Pre-Service Teachers' Perception of Use of English Lecturers' Effectiveness: The Role of Gender and Course Orientation

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Abstract

The foundational problem of poor performance in English language made the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) feel a need to introduce the Use of English into teacher training curriculum to better their academic and teaching practices. Available studies have shown that pre-service teachers found it challenging passing Use of English courses which has contributed to some of them not graduating in time. In an attempt to improve students' performance in Use of English, studies have been carried out on in tertiary institutions. Available studies have focused largely on the evaluation of classroom practices, as well as students and content factors with little consideration for pre-service teachers' perception. This study therefore investigated the contributions of pre-service teachers' course orientation and gender to their perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo and Federal College of Education (special), Oyo. The study, guided by two research questions, adopted survey research design with 312 pre-service teachers purposively selected as participants. A self-designed pre-service teachers' perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers' questionnaire was used. Data collected were analysed using ANOVA and T-test. Findings from the study revealed that there was a significant difference in pre-service teachers' course combination and their perception of effectiveness of Use of English lecturers ($F_{(4,307)} = 5.542, p > 0.05$). Findings also indicated that there was no significant difference in male and female pre-service teachers' perception of effectiveness of Use of English lecturers ($t_{309} = -1.807; p = 0.077 > 0.05$). Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that pre-service teachers' course orientation is a prime determinant of their perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers. Recommendation was therefore made that pre-service teachers' course orientation should be factored into classroom practices to achieve the objectives of teaching Use of English course(s). Also, Use of English lecturers needs to have better understanding of their students' linguistic needs and capability so as to device relevant teaching skills and techniques in their classroom activities.

Keywords: Pre-service Teachers, Perception, Effectiveness, Use of English, Gender, Course Orientation

Introduction

The Use of English (UoE) in colleges of education, as in the other tertiary institutions, is a kind of remedy to poor English usage and it is expected to serve as an intervention strategy to aid students in both communicative competence and written form of English in order to facilitate their tasks in English and their areas of specialization (Agboola, 2009). Considering the objectives of the inclusion of Use of English (UoE) in the tertiary education, Onuakaou (1994) posited that Use of English (UoE) is a compulsory skills course for Nigerian undergraduates. Its genesis is informed by the need to cater for the short and long term communication needs of Nigerian undergraduates since Nigerian Education system has English language as its medium of instruction. It is assumed by the originators of the programme that since Nigerian undergraduates are not native speakers of English, they may not have the native speaker-like intuitive use of and or competence in English which they need for optimal and maximal learning in the tertiary institutions.

National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) Minimum Standards for General Education stipulates the objectives of teaching General English as follows:

i. a proficiency in the use of the English language for effective communication to enhance the study of other subjects and to promote professional competence;

ii. the communicative competence needed for successful living in the tertiary institution environment. That is, the communicative competence he would need as an undergraduate to communicate with all the members, academic and non-academic, of his community;

iii. the communicative competence he needs for receiving and giving information in his general and specialist field of learning; and

iv. the communicative competence he needs on the completion of his studies to successfully and effectively perform his chosen career. (NCCE, 2013)

Still on the aims and objective of the inclusion of Use of English (UoE) in tertiary education in Nigeria, Afolayan (1984) and Agboola (2009) in their studies submitted that two broad aims underlie the need for Use of English (UoE). First it is
to remedy the poor English language skills with which students from Nigerian secondary schools enter tertiary institutions. The second objective of the Use of English (UoE) curriculum is to enable the students to acquire a near native speaker-like intuitive use of and competence in English so that they can sufficiently cope with the language demands of learning in an English-medium tertiary institution. Thus, the Use of English (UoE) curriculum is expected to equip the students with the communication and study skills for both his specialist field and general education in the tertiary institution.

Agboola (2009) posited that while students at the secondary school level need English language as one of the subjects to be passed at credit level to enable them to secure admission into the tertiary institutions, students in universities, polytechnics and colleges of education also need English language in all they have to do and they have to register for, and pass Use of English (UoE) courses before they can graduate irrespective of their course orientation. The importance of Use of English at tertiary institutions also premise on the fact that students need to do more independent studies on their own. Writing of essays and making good notes from textbooks essentially depend on a good knowledge of English language which a student has. At the end of the course, a student has to write a project, which has to be written in English language. And since English language is the medium of instruction from primary four to the tertiary level, a student has to be proficient in it both orally and literally.

As the Use of English (UoE) course is given a pride of place in Nigeria tertiary education system by the federal government, one would expect that all Nigerian graduates from any of the tertiary institutions, especially Colleges of Education where teacher-students communication in English language is germane, would be well grounded in their use of English. Unfortunately, revelations from the available studies (Afolayan, 1984; Malums, 2009; and Agboola, 2012) show that some of the students who made a pass or credit grade in English language at the secondary level, find it difficult to perform well in oral and written communication in English in tertiary institutions and that invariably affect their performance in other courses. Malums (2009) also registers his concern that most of the language problems facing students at the tertiary level originated from the primary and secondary level and it is expected to be addressed with the Use of English (UoE) programme. But that has not been the case. This concern is also expressed by Agboola (2009) that students’ exposure to all the English language skills – listening, speaking, reading writing, and even study skills through the Use of English (UoE) courses should help them in studying better. She, however, submitted that that is not so for now.

As compulsory as the subject is for graduation in higher institutions, reports (Afolayan, 1984; Malums, 2009; and Agboola, 2012) have shown that students at the tertiary level are deficient in it as revealed in their performance which has been found to be largely unsatisfactory. Meanwhile to be able to stem the tide of poor performance in General English at Colleges of education, it is believed that the quality of the teacher matters and this leads to the question of teacher effectiveness in the teaching and learning of Use of English (UoE) in colleges of education.

Effective teaching is a term synonymous with teaching (teacher) effectiveness. Teaching effectiveness has been accepted as a multidimensional construct since it measures a variety of different aspects of teaching such as; subject mastery, effective communication, lesson preparation and the like (Onyeachu, 1996). Afe (2003) defined effective teaching as the type of teaching characterised by the exhibition of intellectual, social and emotional stability, love for children and positive disposition towards the teaching profession and ability to inspire good qualities in students. It was also defined by Vogt (1984) as the ability of instruction to inspire students of different abilities while incorporating instructional objectives and assessing the effective learning mode of the students. According to Evans (2006), teaching effectiveness is a measure of the extent of realisation of the instructional objectives. It is a net growth in intellectual aptitude and skills as measured by students’ achievements. Omoifo and Urevbu (2007) see effective teaching as the use of clearly formulated objectives by the teacher, illustrated instruction that will enable students to acquire desired knowledge content, apply the knowledge to classroom and other related problem, think and take independent decision and the use of effective evaluation technique by the teacher. Rohwer (2001) on his own defines teacher’s effectiveness as the extent to which the teacher analysis the task at hand, assess the learners, plans his lessons, instructs the learners and evaluate the extent of success of his lessons. Akomolefe (2010)
identified the characteristics of effective teaching to include: attention on students achievement, quality teaching responsive to students learning processes, effective and efficient learning opportunities, pedagogical practices that create cohesive learning communities, effective links between school and cultural context of the school, multiple tasks to support learning cycles, aligned curriculum goal effectively, pedagogy scaffolds feedback on students' task engagement among others.

Fennema and Frank (1992) agreed that teacher's knowledge of the subject matter is an indicator of teachers' teaching effectiveness. Also, Kimberly (2009) stated that teachers must be knowledgeable in their area of study. This was corroborated in Fakeye (2012) as he posited that in truth, if a teacher is not enlightened in his/her subject, then any hope of effectiveness goes right out the window. Hence, effective teaching could be measured by the level of a teachers' subject matter competence which Mullens (1993) regarded as a prime predictor of students' learning. Anderson (1991) opined that the teacher must possess the knowledge and skills needed to attain the goal of teaching English language and must be able to use that knowledge and skills if the goals are to be achieved. It has been established that there is a high correlation between what teachers know and what they teach. Thus, the ability to teach effectively depends on the teachers' knowledge of the subject matter. Teachers are handicapped if they are unfamiliar with the body of knowledge taught and teachers’ characteristics is subject specific. Adediwura and Bada (2007) stated in their study that nobody could teach what he does not understand or know. They went further to state that they (teachers) must thoroughly understand the content of what they teach. A teacher whose understanding of topic is thorough uses clearer language, their discourse is more connected, and they provide better explanations than those whose background is weaker. The way the students perceive the teaching in terms of their (teachers’) knowledge of content of subject matter may significantly affect the students' academic performance. Because of this, the teacher should therefore master the subject matter before teaching commences. Huckstep, Rowland, and Thwaites (2003) in their finding on importance of mathematics teachers' knowledge of subject contents, affirm that effective teaching that can lead to better achievement by the students and provide a positive attitude depends on teachers' confidence and in-depth knowledge of the subject matter.

From the foregoing, studies have shown that subject mastery, pedagogical knowledge, teaching skills and classroom management skills as teacher effectiveness variables have influence on students' learning but there has not been any study that looked into the pre-service teachers' perception of their teachers' effectiveness in teaching Use of English with respect to their gender and course orientation.

Statement of the Problem

The foundational problem of poor performance in English language from primary and secondary to the tertiary institutions, especially the Colleges of Education, made the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) feels a need to introduce the General English/Use of English (UoE) among other General Studies courses into teacher training curriculum. The objective of including General English/Use of English in the curriculum of Colleges of Education is to equip pre-service teachers with the skill of language and communication that will be useful for them in their academic and teaching practices. The Use of English (UoE) in colleges of education, as in the other tertiary institutions, is therefore a kind of remedy to poor English usage and it is expected to serve as an intervention strategy to aid students in both communicative competence and written form of English in order to facilitate their tasks in English and their areas of specialization. For this objective to be achieved, Use of English teachers' effectiveness is very important. Also, for teaching-learning activities to go on well, students must have a positive perception of their teachers in the areas of their classroom practices. Available studies have shown that a significant percentage of Colleges of Education students found it challenging to pass Use of English courses which has contributed to some of them not graduating in time. In an attempt to improve students' performance in Use of English courses, studies have been carried out on the teaching of Use of English (UoE) in tertiary institutions. Available studies on the Use of English (UoE) programme in tertiary institutions have focused on the evaluation of the lecturers' classroom practices, as well as students and content factors in relation to effective teaching of Use of English (UoE) courses but students' perception of the effectiveness of Use of English (UoE) lecturers at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo and Federal College of Education (special), Oyo has
not been done in any study. Therefore this study investigated the contributions of pre-service teachers' course orientation and gender to their perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo and Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, Oyo State.

Research Questions

The study attempted to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Is there any significant difference in pre-service teacher's course combination and their perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers?
2. What is the significant difference in male and female Pre-service teachers' perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers?

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study comprised all 200 level pre-service teachers of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo and Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo. The sample size of 312 pre-service teachers participated in the study. The instrument used for data collection for this study was a self-designed pre-service teachers' perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers' questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into section A and B. Section A contained demographic information of the respondents such as name of school, course of study, level, and gender. Section B contained eighteen (18) constructed items to elicit responses on pre-service teachers' perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers based on the four teaching variables of subject mastery, pedagogical content knowledge, teaching skill and classroom management skill. Responses were scored using four (4) keys of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree to indicate the level to which the respondents agree or disagree with the questionnaire items. Data collected from the study were analysed using ANOVA and T-test to determine the significant difference in pre-service teachers' course combination and gender, and their perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers respectively.

Results

Research Question 1: Is there any significant difference in pre-service teachers' course combination and their perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>1072.771</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>357.590</td>
<td>5.542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2000.111</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>64.523</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21074.882</td>
<td>313</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 showed that there was a significant difference in pre-service teachers' course combination and their perception of effectiveness of Use of English lecturers ($F_{(3,310)} = 5.542, p>.05$). This implies that students' course combination influences their perception of effectiveness of Use of English lecturers.

Research Question 2: What is the significant difference in male and female Pre-service teachers' perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers?
Table 4.2: Gender Difference in Pre-service Teachers’ and their Perception of Effectiveness of Use of English Lecturers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>75.5789</td>
<td>8.59791</td>
<td>1.97249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>79.4516</td>
<td>6.49533</td>
<td>1.16659</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 indicated that there was no significant difference in male and female pre-service teachers' perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers ($t = -1.807; p = 0.077 > 0.05$). This means that students' gender and their perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers are not related. Further analysis of the table revealed that with 79.5 mean score, female pre-service teachers have better perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers than that of the male pre-service teachers with less mean score of 75.6.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated pre-service teachers' perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo and Federal College of Education (special), Oyo, Oyo State. Hence, this segment of the study focuses on discussion of findings. The discussion of results is presented as follows:

**Pre-Service Teachers’ Course Combination Difference and their Perception of Effectiveness of Use of English Lecturers**

Findings from this study revealed that there is a significant difference in pre-service teachers' course combination and their perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers. This implies that students' course combination influences their perception of the effectiveness of their Use of English lecturers. This might not be unconnected with the fact that English language is central to some students' course combination. This finding justifies the study of Agboola (2009) who found that course of studies of Polytechnics students in Southwest Nigeria is a determinant of their achievement in Use of English programme. It is therefore pertinent that students' course of study or academic background should be factored into the classroom practices by Use of English lecturers. This is in line with the submission of Banks (2001) and Alwan (2000) on the effect of gender on the effect of gender on the perception of effectiveness of Use of English lecturers. This means that students' gender and their perception of the effectiveness of their Use of English lecturers are not related. This study agreed with the findings in Alwan (2000) and Barzaq (2007) on the effect of gender on the perception of effectiveness of Use of English lecturers.
EFL teachers' perception where both did not find out differences related to sex variable. Also in line with this study is Onyekuru and Ibegbunam (2013) who reported that there was no significant difference in teaching effectiveness between the male and female secondary school teachers in Emohua local government area. This findings however disagreed with Lavin, Korte and Davies (2013) who suggested that there were significant differences between female and male students' rating of their teacher effectiveness. They further justified their findings that that there are specific traits which appear to be more important to females, and other specific traits which appear to be more important to males.

Conclusion

This study investigated the contributions of pre-service teachers' gender and course orientation to their perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo and Federal College of Education (special), Oyo, Oyo State. Findings from this study revealed that pre-service teachers' course orientation is a prime determinant of their perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers. Findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in male and female pre-service teachers' perception of effectiveness of Use of English lecturers.

It can be concluded from the study therefore that, though the Use of English course content and the environment in which to be introduced might not be different but, the students' course orientation differ markedly, therefore the differences in pre-service teachers' course orientation should be factored into classroom practices by Use of English lecturers. It can also be concluded that pre-service teachers' perception of the effectiveness of Use of English lecturers could serve as a positive feedback mechanism to the lecturers and the College Management.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. To impact pre-service teachers with needed linguistics and communicative skills and competence, Use of English lecturers needs to have better understanding of their students' linguistics needs and capability so as to device relevant teaching skills and techniques in their classroom activities.

2. To achieve the objectives of teaching General Studies/Use of English course(s), pre-service teachers' course of studies should be factored into classroom practices.

3. The perennial issue of students' over-population common to General Studies' classes should be addressed by the concerned authority to enhance Use of English lecturers' classroom management skills.

4. To enhance Use of English lecturers' teaching skills, the Use of English lecture rooms should be equipped with relevant and appropriate teaching resources like PAS (Public Address System), projector, electric board and others.

5. Colleges of education management boards should device means of monitoring and ensuring effective teaching of Use of English by designated lecturers.

6. Professional development needs of Use of English lecturers should be catered for by Colleges of education management and other concerned stakeholders.

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