

EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF TEACHERS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A STUDY OF BWARI AREA COUNCIL ABUJA

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ABSTRACT

The English language teacher needs to possess adequate communication skills that will enhance students proficiency in the use of English language. The study made use of the survey method, and questionnaire was the only instrument used for collecting primary data. Teachers and students (Junior Secondary School III) from selected public schools in Bwari made up the population sample of this study. The research work reveals that English language teachers are knowledgeable about the communication process and communication skills available to them. The work again indicates that some of the teachers' communication skills need to be developed and adequately utilized to bring about positive performance by the students. The students though, developing their communication skills need serious drilling on pronunciation of words (phonetic sounds), writing (paragraph writing) and listening activities. Finally, it is recommended that teachers should develop skills like writing, speaking and listening as this will heighten positively the performance of students in the subject.

KeyWords: Communication, Skill, Performance, Evaluation, Evaluation, and Literacy

INTRODUCTION

The word "communication" is derived from a Latin word "commuis" meaning common and "communicare" meaning to make common or to pass on, to share or establish commonness (Okunna 1999, Ojobor 2002, Nweke 2004)

The only means through which human can claim to be knowledgeable about himself and his environment is through communication. Knowledge, ideas, values, beliefs, information, meanings, and skills about different fields of life cannot be shared except through communication. According to Okpara, Orie, Ewurum, Amaechi, Madumelu (2012) communication takes place between two parties who share an area of communicative community. Since man is a social being he needs to interact through communication. For communication to be effective, professional communicators including teachers must understand the communication process and skills so as to be able to build on those necessary skills in order to function effectively. Ogudu (2018) is the view that effective communication is a product of deliberate and conscious efforts to acquire the skills necessary for interaction.

Communication is a complicated process that involves person- to- person, group -to- group and person- to- group interaction. Teaching as an art involves person -to- group communication (teacher-to- students). It is a purposeful communication that involves careful preparation, planning and skill

delivery using spoken words. The teacher is communication practitioner because teaching is communicating. The aim of teaching as well as communicating is the sharing of meaning between the sender and the receivers. According to Akpan (1987) "a good teacher is one who can share the understanding of a concept in his own head with the heads of his students" (6) An effective teacher is one who is able to bring about intended learning outcomes.

It therefore means that students performance whether positively or negatively to a large extent depends on how the teacher manipulates or utilizes communication skills in presenting or delivering his lesson. The teachers as agents of positive revolution are expected to pioneer the rekindling of the government literacy programme for her citizenry.

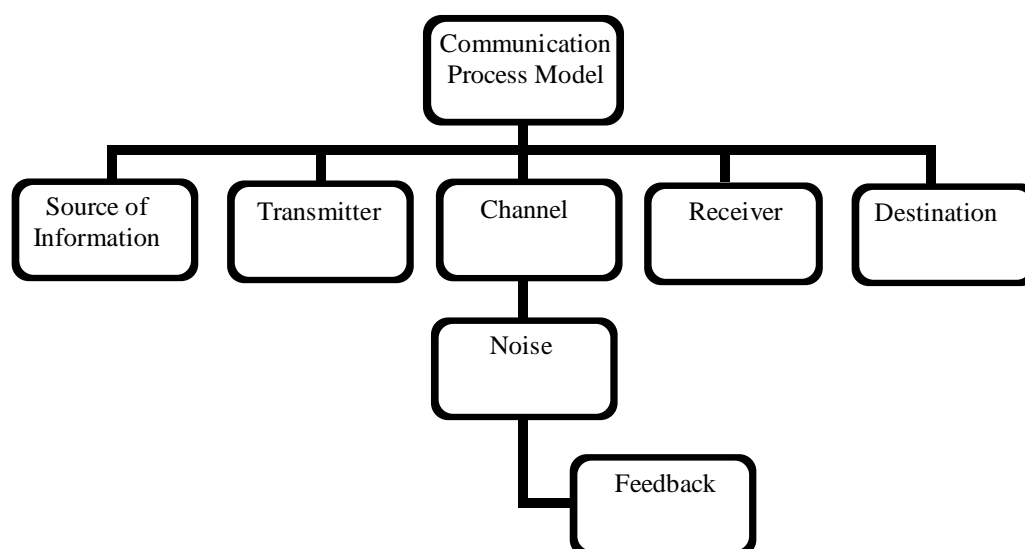
It is obvious that people with literacy skills in English language are finding themselves increasingly accommodated in the labour market as well as literate social circles as it remains the veritable vehicle for information, transfer and usage locally, nationally and internationally.

The Concept of Communication and its Process

There are diverse meanings of the word communication but this paper is interested in communication as a dynamic process or a transaction that affects both the sender (teacher) and receiver (students). As a process it is a continuous and an

ongoing activity in which both the source and the receiver are being affected through feedback. This definition spells out the components that work together for communication to occur during

communication process. These components are the source, transmitter, channel, receiver and destination as seen in the model below.

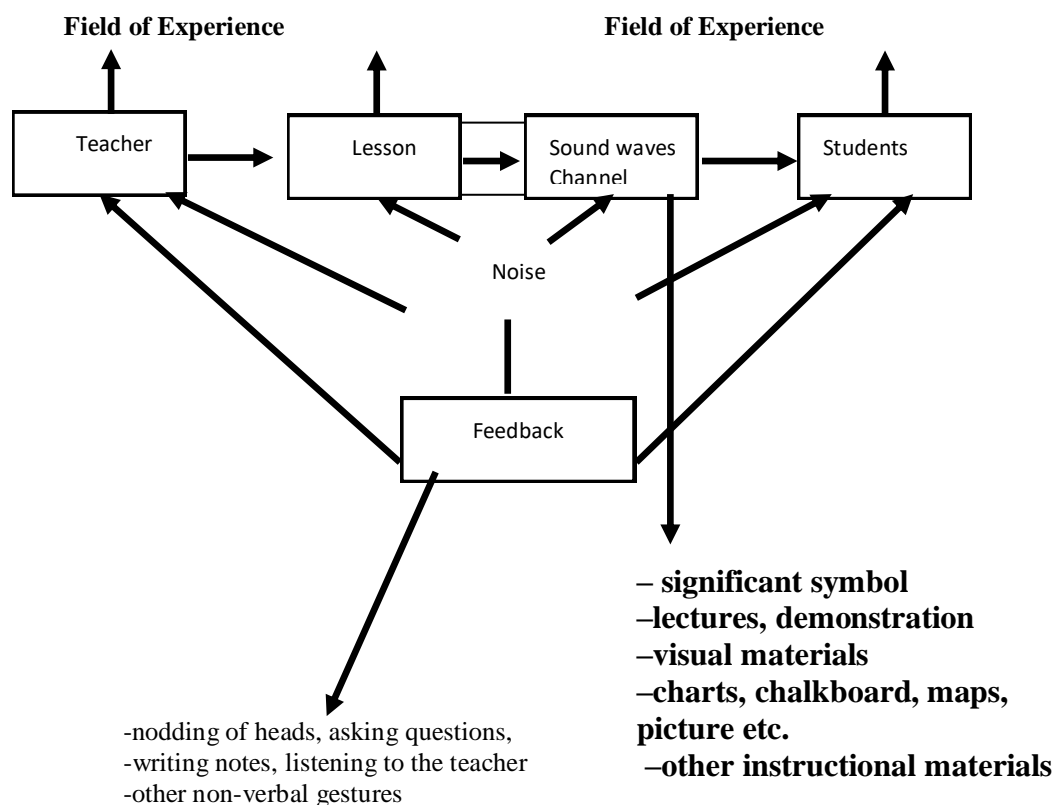


According to: Akpan, (1987) Communication starts with the source encoding a message – the ideation stage. In this stage the source receives sensations and begins to conceive an idea which he first communicates to himself before passing it to others. The ideation stage metamorphoses into encoding and decoding all within the brain of the source. It is in this stage that the source can make necessary adjustment and correction on his message before sending out. Here the source plays a double role of source / destination – intra-personal communication. The message at the ideation stage can only be transmitted to the destination only, if it meets the communication purpose, desire or objective. When communication reaches its destination the receiver makes an effort to make sense or meaning out of the signals that have reached him. Communication cycle is completed by a

receiver sending feedback to the source in an ideal situation. Noise which is also an element of communication is worthy of note by communicators especially teachers because it affects the source,

transmitter, channel, receiver, and destination. Noise can be of any form – semantic, syntactic, mechanical, psychological, social or physiological and can prevent the communication source from sharing meaning with his receiver or class.

In a classroom communication process, communication source is the teacher, message is the – lesson (shared symbols) communication channel is classroom while the receiver is the student / class. The teacher formulates and initiates his planned lessons and selects means (channels of communication such as voice and other physical behaviour and teaching aids) by which to share and transmit (communicate) such encoded lesson to student who try to “make sense” (decode) of the teacher and lesson and respond with feedback in form of questions, note-taking, nodding, listening, answering of question etc. feedback is a useful element to the teacher as it helps in the review of the effectiveness of the lesson and lesson re-planning. A typical classroom communication process is demonstrated by this diagram below:



Source: Instructional Communication model in a teaching-learning process adapted from principles and practice of instructional Communication (Ibe –Bassey, 1992;14)

This diagram consists of all communication elements as earlier explained. Also there is the basis of overlapping of the field of experience of the teachers and learners (students). It can also be seen that in the classroom communication model above, noise is present competing with communication signals. According to Akpan, (1987). noise is one factor that is ever present in communication situation including teaching... noise is present in the teaching, his lesson, the classroom, and the pupils.

The English Teacher as a Communicator

According to Akpan, (1987) “the teacher (as a communication source) has to be credible to his students. Credibility requires psychological distance – a perception that the source is more knowledgeable and possibly more truth worthy than the receiver (student), at least with respect to the content of the message

Also a teacher as a communicator has the responsibility of instilling confidence and making learning a fascinating challenge to students. He makes the classroom environment conducive to learning. An effective and successful teacher loves the art of teaching and the students he is responsible to imparting knowledge to.

Furthermore, a teacher as a communicator explains more complicated point in a simple manner

and encourages students to ask questions. He gives practical examples and illustrations to help students see the relevance of the lesson they are learning (or receiving). A successful and effective communicator instills not only confidence in the minds of his audience (based his credibility and attractiveness) but also carries along every member of the audience as he presents his message (subject). Therefore, a teacher as a communicator, not only instills in students passion for knowledge and understanding, makes them gain confidence and progress but also gives extra attention to help students get along (as he deliver his lesson) since not all students can learn at the same pace.

Since communication is a two-way process involving feedback, the teacher as a communicator asks questions on what he has taught and students on the other hand also ask questions on the lesson taught, this (the nature of the question asked by the students) as a result helps the teacher to discover and judge if his lesson has been effective and comprehended by the students. He makes necessary adjustments and improves on the lesson depending on the feedback got from the students. He shows interest in looking at his students copied notes; this as a result helps him to discover notes not well taken or formed (by the students), poor spellings, incomplete sentences, non-existing words, nonsensical sentences etc.

Again as a communicator, the English teacher discovers, improves or develops his communication skills so as to present his lesson effectively. He has the responsibility to develop the students' communication skills for their future endeavours. He recognizes each student's potentials and knows how to make them blossom and flourish. He builds on their (students) strengths, experiences, skills and abilities and discovers what interests or motivates them.

Communication skills for teaching of English language

Getting across to the students thereby imparting to them knowledge, skills etc for excellent performance can only be achieved by the teacher's proficiency in effective use of communication skills. On this note, it becomes pertinent to discuss these skills.

The teacher's (communication source's sender's) communication skills involve listening, speaking, writing, reading, thinking and non-verbal communication skills. Listening and reading are classified as receptive communication language skills while speech and writing are grouped into expressive communication and language skills.

Listening Skill: It is as important as the speaking skill (speech or oral communication skill). For effective communication to occur, a teacher must possess this skill to be able to understand the students when they express themselves in form of questioning, restating the lesson taught (feedback) etc. and adjusting his lesson. In this case, the teacher plays the role of the receiver. This is because communication (especially classroom communication) is not a one-way process but transactional (two-way and interactive). The receiver can only understand the context of the message passed across by the sender through effective listening.

Reading skill: This is another vital skill of an English teacher, how well he has read about the subject, - its structures, varieties or features of English pronunciation etc. will be evident in his lesson delivery/presentation. The teacher must not limit himself only to English Language text book but also make use of the material available on the internet for improved knowledge. According to William, reading skill involves:

- Reading for exact meaning
- Reading for implied meaning and for relationship of thought
- Reading for the gist
- Reading for information (Azikiwe 1998: 148)

The ability to develop the listening and reading skills of the

Students/learners by the teacher is the manifestation of how proficient he is in these skills. The discourse of listening and reading is further explained on

students' communication skills (how teacher can help in the communication skill development).

Writing skill:

This is yet another skill of an English teacher. It is the ability to put down in a meaningful and understandable way one's ideas, thoughts etc. Akpan (1987) postulates that: "writing is primarily a co-ordination of eye and hand in relation to thinking and produces symbols in the form of marks on a surface appealing directly to the eyes" Basically from this postulate, writing legibly and boldly with correct spelling of words on the chalkboard is very important especially in the classroom situation and brings about effective communication. On that other hand, not writing coherently, legibly and boldly constitutes noise and impedes communication process. Bringing about poor performance on the part of the students. Most students believe so much in their teacher as being knowledgeable than any other person, so even when he writes poorly – not cutting t's and dotting I's on chalkboard and with mechanical errors they (students) still believe their teacher is correct (even when such mistake is pointed out by another person). Teachers should therefore improve on their writing skills to help the student perform well.

Speaking Skill

It is observed with keen interest that though other communication skills of teacher are very important in effective classroom communication process, much emphasis is placed on speaking skill. This could probably be because it is the only verbal instrument through which the teacher can use in the classroom communication.

Ekong, (1987) has it that oral communication (speaking skill) involves the successful production, transmission and reception of a message (lesson) via the verbal medium. In the classroom communication process the teacher's speaking skill involves the following:

- The ability to pronounce words correctly
- Voice quality
- Choice of words
- Knowledge of structure of English Language
- Facilities and critical skills
- Ability to interact
- Interest arousing introduction
- Fluency in lesson presentation

The ability to pronounce words fluently

The ability to pronounce words fluently is dependent on the teacher's awareness of the sound features which characterized different varieties of English otherwise his message (lesson) delivery may not be effective. Features of English pronunciation

are important in producing intelligible and acceptable speech.

Gimson has it that, there are four basic sound types involved in language; sound qualities (vowels and consonants). Pitch, loudness and duration”, (as cited in Ekong, 1987: 240). All these sound features or types function together to produce meaningful communication. The way in which one puts together these sounds is called pronunciation and if one’s pronunciation is ‘bad’ probably because the sounds are not intelligent and socially not accepted then his effectiveness as a communicator is low.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A mastery of written and spoken English language is highly desirable yet its teaching and learning are beset by a myriad of challenges. To surmount these

challenges, the conscientious teacher must re-strategize his pedagogical approach and one of the ways to do this is to integrate communication skills into his service delivery. This study evaluates the effects of such application of these skills on the students performance in English language.

METHODOLOGY

A total of one hundred and thirty five copies of the questionnaire were used Analysis was done using the simple percentage. The sample was drawn from teachers and students in the public school in Kubwa a satellite town in Bwari, Area council Abuja.

ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

The findings expressed in simple percentage are presented in different Tables.

Table 1: Knowledge and understanding of varieties of English

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
The knowledge and understanding of the variety of English aids the English teacher in effective lesson presentation for excellent performance by the students	Agree	6	30%
	Strongly agree	13	65%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Strongly disagree	1	5%
	Total	20	100%

Table one shows that six (6) respondents representing 30% agreed that the knowledge and the understanding of variety of English aids the teachers in the effective lesson presentation for excellent

performance by the students thirteen (13) respondents representing 65% strongly agreed while one(1) respondent that represents 5% strongly disagreed

Table 2: Effective teaching/learning process

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
For effective teaching / learning process to occur, the English teacher must communicate his (lesson) to himself before communicating (presenting his lesson) to the students	Agree	2	10%
	Strongly agree	18	90%
	Disagree	-	0%
	Strong disagree	-	0%
	Total	20	100%

Table two indicates that two (2) respondents representing 10% agree that a teacher must communicate his lesson first to himself before presenting it to the students to ensure effective

teaching/learning process while eighteen (18) respondents representing 90% strongly agreed to this fact.

Table 3: Verbal and non verbal responses

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Does the verbal and non – verbal responses from the student worthy of students worthy of note and enable you to replan your lesson?	Agree	5	25%
	Strongly agree	14	70%
	Disagree	1	5%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Total	20	100%

Table three shows that five (5) respondents representing 25% agree that verbal and non- verbal responses from students aid in the re-planning of

their lesson, fourteen (14) respondents representing 70% strongly affirmed this fact while one (1) respondent representing 5% disagreed.

Table 4: communication skills

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
The possession of the following skills-reading, listening, speaking and writing, thinking and non- verbal cues aid in the effective lesson presentation/ delivery	Agree	5	25%
	Strongly disagree	15	75%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Total	20	100%

Table four shows that five (5) respondents 25% affirmed that the possession of communication skills listed in the table aid in effective lesson delivery.

Fifteen (15) respondents that represent 75% also agreed about the fact.

Table 5: Reading wide In English and listening to responses from students

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Reading wide on English as a second language and listening to students' responses aid the teacher's effectiveness in classroom communication	Agree	5	25%
	Strongly disagree	15	75%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Total	20	100%

Table five reveals that five (5) respondents that represent 25% agreed that reading wide on English and listening to students' responses aid in effective classroom communication. Fifteen (15) respondents representing 75% also strongly affirmed this fact.

Findings reveal that teachers are knowledgeable about effective communication process and skills available to them. In the aspect of the utilization of the effective communication skills available to teachers, it is deduced that not all the skills are adequately and appropriately utilized – Skills like writing, speaking and non-verbal cues need to be improved upon. From the analysis it could be understood that the students are still coming up in the acquisition of communication skills that will help them in their future endeavour and need to do more as this will go a long way to boost their performance in school and outside the school environ.

CONCLUSION

From the study, the importance of effective communication skills for excellent performance in English Language cannot be overemphasized. Effective communication skills cannot be employed in the teaching of English Language without the understanding of the communication process and knowledge in the structure and variety of English. The understanding of communication process puts teachers in the path of bringing about excellent performance by students through the use of effective communication skills.

Reading and listening skills appropriately used by English teacher evident also in the responses of students bring excellent performance. Again other skills like writing, speech (in term of pronunciation, voice modulation and choice of words) and non-verbal cues if not adequately developed and utilized might hamper performance. Continual development of the communication skills of students through creative activities (drama presentation, debate, essay writing, listening to tapes for correct pronunciation of English words) in English will help them a great deal in performing excellently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and considering the importance of effective communication skills of teachers in bringing about excellent performance by students in English, the researchers give the following recommendations:

- For increase in knowledge, English language teachers should continually improve on their reading skill by reading widely not only on English text book alone but on other materials as this would aid them in effective lesson delivery hence, excellent performance by students.
- Teachers should possibly expose themselves to different varieties of English, listen to BBC for right pronunciation of English words. They should try to speak with right voice inflection and with correct pronunciation. Also ambiguous words

should be avoided when writing or speaking. This if considered, will affect the performance of student positively in written and spoken English.

- Teachers should improve on their writing skills – they should write boldly and legibly on chalkboard and with correct spellings. They should write with thoughts logically flowing in a sequential order and with right choice of words not open to several interpretations for the benefit of the students.
- Listening skill of student should continually be developed so that analytical and critical thinking can be cultivated.
- To avoid being misinterpreted by students during lesson presentation, teachers should improve on their non-verbal skills, thereby minimizing the contradiction of verbal and non-verbal cues.

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