




The Challenges Facing Effective Teaching of Literature-in-English in Nigerian Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Literature-in-English is a major school subject that equips students with language and other soft skills needed for entry into the workforce. For students to acquire the skills, effective teaching, which is dependent on the availability of basic teaching–learning resources, is essential. Education is underfunded in Nigeria. This affects the quality of teaching and impedes learning. The rate at which students fail Literature-in-English, which is getting worse each year, indicates that there is a problem in the teaching–learning process. Using a mixed-method research design, this study investigated the problems of teaching Literature-in-English in 51 public senior secondary school in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State. Random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select three local government areas (LGAs), 20 teachers, and 7,090 students. Data were gathered through Availability of Literature Teachers Checklist (ALTC), Interview Guide for Literature-in-English Teachers (IGLT) and Students’ Text Possession Checklist (STPC). The result shows that teachers are faced with many challenges that prevent them from delivering quality instruction. These include poor learning environment, acute shortage of textbooks, low language proficiency, misconceptions about the value of literature, heavy workload, and lack of parental support. Some schools do not have literature teachers. The biggest obstacle, however, is lack of textbooks. The situation is critical and points to a crisis of teaching and learning in Literature-in-English classrooms. Urgent interventions are needed if the objectives of this school subject are to be achieved. Some recommendations are made.

Keywords: *Literature-in-English teaching, learning crisis in Nigeria, teaching resources, soft skills, effective teaching*

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Introduction

The curriculum of the Nigerian senior secondary school, otherwise known as post-basic education, is divided into four sections: business studies; science and mathematics; humanities; and technology (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN] 2014). While subjects like English and general mathematics are compulsory for all students, others are specifically for students in each field. Literature-in-English, for example, is a core subject for students in the humanities.

The curriculum lists general and specific objectives of teaching Literature-in-English and its components. Generally, literature is taught to broaden students' cultural awareness and knowledge of healthy human values to enhance their language skills; expose them to the beauty and potentials of language; and equip them with the necessary skills for independent thinking and creative writing. Another general objective is to adequately prepare students for standardized examinations needed for work and for further studies. For the specific objectives, literary appreciation is intended to help students develop critical sensitivity to literature and be able to independently assess prose, poetry, and drama. Through drama instruction, students learn basic dramatic techniques, develop the skills of acting, and become able to relate drama to real life. The goal of poetry instruction is to expose students to the richness of poetic expression and to gain experience in writing their own poems. Lastly, the objective of teaching prose is to enable learners to recognize the values embodied in fiction (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council [NERDC] 2009, p. iii–v). To facilitate the attainment of these objectives, the recommended texts usually cut across African and non-African writings with diverse themes, including social vices, diseases, science fiction, technology, history, heroism, gender, multicultural issues, politics, and governance.

A major way to establish whether or not students are learning and, by extension, attaining the objectives of Literature-in-English in Nigeria is through their yearly senior school certificate examination (SSCE) results. The SSCE is organized by different examination bodies, notably the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO). The minimum standard students are expected to attain in SSCE is a “pass” at credit level. A credit pass (in combination with four other subjects), qualifies students for further studies in any discipline in the humanities that require Literature-in-English, including English language and literature; language education; mass communication; law; linguistics; theatre arts; and classics.

Meanwhile, the curricula of WAEC and NECO SSCE have been synchronized, meaning that the same literature texts are recommended for both examinations. Out of eight texts, students may read only four (an African drama, a non-African drama, an African prose, and a non-African prose). They also have 3 years (SS1–3) to study these texts. With this lenient structure and extended time frame, it is expected that students would be adequately prepared for these examinations. However, their level of failure, which has become a yearly occurrence, seems to suggest the opposite. Their performance is not only poor but also declining annually, especially in the WAEC SSCE.

Qualitative reports from the WAEC Chief Examiners from 2011 to 2019 reveal common errors and weaknesses in students' writings. The weaknesses include poor literary appreciation; misinterpretation of questions; writing out of context; misunderstanding of rubrics; lack of critical skills and originality in responding to questions; poor communication skills; and an inability to answer questions in good English. Others include reproducing the storyline; inability to answer questions with close reference to the texts; vague and sketchy answers; lack of in-depth knowledge due to shallow understanding of the recommended texts; and illegible handwriting. The report concluded that students read mainly the abridged versions of the texts, short notes, or key points instead of the original texts (WAEC, 2021). In the NECO SSCE, the Chief Examiner reported that out of 1,195,063 students who sat for Literature-in-English from 2011 to 2015, less than 1% of them got A1 (75 %); most of those who passed scored C6, (50%–54%)—which is just an average score (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Although the SSCE may not be the only yardstick for measuring students' achievement level, it helps to understand what is happening in the school system and whether students are learning or not.

Literature-in-English is one of the principal school subjects that can help students enhance their language skills. Graduates who can use language effectively in different domains are needed in today's society. The career paths open to Literature-in-English are numerous, including teaching, creative writing, mass media (broadcasting, journalism, newspaper), film, advertising, copyediting, review and report writing, secretarial works, digital and book publishing, public speaking, editorial assistant, and lexicography. The post-COVID era

is opening up more job outlets. With the barriers of physical space or distance gradually being overcome, companies and institutions around the world are hiring people who have the required skills to fill up the available positions. However, job opportunities are often competitive and the numerous career paths listed (above) are only open to students who acquire the required skills, including proficiency in reading, writing, oral communication, leadership and teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving. These are parts of the most important soft skills that employers require from college students (Workforce Readiness Project, 2006).

As the world continues to adjust to the “new normal” brought in by the novel COVID-19 virus, having the (above) soft skills, including digital literacy, creativity and innovation, are all the more essential for young people to remain relevant (Stephanie, 2021). If Nigerian students are to fit into the present-day workforce, they need to acquire those skills. Thus, it is not enough for students to study Literature-in-English. A high level of efficiency in the teaching–learning process is required to enable students to develop the necessary skills. However, the high rate of failure indicates that they are not learning enough and, therefore, may not acquire the skills that Literature-in-English is supposed to equip them with.

Studies have shown that lack of learning resources is a major factor that contributes to poor teaching and learning in Nigeria (Nigeria Education in Emergencies Working Group, 2019). Cases of non-availability of qualified teachers, lack of textbooks, and school supplies are very common in schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015; UNICEF, 2017). In government interventions to redress the shortage of textbooks, the cross-cutting subjects, especially English and Mathematics are usually prioritized while subjects like Literature-in-English are neglected. Studies on the challenges of teaching Literature-in-English in Nigeria, with emphasis on the availability of teaching–learning resources are sketchy and not elaborate. Such studies include Ichu (1989) and Dahiru (2020).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the problems of teaching Literature-in-English in Nigerian senior secondary schools with emphasis on the availability of teaching–learning resources. Based on the identified problems, the study will recommend appropriate actions to enhance quality instruction, students’ learning, and the attainment of the skills they will need either for further studies or for work.

Literature Review

Studying Literature-in-English as a school subject goes beyond reading a piece of literary work and being able to retell the storyline. It is also not sufficient to know the subject matter in the text. Literature students need to be able to read the text, appreciate it, and engage in meaningful discussion in order to arrive at a deeper level of comprehension. A particular text may require reading over and over again before it could be understood. The more students read the text, the more insights they may gain. Such insights may warrant asking more questions, making clarifications, interacting further with the texts, with other students, or with the teacher. Accordingly, reading the recommended texts is not optional but a prerequisite for all Literature-in-English students, so that they would learn.

To enhance literary appreciation, nothing about the text should be taken for granted. Literature-in-English requires close and purposive reading, paying attention to elements, such as plots, settings, themes, characterization, and diction. Students also need to contribute to the teaching–learning process by participating in classroom discussions, which may be initiated by them or by the teacher. On the part of the teacher, there is a need to make the classroom learner-centered and activity-based. This can be achieved by using various teaching strategies, such as focus group discussion, quizzes, drama, and debate—depending on the genre of literature being taught and the lesson objectives. Since the duration of each lesson is usually 45 minutes, teachers need to encourage students to read the texts beforehand (at home or before the lessons). This would prepare them to participate actively in class discussions. Without actively engaging the students,

the lesson may become boring, and the teacher may become the sole voice in the classroom. If that happens, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to make students appreciate literature.

There are different approaches to the teaching of literature. Carter and Long (1991), as cited in Savvidou (2004), discussed three approaches or models: cultural, language, and personal growth. As its name suggests, the first model's emphasis is to expose learners to other cultures. Thus, the socio-political and historical contexts of each text are explored. The language model presents literature as a tool for language learning, while the personal growth model emphasizes the relevance of literature to daily life.

The three models, which could serve as guidelines for successful classroom instruction, also establish the importance of literature as a school subject. Cultural awareness, for example, is one of the objectives of post-basic education in Nigeria. The National Policy on Education states that education should be used to promote Nigerian art and culture and foster patriotism, national unity, and diversity (FRN, 2014, p. 18). In that sense, literature teaching becomes a means of realizing one of the goals of basic education. Students could be asked to compare and contrast the cultural contexts of the novel or drama with their own culture.

Literature-in-English is basically a manipulation of language in different contexts. The language model stresses the need to engage students in a series of language activities, such as plot summary, discussion of the major themes and characters, as well as attempts to produce individual creative writings following the patterns of a given text. Studies have shown that exposure to literature facilitates language learning (Amuseghan & Momoh, 2013; Anka et al., 2017). As students explore characterization, plots, settings, and themes, numerous questions and insights may come up that could form the basis for class discussions, literary appreciation, language learning, and vocabulary development. Through these, students are enabled to engage in different aspects of language use and practice—listening, speaking, reading, writing, discourse, and development of analytical skills.

The personal growth model could enable students to appreciate literature, not as abstract ideas but as a subject that is relevant to life. Students are required to engage in personal responses to the texts by making connections between the experiences or fictional world portrayed in the text and their individual experiences or social milieu. Fundamentally, all literary works—irrespective of the genre—are about life experiences as perceived by writers in different places and time. Accordingly, literature could help students understand human nature better as they explore some themes that present the universal truth about human beings and human conditions. For example, students may encounter imaginary personalities, situations, and diverse ways of responding to or solving life's many challenges or problems. That way, literature could prepare them to face the challenges of life. Essentially, students may better appreciate literature to the extent that they see its relevance to their daily lives.

Literature teachers may use any of the three models or a combination (an integrated approach) to deliver quality instruction. Irrespective of the approach used, two things are fundamentally necessary: meaningful reading of the text and active participation of learners. For effective teaching and learning of Literature-in-English, there is no short cut or alternative to the reading of the text. While active participation is instrumental to successful instruction, this is impossible without the reading of the text because class discussion is based on what students and teachers have read. Consequently, the broad objectives of literature instruction will be achieved depending on students' readiness to engage in meaningful and extensive reading of the recommended texts and teachers' ability to deliver effective lessons. However, the high rate of failure in the SSCE coupled with the recurring weaknesses in students' examination scripts—as contained in the WAEC Chief Examiners' reports are indications that there are fundamental problems facing the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English in Nigeria. They are also indications that the objectives listed in the curriculum are still far from being realized. Thus, urgent intervention is needed.

A number of studies have been carried out in an effort to improve the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English in Nigerian secondary schools. Dahiru (2020) investigated the challenges secondary school teachers in Yobe and Borno States faced in the teaching of Literature-in-English and its impact on university admission requirements. The study found that the subject was not taught in most secondary schools due to socio-cultural factors, unavailability of qualified teachers, and gender issues. Besides, some heads of schools consider literature an irrelevant school subject. These factors led to students' failure and, by implication, inability to study courses in the university that require a credit in Literature-in-English. Ichu (1989) also reported that the problem of teaching literature in Nigerian secondary schools include shortage of teachers, high cost of the literature texts, and lack of teaching–learning resources. However, the study only asked the opinion of teachers and students without really finding out the extent to which students actually have the recommended texts.

In another study by Danner and Musa (2019), the teaching methods used by teachers to teach the Shakespearean drama were investigated. The results indicate that variables like years of teaching experience, workload and type of training notwithstanding, teachers were not dynamic in their methods of teaching. This is similar to the findings of an earlier study carried out in Benue State by Adelabu and Nder (2013). They reported that teachers' method of teaching English and literature were inadequate and, therefore, unproductive. Besides, Timothy and Obiekezie (2019) discovered that Nigerian pre-service teachers were negatively disposed to teach poetry.

In Ibadan metropolis, where the present study was carried out, there had been an earlier research by Ezeokoli and Igbor (2014). Using the descriptive survey research design, they investigated the extent to which SS2 students possessed the prescribed prose texts and whether this affected teachers' pedagogical practices. The results revealed that many students did not have the prescribed texts and that teachers were not dynamic in their methods of teaching. In other words, the extent to which students possessed the text did not make teachers vary their teaching methods. The study created a gap, by failing to investigate why teachers could not diversify their methods of teaching—even under different contexts.

The reviewed literature points to a deeper problem in Literature-in-English classrooms that requires further investigation. Effective teaching of any school subject is dependent on several—usually related—factors, such as the availability of qualified and motivated teachers, school facilities, and teaching–learning resources, including textbooks for teachers and students, instructional materials, and a conducive environment. Teaching–learning resources, especially textbooks, facilitate the teaching–learning process: active participation of students, positive attitudes, and increased learning outcomes (Sigilai, 2013). Teachers use the textbooks as guides for lesson planning and delivery. However, in many Sub-Saharan African countries, including Nigeria, children learn in poor environments bereft of the basic learning materials, especially textbooks (Humphreys & Crawford, 2014; The African Union, 2015; Rueckert, 2019). Ouane and Glanz (2011) reported that most schools in Africa suffer scarcity of quality educational materials, including textbooks. Studies carried out in different African countries, including in Kenya (Sigilai, 2013), Zimbabwe (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015), Tanzania (Lyimo et al., 2017), and Nigeria (Abdu-Raheem, 2016; Dahiru, 2020; Tofi & Onuminya, 2019), all reported shortage of the essential teaching–learning resources, including qualified teachers, textbooks, and school supplies. The Federal Ministry of Education (FEM, 2015) reported that there was chronic shortage of primary and junior secondary school core subject teachers in every Nigerian State. Non-availability of textbooks and learning resources in most schools is attributed to poor funding of education (Humphreys & Crawford, 2014; FEM, 2015; UNICEF, 2017; Rueckert, 2019). Moreover, many parents cannot afford the cost of schooling due to poverty. Literature-in-English students may find it more difficult because they need to buy several books for the three genres.

Lack of teaching–learning resources affects the quality of teaching and contributes to unequal access to basic education, failure, class repetition, dropout, and perpetuation of illiteracy (Humphreys & Crawford, 2014; UNICEF, 2017; Rueckert, 2019; Nigeria Education in Emergencies, 2019). Birger and Brar (2015) add that the

non-availability of textbooks prevents learners in Sub-Saharan Africa from developing good reading habits and deprives teachers of the much-needed teaching support. Consequently, many learners leave school without mastering the basic competencies in literacy, numeracy, and life skills (African Union, 2015; World Bank, 2018).

Although there are occasions where the Nigerian governments provided free textbooks to students (FEM, 2015), literature textbooks were not included—probably because it is not a cross-cutting core subject. However, in Literature-in-English classrooms, textbooks are not just supplementary or instructional materials. They are, rather, the center of the teaching–learning process. This means that students who do not have or read the texts may not understand what is being taught. This study, therefore, investigated the challenges facing effective teaching of Literature-in-English in Nigerian senior secondary schools (SS1–3).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model, which was developed by Daniel L. Stufflebeam and his colleagues in the 1960s. Stufflebeam (1971) describes the CIPP Evaluation Model as a comprehensive approach to evaluation aimed at facilitating educational improvement. The model helps to understand the functioning of any given program, in order to ascertain whether the set objectives are being achieved, or not, and what could be done to enhance it. The CIPP Evaluation Model assumes that the attainment of the objectives of a program would require proper planning, provision of the necessary structures, which in turn would lead to the proper functioning of the system. A default in the process could be because the required inputs were not put in place. This could make it impossible to attain the set goals.

The CIPP Evaluation Model is relevant in understanding the effectiveness of the educational system as a whole and the teaching–learning process in particular. The success of education may depend on the availability of necessary infrastructures, including a conducive learning environment, adequate personnel, teaching–learning resources, and motivated students who are ready to learn and possess the basic language skills. If any of these is lacking, teachers may find it difficult to teach effectively, which will in turn affect learners.

For Literature-in-English teachers to teach effectively, they may need to ask certain questions such as: What are learners' peculiar characteristics or circumstances? What should be put in place to enable them to learn? How can they be meaningfully taught? Although this study is mainly concerned with the input and process (availability of teachers, students' possession of the recommended texts and effective teaching), understanding the context in which it was carried out (that is, public secondary schools) is important. In Nigeria, public primary and secondary schools are generally dysfunctional due to poor funding, which in turn leads to poor infrastructures, understaffing, and poor quality of teaching and learning. As such, students in these schools are usually from poorer families who are unable to afford the cost of sending their children to the numerous private schools (Rueckert, 2019). Moreover, English is a second language (L2) in Nigeria. This means that many literature students may not possess high proficiency in English. Hence, they require a lot of inputs in the form of instructional materials, textbooks, supplementary materials, and qualified teachers in order to learn better. If these are not available, the teaching learning process may not be effective.

Methodology

This study was carried out in 51 public senior secondary schools in the Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State. Out of the five local government area (LGAs) in the metropolis, the three with the highest number of senior secondary schools (over 25 schools each) were selected. This allowed for the selection and mixture of schools in strategic and remote areas. From each LGA, 17 schools were randomly selected.

The mixed methods research design was used to gather qualitative and quantitative data. The mixed methods approach was considered more appropriate because it would give room to investigate the problem of the study from different perspectives. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data, according to Creswell, Klassen, and Smith (2010), allows for the maximization of the strengths and minimization of the weaknesses of each data type.

The researcher developed three instruments for the collection of data. The first instrument was Availability of Literature Teachers Checklist (ALTC), which was used to get the statistics of schools that have active literature teachers and those that do not. The data were analyzed using frequency count and simple percentage.

The second instrument was the *Interview Guide for Literature-in-English Teachers* (IGLT). It was used to collect qualitative data from Literature-in-English teachers through face-to-face interviews. The selection followed the results of the first instrument. A total of 20 teachers (one from each school) were selected across the three LGAs through purposive sampling technique. The sampled teachers were asked to share the major challenges they encounter in the teaching of Literature-in-English. Their responses were audio-recorded and notes were taken to complement the recordings. At the end of the interviews, the responses were content-analyzed and major themes were established.

A third instrument titled Students' Text Possession Checklist (STPC) was developed and administered on a total of 7,090 students in 35 senior secondary schools (SS1–3). The data were analyzed using the SSPS and the results from each category of data were used to answer three research questions.

Research Question 1: To what extent are Literature-in-English teachers available in the senior secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis?

Research Question 2: What challenges do senior secondary school teachers face in the teaching of Literature-in-English?

Research Question 3: To what extent do Literature-in-English students possess the prescribed Literature-in-English texts?

Results

Research Question 1: *To what extent are Literature-in-English teachers available in the senior secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis?*

Figure 1: *Distribution of the Availability of Literature-in-English Teachers in SS1–3 Classes*

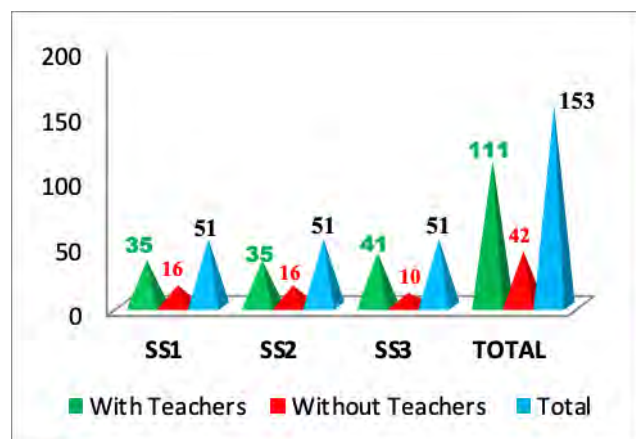


Figure 1 presents the distribution of SS1–3 arts classes (in 51 schools) according to the availability and non-availability of Literature-in-English teachers. Teachers are available in 35 but not in 16 SS1 and SS2 classes respectively. In SS3 classes, the teachers are available in 41 but not in 10 classes. In summary, out of 153 senior secondary arts classes, Literature-in-English teachers are available in 111 classes. In most schools, all Literature-in-English students in each arm (SS1, SS2 and SS3) are merged as one during lessons—irrespective of the number. This creates rowdy scenes and makes the class uncontrollable for teachers.

Research Question 2: *What challenges do senior secondary school teachers face in the teaching of Literature-in-English?*

Below is the summary of teachers' responses on the major problems they encounter in the teaching of Literature-in-English. The responses are summarized in eight subheadings and arranged in chronological order (highest to lowest identified problem). Teachers' names have been replaced with numbers (T1 to T20) for anonymity.

1. Non-possession of prescribed texts: Out of the 20 teachers interviewed, 17 of them identified this as a major challenge. Many students do not have the recommended literature texts. Without the texts, teachers are unable to deliver quality instruction, as students do not read the texts before coming to class. The time that would be used for textual analysis are rather devoted to reading, sometimes, by the teachers. Excerpts:
 - T1: *The number one problem that I encounter is students' inability to buy the prescribed texts. When you go to the class, you will discover that not up to 20% of the students have the prescribed texts. Because of that, I find it difficult to analyze the text. Secondly, since they do not have the text, they are unable to read extensively at home or beyond what I teach in the class.*
 - T2: *The major problem I encounter is the student's inability to get the textbooks. How can you teach effectively when you have about 20 students in a class and not even three of them have the text you want to teach them?*
 - T3: *Since students have not been buying the texts, I made up my mind that since in the WAEC questions, they would be required to pick some questions, I just came up with this style: I choose either African or non-African text for my class. So, from the three genres, I chose either African or non-African text and teach only that. That is the style I've been using for them.*
 - T4: *Students, especially in public schools don't buy textbooks. Before now, we had two syllabi, that is, one for WAEC and another for NECO; presently, the two bodies have harmonized; so, instead of 12 textbooks, students are required to read just six literary texts (that is, including one for poetry and a Shakespearean text). In spite of that, students don't buy textbooks. There is no way they can succeed without reading the texts.*
 - T5: *Many of them don't buy textbook; so we have to make do with what we have. Because they do not have the texts, I cannot give them assignment; not all of them will be able to answer the questions. Without the texts, teaching is difficult. There is an extent to which you can say, share with others. It depends on how many of them that has the texts.*
 - T6: *The students are not buying textbooks and it is difficult to teach without the students' having the text. Also, they do not have a reading culture.*
 - T7: *The teachers are not challenged because the learners do not read.*
 - T14: *Some students would not come to school as a result of not having textbooks. Even, when I extract some parts of a textbook for them to photocopy just to lessen their burden of buying*

a textbook, some cannot even afford to do a photocopy of say ₦80 (\$0.20) or worth of ₦100 (\$0.25).

T15: *Students will rather use their money to buy recharge cards than to buy textbooks.*

The above responses of teachers expose the seriousness of the situation Nigerian teachers and students are faced with, including sketchy and examination-centered teaching, lack of motivation, teachers' inability to put in their best, a feeling of hopelessness and helplessness, frustration, and students missing classes or dropping out of school due to lack of textbooks. For T15, it is a matter of students not making the buying of textbooks a priority. All these have short- and long-term implications for effective teaching, access to, quality, and product of Nigerian education as a whole. When students miss school due to their inability to buy Literature-in-English textbooks, their learning of other school subjects is affected. Meanwhile, the idea of "photocopying part of a textbook" (response of T14), which ordinarily is not legal, points to an unwholesome but a common practice in Nigeria and why it may be difficult to curtail the practice. Poverty, on the part of the students, and the necessity to make teaching and learning possible, on the part of the teachers, all contribute to it.

2. Low interest in reading: Thirteen teachers identified this as one of the major problems they face. Below are some of their responses:

T8: *The students are not really interested in reading. Their reading habit is very low, because, as you even witnessed, about 35% of them cannot read, just few of them can read. So, the teacher has to read, explain. And even, giving them notes, getting home to read is another thing. They are not ready to read.*

T5: *Some students are very lazy; some have the books but are not ready to open the books except when in the class.*

T6: *With the coming of mobile phones and internet, students no longer read. They go to the internet. And if you make it compulsory for them to read, they will tell you that they do not have money to buy the books.*

T10: *There is no way a student of Literature can pass without reading the texts. It is what they read that would enable them to respond appropriately to any question the teacher asks.*

T18: *The students we are having today do not take reading as a major thing. Many of them say: "I read whenever I have time or whenever they ask me to read." But even when asked to read, you discover that they are unable to do so. For those who have the texts, by the time you go to their class to teach, they will not have anything to say, which means they do not read. That is the problem.*

3. Undervaluing of arts as a discipline and Literature-in-English as a school subject: Eight teachers stated that many students do not see the relevance of Literature-in-English
4. and some dislike it because of the requirement to read extensively. For different reasons, some students consider arts as a dumping ground. Some were not properly guided, so, they choose the arts discipline without knowing what to expect and where it could lead them to (that is, the career paths). Some were forced to study arts because they were considered (or they considered themselves) academically "unfit" for the other fields of study. Arts discipline has also been stereotyped as a field for less serious students. These factors combine to make arts students develop a negative attitude, have low motivation, and are unable to aspire high, including the prospect of going to the university. The factors also limit students' zeal to study literature and affect classroom instruction. Excerpts:

T1: *Some students have no focus. They do not understand why they are even studying literature as a subject and what effect it has in their life. Some think that reading the text is a matter of choice or for fun.*

- T3: *Some students just find themselves in arts class. Many of them aspire to be in science class. There is a need for a guidance counsellor to come to the aid of the students to help them understand what they really want, their aspirations and talents, so that they can make the right choice.*
- T20: *Some of my students happen to find themselves in arts class, not because they have interest in it. It is because they could neither fit into science—due to chemistry and math nor into commercial because of accounting. So, the only option left is arts class. On getting to arts class, one subject that some of them hate is literature because it requires a large use of English language, but their background is not encouraging.*
- T14: *Of all the three arms in public schools, students in arts class are considered to be less serious compared to other classes because most of them look at arts as a dumping ground. A common idea is: “If you can’t fit into the other two, come to arts.” But unfortunately, they get discouraged when they come and encounter Literature because it requires a lot of reading and most of them are not ready for this.*
- T8: *It seems they do not even have interest in literature. If they have the interest, they would come to the teacher to help them. A student who cannot read the text cannot answer the questions.*
- T10: *Students do not encourage us, the teachers, because of their lack of interest in literature, and in reading.*
- T17: *Arts students are no longer what they used to be. They used to be looked at as class of lawyers, class of broadcasters. But nowadays, majority of them do not know why they are in that class or what the future holds for them.*

These responses further point to the cyclic nature of poor quality education in Nigeria. Students who cannot fit into their desirable fields could be due to poor foundation at the junior secondary or primary school level.

5. Low proficiency in English language: Several teachers mentioned that their students have low language proficiency, especially in listening, speaking, and reading. As a result, they do not understand the text even when it is being read in the class—not to talk of reading on their own. They also do not understand when the teacher tries to analyze it. As a result, teachers sometimes switch to the mother tongue. Students are not able to make meaningful contributions in the class. Below are some of the opinions shared by the teachers:

- T9: *Some students find it difficult to read. Some do not understand English language. Sometimes, I switch over to their mother tongue.*
- T20: *Sometimes, I have to use the native language (Yoruba) to explain before students can understand what I teach them.*
- T1: *Some of my students cannot express themselves in English language.*
- T18: *Most of my students cannot read.*

Teacher 18 was asked: How is it that students in SS2 cannot read? How did they get to this level without being able to read? His response was:

You see, students are promoted to each class, whether they pass or not. That is the problem. Students do not repeat classes anymore, even if they fail.

6. Lack of parental commitment and support: This is the fifth most-identified problem mentioned by the teachers. Parents are said to have lackadaisical attitudes towards their children’s education. This has been heightened by the recent Oyo State government’s policy of free education, including free distribution of books to students. Teachers observed that:

- T1: *Many students do not buy the books. They give different excuses such as that their parents refused to buy or that they are waiting for the government to give them the books. Many parents are not encouraging them. They are not interested in what happens in the school.*
- T4: *The students here wait for the government to buy the textbooks for them and their parents; if you send for them, they will not come; they are not ready to cooperate.*
- T17: *Now that we have free education policy, they think that everything is free. So, those who purchase the recommended textbooks are those that are actually learning. Out of maybe 60 or 70 students in a class, hardly can you find 20 that would buy the recommended textbooks.*
- T12: *Some students claim that they are living with their aged grandmothers or grandfathers, and the grandparents cannot afford to buy the books. Some do give excuses that their mother is no more with their father, and their father would not agree to buy the books for them.*
- T19: *There are other hidden challenges. Some of them have challenges from home. So, getting to school they are not coordinated.*
- T16: *They feel lazy to copy from the board. Some will copy wrongly while some will not even copy the note. And even when they copy the notes, they will not read it at home. At home, they go to work for their mothers or to stay in their shops.*

Teachers' responses show that students' home background, including unstable families, divorce, poverty, and environment affect their learning. Moreover, it is not just that some parents are poor and unable to buy the books; some of them lack commitment to their children's welfare. Illiterate parents may not understand that textbooks are important for learning.

7. Shortage of Literature-in-English teachers, heavy workload, and large classes: In most schools that participated in this study, it was discovered that a single teacher usually teaches Literature-in-English from SS1–3, and some teach both literature and English language from SS1–3. Some schools have large class sizes that are difficult for teachers to handle. Excerpts:
- T9: *I teach English to SS3 of three arms, that is, Arts, Science, and Commercial classes. I also teach English to SS2 of three arms. Then, I teach Literature-in-English to SS2 and SS3 classes. From Monday to Wednesday, I will be having 1st to 5th period without rest. How can someone be teaching from the 1st to the 5th period without rest? There will be a particular period that will be affected. So, shortage of teachers is a problem we are facing.*
- T13: *The numerical strength of this school is very large. I find it difficult to manage the class due to a very large class. The class is always very rowdy. In one of my classes here, I have around 105 students and out of these, only about seven have the literature text that we are reading currently. So, I have to take it upon myself to read for them, summarize for them, and write on the chalkboard for them in the midst of this terrible noise. It is unlike in our own days when we the students numbered between 25 and 35.*
- T6: *The workload is too much. There is shortage of teachers. I teach both English and Literature-in-English.*
8. Poor learning environment and lack of infrastructures: Teachers reported that poor learning environment limits their ability to teach effectively. It also affects students' ability to concentrate. The situation is worse in large classes. Excerpts:
- T13: *The classroom environment is very poor. Students sit on window frames and on the bare floor, except for those who are able to bring small seats or cut tree branches and bring to the class to sit on. These are not conducive. They are not able to write because the sitting arrangement is not in order.*

T11: *There is no well-equipped library. In our days, if you do not have textbooks, you can go to the library and read. But now, the library is filled with obsolete textbooks.*

T16: *Another problem that I face is lack of furniture. The sitting and classroom environment does not make learning conducive for them. Majority of them do not have chairs or desks. How can you be teaching students who are sitting on the floor and on the window frames?*

9. Lack of instructional materials for teachers: One teacher identified this as a problem. According to the teacher:

There are three of us teaching literature at different arms and most times, we work with only one textbook, that is, a comprehensive text on literature. We have to wait for one another before we can use the text. Also, the primary text, either prose or drama is being bought by the teacher to study before teaching the students, otherwise, we will not be able to teach. The school management does not buy the books except the Exam Focus. For the instructional materials, it is left for the teacher to buy too.

The “comprehensive text” being referred to by the teacher is a popular textbook series in Nigeria, which is prepared in line with the SSCE questions. That is why it is titled *Exam Focus*. The Literature-in-English *Exam Focus* has all the poems but only the summarized version of the drama and prose texts. The above response implies that teachers who cannot buy the different texts may rely solely on the *Exam Focus*. This will affect the quality of teaching. Moreover, the response shows that some schools are more concerned about students’ passing of the SSCE rather than on learning or acquiring the necessary skills embedded in literature.

Research Question 3: *To what extent do Literature-in-English students possess the prescribed Literature-in-English texts?*

The number and percentage of students who possessed the prescribed texts were obtained according to the genres of literature (Figure 2). This is followed by the distribution of those who have the recommended texts according to classes (Figure 3).

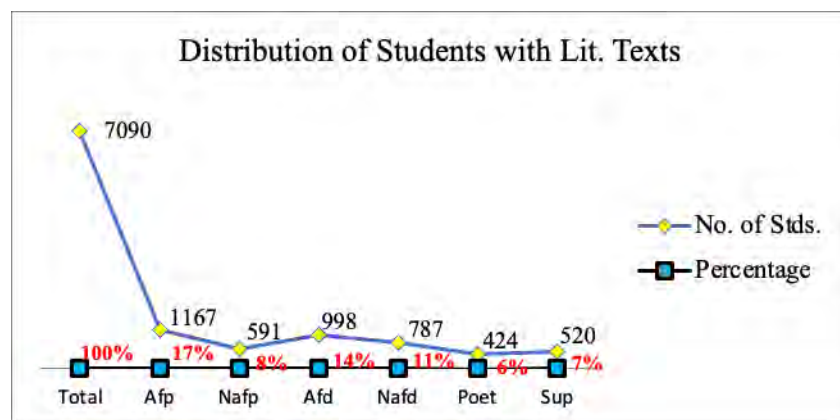


Figure 2 presents the distribution of 7,090 SS1–3 students who offer Literature-in-English according to the number that has the recommended texts. Only 17% (representing 1,167 students) have the African prose (Afp.); 8% (591) have the non-African prose (Nafp.); 14% have the African drama (Afd.); and 11% have the non-African drama (Nafd.) texts, respectively. Furthermore, only 6% (424 students) have the poetry texts, while 7% have the supplementary text (that is, *Exam Focus* or other abridged textbooks).

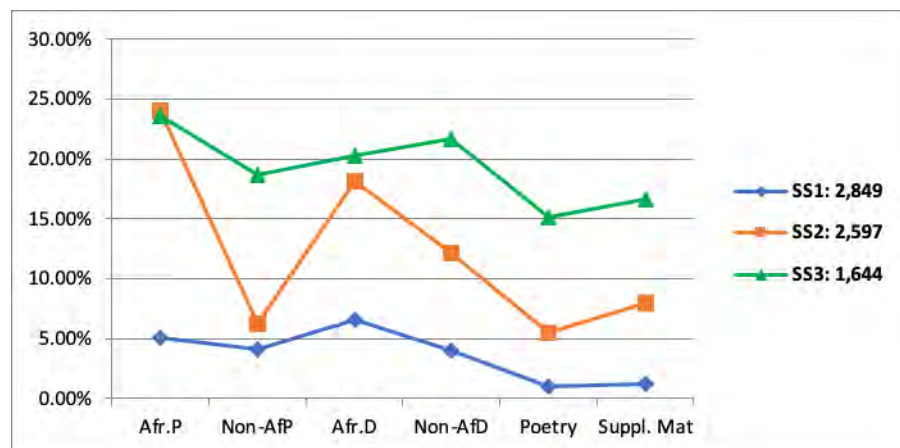
Figure 3: *Distribution of Students Who Have the Recommended Texts According to Their Classes*

Figure 3 presents the distribution of students (SS1–3) by text possession. The number of students that offer Literature-in-English (Figure 3) decreases as they move to higher classes. In SS1 there are 2,849 students; in SS2, the number is 2,597; and in SS3, it is 1,644. Moreover, the number of students who have the recommended texts is very low across all the classes (SS1–3) and across all genres (less than 25% of students have any particular text). Even though SS1 has the highest number of students that offer literature, it has the least number of those who possess the recommended texts (less than 10% across all genres). In SS2, only 24% of the students have African prose text, and less than 20% for the remaining genres. In SS3 too, just a little above 20% of the students have the recommended African prose, African drama, and non-African drama respectively.

Compared to drama and prose, poetry is the least recommended texts possessed by students (1% in SS1; 6% in SS2; and 15% in SS3). In terms of African and non-African texts, more SS1 and SS2 students have the African prose and drama texts than the non-African texts. The same thing is applicable in SS3 (for the prose) but not for drama texts, where 20% have the African and 22% have the non-African texts. A higher percentage of SS2 and SS3 students have prose texts than the other genres. In summary, the extent to which students have the recommended texts is very low.

Discussion

There are many problems facing the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English in Nigerian secondary schools. The first identified problem is the unavailability of teachers. Many schools do not have Literature-in-English teachers while in some, teachers are available for only the SS3 classes—probably to prepare students for the SSCE. A lot of students are left to grapple with the task of studying literature on their own. During the interview session, a teacher in one of the schools stated that she took up the task of teaching literature “out of pity” because the students had been failing the subject in the SSCE each year, since there was nobody to teach them. This result is in line with an earlier finding by Dahiru (2020), who reported that Literature-in-English teachers are in short supply in Nigerian secondary schools.

If students in schools with literature teachers find the subject difficult to master, how much more for those that do not have teachers? Such students will most likely find literature very difficult or develop a negative attitude towards it. Those taught in SS3 only will miss the fundamentals of literature since their teachers may be unable to cover the curriculum contents—given the short duration that each lesson lasts, usually 40–45 minutes. Teachers may teach to the test, and students would be denied of opportunities to acquire the skills that the literature curriculum is supposed to equip them with.

In schools that have Literature-in-English teachers, there are also several challenges that make teachers unable to deliver quality instruction. The most prominent problem is students' inability to buy the prescribed literature texts. Additionally, the learning environment is poor. Only a few students, in the sampled schools, have the recommended texts. To compound the problem, there are no functional school libraries where students could lay hands on the books. It is impossible to effectively teach any of the genres of literature if students do not have or read the texts. Effective teaching of literature demands that students read the texts before coming to class so that lesson periods are not entirely spent on reading but on discussing what had been read. Furthermore, if reading is to take place in the class, students who do not have the texts will become mere listeners and it might be difficult to sustain their attention. This lack of texts will also limit the chances of their achieving the gains and objectives of literature instruction. For example, it is through looking at the words and sentence structures, as used in the texts, and taking note of their pronunciations that students build their vocabulary and enhance their language skills. These skills will equally help them to better comprehend the texts. As Ugwu (2019) stated, ability to read is a necessity for knowledge acquisition but knowing a wide range of vocabularies is needed for meaningful reading and text comprehension. Without students having and reading the literature texts, class discussion, textual analysis, and their ability to respond to the texts will be difficult, if not impossible. Earlier studies, including Ezeokoli and Igbor (2014) had identified students' non-possession of the recommended texts as one of the problems of teaching Literature-in-English in Nigeria.

There is also the problem of poor language proficiency, which manifest in students' inability to read, write, copy notes, or participate fully in the classroom process. In literature lessons, little can be done or achieved if students cannot read. While studying Literature-in-English can boost students' language proficiency, inadequate knowledge of the language of the text can, as well, impede their capacity to make sense of the text. Low proficiency in English language is a common problem among Nigerian students. A high level of failure of English language is recorded yearly by students who write the SSCE. From 2016 to 2018, only 48% of 1.57 million Nigerian students who sat the WAEC SSCE got five credits and above, including English and mathematics (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Students with low proficiency in English language may find it difficult to understand literary texts written in complex vocabularies. As stated by some teachers during the interview sessions, they had to rely on the students' mother tongue for them to even understand the storyline. A major disadvantage of using the mother tongue to teach literature is that since students are assessed in English, they may find it difficult to respond appropriately to the questions due to the inability to express what they know in English. It is, therefore, not surprising that many of them write out of point (off topic) while some fail to observe the examination rubrics—as reported by the WAEC Chief Examiners (The WAEC, 2021). The inability of students to read also implies that teachers may be unable to teach or analyze all the recommended texts. Consequently, they may resort to giving summary notes to their students. All these will affect the quality of Literature-in-English lessons. This finding is in line with that of Hussein and Al-Emami (2016) who reported that students' low level of language proficiency and lack of motivation and interest to engage actively with the literary texts make the teaching of Literature-in-English difficult.

Another challenge is the misconception about the value of arts discipline, in general, and Literature-in-English, in particular. Several factors may be contributing to the misconceptions, including the nature of literature, that is, the reading demands it makes on students, the limited job opportunities in Nigeria, and students' inability to attain the high level of language skills that would enable them to compete favorably in the available jobs after school. Students with poor language skills and those who dislike extensive reading may not find literature appealing. The senior secondary school curriculum recommends that for a better experience of Literature-in-English, students should read outside the recommended texts (NERDC, p. vi).

The high emphasis placed on science and technology can lead students in arts classes to consider it as a discipline for less-intelligent people. As expressed by one of the teachers during the interview, arts class is seen as a place for those who cannot make it in the other areas. This kind of mentality and stereotype is

enough to discourage even students who genuinely are interested in arts. Earlier studies, including Beliaeva (2009) and Kateregga (2014), had reported that poor attitude, the fear of the demands of reading, and the belief that there may be limited—or no—job opportunities are some of the reasons why students avoid studying literature.

Although post-basic education, according to the National Policy on Education, is supposed to offer diversified curriculum that would cater to students' different talents, disposition, opportunities, and future roles, arts seems to be indirectly downgraded. The policy states that “special provisions shall be made and incentives provided for the study of the sciences at each level of the education system” (FRN, 2014, p. 3). This gives a notion that science is more valuable than the other disciplines. This seeming preferential treatment is visible in the current Oyo State government's handling of free education policy. As observed by some teachers during the interview sessions, textbooks on core science subjects (physics, chemistry and biology) were distributed to science students, English and mathematics textbooks were given to all students, but those in arts were not given any textbook that is specifically for arts students, including literature textbooks.

It is obvious, from the results, that poetry is by far the least textual genre owned by the students—across the three arms of senior secondary school. This should come as a surprise, given that most of the recommended poems are available on the internet where students could easily download and copy them. However, this might be because of the negative attitude of students towards poetry. Many studies have shown that students fear or dislike poetry more than the other genres (Xerri, 2016; Timothy & Obiekezie, 2019). Poetry cannot be fully appreciated without students looking at the words, noting the sounds, and even looking at the arrangement of the stanzas.

Faced with the numerous problems discussed (above), the teaching of Literature-in-English is difficult for teachers and is seriously affecting students. There is a learning crisis in literature classrooms, and the situation is almost hopeless. If the broad goals of literature instruction are to ever be attained in Nigeria, if literature students are to acquire the essential skills that would enable them to compete favorably in the limited job opportunities, and, therefore, contribute to the global economy, urgent interventions are needed.

Recommendations

To address the different problems that were identified, the following suggestions might be helpful:

1. Since English is a second language in Nigeria, there is a need to re-emphasize the importance of Literature-in-English as a school subject that could help students build their language skills. Thus, all students should be encouraged to read the recommended literature texts.
2. It is time for Nigerians to shift from undue emphasis on certificate to hands-on skills. Teachers need to focus more on capacity building rather than on examination readiness. This requires a review of the Literature-in-English curriculum, including the goals of literature and the methods of teaching.
3. School heads and teachers should refrain from pairing students into different fields without proper orientation. Their potentials, interests, and capability, as recommended in the education policy, (FRN, 2014, p. 23), should be taken into consideration. Students should know the career path that each discipline could lead to. Heads of schools should invite professionals on different fields to give students seminars on career paths before they choose their field of study.
4. Since the Oyo State government has initiated a free education policy and distributed free books to students, there should be a balance by including literature texts for arts students.
5. Faced with the reality of acute shortage of textbooks, teachers can use collaborative and cooperative learning strategies to meaningfully engage students. For example, schools within a particular locality

can share all the recommended drama texts (one text per school), and then each school prepares for an intra-school dramatic performance based on the assigned text. Through this, students will have a wide range of experiences and develop different skills like teamwork, leadership, listening, communication, and self-confidence. This may enhance their level of comprehension and make them realize the relevance of and connection between literature and real life.

6. Teachers should take advantage of the domineering influence of the social media on young people by utilizing it to enhance students' engagement with reading of literary texts, textual analysis, and discussion. Social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Zoom, and Twitter can be used for inter-class or inter-school debates, quizzes, group presentations, and video conferencing. Through this practice, students and teachers may acquire digital literacy.
7. The Ministry of Education should seek the help of national and international organizations to subsidize the cost of textbooks for students. The government should also invest in computers with internet abilities to enable students to download or read materials that are accessible online. Since generating electricity is a major challenge in Nigeria, the government should invest in solar energy to power the computers.
8. To make the schools conducive for learning and enhance students' active participation, well-equipped libraries and other basic facilities should be provided. To increase parents' commitment, they should be invited during the intra- and inter-school dramatic performances, debates, etc. Through this, they may come to realize what their children could do if given the right opportunity.
9. The practice of merging all arts students into one class during Literature-in-English lessons should be avoided as much as possible, especially in schools with large population of arts students. Splitting the classes into manageable units will make teaching easier, reduce noise and distraction, enhance active participation of students, and improve learning.
10. There is a need to employ more qualified Literature-in-English teachers, and those employed already should not be tasked to teach both English and literature. To reduce cost, part-time teachers could be hired.

Conclusion

The study identified and discussed some challenges of teaching Literature-in-English in Nigerian senior secondary schools. The challenges include poor learning environment, lack of basic learning facilities, especially textbooks, students' limited language proficiency, and poor attitude towards reading. Many schools do not have teachers, and some teachers are saddled with heavy workloads. These factors prevent them from delivering quality classroom instruction. For the teaching–learning process to improve, the identified problems need to be properly addressed. As a way forward, the study made several recommendations. The study upholds the relevance of the CIPP Evaluation Model to education. The availability of essential human and material resources (inputs) enables effective teaching and learning (process) for learning to take place and the learning objectives (products) to be realized. Future studies could focus on Literature-in-English students' level of awareness of the career paths open to them, why students are not reading, and teachers' level of preparedness for digital literacy. The salary structures of arts and science graduates in the Nigerian workplaces can also be compared.

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