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COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TO MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

Olagunju Edijana Bose Faith ¹⁾, Ivwighren Hannah Emuobosa ²⁾, *

1) Department of General Studies and English, University of the People, Pasadena, USA

2) Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic, Orogun, Delta State

Abstract

This study investigates the communication obstacles that English language educators of multilingual classrooms experience in Delta State Nigeria. Research follows a descriptive survey design under Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory to study 180 lecturers working with English and Mass Communication departments in six Delta state tertiary institutions through structured questionnaires. Stratified random sampling allowed the investigation of perceived communication issues as well as the analysis of existing teaching methods and professional development workshop performance. The study discovered that instructors dealing with language differences experience major communication issues which affect their teaching performance. Workshops produce varied outcomes regarding their benefit to instructors because content delivery interacts with institutional backing as well as workshop design. The research shows that multilingualism creates major difficulties for English language education requiring better institutional backing. The implementation of peer collaboration and mentorship programs and multilingual resource-sharing systems should become part of the plan to provide teachers with effective teaching methods.

Keywords: Digital Media, Media engagement, Misinformation, reportage and Internet Penetration

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*Corresponding author:

E-mail: kaylaeguonor@gmail.com

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Introduction

Nigeria as a nation, holds a remarkable number of diverse languages which surpass 500 in total (Iwuchukwu 2021). The cultural wealth of multilingual in Nigeria generates communication challenges that mainly affect English language leverage. British colonialism transmitted English until the language became the universal communication tool across Nigeria for official business and all government operations as well as education at the tertiary level and governmental communication. English serves as an essential means for Nigerians to gain access to worldwide knowledge and opportunities (Yoder, Cantrell & Hinkle 2022; Ayeomoni 2012). Societies across Nigeria view English fluency as the key requirement to achieve both social promotion and economic growth. Communication in English maintains its fundamental position in the Nigerian education system because it holds vital importance across all schools until the final level of tertiary education. The truth shows that most Nigerian children have English as their minor or secondary linguistic background. Each student enters school with different English language skills because they generally only have limited English practice in educational settings (Borisova, Борисова, Il'ina & Ильинан 2017). Despite having only one classroom, teachers face major difficulties because their students excel at different levels of multilingual skills.

Many Nigerian classrooms face serious communication difficulties due to their multilingual presence (Onuora & Ekwueme 2021). As a result, students encounter difficulties when they try to understand directions participate in group discussions and utilize English materials for learning purposes. At the same time, teachers need to find effective ways to communicate with students who speak a wide range of languages according to the study of Borisova, Борисова, Il'ina and Ильинан (2017). Educational disparities may develop because of this situation which leads to frustration among both teachers and students and slows down learning outcomes (Levy, Heissel, Richeson & Adam 2016). The resolution of these communication problems requires specific instructional practices involving teachers to have the proper skills and understanding to train English as a second language in multilingual educational settings (Yoder, Cantrell & Hinkle 2022). In a related study, Iwuchukwu (2021) established that teaching methodologies together with explicit communication challenges recognition and maintaining a supportive classroom environment may help teachers to enhance their prospects for effective teaching.

This study demonstrates importance for the requirement of proper teacher training which enhances effective communication support for multilingual learners while improving English language acquisition outcome quality. Since the teachers interact daily with multilingual students, they have the advantage of understanding which communication challenges the students encounter. The assessment of instructional approaches performed by teachers requires us to explore their professional viewpoints including their implementation practices. Teacher insight enables useful knowledge to improve both language training programs for instructors and education regulations concerning languages. 1) What are the most significant communication challenges perceived by teachers when teaching English to multilingual students?; 2) What instructional strategies are currently being used by teachers to address the diverse linguistic needs of their students?; 3) How does participation in a professional development workshop on teaching multilingual learners' impact on teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and classroom practices?

Literature Review

Communication Challenges of Teaching English to Multilingual Students

English language instructional processes within multicultural classrooms generate multiple communication barriers affecting teaching staff and learning students (Safeer, Hussain, Azhar, Shaikh & Jakhrani 2024). The official language alongside many existing languages in Nigeria requires teachers to handle multilingual complications which affect students' comprehension together with their engagement level and educational results (Muhammad, Ya'u, Aliyu & Hassan 2018). According to Hsieh, Ionescu and Ho (2018), language interference stands as a primary obstacle because first language influences student English use resulting in grammatical mistakes and improper pronunciation combined with the problems to construct coherent sentences (Galante 2020). The interferences from students' native tongues create barriers that reduce their ability to understand English syntax and semantics thus extending the time required to learn. Safeer, Hussain, Azhar, Shaikh and Jakhrani (2024), maintain that code-switching is another common challenge for both students as well as some teachers combine both English and their native language to help their understanding. Modulating between English and native languages has limited value because it limits exposure to American academic jargon and causes students to doubt their mastery of English without outside assistance. Another communication challenge exists when different students at diverse English proficiency levels learn together in a single classroom environment (Rasheed, Zeeshan & Zaidi 2017; Obiegbu & Njemanze 2015). Within a classroom, there exists a wide range of English language abilities which operates from solid proficiency in students to minimal understanding among others. The varying levels of English proficiency between students create challenges for teachers to deliver suitable lessons that do not either underachieve with weak students or underuse the potential of stronger learners (Galante 2020; Li Xie, Ai & Li 2020).

Time dynamics with local culture and contextual peculiarities limit communication effectiveness between students since English carries both linguistic forms and cultural expressions (Ticheloven, Blom, Leseman & McMonagle 2019). This might contradict their traditional backgrounds. Several English concepts prove difficult to explain because teachers cannot translate them properly through local languages thus, causing students to misinterpret their meaning (Obiegbu & Njemanze 2015). Teaching resources are scarce and insufficient training of teachers intensifies communication barriers in the classroom. The scarcity of appropriate teaching resources for English language education that support multilingual learners exists in numerous Nigerian schools while several teachers lack training in specific multilingual education methods (Aguma, Kimathi & Situma 2021). The restriction prevents them from delivering adequate solutions for effective linguistic diversity management.

Instructional Strategies for Multilingual English Language Learners

Teaching methods developed to accept multiple linguistic backgrounds to help students develop their English language abilities as a strategy towards an enhanced outcome (Sabe & Luka 2020). Teachers need to select classroom methods that improve student understanding while stimulating engagement and creating connections between their familiar language and the English language. Wawire and Barnes-Story (2022) are of the view that, through translanguaging, students can have the chance to maintain their native language while using English as they learn. Teaching personnel can prompt their students to examine and exchange knowledge through their original language before they express themselves in English (Obiegbu & Njemanze 2015). Using this method students may experience less language fear while learning better and making substantial connections between their native language and English (Aguma, Kimathi & Situma 2021; Ticheloven, Blom, Leseman & McMonagle 2019).

The learning process includes educator-provided sentence templates and reading training exercises as well as controlled group dialogues to develop English mastery. Rasheed, S., Zeeshan and Zaidi (2017) states that employing Mother-Tongue-Based instruction involves teaching beginning learners using their native tongues, so they develop their literacy skills before shifting to learning English (Perfecto 2020). The process of learning the first language helps students develop English proficiency more efficiently according to research findings. Students can participate in group tasks while discussing with peers through role-playing exercises that promote meaningful English usage in interactive learning situations. Group tasks can enable stronger students to provide academic support to their peers thus establishing an inclusive learning setting (Ticheloven, Blom, Leseman & McMonagle 2019). Multilingual students gain a better understanding of abstract English concepts when teachers employ methods that use charts together with videos and storytelling techniques.

Professional Development Workshops for Teaching English to Multilingual Students

The expanding language diversity inside Nigerian classrooms generates complex situations alongside the worthwhile potential for teaching English as an academic course (Lorenz, Krulatz & Torgersen 2021). Teaching professionals need essential strategies to educate students with multilingual backgrounds because diverse language classrooms have become common. Educational institutions can organise workshops that give teachers essential teaching approaches alongside assessment methods for creating welcoming learning spaces where students from different language backgrounds can succeed. According to Prabjandee (2020), the primary objective of professional development workshops consists of enabling educators to grasp the specific academic needs of students who are learning English as a second language. Numerous students in Nigeria encounter language interference challenges because they speak from among the 500 indigenous languages found in the country which shapes their use of English (Ayeomoni 2012). The cultures students belong to affect their understanding because these students face issues connecting to English expressions together with related concepts. The provided workshops teach educators to identify these issues while teaching them effective communication techniques that enhance comprehension. Onuora and Ekwueme (2021), opine that quality instruction improves through the implementation of translanguaging along with scaffolding and differentiated instruction approaches by teachers. Translanguaging provides learners with their native tongue to approach English learning and scaffolding includes visual explanations and directed conversations which simplify advanced material into simpler pieces. Through workshops, teachers receive training on managing English language instruction by developing activities that let students practice their fluency while respecting their native language skills (Borisova, Борисоваа, И'ina & Ильинан (2017).

Strategies that incorporate assessment together with feedback serve as essential components throughout student learning. Educational staff learn to create balanced assessments that recognize different languages within the student population (Sadeghi & Richards 2021). The formative assessment methods including group discussions, presentations as well as personalized feedback assist both students and educators to keep track of learning progress while determining which subjects need additional help (Levy, Heissel, Richeson & Adam 2016). These assessment methods enable instructors to establish learning platforms where students will enhance their English language skills. The implementation of technology functions as an essential part of professional development workshops that teach English language instruction. Through digital tools and language-learning apps combined with online platforms, students have interactive ways to practice English learning activities after leaving traditional instruction (Prabjandee 2020). These educational sessions demonstrate the tools to educators while showing them how to use technology properly within their instructional delivery. Virtual exchange programs create valuable

student connections with English speakers across multiple regions which improves their communication abilities (Ayeomoni 2012). The workshops also prioritize developing policies that adapt to the needs of teaching and updating curricula in professional development training activities. Teaching professionals receive guidance to match their approach to national language policies while campaigning for educational programs that benefit students who speak multiple languages (Teasley & Homer 2020). Educational workshops enable teachers to develop better skills in multilingual classroom management that produce enhanced student participation and academic achievements. The training sessions empower teachers with modern educational approaches that advance the inclusive learning movement toward providing equivalent pathways for English success to all students with different linguistic profiles (Sadeghi & Richards 2021; Prabjandee 2020).

Theoretical Framework- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

This study is anchored on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that emerged under the groundwork of two linguists Dell Hymes and Michael Halliday in the 1960s who recognised communicative proficiency as the focus of language acquisition (Salam & Luksfinanto 2024). CLT functions as a teaching methodology that puts students' needs first through its emphasis on both interaction and communication outcomes. The approach matches Nigerian educational practices for teaching English to students who speak multiple languages since language diversity affects their ability to learn and communicate in class. The inclusion of CLT principles enables teachers to resolve communication problems and boost student participation while improving the quality of English use among multilingual students (Qasserras 2023). CLT emphasizes authentic interaction between people in real-life situations since multilingual learner's face challenges with English usage because their native tongues interfere with this second language. In the opinion of Salam and Luksfinanto (2024), The implementation of interactive storytelling combined with debates and peer collaboration mechanisms can help teachers in developing English language communication abilities with their students. CLT provides approaches that help students overcome problems in their communication such as incorrect interpretations vocabulary gaps and cultural differences (Jabri & Samad 2021). Experts who teach students use three different methods including scaffolding techniques, peer interaction and cooperative learning structures to help students overcome their communication challenges (Onuora & Ekwueme (2021). The teaching approach of contextualized learning holds substantial importance in CLT especially when used in Nigerian classrooms to deal with multiple languages. Workshops about CLT principles train educators to transition into more communicative teaching methods by providing skills that enable effective facilitation of student-led activities and classroom diversity management as well as utilizing multimodal instructional resources for better teaching results. The communicative approach of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) establishes an effective framework for multilingual classrooms to handle linguistic communication issues because it focuses on student dialogue along with natural language use and proficiency development (Santos 2020; Qasserras 2023).

Hypotheses

H₀: There is no significant relationship between instructional strategies and professional development workshops on teaching multilingual learners

Research Method

This study uses a descriptive survey research design to investigate the communication challenges and instructional strategies of English language and communication teachers in multilingual classrooms. According to Baillie (2019), it helps the researcher undertake a logical and theoretically informed study. The population includes lecturers from the English and Mass

communication department at Dennis Osadebay University Asaba, Western Delta University of Science and Technology, Ozoro, Federal Polytechnic Orogun, Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, Delta State College of Education Mosogar, and Federal College of Education Asaba who play a crucial role in shaping students' proficiency in English. A stratified random sampling technique described by Tipton, Hedges, Vaden-Kiernan, Borman, Sullivan and Caverly (2014) as “gold standard” for causal research was employed to ensure a representative sample, with 180 English language and Mass communication lecturers with 5 years of teaching experience and above were selected to participate at 30 participants per institution. Data collection involves a structured questionnaire to gather quantitative insights. Descriptive statistics summarize responses, while inferential statistical techniques identified the relationship between teachers' instructional strategies and professional development workshops on the STATA 0.13 app. Qualitative data is analysed thematically to highlight emerging patterns and trends related to communication challenges and CLT implementation.

Expert validation assessed the questionnaire's relevance and effectiveness with an addition of a pilot study involving a small group of English language teachers was carried out in a secondary school to test the reliability of the questionnaire. The internal consistency of the questionnaire items, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.8, ensuring that the instrument is dependable and accurately reflects the subject being studied. Confidentiality was upheld to protect participants' identities and responses, and institutional approval was sought to facilitate smooth data collection across the multiple institutions. The study aims to generate valuable insights into how English language teachers in Nigerian higher institutions navigate communication challenges and implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles in multilingual classrooms. The findings contribute to the development of more effective instructional strategies, ultimately enhancing English language learning in diverse educational settings.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Return Rate

S/N	Institutions	Given	Returned	%
1	Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba	30	27	15
2	Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro	30	25	14
3	Federal Polytechnic Orogun	30	29	16
4	Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku	30	28	16
5	Delta State College of Education Mosogar	30	26	16
6	College of Education Warri	30	28	14
	Total	180	163	91

The following data in Table 1 shows the distribution along with return rates of questionnaires sent to English language and Mass communication lecturers at six Delta State higher institutions in Nigeria. The study obtained a high response rate through the successful retrieval of 163 completed questionnaires out of the original distribution of 180 forms. More than ninety percent of the total questionnaires distributed were returned to researchers. The high response rate of 91% ensures that the study's conclusions precisely demonstrate the views of English language instructors from participating institutions.

Table 2: Demographic Variables of Respondents

Gender	Age	Educational Qualification	Marital Status	Years of Experience	Department
Male 84 (52%)	25-35 29 (18%)	1st Degree 42 (26%)	Single 34 (21%)	5 -10 72 (44%)	English Language 83 (51%)
Female 79 (48%)	36-45 58 (36%)	2 nd Degree 67 (41%)	Married 93 (57%)	11-15 44 (27%)	Communication 80 (49%)
	46-55 43 (26%)	3 rd Degree 35 (21%)	Divorced 4 (2%)	16-20 21 (13%)	
	56-65 33 (20%)	Others 19 (12%)	Widowed 27 (17%)	21-25 15 (9%)	
			Separated 6 (3%)	25 and above 11 (7%)	

Table 2 above examines the composition of English language and communication Studies teachers in Nigerian higher institutions. The study participants belong to these groups: gender, age, and education level as well as marital status alongside years of experience and departmental assignment. Most of the participants (52%) identify as male respondents while approximately half identify as female respondents. English Language educators at Nigerian higher institutions primarily belong to the 36-45 age range which contains educators who teach English in multilingual contexts. The survey participants demonstrate extensive knowledge of language teaching and instructional methods through their advanced educational qualifications. A large percentage of 57% within this group maintains marital status according to the research findings about instructional strategies and work-life balance perspectives. Most participants possess teaching experience between 5-10 years although 27% maintain 11-15 years of service. This study gathers responses from both students of the English Language Department and the Communication Department which allows researchers to receive feedback from linguistics experts and communication specialists. The research benefits from the diverse professional backgrounds of its participants because it examines Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its usage in lessons that handle multiple languages.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3: summarize pcctmsc ismell pdwtems

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Obs</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
<i>pcctmsc</i>	163	3.804908	.681665	2	5
<i>ismell</i>	163	3.159509	.6033485	1.6	5
<i>pdwtems</i>	163	3.293252	.7471038	1.4	5

Table 3 presents the summary of the descriptive statistics of the three variables tested in the study; perceived communication challenges (pcctmsc), instructional strategies employed (ismell), and professional development workshops (pdwtems). The statistics cover observations (Obs), mean, standard deviation (Std. Dev), minimum (Min), and maximum (Max) values for each variable. It shows that 163 participants were observed in total providing the data for the study. The mean variation of 3.804908 indicates teachers perceive communication challenges as relatively high in multilingual classrooms, 3.159509 suggests Instructional strategies used are moderately effective, but may not fully address students' diverse multilingual needs, and 3.293252 Professional development workshops are rated somewhat beneficial, but there is room for improvement. It also shows that teachers' experiences with these workshops vary, likely due to differences in content, delivery, and institutional support.

The standard deviations for all three variables; .681665, .6033485, and .7471038 indicate significant variation in responses, which reflect differences in classroom contexts, teaching experience, or institutional support. Minimum (Min) rates of 2, 1.6, and 1.4 further points to the varying perceptions of the participants on the variables. While the maximum (Max) of 5 across the board signifies a positive rating. Considering all outcomes, the findings suggest the need for enhanced teacher training programs, improved instructional methodologies, and targeted support to overcome communication barriers in multilingual English language classrooms.

Inferential Statistic- Test of Hypotheses

H₀. There is no significant relationship between teachers' instructional strategies and professional development workshop

Table 4: Spearman Rank Analysis

Observed	163	Decision
Spearman's rho	-0.0792	Accepted
Prob > t : P-value	0.3146	

The result affirms that 163 respondents participated in the study. A weak negative correlation of -0.0792 between instructional strategies (ISMELL) and professional development workshops (PDWTEMS) exists with an acceptance of a p-value at 0.3146 exceeding 0.05 thus indicating professional development workshops have a minor ability to reduce the effectiveness of instructional strategies but do not influence them significantly. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between teachers' instructional strategies and professional development workshops is accepted. The analysis implies that teacher experience along with institutional requirements and classroom environment factors about workshop programs independently influence instructional teaching methods. The minimal relationship between

professional development workshop attendance and instructional practices may stem from workshops that were either impractical or improper matches and insufficient follow-up support and experienced-based teaching as well as inconsistent workshop impacts. Training programs delivering workshops can enhance their effectiveness by making sessions active, and hands-on and addressing actual teaching problems in classrooms.

Discussion

The survey sought to investigate the communication challenges and instructional strategies of English language and communication teachers in multilingual classrooms. The findings of this study offered useful information about these areas and are consistent with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory and other empirical studies. In support of the study of Safeer, Hussain, Azhar, Shaikh and Jakhrani (2024), it is affirmed that English language instructional processes within multicultural classrooms create several communication difficulties influencing the instruction of the teaching staff and learning environment. The finding corroborates with the study of Muhammad, Ya'u, Aliyu and Hassan (2018), in their opinion that official language alongside many existing languages in Nigeria requires teachers to handle multilingual complications which affect students' comprehension together with their engagement level and educational results.

Another conclusion that was drawn from the study is that Using techniques designed to accommodate many language backgrounds can assist students improve their English language skills, therefore promoting a better result. This supports the observation by Wawire and Barnes-Story (2022) that, through translanguaging, students can have the chance to maintain their native language while using English as they learn. It further buttressed the view of Aguma, Kimathi and Situma (2021) when the stated that using strategic method, students may experience less language fear while learning better and making substantial connections between their native language and English.

In addition, the findings made it possible to denote that indeed professional development workshops should be focused on enabling educators to grasp the specific academic needs of students who are learning English as a second language as agreed by Prabjandee (2020). However, the study result indicates that the cultures of students do influence their perspective as they deal with concerns relating to English expressions combined with related topics. Ayeomoni (2012) supports this view by emphasizing workshops and seminars provide teachers with efficient communication skills that improve understanding and help them to spot these problems.

Furthermore, conclusion from the tested hypothesis sync with the logic of Onuora and Ekwueme (2021) that quality instructions and exchange programs create valuable student connections with English speakers across multiple regions which improves their communication abilities. This gave credence to the ideology of Sadeghi and Richards (2021) that throughout the learning process, strategies that combine evaluation and feedback are crucial. Teachers are trained to develop fair tests that consider the many languages spoken by students. The findings corroborate the tenets of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory that allows teachers to improve the quality of English use among multilingual students while resolving communication issues and increasing student involvement according to Qasserras (2023).

Conclusion

Communication challenges, instructional strategies, and workshops for professional development related to teaching English to multilingual students at Nigerian higher institutions were examined in this study. Instructor-communication difficulties arise due to the language variation that exists in the classroom environment. The performance of multiple instructional approaches which educators apply to handle these problems shows only a moderate level of success thus demonstrating the requirement for specific teaching approaches. Educational workshops served as one approach to developing instructor capabilities for better teaching strategies. The study reveals a lack of clear professional development workshop impact on classroom methods because no important link was found between this training and instructor teaching approaches. The situation calls for additional hands-on training sessions that provide expert support throughout each academic year. Analyzing the participants reveals the broad spectrum of origins experiences and education levels of Nigerian higher education English language instructors. Educational approaches together with multilingual education depend heavily on teacher diversity. Nigeria's educational institutions will need both effective communication methods and professional training programs to improve multilingual English language education because they continue implementing linguistic diversity.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, this study recommends:

1. The Ministry of Education along with the government needs to collaborate toward strengthening Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) teaching approaches for better multilingual classroom communication.
2. Workshops for practical implementation of training must contain authentic classroom modeling support services and practical exercises for effective deployment.
3. Learning institutions and agencies need to provide institutional support that helps teachers improve their teaching methods through peer cooperation mentorship access and multilingual material-sharing systems.

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