

## **A Survey of Upper Basic Teachers Use of Instructional Materials in English Language Instruction**

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### **Abstract**

*This study is designed to assess the availability, adequacy and teachers use of instructional materials in English language instruction in Upper Basic Secondary Schools. Two research questions were raised and two hypotheses were formulated. A sample of sixty-nine English language teachers were randomly selected from forty junior secondary schools in three local government areas in Edo State. A questionnaire was used for data collection for the study. Data analysis was carried out using simple percentage, mean score, standard deviation and t-test statistics. The findings revealed that majority of the schools lack instructional facilities and materials for English language instruction. Consequently, majority of the teachers do not make use of instructional materials in their teaching. This study also showed that there were no significant differences in teachers' use of instructional materials based on experience and gender. Based on these findings it was recommended among others that Edo state government should provide instructional materials and facilities especially language laboratory and ICT facilities in schools to enhance effective English language teaching.*

**Key Words:** Upper Basic, Instructional Materials, Language Instruction.

### **Introduction**

Teaching involves communication. Communication is the process of transferring signals/messages between a sender and a receiver through various methods (written words, nonverbal cues, spoken words). For effective communication to take place, the message must be correctly decoded, if not the message becomes distorted (Asokhia, 2002). Effective communication in language teaching especially in the field of second language (L2) teaching and learning is very critical. The teacher's teaching sends out information/message to the learners and sometimes, the message comes in abstract form unknown to the learners and in such situations learning becomes compounded and somehow mysterious. When this happens little or no learning takes place because the message is somehow distorted. To avoid such distortions the sender of the information/message, the teacher, must make himself/herself explicit. This can be achieved through the use of teaching aids. According to Imogie (2002), teaching aids are aids to teaching. They help to communicate information through the senses.

Learning English Language particularly in an English Language as a Second Language context, as we have in Nigeria can be very cumbersome for learners, unless it is taught in an interesting way (Adebiyi & Adelabu, 2013). It is therefore important that English language teachers use teaching aids to make language learning easy, enjoyable and permanent. It is in this same vein that Gbenedio (1996) asserted that in the teaching of a second language especially where

such a language is the language of instruction, government and internal communication, the teacher must make use of teaching aids/instructional materials.

There are various classification of instructional materials, but for this study the researchers are interested in the classification into printed, non-printed and electronic. These include books, textbooks, reference books, workbooks, teacher's handbooks, newspapers, magazines, films, pictures, audio tapes, video tapes CDs, DVDs, radio, television, computer, charts, models, posters etc. (Imogie, 2002). However, as a result of the economic conditions and the level of educational implementation, these needed teaching aids especially the newer technologies (computer, internet) that language teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century information technological (IT) driven society requires are oftentimes not readily available (Ololube, 2007). Sharing the same view Gbenedio (1996) stressed that even the simplest aids like cardboard illustrations are not available. Availability of instructional materials can enhance or retard students' achievement in English language. The term 'availability' in this study refers to the number of instructional materials that are available and which teachers and learners have access to.

The use of instructional materials in a core subject such as English language cannot be over emphasized. It is a good source of authentic materials for the teaching of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The impact of the use of instructional materials particularly audiovisual aids on the language skills of listening and speaking have been very remarkable (Farhi, 2013). If teachers bear this in mind, they will see the need to facilitate their students' learning through the use of teaching aids. Apparently, this has not been the case as critical analyses of the annual Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) results from 2010 -2013 reveal students' poor performance in English language, which suggests that learning and comprehension in this subject is poor.

When one takes a retrospective look at the issue of poor performance in English language, it would be necessary to examine the activities at the primary and junior secondary school levels where the foundation is laid. This is because the basic school level is a fundamental background upon which the foundation of teaching and learning of English is laid (Gbenedio, 1996). Therefore, if this level is weak, the learning of English language at the senior secondary school level and subsequent levels will be problematic. Could this poor performance in English language be associated with the non-availability of instructional materials in our schools? Umoru-Onuka (2002) cited in Aramide and Bolarinwa, (2010) observes that the use of audiovisual and electronic resources is affected by their availability and ease of access. Could this lack of use of instructional materials be responsible for students' poor performance in English language at the upper basic school level?

In the field of second language (L2) teaching and learning, the use of instructional materials has long been recognized as one to the key factors that determine L2 achievement and attainment (Aramide & Bolarinwa, 2010; Mundi & Alfred, 2006). There have been several studies on instructional materials and academic achievement (Isola, 2010; Moronfola, 1982; Popoola, 1990). These studies have asserted that instructional materials have a significant effect on student's achievement in school subjects. The use of instructional materials provides authentic materials for language learning and helps learners attain useful language proficiency. Some learners learn and retain information that is fed to them through a lecture, some learn better by reading, while other students absorb information with the aid of visual cues in addition to the lecture and reading. The use of different instructional materials assures and provides the learners with different learning aids to maximize learning and retain the information given to them.

In line with Millennium Development goals (MDGs), the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE). This is a reformed programme in Nigeria's basic education delivery aimed at eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. The primary target of the UBE was ensuring that every Nigerian child acquires a minimum of 9 years basic education. The structure of the UBE is made up of the lower basic, primary 1-3; the middle basic, primary 4-6 and the upper basic, JSS 1-3, the three years of Junior Secondary School. The focus of this study is the upper basic education section of the UBE. This level was chosen because it is the last stage of the 9-year Basic education programme and it is hoped that any deficiency at the lower and middle stages can be addressed before students move on to the senior secondary school level.

The central purpose of this study therefore, is to examine upper basic secondary school English language teachers' use of instructional materials in three local government areas (Ikpoba-Okha, Egor and Oredo) in Edo State against the backdrop of the submissions of scholars that instructional materials are veritable tools for effective teaching and learning (Aramide & Bolarinwa, 2010; Mundi & Alfred, 2006). The study aims specifically to examine; the availability of instructional materials for English language teaching in upper basic secondary schools in three local government areas (Ikpoba-Okha, Egor and Oredo) in Edo State and to determine whether a teacher's teaching experience and gender affect his/her use of instructional materials in English language teaching, hence, the researchers want to find answers to the following questions:

1. Do upper basic secondary school English language teachers have at their disposal relevant facilities/instructional materials for use in their language classes?
2. Do upper basic secondary school English language teachers make use of instructional materials in their language classes?
3. Do the more experienced teachers use instructional materials more than the less experienced teachers in teaching English language?
4. Will there be any gender difference in teachers' use of instructional materials in English language teaching?

Questions three and four were used to raise two hypotheses.

- HO<sub>1</sub>        There is no significant difference between experienced teachers and less experienced teachers in their use of instructional materials in teaching English language
- HO<sub>2</sub>        There is no significant difference between male and female teachers in their use of instructional materials in teaching English language.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted a survey design to collect data on teachers' use of instructional materials in English language teaching at the upper basic secondary school level. The population of the study was made up of one hundred and thirty two (132) upper basic secondary school English language teachers in three local government areas (Ikpoba-Okha, Egor and Oredo) in Edo state. Fifty percent (50%) of the schools in the three local government areas were randomly sampled. Due to the dearth English language teachers in secondary schools all fifty nine (59) English language teachers in the sampled schools were made to fill the survey questionnaire

A questionnaire was used for data collection for the study. It is made up of two sections: Section A of the questionnaire elicited information on teacher's demographic data such as gender, teaching experience, qualification and area of specialization, Section B sought to obtain information on teacher's use of instructional materials in English language classes and their

availability. The face and content validity of the questionnaire designed by the researchers was established through the expert opinion of three experts in Instructional Technology and language education in the department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology in the University of Benin, Benin City. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was calculated using the Cronbach's alpha formula and the reliability coefficient was 0.79

## Findings and Discussion

Responses from the questionnaire were coded and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Research questions one and two were answered using mean score, standard deviation and percentage, while hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using t-test statistics. Both hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level. The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Variables	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	15	25.4%
Female	44	74.6%
<b>Experience</b>		
Experienced Teachers	51	86.4%
Inexperienced Teachers	08	13.6%

Table 1 revealed that 74.6% of the respondents are females while 25.4% are male. This is not surprising as studies have revealed that there are more females in the teaching profession at the secondary school level especially those teaching English language (Danner and Uyi-Osaretin, 2010). Table 1 also revealed that approximately eighty-six percent (86%) of the respondents were experienced teacher who have taught for five years and above. Only 13.6 % were inexperienced and have taught for less than five years. Table 1 equally revealed that 96.6% of the respondents teaching English language read English language at the degree level, while 3.4% read other Arts subjects at the degree level. This is the usual practice in some schools where school principals assign teachers who read other Arts subject to teach English language. Their belief is that anybody who has a degree in an Arts subject can teach English language. This is not always true especially since English language is a skill subject while the arts subjects are content subjects.

### **Research Question 1: Do Upper Basic Secondary School English Language teachers have at their disposal relevant Instructional materials for use in their language classes?**

Because English language teachers cannot be expected to teach English language effectively if they lack relevant instructional materials the first research question addressed teachers' perceptions of the extent to which relevant instructional materials were available for their use. In the survey, English language teachers identified which of the several instructional materials were available for their use in the classroom. The instructional materials listed in the survey included those necessary for the teaching of English language which can be classified as printed, non-printed and electronic (e.g. computers with internet connection). Table 2 summarized the results in descending order for the availability of the specified instructional materials.

**Table 2: Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Knowledge of the Availability of Relevant Instructional Materials for English Language Instruction**

Instructional Materials	Very Adequate	Adequate	Not Adequate	Unavailable	M	SD
Chalkboard displays	8 (13.6%)	39 (66%)	9 (15.3%)	3 (5%)		.697

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Students' chairs and desks	5 (8.5%)	24 (40.7%)	30 (50.8%)	—	1.5 8	.649
Handouts/assignment sheets/individualized learning materials	—	9 (15.3%)	46 (78%)	4 (6.8%)	1.0 8	.466
Basal readers	—	7 (11.9%)	46 (78%)	6 (10.2%)	1.0 2	.473
Flashcards/index cards	—	—	38 (64.4%)	12 (35.6%)	.64	.483
Wall charts/posters	—	1 (1.7%)	34 (57.6%)	24 (40.7%)	.61	.526
Magnetic board	—	13 (22%)	1 (1.7%)	45 (76.3%)	.46	.837
Pamphlets/brochures/newspapers/magazines	—	4 (6.8%)	8 (13.6%)	47 (79.7%)	.27	.582
School library	—	3 (5.1%)	4 (6.8%)	52 (88.1%)	.17	.497
Language laboratory	—	—	4 (6.8%)	55 (93.2%)	.07	.254
Radio	—	—	3 (5%)	56 (94.9%)	.05	.222
Television	—	—	3 (5%)	56 (94.9%)	.05	.222
Audio tape player/recorder	—	—	3 (5%)	56 (94.9%)	.05	.222
CD/DVD player/recorder	—	—	3 (5%)	56 (94.9%)	.05	.222
Data processing packages/data base systems	—	—	3 (5%)	56 (94.9%)	.05	.222
Computer/Internet	—	—	3 (5.1%)	56 (94.9%)	.05	.222

Slide show/film strips	—	—	3 (5%)	58 (98.3%)	.02	.130
Overhead projector	—	—	—	59 (100%)	.00	.000

The analyses of data indicate that only chalkboard displays is 66% adequate, while others were inadequate, for example chairs and desks is 40.7% adequate. This means that these materials are not available in most of the schools in the three local government areas used in the study. Adequacy of assignment sheets is 15.3%, which is very low and this means that many of the teachers do not give their students assignments to do. Basal reader's adequacy is 11.9%. This low percentage of the availability of basal readers could be as a result of two reasons; first, it might be that the state government does not provide basal readers and secondly students who are supposed to buy their personal copies do not. Similarly, schools do not provide flashcards/index cards for teachers' use, the few teachers that make use of these materials improvise them. The adequacy of wallcharts/posters is 1.7% which is very low, pointing to the fact that majority of English language teachers and schools do not have them. Adequacy of magnetic boards accounted for the 22% adequacy reported by the teachers. Adequacy of newspapers/magazines was 6.8%.

**Research question 2: Do upper basic secondary school English language teachers make use of instructional materials in their language instruction?**

To address research question two, teachers were asked to indicate how often they used instructional materials in their English language instruction. Section B of the questionnaire, which is a 4-point Likert type instrument listed the relevant instructional materials and teachers were asked to rate how often they used them in their language instruction. The findings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Use of Instructional Materials in English Language Instruction**

Instructional Materials	Always	Occasional	Seldom	Never	M	SD
Chalkboard displays	42 (71.2%)	13 (22%)	4 (6.8%)	—	2.64	.609
Basal readers	12 (20.3%)	42 (71.2%)	5 (8.5%)	—	2.12	.528
Handouts/assignment sheets/individualized learning materials	4 (6.8%)	25 (42.4%)	29 (49.2%)	1 (1.7%)	1.54	.652
Flashcards/index cards	2 (3.4%)	13 (22%)	36 (61%)	8 (13.6%)	1.15	.690
Pamphlets/brochures/newspapers/magazines	2 (3.4%)	3 (5.1%)	18 (30.5%)	36 (61%)	.51	.751
Magnetic board	—	14 (23.7%)	1 (1.7%)	44 (74.6%)	.49	.858
Wall charts/posters	—	11 (18.6%)	34 (57.6%)	14 (23.7%)	.95	.655
Data processing packages/data base systems	—	—	4 (6.8%)	55 (93.2%)	.07	.254



Computer/Internet downloaded materials	—	1 (1.7%)	3 (5.1%)	55 (93.2%)	.02	.443
Radio (radio programmes)	—	—	2 (3.4%)	57 (96.6%)	.02	.130
Audio tape player/recorder	—	—	2 (3.4%)	57 (96.6%)	.07	.365
Slide show/film strips	—	—	1 (1.7%)	58 (98.3%)	.02	.130
CD/DVD player/recorder	—	—	1 (1.7%)	58 (98.3%)	.02	.130
Over head projector	—	—	—	59 (100%)	.00	.000
Television (TV broadcast)	—	—	—	59 (100%)	.00	.000

The analysis of data revealed that the only instructional material that majority of the teachers used always is the chalkboard displays (71.2%). They occasionally used the basal readers (71.2%), while they seldom used flashcards/index cards (61%), wall-charts/posters (57.6%). The findings showed that majority of the teachers have never used about ten of the listed instructional materials. These include; newspaper/magazines (61%), magnetic board (74.6%), data processing packages/data base system (93.2%), computer/internet (downloaded materials (93.2%) and radio (radio programmes) (96.6%), audio tape player/recorder (96.6%), slide show/film strips (98.3%) and CD/DVD player/recorder (98.3%). None of the respondents has ever used the overhead projector (100%) and television (TV programme (100%) in language instruction.

The two hypotheses sought to find out if there were any variations in Upper Basic English language teachers' use of instructional materials based on demographic factors of gender and teacher's experience.

**Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between experienced teachers and less experienced teachers in their use of instructional materials in language instruction.**

To test hypothesis 1, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the use of instructional materials in English language teaching by experienced and less experienced teachers. The result is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Independent Sample t-test of the use of instructional materials in English language instruction by experienced and less experience teachers**

	Experience	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t	Sig (2-tailed)	Result
Use of Instructional Materials	Less experienced teachers	08	10.8750	1.80772	57	1.43	.258	Retained
	Experienced teachers	51	9.7843	2.59472				

There was no significant difference in the mean score of experienced teachers ( $M=9.7843$ ,  $SD=2.59472$ ) and less experienced teachers ( $M=10.8750$ ,  $SD=1.80772$ );  $t(57)=1.43$ ,  $p=.258$ . These results suggest that experience does not have effect on the use of instructional materials in English language instruction.

**Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers in their use of instructional materials in language instruction.**

To test hypothesis 2, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the use of instructional materials in English language teaching by male and female teachers. The result is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Independent Samples t-test of the use of instructional materials in English language instruction by male and female teachers**

Use of Instructional Materials	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t	Sig (2-tailed)	Result
	Male	15	10.4667	1.99523	57	.951	.346	retained
	Female	44	9.7500	2.66872				

There was no significant difference in the scores of male English language teachers ( $M=10.4667$ ,  $SD=1.99523$ ) and female English teachers ( $M=9.7500$ ,  $SD=2.66872$ ),  $t(57)=.951$ ,  $p=.346$ . These results suggest that gender does not determine teachers' use of instructional materials in English language instruction. The hypothesis is therefore retained.

The place of instructional materials in the effective implementation of any education programme cannot be under-mined. Instructional materials perform such functions as the extension of the range of experience available to learners, supplement and complement the teacher's verbal explanations thereby making learning experience richer and provide the teacher with interesting wide variety of learning activities.

The findings revealed that apart from chalkboard displays (71.2%) which the respondents reported using always, they also occasionally made use of basal readers (71.2%). As for majority of the other instructional materials they have never used them. In fact 100% of the respondents have never used the overhead projector and television (TV broadcast) for English language instruction. What this portends is that teachers do not make use of modern technology in teaching.

Analysis of the results revealed that there were no significant differences in teacher's use of instructional materials according to experience and gender. However, this calls for resourcefulness and improvisation on the part of the English language teachers. The ability of the teacher to make use of "local" materials in place of "standard" ready-made materials makes lessons more effective and improves students' achievement.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study investigated teacher's use of instructional materials in English language instruction. The study specifically sought to determine teachers' use of instructional materials in English language teaching in upper basic secondary school and to determine whether teacher's teaching experience and gender affect his/her use of instructional materials in English language teaching.

One major finding of this study is that majority of the teachers do not make use of instructional materials in English language instruction. It was only blackboard that 71.2% of the teachers used always, while 71.2% occasionally made use of the basal readers. As for the other instructional materials, as high as 61%, 74.6%, 93.25%, 96.6%, 98.3% and even 100% (overhead projector and television (TV broadcast) of the teachers have never used them. This study showed that there were no significant differences in teachers' use of instructional materials based on experience and gender.

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made, teachers do not use instructional materials in English language teaching; and teachers' experience and gender have no effect on their use of instructional materials. In view of findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made: Edo state government should provide instructional materials and facilities especially language laboratory and ICT facilities in schools to enhance effective English language teaching. Libraries should be provided so that students can use the facilities for their private studies. English language teachers should be encouraged to use and if possible improvise instructional materials for teaching through workshops and seminars on improvisation of instructional materials. This will reduce the heavy reliance of teachers on only chalkboard displays.

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