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INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the instructional strategies for improving students' academic performance in English Language in Secondary Schools in Anambra state. Three research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of year two senior secondary school (SSS2) students in the 263 public secondary schools in the six (6) education zones in Anambra state. The participants for the study consists of 946 students, (426 males & 520 females) obtained through non-proportionate stratified random sampling technique from eight (8) schools in Onitsha, and Awka education zones (four schools from each education zones). The data collected were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. The study revealed that majority of the items were rated agreed to the instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance, majority of the items were rated high extent to which instructional strategies improve students' academic performance and the students agreed to majority of the items on problems confronting the use of instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools. The study recommended among others that instructional resources that are current and adequate should be provided for the students.

Keywords: Instructional strategies, English Language, academic performance.

Introduction

Academic performance plays an important role in an individual placement, be it in the academic institutions or job placement. Due to this, many people are concerned with the ways they can enhance their academic performance. The emphasis on academic excellence which is also prevalent worldwide has encouraged many studies about the conditions promoting it. The role of academic performance as one of the predictors of one's life success and also in the aspect of academic placement in schools to higher institutions as well as the level of employability in one's career is inevitable (Labaree, 2013 in Illeris, 2018).

Academic performance refers to how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers. Academic performance, which is measured by the examination results, is one of the major goals of a school. Academic performance is the outcome of education, to the extent at which a student, teacher or institution have achieved their educational goals during and after teaching and learning process that usually takes place in the classroom.

The problem of unsatisfactory academic performance in most subjects including English Language both in school and external examinations is disheartening. This low academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Anambra State arouses doubts on the effects of instructional methods and resources used by teachers in secondary schools. As academic performance has always been measured by test scores or examinations results neglecting the effects of other factors such as learning environments, learning strategies and learning resources on academic performance (Oluwatosin & Bamidele, 2014).This has generated a lot of interest among researchers on appropriate methodology, instructional resources and strategies that can be adopted in boosting the academic performance of students in English Language.

According to Atubi (2021), instruction refers to the practice of maximizing the effectiveness, efficiency and appeal of teaching and learning experiences. The process consists broadly of determining the current state and needs of the learner defining the end goal of instruction and creating some "intervention" to assist in the transition of knowledge. Instruction may be aimed at teaching learners problems solving skills, thinking and reasoning skills including perception memory, language etc. many would agree that people learn better when they can build on what they already understand known as "schemes" but the more a person has to learn in a shorter amount it is to process that information in working memory.

Instructional strategies are all the things the teachers uses to aid the learners in their learning process; they are the means used to bring about effective teaching and learning. Obara and Okoh (2005) in Baafi (2020) regard instructional strategies and materials as "all the things the teacher utilizes to interactively enhance, motivate and facilitate teaching and learning in an attempt to ensuring the achievement of a set objectives." The effectiveness of instructional materials and strategies depends upon the manner and degree to which they meet the needs of the teacher and students. Instructional strategies and materials are selected based on the principles of provision of accurate materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the interest, abilities and maturity levels of the students. Teachers should be encouraged in every way to use instructional strategies as it makes learning more concrete and meaningful (Buseri and Dorgu 2011). Teaching brings about understanding; it involves a teacher, a learner and subject matter and teaching materials. Therefore to bring about learning, the teacher engages in certain activities such as talking, demonstration, and give instruction etc, all these are the various strategies to bring about learning (Adediran 2014).

Teachers need to use different instructional strategies to ensure students centered method in the classroom for creativity, innovative and critical thinking purpose in students. Classroom teaching is

likely to be more effective when it is informed by an understanding of how students learn. It is therefore important that, the major implications of instructional strategies be reflected in classroom practice. Adediran, Orukotan and Adeyanju (2015) carried out a study on instructional strategies for effective teaching and learning in Nigeria secondary schools. The study investigated the instructional strategies for the promotion of effective teaching and learning in secondary schools in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria and found out that teachers agreed that the manner in which the teachers approach in their teaching do not promote effective teaching and learning; that there are problems confronting the use of instructional strategies in their teaching process, and that some of the teachers find it difficult to use instructional strategies in their teaching activities in the classroom. Also Oganto (2016) agreed that to an extent poor teaching methodology pose problems in instructions while teaching and learning.

The production of a functional and productive citizenry which is a major focus of secondary school education entails that secondary school education concerns itself with inculcating creative reflective, competence relational, analytic and decision-making skills and competence in the learner (Kang& Keinonen, 2018). Hence, researchers are assiduously working on possible strategies to improve academic performance of students. In furtherance of this search, this study investigated the instructional strategies for improving students' academic performance in English Language in Secondary Schools in Anambra State.

Statement of problem

The issue of low academic performance in secondary schools in Anambra State and in English Language is not quite encouraging as reports by examination bodies. In Anambra State, it is worrisome that the performance of students in English Language is declining steadily. This situation has become a source of concern to teachers, parents, evaluators and researchers. It is

believed that if the performance of students continues to decline unabated, it may affect the economic and technological growth of the nation. However, researchers are assiduously working on possible strategies to improve academic performance of students. In furtherance of this search, this study investigated the instructional strategies for improving students' academic performance in English Language in Secondary Schools in Anambra state.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find out, the instructional strategies for improving students' academic performance in English Language in Secondary Schools in Anambra state. Specifically, the study determined:

1. The instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools in in Anambra state.
2. The extent to which instructional strategies improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools in in Anambra state.
3. the problems confronting the use of instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools in in Anambra state.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools in Anambra state?
2. To what extent does instructional strategies improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools in Anambra state?
3. What are problems confronting the use of instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools in in Anambra state?

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Nworgu (2016), defined descriptive survey as those studies that aim at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristic features and facts about a given population This design is considered appropriate for the present study, because the study sought the opinions of respondents on the instructional problems associated with poor academic performance in English Language amongst secondary school. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised of year two senior secondary school (SSS2) students in the 263 public secondary schools in the six (6) education zones in Anambra state. The participants for the study consists of 946 students, (426 males & 520 females) obtained through non-proportionate stratified random sampling technique from eight (8) schools in Onitsha, and Awka education zones (four schools from each education zones).Instruments for data collection include a structured questionnaire that was designed by the researchers to collect data on Instructional Strategy for Improving Academic Performance in English Language(ISIAPEL). The instrument has two sections section A contains demographic information of the teachers and students while section B contains the question items for the research. The questionnaire were constructed in a way that the respondents had to choose of the response options of four-point rating scale of: Stronglr Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) for research question one and three while research question two indicated Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (LE) and used to respond to each item. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument, which yielded coefficient values of .89 with average coefficient index of .87.This value show that the instrument is sufficiently reliable. The data collected were analyzed using the mean scores and standard deviation.

Results

Research question 1

What are the instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools in Awka South L.G.A?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language

S/N	Improve Students' Academic Performance	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Making available to the students the subject content at the beginning of each term	3.02	1.07	Agree
2.	Disclosure of the specific objectives of each lecture before the commencement of each lecture	3.09	1.02	Agree
3.	Involvement of the learners in planning for instructional strategies	2.78	.94	Agree
4.	Use of the instructional strategies as the preferred medium of classroom communication	2.83	1.14	Agree
5.	Explorative discovery in their lesson	2.40	1.13	Disagree
6.	Encouragement of note-taking skills instead of note copying skills	3.07	.01	Agree
7.	Making classes democratic in order to allow students air their views	2.64	1.01	Agree
8.	Giving of individuals and collaborative tasks	2.52	1.30	Agree
9.	Proving open access to learning resources	2.36	1.12	Disagree
10.	Use of applied questions that encourage critical thinking skills	2.46	1.07	Disagree
11.	Encouragement of learners to keep a written record of their learning	2.52	.18	Agree
12.	Regular evaluation of the students to determine their progress of learning	3.08	1.01	Agree
13.	Providing feedback to the students on their progress in learning	3.05	1.07	Agree
14.	Use of seminars where each students researches and presents a paper for class criticism	2.81	.03	Agree
15.	Giving freedom for away of texts and projects for the lesson	2.98	1.01	Agree

Cluster Mean	**3.07**

Research question 2

To what extent do instructional strategies improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools in Awka South L.G.A?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the extent instructional strategies improve students' academic performance in English Language.

S/N	Extent to which instructional strategies improve students' academic performance in English Language	Mean	Decision
16	The subject content is communicated to the students at the beginning of the term	**3.02**	High Extent
17	The specific objectives of each period are made known to the students at the beginning of the lesson	**2.94**	High Extent
18	Students partake in planning for instruction and in the improvisation of instructional materials	**3.07**	High Extent
19	Teachers do not dictate notes; rather they encourage interactive discussions and explorations	**3.03**	High Extent
20	Teacher-student classroom interaction patterns are democratic	**2.95**	High Extent
21	Teachers do not like their ideas to be challenged by the students	**3.13**	High Extent
22	The teacher controls all class activities	**3.07**	High Extent
23	Paired work is encouraged by teachers in the lesson delivery	**3.06**	High Extent
24	Collaborative assignments are given to students by the teachers	2.36	Low Extent
25	Students have choice in the assignment or tasks they perform	2.42	Low Extent
26	Students have always passed their examinations by reproducing what the teacher gave them in the notes	2.98	High Extent
27	There is in-depth coverage of learning content by teachers	2.56	High Extent
28	Students have open access to information in the library	3.07	High Extent
29	The library holds current information in various subjects	3.03	High Extent
30	Students have limited access to information on the internet	2.30	Low Extent
	Cluster Mean	**3.07**	High Extent

Table 2 reports the mean and standard deviation response on the extent to which instructional strategies improve students' academic performance in English Language. Mean score ratings of all the items falls above 2.50 except 24, 25 and 30 which fall below 2.05 shows that majority of the respondents attested to a high extent that the stated instructional strategies improves students' academic performance in English Language. This therefore implies that the stated instructional strategies have high extent of improving students' academic performance in English Language. The standard deviation scores shows homogeneity in the respondents ratings.

Research question 3

What are problems confronting the use of instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools in Awka South L.G.A?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on the problems confronting the use of instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language.

S/N	Equipment	Mean	SD	Remark
1	It is difficult to measure the extent of students ability	3.93	.15	Agree
2	It is a new approach without a clearly delineated procedure	3.03	.60	Agree
3	It reduces the authority of the teacher	2.95	.31	Agree
4	It demands a lot from the teacher in terms of planning	2.91	.80	Agree
5	Large class size may prevent the monitoring of the progress of learning.	3.02	1.14	Agree
6	The time allocated to each subject per week may not encourage the use of the approach	3.06	.45	Agree
7	Learner autonomous approach may degenerate into laissez faire approach	3.14	.60	Agree
8	Not many teachers are trained on the use of this approach	2.01	.61	Disagree
9	Innovative learning involves open access to information which may not be readily available	1.12	.80	Disagree
10	It may not be a suitable approach for dull students	2.76	.54	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**2.79**		**Agree**

Table 3 reports the mean and standard deviation response on the problems confronting the use of instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools. The study found that the respondents agreed to nine problems confronting the use of instructional strategies, and disagreed with two. On the whole, the respondents agreed to majority of problems confronting the use of instructional strategies. The standard deviation scores reveal heterogeneity in the respondents rating.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings observed majority of the items in tables 1 were rated agreed which indicates that poor teaching methodology pose problems in instructions while teaching English Language. Looking at the analysis it was discovered that the respondents agreed to nine teaching methodologies which include group, drilling, dictation/speed, reading rate, question/answer, drama, excursion, firm, and invite experts respectively and disagreed to three methodologies which include Transcription, Assignment and Display work. Hence, majority of the items were rated agreed. The findings are in line with Oganto (2016) which points out that agreed to the extent poor teaching methodology pose problems in instructions while teaching and learning.

Table 2 showed that the respondents agreed to five instructional materials which include writing board, model office, staff offices, lecture halls/theatre, students" tables and chairs and disagreed to six instructional materials (relevant textbook, ICT lab/services, library services, ventilation facilities, and air conditioners) as instructional materials affecting the teaching English Language. On the whole, majority of the instructional materials were rated disagreed. The standard deviation scores also showed homogeneity in the respondents ratings. The study in table 3 found out that the respondents agreed to the wrong usage of nine instructional materials. On the whole, the respondents agreed to majority of the items. The findings are in line with Adediran, Orukotan and Adeyanju (2015) who found out that

teachers agreed that the manner in which the teachers approach in their teaching do not promote effective teaching and learning; that there are problems confronting the use of instructional strategies in their teaching process, and that some of the teachers find it difficult to use instructional strategies in their teaching activities in the classroom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this research reveal that majority of the items were rated agreed to the instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools, also majority of the items were rated the high extent to which instructional strategies improve students' academic performance in English Language. And they agreed to majority of the items on problems confronting the use of instructional strategies to improve students' academic performance in English Language in secondary schools. This indicates that students are more likely to learn and retain what is learnt thereby achieving result-oriented classrooms if their teachers learn to make use of various instructional strategies that can promote effective teaching and learning of English Language in secondary schools in Anambra state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and subsequent discussion, this study recommended the following:

i. Workshops and Seminars should be organized to train teachers on the approach as well as the procedure for using it.

ii. Parents should be actively involved in encouraging students to learn and also in supervising students academic work at home

iii. Instructional resourcesthat are current and adequate should be provided for the students.

iv. More research should be carried out on the use of this various instructional strategies for teaching and learning English Language and allow experiments to compare its efficacy with the traditional approach.

v. Secondary school teachers should be allowed to involve in the curriculum planning and implementation, in order to make them bring in students centred methods/strategies as it is more likely to produce self reliant students than the traditional approach.

vi. Parents should be made to realize the importance of motivation in determining their children's academic performance in schools,

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