

INVESTIGATING TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS, TRAINING, AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN ENGLISH AND HAUSA LANGUAGE-TEACHING

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Abstract

This study examined the level of professionalism of language teachers in secondary schools in Nasarawa State. Two schools were randomly selected from each Local Government Area of the State: private and public. Two languages (English and Hausa) were in focus. A survey design was adopted using a questionnaire that was administered to research participants by trained enumerators through Kobo collect toolbox. Focus Group Discussion (FGD), interviews, and direct observations were deployed to triangulate quantitative data. The research sample comprised 274 teachers. Teachers' educational qualifications, level of training received, experience, exposure to the language taught or used, language teaching methods and strategies, and the level of collaboration among the teachers were used to measure teachers' overall competence. The study revealed that more than 80% of the language teachers had educational qualifications and teaching experience of over 5 years. They, however had limited knowledge and application of language teaching methods/strategies. The study concludes that continuous professional development for language teachers, adequate motivation in resource mobilisation, and making language teachers part of curriculum development/reviews would align with global educational standards and would significantly contribute to improved students' performance and overall quality of education in the State.

Keywords: qualification, competence, teaching methods and strategies, and collaboration.

1. Introduction

Nasarawa State is educationally disadvantaged and unlikely to attain the sustainable development goal (SDG) 4 in terms of school enrolment and achievement; both of which rely heavily on teacher' quality and language curriculum delivery. Defective language teaching strategies may constitute one of the greatest impediments to attaining the goal. Therefore, so much is expected of the language teacher as experts. For instance, the teacher of English or any other language must be proficient in the language to be able to teach it effectively in school (Azikiwe, 1998, p.59). More

so, the teacher must be conversant with and willing to explore and adopt relevant teaching methods to attain the expected goals of equipping the learner with skills in the use of the language for a productive life. Teaching methods to choose from range from the traditional to the modern and evolving in today's digitised world.

2. Problem Statement/Justification

The teaching profession in Nigeria has witnessed turbulence over the years. In a bid to fill in the gaps of shortage of teachers for Universal Primary Education (UPE), the government introduced the crash programme for training

teachers (Obukha,1982) This was launched in phases: 1968, 1974, 1976. It led to the establishment of more Teacher Training Colleges and Colleges of Education. The system thus witnessed an upsurge of “unwilling” students admitted into these colleges with low entry requirements and without passion for the teaching profession. This trend has continued with the result that many teachers on the field may be without the necessary knowledge-base and soft skills to support their qualifications. This adverse situation may be remedied by the length of time such teachers remain in the profession. The longer an “unwilling” teacher remains teaching, the more he/she learns the ropes and may eventually adapt to the job.

One of the key indices of quality education is the quality of teachers responsible for imparting knowledge on learners. Teacher quality would therefore encompass qualification, which is usually manifest in subject knowledge, effective communication skills, ability to work under stress, a passion for the job and ability to create a conducive environment for learning to take place. Positive learning outcomes are therefore premised on successful planning and delivery of lessons using relevant methods and strategies to achieve set goals.

In this study, focus is on teachers of English and Hausa languages against the backdrop of teachers’ qualification, setting this against their subject knowledge base, knowledge of teaching methods/strategies and how they proceed with lesson delivery to ensure positive learning outcomes.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives, to:

- i. Examine the quality of English and indigenous language teachers in terms of their qualifications and experience;
- ii. Determine the teachers’ level of exposure to English and indigenous languages;
- iii. Determine self-rating of English language and indigenous teachers in lesson delivery;

- iv. Determine teachers’ knowledge of and use of teaching strategies for the teaching of English and indigenous languages;
- v. Determine the level of collaboration between English language teachers and indigenous language teachers;
- vi. Determine the language preferences for lesson delivery;

4. Literature Review

4.1 Professionalisation of Language Teaching in Nigeria

The concept of professionalisation is defined as the process of the improvement in the status and practice of any occupation as the practitioner continues to upgrade in knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are required for effective and efficient service delivery (Fareo, 2015 in Obiekezie, Nwankwo, Nweke, & Ugwunnamachi, 2023). From the foregoing, professionals in language teaching are those who are required to upgrade their teaching practice in ways that align with current teaching standards. This would include an upgrade in teaching methods and strategies. Umezulike (2021) succinctly observes that in professionalisation, the individual must be distinctly initiated, trained, and assessed in the field. Thus, professionalisation requires some specialised skills since it is a vocation.

For this reason, the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN, 2004) conceived of some operational standards for teaching practitioners called the Teacher Professional Standards (TPS). TPS are requirements developed by TRCN for setting out competencies in teaching and learning and for developing ethical guidelines within the teaching profession. At the core of its responsibilities, TPS strives to promote professionalism and accountability in the teaching profession and proposes some teaching profession certifications like the National Teacher Education Policy (NTEP) in 2016 and the Profession Qualifying Examination (PQE) in 2017. These two have different functions to play in the training, retraining, skill acquisition, deployment and retention of teachers. Also, the inclusion of ICT in teaching is viewed as one of the strategies for professionalising teaching in Nigeria (Obiekezie, Nwankwo, Nweke, & Ugwunnamachi, 2023).

In the same vein, language teaching requires professionalism. As a carrier of civilisation and culture, human thoughts and philosophy are conveyed from one generation to the other through the medium of language. It is through language that knowledge is stored, transferred to the next generation, and yoked the present, past, and future together. Language is the gateway to acquiring knowledge and gaining access to quality education; without which there can be no development (Adekanmbi, 2013). One of the United Nation's sustainable development goals (SDGs) is access to quality education at all levels; and for this study, quality education entails professional language teaching for development. Thus, where access to knowledge is hindered due to inadequate exposure to mutual intelligible language, then the possibility of achieving quality education is low. Students' failures in the West African School Certificate Examination (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO) are conspicuous examples.

In Nigeria, teaching English and other languages has faced a myriad of challenges including inadequate resources, lack of human capital development, attitudes of teachers as well as learners, poor national language planning and policy, quality of teachers, and teaching aids, among others. Bamgbose (1977) opines that there is a strong link between development and language, and until key stakeholders, especially the academia, can convince policymakers of this important link, development efforts will continue to be scuttled. This implies that the attainment of quality education for development hinges on the choice of language and the professional execution of the task of teaching the language by the teachers. It is assumed that the more professional the teachers are, the better the attainment of quality education for sustainable growth. Teachers' use of appropriate teaching methods and other resources is considered a key factor of professionalism. Thus, to actualise effective learning of language, appropriate teaching methods such as the Direct Method, Grammar Translation Method and Audio-lingual Method could be used by teachers. However, there are other language teaching methods listed in the literature including Total

Physical Response, Communicative Language Teaching, Comprehension Approach, Content-based Instruction, and Cooperative Learning that bear affinity with one another in an eclectic manner.

4.2. Challenges of Professionalising Teaching in Nigeria

There are lots of reported challenges in the attempt to professionalise teaching in Nigeria, and in a narrowed perspective, the teaching of language in Nigeria. These challenges range from low morale due to the poor condition of service, brain drain syndrome (*japa*), lack of adequate resources, poor remuneration, and inadequate training for service delivery, among others (Obiekezie, Nwankwo, Nweke, & Ugwunnamachi, 2023). Ozuah (2020) has viewed the teaching profession as a dumping ground for youths who are job searching, and so teaching becomes a placeholder for young people to garner experience for better jobs. It is due to the recounted afore-listed challenges that young Nigerians would rather go into teaching as a result of lack of better jobs than passion.

5. Theoretical Position

The study adopts two theories for analysis: Skinner's (1957) behaviorist theory (BT), and Krashen's (1982) theory of second language acquisition (SLA). Also, insights are drawn from Cohen and Weaver (2006) language learning preferences (LLP) to give a perspective to learning strategies and motivations; Professional Learning Theory (PLC) (Richard & Eaker, 1998) on collaboration indicates collaboration as an enabling factor for group learning and Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, supporting self-efficiency and goals-setting. The behaviorist theory provides explanations for how language is learned. Skinner argues that the language environment plays a crucial role by providing incentives and motivation for learning. BT also referred to as the stimulus-response theory sees language learning as an engaging practice.

Krashen's SLA is also relevant to data analysis in this study as it focuses on five hypotheses in language teaching and learning: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, input hypothesis, affective filter hypothesis, and the

natural order hypothesis. These five hypotheses are useful for language teaching and learning. Cohen and Weaver (2006) serve as a supplementary theory for Skinner's and Krashen's. LLP is interested in how learners deploy strategies that are commensurate with their learning abilities and aptitude. This study, therefore, using these theories to examine the complex interplay between what the authors have identified as indices of professionalisation in language teaching and language preferences for teaching and learning reveals the learning needs of students in the select-schools.

6. Methodology

A mixed method (qualitative and quantitative approaches) was adopted. The study area was Nasarawa State which is located in north-central, Nigeria and shares boundary with Kaduna State in the north, the Federal Capital Territory in the west, in the south, Kogi and Benue States, and in the east, Taraba and Plateau States. The State is highly multilingual, with about 39 languages spoken across the 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs). The sample consisted of 274 language teachers and 222 teachers of other subjects in select-secondary schools in Nasarawa State. Two schools (one private and one public) were randomly selected in each Local Government Area (LGA); making a total of 26 schools and in each school, 2 language teachers were interviewed. Two hundred and twenty-two subject teachers also participated in the study. A questionnaire was used to collect online data which was mainly quantitative while, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), semi-structured interview (SSI) guide, and On-the-Spot Observations (OSO) were conducted to triangulate the quantitative data generated from the questionnaire. The qualitative data was analysed through content analysis along thematic lines; while the quantitative data was collated and analysed for frequency counts/percentages.

7. Data Presentation and Analyses

7.1. Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

Of the 274 teacher-respondents, 59% were males and 41% were females. This debunks the previously held popular opinion that teaching as a profession was dominated by women. The

breakdown of language teacher-respondents by teaching subjects indicated 57.7% English language and 42.3% Hausa language teachers. On the other hand, of the sampled 222 teachers of other subjects, Computer, Mathematics and Agricultural Science topped the list with 21, 21 and 20 respondents respectively. This is followed by Civic Education, Physics, Chemistry and Government that had above 15 respondents each. The spread of teaching-subject teachers shows a bias to science and technology, which is a welcome development and a reason to desire professional language teachers who, in collaboration with the subject teachers, would make learning of science and other school subjects easy for students. In the following section, data is presented to align with the set objectives.

Objective 1. Examine the quality of English and indigenous language teachers in terms of their qualifications and experience:

The breakdown of teacher-respondents indicated that 85% had teaching qualifications while 15% did not. In addition, 80.7% were certified teachers and 19.3% were yet to be certified as follows:

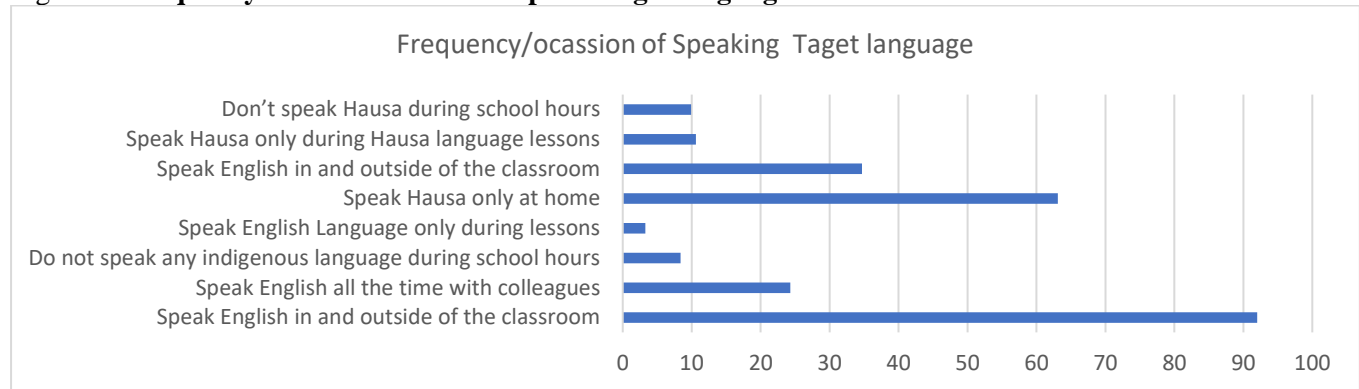
Most of the teacher-respondents (60%) were first-degree holders, followed by NCE (30%). All the English language teachers interviewed were first-degree holders. By their qualification, one could conclude that most of the language teachers were professionals in the field of language teaching, specifically, English and Hausa languages as follows: National Diploma (1%) Higher National Diploma (4%) NCE (30%) Master's (5%) and BSc. /B.Ed. (60%).

Objective 2. Determine the teachers' level of exposure to teaching English and indigenous languages:

In response to how long teachers had been teaching English or Hausa, data revealed that most of the teachers (54%) had spent more than five years; while 14%, 19%, and 13.2% had been on the job for five, three and two years respectively. To determine the level of exposure to the target language, English and Hausa language teachers were also requested to indicate the frequency and occasion in the use of the language they teach. Data collected revealed that the two sets of language teachers make attempts to maximise the

use of the target language in a school setting, especially when communicating with students; as shown on Figure 1:

Figure 1: **Frequency and where teachers speak target language**



Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2024

Objective 3. Determine self-rating of English and indigenous language teachers in the delivery of their tasks:

English and Hausa language teachers were requested to do a self-assessment of their competence levels in the delivery of their tasks as language teachers. Data as shown on Table 1 indicates that the majority rated themselves highly.

On every item scored above 70%, revealing that teachers consider themselves competent to teach every aspect of English and Hausa languages. This assessment may not necessarily subsist since they were not subjected to any external evaluation. However, the confidence with which they have self-assessed themselves speaks well for them.

Table 1: **Language teachers' self-assessment of competence in teaching**

Topic	Very well	Fairly well	Poor
Pronunciation, Word Stress, and Intonation	43(82.7%)	9(17.3%)	00
Vocabulary	40(76.9%)	11(21.2)	(1.9%)
Types of Comprehension	42(80.8%)	10(19.2%)	
Structure	43(82.7%)	6(11.5%)	3(5.8%)
Summary Writing	45(85.5%)	7(13.5)	
Different Types of Composition	44(84.6%)	8(15.4%)	

As a follow-up on teachers' self-assessment, the researchers deemed it necessary to seek out the teachers' perceptions on the learning outcomes from their professional application of appropriate methods in teaching the languages. The responses, summarised below, mainly show the development of language acquisition skills (speaking, listening,

reading, and writing) for better communication. The Hausa language teachers also emphasised language diversity and the multilingual state of Nigeria. This point is reminiscent of the need to intensify efforts towards the implementation of Nigeria's language policy which recognises multilingualism and the need to meet every

Nigerian school child's need for quality education. The teachers expected the following outcomes from the students. To be able to:

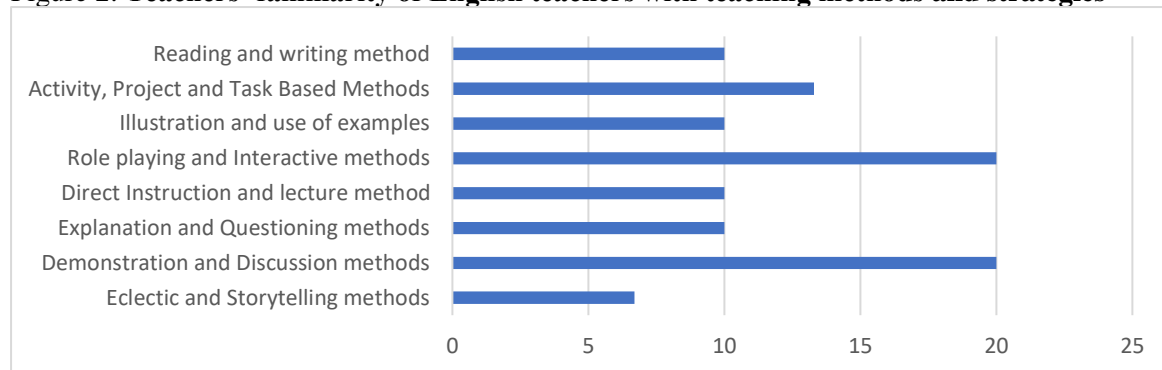
- a. Express themselves fluently in English language and write in English language effectively.
- b. Differentiate between the British and American English varieties while spelling words.
- c. Attain proficiency in the language and communicate effectively within and outside the school.
- d. Read, write and speak good English.
- e. Know the rules governing the English language and apply them in composition writing.
- f. Develop competence and the ability to speak English language fluently.
- g. Attain sound vocabulary development.
- h. Communicate effectively in Hausa language.
- i. Understand lessons in the language and apply the language in their daily activities.

- j. Explain a concept in different languages to ensure that they have a good understanding of it.
- k. Become fluent speakers of Hausa.
- l. Improve their reading ability in Hausa language.
- m. Know Hausa culture and use it in the media houses, and participate in international relations.
- n. Become multi-lingual citizens of Nigeria.

Objective 4. Determine teachers' knowledge of, and use of teaching methods for the teaching of English and Hausa languages:

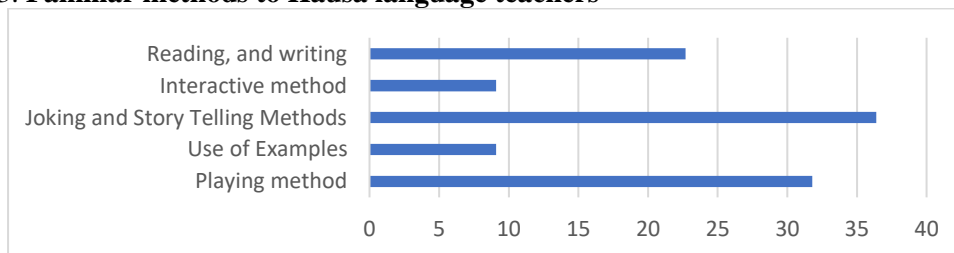
To further determine the level of professionalism of the English and Hausa teachers, their self-rating was juxtaposed with their knowledge of teaching methods and how they applied the methods in classroom situation. Teachers made a list of familiar teaching methods and strategies for teaching language as in Figs 2, 3, 4 & 5:

Figure 2: Teachers' familiarity of English teachers with teaching methods and strategies



Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2024

Figure 3: Familiar methods to Hausa language teachers

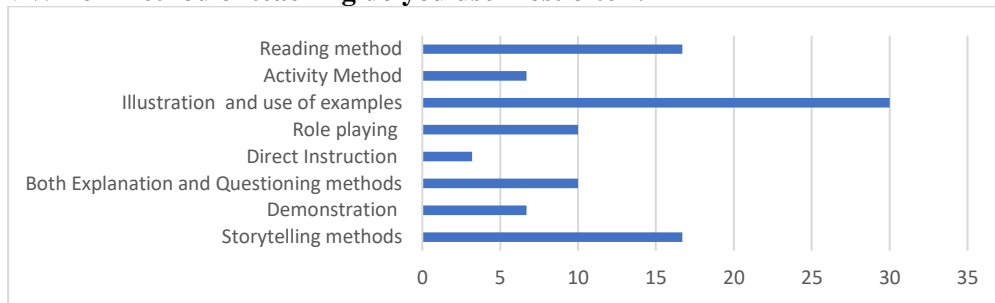


Source: Researchers' Fieldwork, 2024

All the “methods” listed by both English language and Hausa language teachers indicated that teachers were familiar with basic teaching strategies which apply to all subjects in the school curriculum, not necessarily limited to teaching of languages. To further interrogate the level of

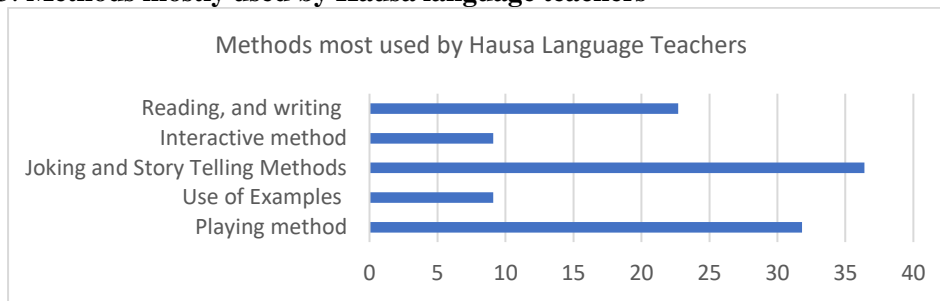
teachers’ professional practice in terms of teaching methods, they were required to list the methods they used most often in classroom interactions. Their responses were a replication of their familiarity of teaching methods:

Figure 4: Which method of teaching do you use most often?



Source: Researchers’ Fieldwork, 2024

Figure 5: Methods mostly used by Hausa language teachers



Source: Researchers’ Fieldwork, 2024

To further interrogate professional practice among the English language and Hausa language teachers, the teachers were requested to describe a typical lesson they had delivered to their students. The responses produced 12 “models” which indicated the basic steps in a general lesson presentation with little details of the topic taught or student activities during the lesson. Most of the lessons

were teacher-centred, with little opportunity for students to practice the target language. Professionalism in language teaching should reflect in lessons that follow recognisable procedures directed toward achieving specific classroom objectives. This seems to be lacking in most of the “models” described by the respondents as presented on Table 2:

Table 2: Models of teachers’ description of a typical language lesson delivered

Model	Sequence of activities
1	<p>Greetings first</p> <p>Teach basic phrases such as "Sannu" (Hello) and "Yaya dai?" (How are you?).</p> <p>Provide Hausa equivalents for English words and encourage repetition for memorization.</p> <p>Provided clear explanations in both Hausa and English to ensure comprehension.</p> <p>Conduct role-plays or pair activities where students practice speaking in Hausa.</p> <p>Guide students through reading exercises, focusing on comprehension and pronunciation.</p> <p>Review and feedback. Homework Assignment</p>

2	Greetings Introduction of the topic if it is just being introduced to the student A wide and vivid explanation of the topic Questions and answers Lastly note-taking
3	First is greeting, Introduction of concept, Explanation Summary and conclusion
4	Greeting, Topic introduction, Define the concept and the types, Explain then write a short note or dictate, Going over the lesson then give a take home assistance or class work
5	Greetings, Introduction of lesson, Previous knowledge, Present the lesson by a choice of method, Discussion continues, Evaluates lesson and the lesson ends for the day.
6	Introduce the topic, Remind them of the previous lesson and then Ask them questions, Starts to teach properly, Evaluate based on the lesson that has just been taught, Response determines conclusion which is followed by assignment
7	Introduce the topic, Review the last lesson, Definition of concept, Evaluation and class activities, Conclusion and assignments
8	Introduction of topic (al'ada) meaning culture. Use the teacher's dress code as examples, Dramatise the concept, Ask them questions, Summarise and give them assignment
9	Introduction with use of instructional materials, Make them to read from the material after the teacher, The students put the words into action, Use part of their body to do the work, Evaluation, summarise the lesson, conclude
10	Start with introduction, With teaching materials, Go into the body of the lesson step by step, Evaluation, Summary which involves the review of the lesson, Conclusion by giving assignments or classwork

11	Start with greeting, Introduction, Explanation of concept, Giving examples and asking the students to practice
12	Start with set induction Introduce the lesson, List the activity and give it out to the class group, Guide the students, assess them

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork 2024

Objective 6. Determine the level of collaboration between English language teachers and indigenous language teachers:

Language teachers were requested to list the areas of collaboration with teachers of other subjects. The data indicated greater collaboration in organising/attending/sharing information on professional development workshops. This was followed by language immersion. Other areas included working in teams, curriculum development, and lesson planning, and carrying out projects/research.

Objective 7. Determine the language preferences for teaching:

Of the 274 teachers, 206 (75%) would prefer that all subjects should be taught in English since it is the official language of instruction and because students were of different ethnic groups. Sixty-seven (24.4%) would prefer to teach some subjects in Hausa because many students speak Hausa and would understand better. Only one teacher would prefer to use an indigenous language other than Hausa to teach students because he/she would find it easier to explain concepts.

8. Key Findings

- Majority of the teachers had the required minimum qualification to teach English and Hausa languages with more than 80% having first degree in English/Hausa plus a teaching qualification that certified them as professional teachers.
- There was evidence that English and Hausa language teachers were exposed to English and Hausa languages as they used the languages copiously in and out of the classroom with colleagues and students.
- English and Hausa language teachers rated themselves "A" in the teaching of the target language delivery of their tasks.

- Language teachers were knowledgeable about general teaching methods and strategies. However, their descriptions were scanty and teacher-centered and did show integration of participatory strategies that would engage the students.
- There was evidence of collaboration between English and Hausa language teachers and among teachers of other subjects. The collaboration centred more on their professional development and language immersion.
- While English and Hausa language teachers used the target languages for instruction, other subject teachers also preferred to use English because it is the official language of instruction.

9. Discussion of the Key Findings

The study revealed that most teachers of English and Hausa languages in the selected secondary schools in Nasarawa State are qualified to teach. This aligns with the very concept of professionalism which Fareo (2015) in Obiekezie, Nwankwo, Nweke, & Ugwunnamachi (2023) avers as improvement in the status and practice of any occupation as the practitioner continues to upgrade in knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are required for effective and efficient service delivery. This data is further corroborated with the key finding on collaboration among teachers that indicated the greatest area of collaboration was in '*organising/attending/sharing information on professional development workshops.*' The zeal for self-development as a professional's mark of dedication to duty is duly demonstrated here.

The study also revealed that a high percentage of English and Hausa language teachers is exposed to and has copious access to both languages in and out of the classroom with

colleagues and students. This aligns with Skinner's (1957) Behaviorist Theory (BT), and Krashen's (1982) Theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) indicating that as second language users of English and probably Hausa (for some Hausa language teachers), continued engagement with the language engenders higher levels of competency because "practice makes perfect".

English and Hausa language teachers in this study rated themselves highly in the teaching of all aspects of the target language. This may be self-regulation in learning and behaviour, which according to Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, is an activity to develop self-efficiency by setting goals and adjusting teaching strategies. Being second language users of English, and probably Hausa, even as teachers, they set their learning goals. Thus, the high self-awarded scores may be their way of setting learning goals towards which they will move to achieve excellent lesson delivery. However, unknown to them is the fact that assessing their target language delivery as excellent is to assess the rate of academic success of the students in terms of their pass level in examinations such as the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO), respectively, in English and Hausa languages respectively, and other subjects taught in the languages. While they have scored themselves 'excellent', the results from WAEC and NECO in most years indicate mass failures in English Language. Thus, setting goals for better lesson delivery may well signify a step towards better learning outcomes by the students.

In line with the concept of professionalism, language teachers in this study were knowledgeable about general teaching methods and strategies even though their descriptions were limited and overly teacher-centred. The teaching methods and strategies did not include participatory activities to engage students in sufficient practice. This is a negation of one of the key principles of Behaviourist Theory (Skinner, 1957) which emphasises habit formation in language learning. Learners are made to participate in drills and repetition, practicing language skills until they become automatic. This

gap can impede the learning process and hinder the attainment of quality education and development in the State.

The study also found evidence of collaboration between English language and Hausa language teachers and among teachers of other subjects. The collaboration centred on professional development and language immersion. This aligns with the very fact that interdisciplinary/interlingual collaboration is a global standard for quality job performance. Moreover, among educators, collaboration is an enabling factor for group learning to improve learning outcomes and earn professional development. This is the position of the Professional Learning Theory (PLC) (Richard & Eaker, 1998). This collaboration indicates a positive trend in professional development of teachers which, if sustained, can spiral into quality education and academic success for development in Nasarawa State.

The study also revealed that English and Hausa language teachers preferred to use the target languages for instruction. Other subject teachers also preferred to use English since it is the official language of instruction. This is because the English language is accorded a high prestige and this measures those who use it as a means of education. The finding agrees with the National Education Policy (2014) which prescribes English Language as the language of instruction. Cohen and Weaver (2006) language learning preferences (LLP) also supports language preference, in this case, as a policy requirement.

Conclusion

Professionalising language teaching in secondary schools in Nasarawa State is crucial for the attainment of SDG 4. This study has provided ample evidence of efforts by language teachers in Nasarawa State to attain professional development for optimal job performance. Besides seeking higher qualifications and ensuring their certification as teachers, they showed commitment to their profession by collaborating with their peers at work for professional growth, adequate motivation in resource mobilisation, and a curriculum that aligns with global educational standards. While language teachers are doing what

is within their reach to ensure quality delivery on their mandate, they are faced with indomitable challenges which is out of the purview of this paper, yet glaring to research in education. It is therefore pertinent to enjoin government and private owners of schools to provide basic facilities in the schools to improve learning outcomes in Nasarawa State.

Recommendations

The study has the following recommendations:

- i. Teachers should be supported by the Parent Teachers' Association of their schools or government to attend short or long service courses that will further enhance their job performance.
- ii. Schools should be encouraged to adopt digital tools such as language apps, interactive platforms and online resources for greater exposure to the target language.
- iii. Language teachers should be part of curriculum planning and selection of resources for teaching and learning.
- iv. As a community of professionals, teachers should organise sessions for knowledge sharing to bring themselves up to date on appropriate and student-friendly methods and strategies of curriculum delivery.
- v. There should be a higher level of collaboration among the government, school administrators and communities and/or individual to mobilise resources for supporting language teaching and learning in schools.
- vi. The use of a wider language of communication, like Hausa is to Nasarawa, should be used even in an English language class to deepen understanding of concepts.

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