



TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHING AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN OSOGBO METROPOLIS, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

English grammar is an important aspect of English language. The knowledge of English language helps in understanding other school subjects since it is used to teach all other subjects except local languages. Good foundation of the language paves way to success in life. Students' persistent poor performance in the subject has been attributed to various factors in the purview of the teacher. Therefore, this study investigated teachers' attitude towards teaching and students' performance in English grammar in selected senior secondary schools in Osogbo metropolis, Osun State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design of survey type to provide answers to two research questions. A total of 12 teachers and 300 students were randomly selected from the six Government High Schools in Osogbo metropolis, covering Osogbo and Olorunda Local Government Areas in Osun State. Teacher Attitude Questionnaire ($r=.89$) and English Grammar Achievement Test ($r=.74$) were used in data collection. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, simple percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings of this study revealed that majority of the teachers who participated in the study had negative attitude towards the teaching profession. The findings also showed that teachers' attitude towards teaching had a positive significant relationship with students' academic achievement in English grammar ($r = .104$; $p < .05$). Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that government at all levels should ensure prompt payment of teachers' salary and other allowances for improved interest in and commitment to their work, only those who are passionate about teaching should be employed as teachers, and that the people should see teachers as indispensable elements in the development and sustenance of the society; hence, accord them necessary respect.

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1. Introduction

Grammar is the spinal cord of any language and the user's mastery of it determines his performance in the language. Grammar is the study of words and the ways words work together; an invisible force that guides us as we put words together into sentences. Any person who communicates using a particular language, consciously or unconsciously becomes aware of the grammar of that language (Kumar, 2013). Grammar is the structure and sound of a language. Native English speakers are able to recognize the grammar and are therefore able to speak grammatically acceptable sentences. It may, however, be a struggle for non-native speakers who have to learn the language from its core and whose mother tongue is another language. For such students, understanding the grammar may seem to be difficult. Good mastery of English grammar will go a long way in determining one's competency both in written and spoken composition.

English language is the medium of instruction in Nigerian schools right from the upper primary to tertiary level. The knowledge of English language helps in understanding other school subjects since it is used to teach all other subjects except local languages. Good foundation of the language paves way to success in life. Students whose performance in English language is high usually have no problems with other subjects except in rare cases. It is however a matter of great concern that, the performance of the Nigerian school students in English language has been on a steady decline since 1960. Studies have shown that there is a low performance of students in English language (Abdullahi, 2000; Odejide, 2000). They observed the unpleasant performance at the school certificate level of the Nigerian secondary schools. At the tertiary level of education, students have so much difficulty with their communicative skills in the English language as a result cannot function effectively in the academic use of English (Okoro, 2000).

It is in search for solution to this problem that researchers are now paying attention to some teacher characteristics. This is because teachers have an imperative role in influencing the academic performance of the students. They are bestowed with the authority to direct all the classroom activities and administer learning. According to Maina (2010), the main objective of the teachers should only be to enhance the academic performance of the students and lead to their effective development. It is vital for the teachers to possess the traits of professionalism and conscientiousness in order for them to perform their duties as expected. They need to possess an approachable nature, listen to the students and provide solutions to the problems experienced by the students.

Indeed, the pivotal roles of teachers in providing quality education are well documented in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) also noted that "*no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers*" (TRCN, 2004). Teachers are highly essential for successful operation of the educational system and they are important tools for

educational development (Obadara, 2008). Both teaching and learning depends on teachers, so an effective teacher has been conceptualized as one who produces desired results in the course of his duty by adopting the learning strategies that will enhance the successful delivery of his or her instruction in the classroom.

An attitude is a mindset that affects how a person thinks and acts. Attitude can influence a person's performance positively or negatively. For instance, negative attitude towards one's job will result in negative performance. Similarly, attitude could also affect how well a teacher plans and prepares for his/her lessons. The attitude of a teacher, consciously or unconsciously, greatly affects students' academic performance. If teachers' knowledge and information regarding the subjects that they are teaching, usage of technology, modern and innovative methods in the teaching and learning processes, managing discipline and directing all of the classroom as well as school activities play a key role in enhancing students' learning, equally as important then are teachers' attitudes toward their profession. Playing the key role in regulating behaviours of individuals in society, teachers are regarded as the fundamental components of an educational system that influence and inspire students by their knowledge, personality, behaviours and excitement. In order to do so, they are expected to be equipped with world, field knowledge and professional knowledge. It is acknowledged in OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) Report on Education (2009) that teachers' beliefs, practices and attitudes are important for understanding and improving educational processes as they are closely linked to their strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life and to their well-being, and they shape students' learning environment and influence their motivation and achievement.

There is a consensus among various scholars mainly on the correlation between attitude and teaching profession (Duatepe & Akkuş-Çıkla, 2004; Issan, Al-Nabhani, Kazem, & Al-Ani 2011; Al Harthy, Jamaluddin, & Abedalaziz, 2013; Akbaba, 2013; Bhargava & Pathy, 2014). Al Harthy, Jamaluddin, & Abedalaziz (2013) contend that teachers' attitudes towards their profession affect their teaching practice. Figure 1 illustrates the cycle of relationship between attitudes and teaching practice as proposed by Smith (1993) in Duatepe & Akkuş-Çıkla (2004).

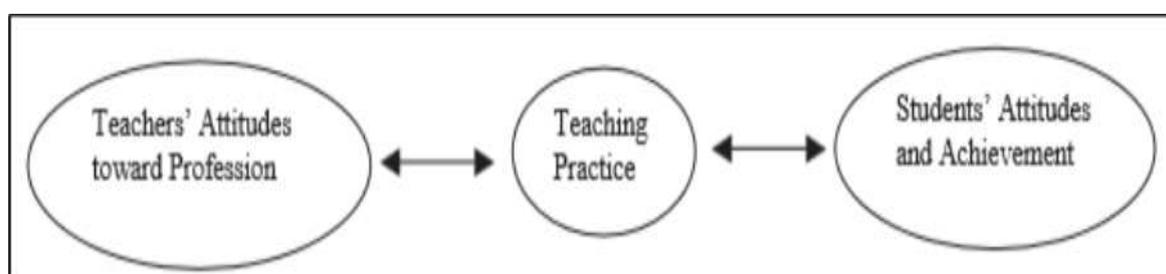


Figure 1: Relationship between Teachers' Attitude and their Teaching Practice

Source: Smith (1993) (in Duatepe & Akkuş-Çıkla, 2004)

It can be seen that teachers' attitudes towards their profession directly influence both their teaching practices and their students' attitudes and academic performance. Namely, according to Duatepe and Akkuş-Çıkla (2004), teachers' negative attitudes

towards their profession are likely to negatively influence their teaching practices. Effective teachers are reported to display positive attitudes about teaching through promoting and participating in a collegial, collaborative work environment, holding their students responsible while accepting responsibilities themselves. The scholars in concern conclude that positive attitudes towards teaching depend largely on the personal beliefs of individual teachers, and their personal experience of pre and post education and training. Bozdoğan, Aydın, & Yıldırım (2007) define teaching as a “dynamic” profession of which method is as significant as its content; hence, individuals who choose it as a profession need to be aware of the fact that having an in-depth field knowledge might not enable them to convey it to the students, entailing positive attitudes towards teaching is a prerequisite for overcoming the difficulties of the profession.

Baumert, Kunter, Blum, Brunner, Voss, Jordan and Tsai (2010) have investigated the impact of teacher variables on students' academic achievement and they focused especially on Science subjects. Other studies have also tried to explore teacher quality and students' achievement in English. Most of the studies were conducted in other settings and as such their findings are not directly applicable to the setting of this present study because of socio-cultural differences. Thus, the apparent dearth of studies on the extent to which teachers' attitude towards teaching relates to students' academic achievement in English made this study imperative.

2. Statement of the Problem

Teachers have an imperative role in influencing the academic performance of the students. They are bestowed with the authority to direct all the classroom activities and administer learning. Therefore, they should possess strong positive attitude to their work. Also, the persistent poor performance of students in English Language at the secondary level of education has been attributed to students' deficiencies in grammar which is the core aspect of the language. The WAEC Chief Examiners' Report each year confirms this trend. Despite various research efforts in addressing the problem, the problem still persists. Hence, this study was carried out to discover the relationship between teachers' attitude to teaching and students' academic performance in English grammar in selected senior secondary schools in Osogbo metropolis, Osun State.

2.1 Research Questions

The study sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of teachers towards teaching profession?
2. Is there any relationship between teachers' attitude towards teaching and students' performance in English grammar?

2.2 Significance of the Study

The study investigated teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession and the relationship between teachers' attitudes and students' performance in English grammar

in selected senior secondary schools. Findings from this study would be significant in the following respects: the research findings would educate teachers in secondary schools and tertiary institutions on the need to have positive attitude to their profession which would aid them to deliver the learning content effectively and ensure students achieve better learning outcomes. It would also serve as eye openers to the government and other employers of teachers by ensuring teachers are favourably disposed and highly committed to their work through timely payments of their salaries and other benefits. The study would also contribute to research efforts geared towards finding a permanent solution to the problem of poor performance of students in English language.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design of survey type. The population consisted of teachers in selected public secondary schools in Osogbo metropolis, Osun State and their students. Two (2) English language teachers and their students were selected from each of the sampled schools making a total of 12 teachers and 300 students who were randomly selected from the six Government High Schools in Osogbo metropolis, covering Osogbo and Olorunda Local Government Areas in Osun State.

Two instruments, namely, Teacher Attitude Questionnaire (TAQ) and English Grammar Achievement Test (EGAT) were used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was a self-developed instrument which was used in the collection of information on teacher attitude to the teaching profession. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; section A consists of background information of the respondents/teachers, while section B contains items to elicit information on teacher attitude to teaching. The items in the questionnaire were rated as follows; SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, and SD= Strongly Disagree. The achievement test was constructed by the researcher based on past questions in English Language. The questionnaire and achievement test were given to experts in the field of research. Further comments were factored into production of final draft of the two instruments. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach alpha yielding coefficient of .89. The achievement test was administered on a separate group of students from two schools, which were not part of the schools for the main study. The reliability was determined through test re-test yielding a value of .74.

The researcher sought permission from the principals of the sampled schools before embarking on the data collection process. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentage. In addition, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to find out the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

4. Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of teachers towards teaching profession?

Table 1: Teachers' Attitudes to Teaching

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I think teaching is easy.	1 (8.4%)	2 (16.6%)	6 (50%)	3 (25%)
2.	I sometimes feel teaching is inferior to other professions.	4 (33.2%)	6 (50%)	1 (8.4%)	1 (8.4%)
3.	The benefits I get as a teacher are as good as most other professionals.	- (0%)	- (0%)	10 (83.2%)	2 (16.8%)
4.	I dislike teaching because teachers are always owed salaries.	1 (8.4%)	6 (50%)	3 (25%)	2 (16.6%)
5.	I am comfortable with my teaching profession.	1 (8.4%)	3 (25%)	7 (58.3%)	1 (8.4%)

Table 1 presents the results on teachers' attitude towards teaching. It was revealed that 3 (25%) of the teachers agreed that teaching is easy, while 9 (75%) disagreed. This implies that majority of the teachers disagreed that teaching is easy. Also 10 (83.2%) of the teachers agreed that they sometimes felt teaching is inferior to other professions, while 2 (16.8%) disagreed and this means that majority of the teachers felt teaching is inferior to other professions. When prompted that the benefits they get as teachers are as good as most other professionals, all the teachers disagreed. For the statement "I dislike teaching because teachers are always owed salaries", 7 (58.4%) of the teachers agreed while 5 (41.6%) disagreed. Therefore, it can be seen that majority of the teachers did not like the teaching profession. Likewise, only 4 (33.4%) of the teachers stated that they were comfortable with their teaching profession, while majority 8 (66.6%) of the teachers disagreed.

In summary, it can be implied from the above results that majority of the teachers who participated in this study had negative attitude towards teaching profession. This may stem from their personal belief on the nature of the profession; majority of the teachers believed teaching is difficult, so they carried this notion into their classroom practices which will ultimately affect their students' performance. Another reason that might have accounted for this poor attitude by the teachers is the societal factors. The society did not accord teachers required respect like other professionals. In fact, most parents discourage their children from going to colleges of education or studying education courses in the university. This is why majority of the teachers too felt teaching is inferior to other professions. The teachers' salaries and other benefits compared to those of other professions may be one of the reasons for teachers' poor attitude to the teaching profession. Majority of the teachers believed that what they earn is far below what other professionals earn. Also, the little that is being earned by the teachers is not usually paid on time. This is understandable because the study area is in Osun State,

which has been battling with the prompt payment of workers' salaries including the teachers.

Research Question 2: Is there any relationship between teachers' attitude towards teaching and students' performance in English grammar?

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of the Independent Variable and Students' Performance in English grammar

Variables	N	Mean	St. D.	1	2
Students' Performance in English Language (1)	300	23.81	6.114	1.000	
Teacher Attitude to teaching (2)	12	41.24	8.137	.104*	1.000

Table 2 shows the relationship that exists between students' performance in English grammar and teachers' attitude towards teaching. The results revealed that teachers' attitude towards teaching had a positive significant correlation with students' performance in English grammar ($r = .104$; $p < .05$). This implies that there was significant positive relationship between teachers' attitude towards teaching and students' performance in English grammar.

The study found that there was a positive significant relationship between teachers' attitude towards teaching and students' achievement in English grammar. This finding might be due to the fact that attitude is a constant phenomenon which considerably influences human behaviours. According to the cycle of relationship between teacher attitude and teaching profession proposed by Smith (1993), teachers' attitude to their profession will shape their pedagogical practices and in turn, determine students' learning achievement. In other words, a teacher who has strong positive attitude to teaching, other factors considered, will be able to impact his/her learners positively more than a teacher with a negative attitude to teaching as a profession. These findings accord perfectly with the work of Akinfe, Olofiniyi and Fashiky (2012) that studied teacher characteristics as predictor of academic performance of students in Osun State and found that students' academic performance correlate positively and significantly with teachers' attitude to teaching. It also falls in line with the findings of Shittu and Oanite (2015) who examined the influence of teachers' attitude on teaching and learning of Social Studies in secondary schools and concluded that teachers' attitude to their profession play a crucial role in determining students' performance in the subject. Furthermore, the finding of this study agrees with the submission of Ekperie'tal (2019) that there was a positive correlation between Geography teachers' attitude to teaching and students' performance in Enugu North Local Government Area, Enugu State. However, the finding is in contrast with the work of Kurgat and Gordon (2014) which revealed that there was no correlation between teachers' attitude to teaching and students' achievement in KSCE Economics examination in Kenya; that students' poor performance could be attributed to other factors other than teacher attitudes. Hooley and Jones' (2006) study also revealed that no significant relationship existed between teacher attitude to teaching and students' learning outcomes.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated teachers' attitude towards teaching and the relationship between teachers' attitude and students' performance in English grammar. The study revealed that majority of the teachers who participated in the study had negative attitude towards teaching. This is due to teachers' personal beliefs about the nature of the profession, poor perception of teaching profession in the society and government's delay in paying teachers' salaries and other entitlements. It was also revealed teachers' attitude towards teaching had positive significant relationship with students' performance in English grammar. That is, teachers' attitude towards their profession can make or mar students' performance in English grammar. It could be concluded from this study that teachers' attitude towards teaching is crucial to evolving practical solutions to the persistent problem of poor achievement in English Language among senior secondary school students in Osogbo metropolis, Osun State, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that government at all levels should ensure prompt payment of teachers' salary and other allowances for improved interest in and commitment to their work, only those who are passionate about teaching should be employed as teachers, and that the people should see teachers as indispensable elements in the development and sustenance of the society, hence, accord them necessary respect.

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