Assessing English Studies Teachers’ Competence in the Use Of Flash Cards and Charts in Teaching Vocabulary Among Lower Primary School Pupils in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract
The study determined English Studies teachers’ competence vis-a-vis their educational qualifications, years of experience and gender in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils in Osun State. The study employed survey research design. The sample size consisted of 540 English Studies teachers that were selected using multi-stage sampling procedure and simple random sampling techniques. A research question was asked and answered while three hypotheses were formulated and tested. The results showed that the teachers had average competence in using flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary within the study area at 295(54.6%). Also, no significant differences existed based on gender (F= 2.678; p> 0.05) whereas significant differences existed based on educational qualifications (F= 8.257; p<0.05) and years of experience (F=154.752; p< 0.05) respectively. The study concluded that years of experience and teachers’ qualifications are major determinants of teachers’ competence in using flash cards and charts in teaching lower primary pupils’ vocabulary?

Keywords: Teachers’ Competence, English Studies, Flash Cards, Charts, Vocabulary

INTRODUCTION
Teachers are potent agents of education and they dictate the learning process. The pupils are the reflections of the teachers. Who a teacher is; what he teaches and the competence at which he disseminates his lesson will determine pupils’ acquisition and usage of knowledge. That is why the phrase “The child is the father of the man” which appeared in a poem, “My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold” by William Wordsworth (1842) captures the fact that the moral values, right conduct, knowledge learnt during the early stages of life will be evident all through the other phases of life. Past observations and assessment (Otu, 2016; Babalola, 2000) indicate that the problem with our graduates is largely rooted in their past. This can be traced to the poor quality education received at the primary and secondary school levels. This is why teachers must possess the basic competencies in teaching.

Babatunde (2011) states that the role of the teacher as a major determinant in the quality of education cannot be ignored. This necessitates the need for teachers to be furnished with appropriate and adequate tools that will enhance their vocabulary teaching efforts. The Nigerian National Policy on Education (FGN, 2014) is intended to improve the competence of teachers in the development and promotion of effective use of innovative materials in schools. This supports the fact that the nation appreciates that competence of the teaching work force is a key factor in its capacity building. Orji and Abolarin (2012) define competence as the effectiveness or ability of anyone concerned to apply the acquired knowledge and skill to achieve desired results. Adeyemi (2016) equally points out that a teacher’s competence can be viewed from his knowledge, skills and behaviour. Therefore, how best a method of teaching is will be determined by the teacher’s competence. For effective teaching of vocabulary to learners in lower primary; the teacher must have the necessary teaching qualifications, experience and skills in using instructional materials such as flash cards and charts. Coskuner (2001) indicates that English language teachers should be able to satisfy the expectations of regular rise in the number of students by utilizing current teaching methodologies with commitment and diligence.

The foundation of any learning endeavour matters a lot. If the foundation is not solidly established on required expected skills, a learner can drastically be affected throughout the academic career and this will invariably affects other areas of life. The lower primary school stage requires effective inculcation of skills in English vocabulary that will enable the pupil to involve in tasks that are related to such age group. This signifies that pupils need to have a knowledge of early vocabulary instruction and this mostly depends on the teachers’ competence in handling instructional materials such as charts and flash cards in teaching concepts. Susanto (2017) points out that the learning of vocabulary is an important part in foreign language learning because the meanings of new words are

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frequently emphasized in books or in verbal communication. Adeniyi (2001) opines that instructional resources are educational inputs that are vital to teaching of any subject in the school curriculum. They are materials which the teacher uses in supplementing the teachings. Teachers are considered as the major implementing factors of effective resource utilizations in any teaching-learning process.

Some children nowadays are exposed to various avenues of acquiring vocabulary through newspapers, articles, radio and television, but realistically, they have limited vocabulary to express their views both in verbal or written forms. It can be inferred that their contact with the various means of building up their vocabulary is considered as avenues for entertainment and pleasures. Thus, there is a great decline and lack in any significant or rich vocabulary. The only remedy is for the language teachers to use methods that will enhance effective vocabulary skills. Using flash cards with pictures of simple English words will assist learners to capture and retain words better. Thus, colourful flash cards with different pictures representing the words to be taught will help them to learn new words and utilize them when necessary. These new words after being mastered can be used to form simple sentences. Charts appeal to learners in a meaningful way and they can be used to teach vocabulary to lower primary pupils.

Berne & Blachowicz (2008, in Susanto 2017) indicate that few researches show that teaching vocabulary can be considered as problematic, as some teachers are not really sure about the best practice in the teaching and sometimes not really aware how to start forming an instructional emphasis in vocabulary learning. Though there are various methods in teaching vocabulary to lower primary pupils, emphasis in this study will be on how competent English Studies teachers are in using flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary. If teachers are not pedagogically trained, there is no way they can teach vocabulary efficiently using flash cards and charts. This implies that teachers should undergo training regularly. Through this, teachers can develop needed skills for effective teaching of vocabulary.

Statement of the Problem
The English Studies teachers’ knowledge of using flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary determines the way it is presented to the pupils. Many lower primary pupils find it difficult to identify words and their meanings because of their limited exposure to vocabulary. Consequently, it affects their response to learning because inadequate knowledge of vocabulary inhibits the acquisition of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This indicates that English Studies teachers must possess the competence required in using flash cards and charts to teach vocabulary to the pupils. Considering the inadequate knowledge of vocabulary as depicted in most learners’ speech and written work, it is expedient to assess the competence of English Studies teachers in handling vocabulary lessons.

Objectives of the Study
The objectives of the study are to:
1. determine the English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils in Osun State;
2. determine English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils in Osun State based on educational qualification;
3. investigate English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils in Osun State based on years of experience; and
4. assess English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils in Osun State based on gender.

Research Question
How competent are the English Studies teachers in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among primary school pupils in Osun State?

Hypotheses
1. There is no significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on educational qualification.
2. There is no significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on years of experience.
3. There is no significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on gender.

METHODOLOGY
The study employed survey research design. In a survey design, data are collected from a sample of sufficient size to make generalisations of a wider population. This is suitable for this study because it is assumed that the sample size will represent the entire population. The population for the study consisted of lower primary school English Studies teachers in Osun State. The sample size was made up of 540
lower primary school English Studies teachers. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed in selecting six local government areas from each of the three senatorial districts that made up Osun State; using simple random sampling technique. From each school, three English Studies teachers were equally selected using simple random sampling technique. An instrument titled “English Studies Teachers’ Competence in the Use of Flash Cards and Charts Questionaire” (ESTCUFCCQ) was developed by the investigator to elicit information from lower primary school teachers teaching English Studies. It has two sections: A and B. Section A was on bio data of the teachers, that is, name of the school, local government, educational qualification, years of experience and gender in which the respondents are expected to tick as appropriate. Section B consisted of 20 items Likert type scale instrument having the response options of Very High=4 points, High=3 points, Average= 2 points and Low= 1 point. The maximum score per respondent is 8 points while the lowest score per respondent is 20 points. The instrument was validated by three experts in Measurement and Evaluation Unit. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated before the instrument was administered. An estimate of internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) was used to estimate the reliability of the instrument which was found to be 0.78. Permission of the Head teachers of the sampled schools was sought before the administration of the instrument. All copies of the questionnaire administered were returned. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, Simple Percentages and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

Research Question: How competent are the English Studies teachers in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils in Osun State?

In order to answer this research question, data collected on lower primary school teachers’ competence in teaching vocabulary skills using flash cards and charts were subjected to descriptive analysis and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of competences of English Studies teachers in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Flash Cards f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Charts f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>540</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data presented in Table 1 showed the descriptive analysis of the competence of English Studies teachers in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils in Osun State. It could be observed from the table that 295 (54.6%), 136 (25.2%) and 109 (20.2%) of English Studies teachers had average, low and high competence respectively in using flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary to lower primary pupils within the study area.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on educational qualification.

In order to test this hypothesis, data collected on English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils and their educational qualifications were subjected to One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: One-way ANOVA of English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on their educational qualifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Sum of Squares df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>16.363</td>
<td>16.363</td>
<td>8.257</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>1066.163</td>
<td>1.982</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1082.526</td>
<td>539</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(F=8.257, p<0.05)

The result in Table 2 showed that there was significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on educational qualification at (F=8.257,
p<0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis that stated that there was no significant difference in teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on educational qualification was hereby rejected.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on years of experience.

In order to test this hypothesis, data collected on teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils and their years of experience were subjected to One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) and the result is presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>312.817</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>312.817</td>
<td>154.752</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>1087.515</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>2.021</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1400.331</td>
<td>539</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(F=154.752, p<0.05)*

Data presented in Table 3 showed that there was significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on years of experience at *(F=154.752, p<0.05)*. Therefore, the null hypothesis that stated that there was no significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on years of experience was hereby rejected.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on gender.

In order to test this hypothesis, data collected on English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on gender were subjected to One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) and the result is presented in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.669</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.669</td>
<td>2.678</td>
<td>.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>134.285</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134.954</td>
<td>539</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(F=2.678, p>0.05)*

The result in Table 4 showed that there was no significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils based on gender at *(F=2.678, p>0.05)*. Thus, the null hypothesis that stated that there was no significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence based on gender was hereby not rejected. The result implied that gender was not a predictor of English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils within the study area.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings deduced from the study showed that 295(54.6%) of English Studies teachers had average competence in using flash cards and charts while 136(25.2%) and 109 (20.2%) of them had low and high competence in using flash cards and charts respectively. This indicated that the percentage of lower primary school pupils based on years of experience.

English Studies teachers that were competent in using flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary skills were minimal. This revealed that a large percentage of pupils in lower primary were taught by teachers who were not competent in using flash cards and charts to teach vocabulary. Adeyemi (2014) found out that there was a significant relationship between teachers’ competence and attitude to the utilization of media types in teaching Oral English in Senior Secondary schools. This assertion also supported similar results by Ozdemir and Usun (2009, in Abali 2012) that 4th and 5th grade primary school English Studies teachers’ perception of competence was rather low in implementing creative writing, drama applications, using audio materials and ICT. A pupil that had no sufficient vocabulary to comprehend what the teacher said would definitely fail abysmally. This would prevent such learners from involving in other English Studies tasks like reading, speaking, instructing, creative thinking and writing.
The results also indicated that there was no significant difference in English Studies teachers’ competence in the use of flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary to lower primary pupils based on educational qualification. This implied that teachers’ educational qualification played a prominent role in their teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils using flash cards and charts. Brumfit (1985, in Azikiwe 1998) stated that the teachers of English must possess the qualities that enhanced their teaching activities. They should be professionally trained and well informed. Their approach to teaching should be founded on principles, but not dogmatic. In addition, they should like their students. These attitudes would not be found in mediocre teachers who knew nothing about the rudiments of the language. Therefore, for effective teaching of vocabulary using flash cards and charts, the English Studies teachers’ competence in relation to their educational qualification should not be ignored. In the field of education, experienced teachers who had taught for several years still needed to improve themselves by attending workshops and training so as to bring out the best in pupils during teaching activities.

Adeyemi (2016) pointed out that teaching experience had a significant influence on teachers’ competence in using play-way method. This contradicted the view of Rice (2010) who stated that many occupations recognized employees’ years of experience as a relevant factor in human resource policies, including compensation systems, benefits packages and promotion decisions. Experience, gained over time would improve the knowledge, skills, and productivity of workers, though more would not always be the better. The impact of experience would be strongest during the first few years of teaching; after that, marginal returns would diminish. Therefore, language teachers should update their understanding of the subject through participating in training and retraining as well as in workshops throughout their careers.

The results further showed that gender was not a predictor of English Studies teachers’ competence in using flash cards and charts in teaching vocabulary among lower primary school pupils. This assertion equally affirmed Adeyemi (2016) who discovered that teachers’ gender had no significant influence on their competence. This result contradicted the view of Mahdi & Al-Dera (2013) whose finding indicated that there was significant difference between male and female teachers in terms of competence in using ICT in language teaching. That was why Slästen in (2008, in Blinova&Zagaynov 2015) stated the teachers’ professionalism as the qualitative characteristic that would reflect the professional competence in the high level and the personal readiness for the effective solution of pedagogical tasks.

**CONCLUSION**

English Studies Teachers’ qualification and years of experience cannot be disregarded in determining their competence in using flash cards and charts to teach lower primary school pupils. The professional trainings teachers undergo during their studentship through micro and macro teachings put them in good standing to utilize what they have acquired. Moreover, the workshops they attend assist them to know and improve in using various strategies especially flash cards and charts to teach vocabulary to lower primary pupils. Nonetheless, the gender of English Studies teachers does not determine whether they are competent or not, rather, they are to develop themselves so as to possess the necessary skills to teach vocabulary effectively using flash cards and charts. This shows that as the English Studies teachers are paramount to the success of the learners, so is their competence in teaching vocabulary using flash cards and charts.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Vocabulary teaching using flash cards and charts should be done by seasoned English Studies teachers, not half-baked ones.
- Policy makers should provide appropriate professional development avenues for language teachers.
- Adequate reinforcement strategies should be put in place to encourage competent teachers.
- English Studies teachers are to improve on their experience through regular participation in workshops and training.

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