



Using the 2Rs to Improve Teaching/Learning Strategies in English at the Secondary School: A Case Study

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Abstract: The 3Rs is a mixed blend of interactive teaching/learning strategies introduced to teachers of English language in a secondary school in Nigeria. This was part of the overall goal of improving learning outcomes with a focus on teacher performance and learning achievement. The operative words are: rigour, relevance, and respect. The study introduced some teachers to the operative words whilst introducing some teaching strategies to them in a particular school. Using a prior needs assessment to arrive at the challenges faced by teachers and students in the school, the researcher used some teaching and learning strategies for use in the classroom by both teachers and students. After some initial reluctance by the teachers to the new interactive approach, teachers then embraced the use of the strategies with obvious good results. The efficacy of the strategy in improving teacher performance and learning achievement by students was shown after a few trials. The recommendation is for more innovative and rigorous use of teaching strategies by teachers for improved learning outcomes.

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1	ENGLISH	186	175	361		1	1	10	22	32	44	44	88	44	61	105	56	34	90	32	13	45				
2	MATHE- MATICS	192	176	368	6	8	14	22	22	44	90	85	175	65	56	121	7	4	11	2	1	3				
3	BASIC- SCIENCE	185	180	365	39	47	86	47	45	92	67	59	126	26	27	53	5	2	7	1		1				

The official examination body also has a critical report on the performance of the students in public examinations, especially in English. At a press conference, the examination body gave a report on the results for years 2011-2014.

WAEC on the Performance of Students in Senior School Examinations from 2011-2014 (from Daily Trust Newspaper 12th August, 2014 by Nurudeen Oyewole Lagos)

- About 70% of candidates who wrote the May/June 2014, West African Examination Council (WAEC) examinations in Nigeria, failed to obtain 5 credits in English Language and Mathematics, the examination body said yesterday.
- Head of the National Office, (WAEC) Charles Egundu, said at a news conference in Lagos that **529,425** candidates representing **31.28%** of the **1,605,613** candidates whose results were fully processed, were able to obtain 5 credits including Mathematics and English Language. When the result is compared with that of 2012 and 2013, there appears to be a steady increase in failure rate.
- In 2011, **587,630** candidates representing **38.93%** obtained credits and above in Mathematics, while 838, 314 representing **55.34%** obtained credit and above in English and Mathematics. Total no. of candidate **1,545,004** (SWAEC).

Teacher Professional Development

As part of efforts to improve on teaching and learning at the secondary school level for improved learning outcomes, a state government felt the need to focus on the professional development of teachers. This was part of the overall goal of continuous improvement of the education sector. To that end a number of programmes were embarked upon to improve the school system as a whole, by giving schools a face-lift, with the provision of infrastructure and teaching learning materials and resources and to

generally make the schools conducive for learning.

One of the programmes targeted at the teachers as part of their professional development was the “Teachers Mentor Programme.” This programme had as objective “the development of a pool of mentors that will develop effective instruction, coaching and support to teachers” (Lagos EKO Teachers Mentoring Programme, 2013). The pool of mentors included serving and retired secondary school teachers who will assist serving teachers to be more effective in the classroom by nurturing the use of effective teaching strategies. The mentors were trained for six weeks on the use of teaching/learning strategies before sending them to the schools. Poor teacher performance at the secondary school level has implications for learning achievement of students, especially in public examinations in the final years. This has been a recurring decimal, and a source of embarrassment to Education Commissioners in Nigeria.

This is particularly serious in the core subjects of English and Mathematics as a below credit pass in the two subjects at the Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) will deny students admission into tertiary institutions (University) for any course of study. That was what informed the need to improve on teaching and learning at the secondary school in the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Biology. Most of the public schools predictably record below average in the results of students in English in Junior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (JSSCE) examinations and SSCE (Senior Secondary School) examinations, as shown in *Tables 1-3* above.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Teaching or instructional strategies refer to the approach or approaches a teacher takes to achieve learning objectives or outcomes. Instructional methods are different from strategies, as these refer to activities or approaches used by teachers to create learning environments. Teaching strategies are also used to specify the nature of activity or activities in which the teacher and learner will be involved during the lesson. Strategies can also be defined as “the approaches that can be used across curricular areas to support the learning of students” (Herrel & Jordan, 2004, p. 5), which may be used only on occasion” (Ritchart, Church, & Morrison, 2011, p. 48). Whilst particular methods are associated with certain strategies, some methods are found within a variety of strategies.

In a case study, researchers at the New Teacher Centre, University of California Santa Cruz, Rain Bongolon and Ellen Moir, identified “Six Key strategies for teachers of English Language.” The strategies were then used to reduce the daunting challenges faced by teachers in addressing the language needs of every student in a particular school (Bongolon & Moir, 2005). In the NTC program, schools release experienced teachers and administrators full time to observe and mentor beginning teachers. The programme pairs beginning teachers with mentor teachers from a similar grade level or subject-matter expertise. Mentors are trained to work with new teachers and administrators using research based instructional methods. The six key strategies are:

- Vocabulary and language development
- Guided interaction
- Meta-cognition and authentic assessment
- Explicit instruction
- Meaning based context and universal themes and;
- Modeling, Graphic Organizer and visuals. (Bongolon .R. & Moir, E,2005)

The use of the six strategies was found to not only help students develop English as second language, but also to help native speakers learn words that are not part of everyday English. The programme has also seen to long-term teacher retention rate as high as 95% compared to nationwide average of around 50% for teachers supported by the NTC model. This is a testament to the positive impact the NTC model has had on the teaching profession in California. Also the rapid expansion of the programme also testifies to the belief by educators of its efficacy. The use of the “Six Key Strategies” has been extended from Santa Cruz to the entire Silicon Valley, and into state and national.

Natasha Thomson of Kongsberg International School also undertook a study to identify ways in which language support could be provided when teaching a unit of inquiry in the primary years programme to children whose mother tongue is not English or the medium of instruction. The report of her investigation presented in 2012, was titled: “Language Teaching Strategies and Techniques used to support students learning in a language other than their mother tongue” (Thomson, 2012). The objectives of the research were listed to include the following:

- Observe, record and analyse the strategies and techniques primary year teachers use to implement their unit of inquiry to children learning English as a foreign language or additional language.
- To create a resource bank of language teaching strategies, ideas and techniques for teachers to use when implementing units of inquiry.
- To help raise awareness of language learning through the programme of inquiry.

Using ten teachers working in the European region, and one volunteer from the Pacific region, the researcher used observations, teacher interviews, and coordinator interview including field notes. Results of findings from data analysis gave rise to the identification of a number of strategies, such as **scaffolding and drawing upon prior knowledge** which can be incorporated into classroom practice by teachers to further improve the language support given to learners (Thomson, 2012). Some of the recommended teaching strategies for English Language are:

- (1) **Thinking Time:** Where teachers try to allow a few seconds for students to think before asking questions on what they have learnt.
- (2) **Elaborated Input:** Teacher should consider more elaboration or repetition of key words, Instruction and points to enable students to fully understand what has been taught, the elaborated input can also include the use of visual and graphics.
- (3) **Re- cast:** the teacher helper helps student to correct errors by repeating what the student said, providing the correct words or model, without over drawing attention to the error.
- (4) **Questioning:** teachers ask more open ended questions, directing the questions, to specific individuals to ensure students have the opportunity to participate, and
- (5) **Increase Verbal Interaction:** teachers provide opportunities to increase verbal interaction in classroom activities to help ensure that students are exposed to as many different types of authentic language as possible. This will

also give students opportunities to practise using the target language.
(Thomson, 2012)

Statement of the Problem

Most teachers in public secondary schools are found to be using the lecture method of instruction mostly. A visit to a school identified the challenges faced by teachers and students in an attempt to adopt the interactive approach to teaching and learning.

Table 4: Challenges faced in the school

	TEACHERS	STUDENTS
1.	Inattentive students and poor reading ability.	Not enough books in the library to read.
2.	Lazy students	Teachers are unfriendly and Uncaring.
3.	Large class size that can overwhelm the teacher.	Bullying from bigger students and some seniors.
4.	Dearth of instructional materials, especially Visuals.	Teachers don't listen to our complaints and worries.
5.	Unresponsive students.	Teachers who don't know their stuff.
6.		Long school hours
		Teachers who don't explain things to us

Under the Teacher Mentoring programme, the Interactive instructional approach was adopted as most suited to achieving the objectives of improved learning outcomes. Most public school teachers were also found to be using the following instructional approaches like "Explicit Teaching," "Drill and Practice," and "Didactic Questions."

These teaching strategies have not been achieving the desired objectives of motivating teachers to teach, and learners to learn. The poor performance of students in

public examinations, and low achievement in English language, have been linked to the instructional approach or teaching strategies adopted by the teachers for use in the classroom. Most of the teachers, either from ignorance or lack of training or laziness, adopt the lecture and explicit teaching strategies to teach their students, then wonder why the students are underperforming. The interactive approaches in teaching strategies have been adjudged to be effective for teaching and learning at the secondary school level for a number reasons that have been stated in study after study. This is because students get involved in the learning process as they take responsibilities for their learning achievements and outcomes. Under the interactive approach, students make use of a number of learning strategies that help their understanding of sometimes difficult topics and themes in the curriculum.

THE STUDY

The Objectives of the Study were as follows:

- To design a plan of interactive strategies for teaching and learning English
- To model the use of the design lesson plan based on the 3Rs approach to teachers for their use
- To observe the use of the 3R's approach in a typical English Language class by the teachers, and
- To determine the efficacy of the approach for improved learning outcomes.

The researcher made use of three (3) English language teachers and about one hundred and fifty (150) students in a particular school. The researcher then identified number of interactive teaching and learning strategies to develop the 3Rs approach.

Table 5: Below depicts the content of 3Rs strategies

Rigour (for teachers)	Relevance (for teacher and students)	Respect (both teacher and students)
Lesson planning	Building background	Scaffolding
Lesson sequence	Connect learning to life	Think aloud

Lesson delivery	Think – pair – share	Getting the gist
KWL chart; Building background	Small group: discuss and Share	Anticipation/Reaction guide
Concept Definition Map	Chunk and chew	Heading into questions
Use of graphic Organizer	Higher–order questioning	Split – page note taking
Clarify	Canned Questions	Question the author

3Rs strategies for teaching English at secondary school

Using the listed challenges, the researcher grouped her teaching and learning strategies around the 3'RS of 'rigour', 'relevance' and 'respect' as follows:

- **Rigour:** Teachers were introduced to the rigours of developing a lesson plan, and lesson sequence before lesson delivery. The painstaking effort put in to prepare a lesson plan that will take care of all the issues raised by a student is the rigour.
- **Relevance:** This has to do with the use of the KWL chart as part of building backgrounds in order to make the topic relevant to the interests and experiences of the students.
- **Respect:** This has to do with taking cognizance of the views expressed by students to make the leaning more interactive and more effective. To treat students with more respect and compassion, bearing in mind the challenges they are facing, and to also get the students to choose the learning strategies suitable to their learning styles.

The 3Rs was used to develop a lesson plan to teach a particular topic in the English curriculum as follows:

Table 6: Model Lesson Plan

LESSON	COMPREHENSION PASSAGE: RASING AIDS AWARENESS THROUGH SPORTS
LESSON OBJECTIVES:	Students will be able to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the role of sports in AIDS Awareness; • explain the meanings of some new vocabulary from content; • summarize key messages from the passage using a graphic organizer.
<p>KEY VOCABULARY WORDS:</p>	<p>Phenomena, mobilizing, galvanize, advocacy, outreach, campaign, potential, inspire, transmission.</p>
<p>RESOURCES and MATERIALS:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video clips of football matches and other sporting events. • Pictures of sporting materials like football, and other memorabilia. • Real sporting objects like football and team jerseys. • Flip charts and markers for students to create their own • Graphic organizer like Main Idea and supporting details.
<p>CONNECTIONS TO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE/BUILDING BACKGROUND:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Background: • Prior Knowledge: Students have talked about one sporting event they have participated in or watched, or • they have a favourite football star; • Prior Experience: Students are members of a football • team or they have played in a game or match ; • Students also have their own favourite sporting clubs, or are members of a Supporting club.
<p>STRATEGIES and ACTIVITIES:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Getting the gist"=Students are broken into groups. Each group chooses one person to read out sections from the passage, the other students listen attentively. Discuss what the section is about and write down key vocabulary words and phrases from each section for the students to get an understanding of the meanings. Students take turns to read sections and discuss the new words or phrases they come across, till the end of the passage. • Review and discuss key vocabulary words and

	<p>phrases with the students, especially those they wrote down using the "getting the gist" strategy to aid their learning. Teacher asks the question...."What do you understand this word or phrase to mean?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the small group strategy, students are asked to summarize sections of the passage using their own words. Teacher also asks.... "Why is it important /necessary to raise AIDS Awareness through sports?" • Connect Learning to Life: Pictures of HIV-AIDS-positive persons. Show a film on AIDS Awareness campaigns. Ask students to mention their favourite football star or player. Ask students what sports they play. Refer to the last World Cup in South Africa, 2010, and ask students the country that won the cup. Show some of the campaign messages from the last World Cup like-"Give AIDS the Red Card" initiative. Does this help you see the need to raise awareness about AIDS through sports?
<p>WRAP-UP/ASSESSMENT:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tickets-out: What is the one thing you have learnt about AIDS in this lesson? • What have you learnt about creating awareness about AIDS in this lesson? • Use a graphic organizer —Main idea and supporting details to summarize the key messages from the passage.

The researcher then modelled a lesson from a topic in the school curriculum such as "Letter Writing" to show teachers and students how to use the 3R's approach to teaching and learning English Language at the Secondary School. Once teachers saw the efficacy of the approach in practice, it became easier to adopt the 3R's strategy for use in the teaching of topics in English Language.

Conclusion

There are on-going efforts to replicate the use of the 3Rs approach for teaching and learning English in more secondary schools so that tentative positive results can be

generalized. The results from interviews and observation of classroom practice in the school have shown the adoption of the interactive strategies for teaching and learning English language. Teachers have also expressed a positive outcome in learning achievement on the part of students after the use of the 3R's approach. The recommendation is therefore for a wider use of the mixed blend of interactive strategies- the 3R's for improved learning outcomes at the secondary school level.

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