



## AN ASSESSEMENT OF THE USE OF TWO LEVELS OF CREATIVE TEACHING OF LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH IN TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract:

This study investigated the extent of use of two levels of creativity in teaching Literature-in-English in tertiary institutions in Kwara State. The study employed the descriptive survey research design. Total enumeration sampling technique was used to select 32 lecturers of Literature-in-English from two public colleges and two faculties of education in the state. Two instruments were used to gather information for the study namely: Use of Creativity Questionnaire for Lecturers (UCQL), and Use of Creativity Observation Rating Scale (UCORS). Data collected were analysed using frequency, percentage, and mean. The results revealed that there was a low level of use of the two levels of creativity in teaching Literature-in-English with percentage ranging from 56.25% to 68.75% of respondents who did not use either of the levels of creativity at all, with their mean scores being less than 1. Lecturers also made use of teaching creatively (0.90) more than teaching for creativity (0.80). The study concluded that there was low use of the two levels of creativity in teaching Literature-in-English in tertiary educational institutions in Kwara State.

**Keywords:** teaching creatively; teaching for creativity

### 1. Introduction

Literature-in-English is a subject/course which contributes to imaginative and intelligent thinking. It is offered in secondary schools and tertiary educational institutions. Moss (2000) sees literature essentially as an imaginative act, that is, act of the writer's imagination in selecting, ordering and interpreting life experiences. Literature is about life and what it means to be human; it illuminates life by shaping people's insights. It has the property of formulating a concentrated imaginative

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awareness of experience in language, to stimulate specific emotions and responses through its meaning, sound and rhythm. Literature is the expression of human quest for perfection, an attempt to understand the universe we live in; without it, human existence would be shapeless, and void. Literature is a reflection of a society put into writing. It is included in the Nigerian school curriculum for the development of not only cognitive, affective and psychomotor components of the individual but also for reading skills.

The aims and objectives of teaching Literature-in-English in Senior Secondary Schools as contained in the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), (2009), are to enable learners to:

1. appreciate and enjoy a wide range of literary or creative texts and other related cultural forms;
2. develop their capacity for critical thinking, creativity, self-expression, personal growth, empathy and cultural understanding;
3. enhance their awareness of the relationship between literature and society;
4. develop a greater sensitivity to the nuances of the English language; and

The objectives of teaching Literature-in-English for Senior Secondary Schools are to:

1. broaden the cultural horizon of students through literary texts that vary in perspective but universal in application;
2. expose students to 'language in action' in literary texts, thus re-enforcing their English language skills already acquired;
3. expose students to healthy human values and attributes;
4. develop capacity for independent thought, judgement and literary competence of the learners;
5. inculcate in students the entertainment and instructive values of Literature;
6. expose students to the beauty and potentials of language.

From the aforementioned aims and objectives of teaching Literature-in-English, it is glaring that the knowledge of literature can help to develop students' effective use of the English language. Literature helps learners broaden their understanding of other cultures. It acquaints them with understanding of differences in cultures, as well as helps them to perceive and tolerate other people's cultures. Through literature, universal themes, such as love, war, and loss that are not always covered in-depth in the language course books are treated. The study of literature helps the language learners achieve cultural assimilation, language competence, conflict resolution, good liberal education and development of desirable attributes. There is no doubt that a student, who is exposed to all the values of literature listed above, will be fully integrated into his/her culture as well as other peoples' culture. The student will become fluent in language, having a wide range of vocabulary at his/her disposal. Clandfield (2001), states that, there are good reasons for using literature in the classroom. Specifically, literature provides authentic reading materials for students and encourages interaction. Literary texts are often rich with multiple layers of meaning and can be

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effectively used for discussion and sharing feelings or opinions. It is good to expose students to this source of real-life language in the classroom.

A close look at literature and language shows that the two are closely related, they can be said to be two sides of the same coin. This close relationship is obvious because from all indications, Literature presupposes language; literature is language put to use. It is inconceivable to discuss literature without reference to language. Eagleton (1996) opines that literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language while Onukaogu (2002) claims that all the genres of literature are needed in order to make the English Language curriculum result and goal oriented. Literature also expands language awareness. For example, asking students to examine sophisticated or non-standing examples of language (which can occur in literary texts), makes them more aware of the norms of language use. In addition, literature educates the whole person (Richards, 2006). By examining values in literary texts, students involve the use of all their senses in the learning process. Literature helps students to increase their empathy and awareness of others, foster peer respect and group cooperation, reinforce positive self-concept and provide teachers with a fresh perspective on teaching (Cropely, 1999). Therefore, it is important that emphasis be laid on the study of literature at both the junior and secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions, so as to bring about improvement in the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of the English language and also empower learners.

Despite the importance and all the aforementioned benefits attached to the learning of literature, the teaching and learning of literature has many challenges which hinder its effective teaching and learning. Classroom observations and research have shown that Literature-in-English in Nigeria is still being taught mostly through the traditional method which is generally teacher-centered, instead of being learner-centered, interactive and contextualized. Most teachers merely aim at getting the students to learn the facts and be able to recall information for examination purposes. According to Ogunnaike (2002) major problems of teaching Literature-in-English, are poor planning, poor pedagogy and poor presentation in the classroom. Even though there are specific methods of teaching Literature-in-English, most teachers tend to teach it anyhow. Ogunnaike submits that teachers use whatever method available or at their disposal and most often, they use the 'take-your-book-and-read' approach. This approach may be wrong and ineffective for teaching and learning of Literature-in-English.

Ogunnaike maintains that such an approach has affected students' attitude towards the subject, thus, resulting in poor performance. Labo-Popoola's (2010) assertion corroborates that of Ogunnaike, that the way a teacher handles the Literature class goes a long way in giving the students the right attitude towards the subject. To him, the attitude of the teacher as well as his/her competence in handling the texts will determine his/her output in class. In a related vein, Nwodo (2011) asserts that despite the fact that the study of Literature-in-English offers students the opportunity to be proficient in English, there is no dynamic and functional Literature policy on ground.

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She argues that a well-planned Literature curriculum will enhance candidates' performance and raise the standard of education in the country.

One other problem of teaching Literature-in-English has to do with choice of texts, a lot of students find literature difficult as a result of choice of literary texts. Literary texts should be such that can capture students' interests as well as relevant to their background and culture. Frequent changes in the school syllabus, lack of interest by students, poverty and a dearth of books or high cost of books, ill-equipped libraries or a total absence of libraries in schools, homes and classrooms are some other problems facing the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English in Nigeria.

With all these obstacles in the achievement of the stated goals of teaching and learning of Literature-in-English, there is a need to put adequate measures in place to facilitate effective teaching and learning, most especially in the area of methodology. Teachers' methods or styles of presentation of lessons are very important to the overall learning output of the students. Researchers such as Sawyer (2006) have emphasized the need for literature teaching to be creative and improvisational. According to research, if classrooms are scripted and overly directed by teachers, students cannot co-construct knowledge, and both students' and teachers' growth are impaired in the process (Woods, 1995)

Creative teaching is necessary to meet the complex educational needs of diverse student populations. Teachers must be creative with their knowledge and practice when working with multilingual and multicultural students and students with diverse learning needs. In fact, it is difficult to imagine successful teaching in general and of literature in particular that does not depend on teacher's creativity. Lessons should be planned and improvised to meet the varied needs, interests, and abilities of students as well as conforming to the formal policy, curriculum and available resources (Rejskind, 2000). In addition, teachers are expected to manage interpersonal, instructional and managerial tasks and problems that come up during teaching which must be achieved by handling challenges on the spot with little or no advance warning (Ambrose, 2005). Though the idea of creativity as a characteristic of a good teacher is recognized (Halliwell, 1993), it is not reflected in many official professional competencies.

Creativity is the process of bringing something new into being. Creativity requires passion and commitment. It brings to one's awareness what was previously hidden and points to new life. Creativity is the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality. Creativity is characterized by the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions. Creativity involves two processes: thinking, then producing. Definitions of creativity vary, but must include two essential criteria: that an action or product be unusual or unique, and that it be useful or valuable (Cropley, 1999).

Teaching can be deemed creative when a teacher combines existing knowledge in some novel or unique way or introduces new processes to cultivate cognition to get useful results. This may be either planned before the act of teaching, or improvised as a response to the demands of the learning context. In the learning context, creativity helps

to stimulate, engage, motivate and satisfy in a deep sense. Creativity in teaching tends to improve students' self-esteem, confidence and self-awareness. This enhanced sense of self-worth also feeds into more committed and more effective learning.

Teaching creatively is defined as 'using imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting and effective' (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) 1999, p.32), while teaching for creativity is defined as forms of teaching that are intended to develop student's creative thinking or behaviour. This distinction has been useful in highlighting the importance of creativity in teaching generally and particularly in Literature-in- English. In seeking to become a creative teacher, the teacher will want to widen his or her understanding of creativity, and the imaginative approaches and repertoire of engaging activities that can be employed in order to develop the student's capacity for original ideas and action. The teacher also exerts professional autonomy, learning to be flexible and responsive to different students and diverse learning contexts. Joubert (2001) observes that creative teaching is an art. Some strategies may help to promote creative thinking, but teachers need to develop a full repertoire of skills which they can adapt to different situations.

Creative teaching allows teachers to realize their full potential, but only if they have mastered that subject area themselves. It goes to say that, if teachers want their students to be successful, they need to acquire the skills and attitudes required to think deeply about a certain problem and make wise smart choices. They need to think flexibly and imaginatively to be creative. In the same vein, teaching for creativity is not a demanding task; it is a teaching activity that should produce an enjoyable, creative outcome, if the students have the opportunity for creative thinking. Reviewing past studies, one can clearly notice the dearth of research in the area of Literature teachers' use of creativity and their effect on students' achievement, particularly, in developing countries like Nigeria (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2001; Agharuwhe, 2013). In addition, even when creativity is considered in teaching, emphasis seems to be on the first level to the detriment of the second level. The present study thus attempts to fill this gap, most especially as it relates to the teaching of Literature-in-English by investigating the teachers' use of two levels of creative teaching and the extent to which they individually and jointly determine learning outcomes in Literature-in-English.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Studies have shown that students generally seem to demonstrate a negative attitude to Literature-in-English which tends to affect their performance in it. Several factors, one of which is the teachers' methodology are considered to be responsible. This is considered to be the most fundamental. For example, classroom observations and Ogunnaike's (2002) findings show that Literature-in-English is not properly taught by teachers in most cases as teachers use whatever method is at their disposal. The role of creativity in the effective teaching of literature has been emphasized (Sawyer, 2006). However, there is dearth of empirical studies on the use of the two levels of creativity especially in teaching Literature-in-English. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the

use of these levels of creativity in teaching Literature-in-English in Nigeria educational tertiary institutions, particularly in colleges and faculties of education in Kwara State, hence, this study.

### **2.1 Purpose of the Study**

The study aimed at investigating the use of two levels of creative teaching on students' learning outcomes in Literature-in-English in tertiary institutions in Kwara State. Specifically, the objective of the study is to:

- Investigate the extent of use of the two levels of creativity in teaching Literature-in-English in tertiary institutions in Kwara State.

### **2.2 Research Question**

Based on the objective of this study, the following research question was asked and answered:

- To what extent are the two levels of creative teaching used in teaching Literature-in-English in tertiary educational institutions in Kwara State?

## **3. Methodology**

The study employed the descriptive survey research design to examine the use of two levels of creative teaching (teaching creatively and teaching for creativity) on students' learning outcomes in Literature-in-English in tertiary educational institutions in Kwara State. The population and sample for the study comprised 32 lecturers of Literature-in-English selected from two public colleges and two faculties of education using total enumeration sampling technique. Two validated research instruments were used to gather information for the study namely:

1. Use of Creativity Questionnaire for Lecturers (UCQL);
2. Use of Creativity Observation Rating Scale (UCORS);

Use of Creativity Questionnaire (UCQL): This is a self-designed questionnaire. It is divided into two sections: Section A was used to gather respondents' personal information; Section B contains 10 Likert format type items used to elicit information on the prevalence of use of creativity in teaching Literature-in-English. Responses which were measured in degree ranging from to a great extent, to some extent, and to not at all were scored 2, 1, 0 respectively.

Use of Creativity Observation Rating Scale (UCORS): The UCORS is a self-designed rating scale used to elicit information on teachers' use of creativity in Literature-in-English classrooms. It contains Likert format type items. Responses were measured ranging from to a great extent, to some extent, to not at all and were scored 2, 1, 0 respectively.

**4. Results**

Research Question: To what extent are the two levels of creative teaching used in teaching Literature-in-English in tertiary institutions in Kwara State?

This question was answered using data obtained from the lecturers' questionnaire and observation rating scale.

**Table 1:** The Extent of the Use of the Two Levels of Creative Teaching

S/N	Items	To a Great Extent	To Some Extent	Not at All	Mean
1.	I understand the concept of creative teaching.	12 (37.5%)	20 (62.5%)	0 (0.0)	1.38
2.	I teach Literature-in-English using both levels together.	6 (18.75%)	8 (25.0%)	18 (56.25%)	0.63
3.	I encourage my students to recite and appreciate poems while teaching.	12 (37.5%)	20 (62.5%)	0 (0.0)	1.38
4.	I encourage my students to creatively write their own poems in literature classes.	6 (18.75%)	8 (25.0%)	18 (56.25%)	0.63
5.	I ask my students to re-tell stories in their own words both orally and written.	13 (40.67%)	17 (53.13)	2 (6.25%)	1.34
6.	I encourage my students to act out plays.	6 (18.75%)	6 (18.75%)	20 (62.5%)	0.56
7.	I use artistic images/messages to teach Literature-in-English	2 (6.25%)	8 (25.0%)	22 (68.75)	0.38
8.	Teaching creatively makes it possible for students to benefit more from the Literature-in-English classes.	32 (100%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2.00
9.	Teaching for creativity makes it possible for students to benefit from the Literature-in-English class, hence developing their creativity.	23 (71.9%)	9 (28.13)	0 (0.0)	1.71
10.	Creativity improves the quality of teaching Literature-in-English.	20 (62.5%)	12 (37.5%)	0 (0.0)	1.63

Source: Field survey, 2017.

Table 1 reveals the extent of use of the two levels of creative teaching. The result of the analysis indicates that majority of the lecturers agreed to the use of creative teaching to a great extent to items 8,9,10, with a mean score above 1.50. It also shows that 100% of the respondents agreed that teaching creatively makes it possible for students to benefit from Literature-in-English classes. It was further revealed that 71.9% agreed to a great extent that teaching for creativity makes it possible for students to benefit from the Literature-in-English class, hence developing their creativity, while only 28.13% agreed to some extent. Results reveal that 62.5% agreed to a great extent that creativity improves the quality of teaching in the Literature-in-English while only 37.5% agreed to this to some extent. The table also reveals that there was a moderate level of agreement to items 1,3 and 5 as 62.5% of the respondents agreed to some extent to understanding the concept of creativity and the same percentage of respondents agreed that they

encourage students to recite and appreciate poems while teaching. Also, 53.1% of the respondents agreed that they ask students to re-tell stories in their own words both orally and in written form to some extent, 40.67% agreed to a great extent to this and 6.25% did not agree to this.

However, there was a low level of agreement by the respondents to items 2, 4, 6 and 7 as they all had a mean score less than 1. The findings of the study reveal that less than half of the total number of respondents (43.75%) agreed to using both levels in teaching their students, indicating that 56.25% of the respondents to these items do not teach students using the two levels. The table also reveals that the same percentage of respondents (56.25%) did not encourage their students to creatively write their own poems in Literature--in-English classes. It was also identified that only 31.25% of the respondents made use of artistic images to teach Literature-in-English while 68.75% did not use artistic images to teach Literature-in-English and 62.5% did not encourage them to act out plays.

From the above deductions, it could be concluded that even though the respondents were aware of the importance of the use of these two levels (items 8,9,10) and also had a moderate level of knowledge of the two levels (1,3 and 5); there was a low level of use of the levels by the respondents themselves ranging from 56.25% to 68.75% on different measures of creative teaching as indicated by items 2,4,6 and 7.

**Table 2:** Observation of Use of Creativity

S/N	Items	To a Great Extent Freq (%)	To Some Extent Freq (%)	Not at All Freq (%)	Mean
1.	Teacher understands the concept of creativity.	4 (40.0)	4 (40.0)	2 (20.0)	1.20
2.	Ability to teach creatively	3 (30.0)	3 (30.0)	4 (40.0)	0.90
3.	Ability to teach for creativity.	2 (20.0)	4 (40.0)	4 (40.0)	0.80
4.	Ability to switch conveniently from one level to the other.	1 (10.0)	3 (30.0)	6 (60.0)	0.50
5.	Teacher asks students to re-tell stories.	2 (20.0)	3 (30.0)	5 (50.0)	0.70
6.	Teacher allows students to recite, write their own poems and appreciate poems orally.	1 (10.0)	4 (40.0)	5 (50.0)	0.60
7.	Teacher encourages students to creatively act out plays.	2 (20.0)	2 (20.0)	6 (60.0)	0.60
8.	Teacher uses creative artistic images / pictures / messages to teach Literature-in-English.	1 (10.0)	3 (30.0)	6 (60.0)	0.50
9.	Active and participative learning through use of creativity.	2 (20.0)	3 (30.0)	5 (50.0)	0.70
10.	Students learn from each other well with the help of teacher's creativity.	5 (50.0)	3 (30.0)	2 (20.0)	1.30

**Source:** Field survey, 2017.



Table 2 reveals the observation on the use of creativity which further buttresses the deductions made in Table 1. The findings of the study reveal that 80% of the observed lecturers had a moderate understanding of the concept of creativity with a mean score of 1.20. It was also observed that 80% of the students learnt from each other well with the help of teachers' creativity with a mean score of 1.30. However, the extent of use of creativity by lecturers was low as seen in items 2 to 9 (all with mean scores below 1.00). The table reveals that 40% of the respondents did not teach creatively. Also, 40% of the respondents also did not teach for creativity. Furthermore, it was revealed that 60% of the respondents did not switch from one level of creativity to the other and 50% of the respondents did not ask the students to retell stories. Also, it was revealed that 50% of the respondents did not encourage students to recite or write their poems orally. The findings of the study also revealed that 60% of the respondents did not encourage students to creatively act out plays, as they also did not use creative artistic visuals to teach the subject and 50% did not encourage active and participative learning through the use of creativity.

The mean scores of all the items were added and the average mean score of the respondents based on the ten items tested was given as 0.78 out of 3.00 which reveal that the extent of use of the two levels of creative teaching by the respondents in the study area was low. It could be concluded that there exist a low level usage of the two levels of creativity in teaching Literature- in-English in tertiary educational institutions in Kwara State.

## 5. Discussion of Findings

Results of Research Question, on the extent of use of creativity in teaching Literature-in-English tertiary educational institutions in Kwara State showed that despite Literature-in-English lecturers' understanding of the concept of creativity and their awareness of the importance of creativity in teaching the subject, there was a low level of use by the respondents. This is in consonance with Ogunnaiké's (2002) finding that the major problems of teaching Literature-in-English are poor planning, poor pedagogy and poor presentation in the classroom. The result of observation on use of creativity carried out on lecturers of Literature-in-English in the institutions identified low use of creativity, most especially at the second level, which is teaching for creativity. This is also in line with Labo-Popoola's (2010) assertion that the way a teacher handles the Literature class goes a long way in giving the students the right attitude towards the subject. To him, the attitude of the teacher as well as his/her competence in handling the texts will determine his/her output in class vis-a-vis students' performance. However, Ekpo (2000) blames teacher ineffectiveness on the teacher education programme that has failed to adequately equip the teachers with the relevant skills to make them function well in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms.

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that there is low use of the two levels of creative teaching of Literature in- English in Tertiary Educational institutions in Kwara State.

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