

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG COLLEGES OF EDUCATION STUDENTS IN NORTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of teacher-related factors on students' academic performance and attitudes toward learning English in Colleges of Education within Nigeria's North-West Zone. It was guided by two research objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses. An exploratory correlational research design was employed. The population comprised English language lecturers and NCE II students from 15 public Colleges of Education in the North-West Zone. A sample of 66 lecturers and 217 students was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using three instruments: the English Language Attitude Questionnaire (ELAQ) adapted from Gardner (1985), the English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) adapted from Jigawa State College of Education (2023/2024), and the Classroom Observation Rating Scale based on Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2007). Pilot testing established high reliability, with Pearson correlation coefficients of $r = 0.99$ for ELAQ, $r = 0.75$ for ELAT, and $r = 0.98$ for the observation scale. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage, and standard deviation) were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics included Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) for hypotheses 1–2, all tested at the 0.05 significance level. The major findings revealed no significant relationships between communication skills, and either students' academic performance or their attitudes toward English learning. Findings underscore the need to re-examine prevailing assumptions about the drivers of student success in English learning and highlight the importance of considering broader socio-cultural, institutional, and environmental factors. It recommends adapting teacher training programs to the region's unique context, integrating responsive strategies into curriculum reforms, and pursuing further research to explore alternative determinants of learning outcomes.

Keywords: Teacher-related factors, communication skills, academic performance, attitude, English language.

Introduction

The academic performance and attitude of students toward the English language, particularly in colleges of education, are critical areas of concern in the Nigerian education system. As a medium of instruction and a core subject, English plays a pivotal role in shaping students' cognitive, communicative, and professional abilities. However, the level of proficiency and retention among students has been a subject of widespread concern in recent years, particularly in the North-West zone of Nigeria, where education faces unique challenges related to socio-economic, cultural, and systemic factors.

The issue of poor academic performance of students in colleges of education has been of much concern to all the teachers and educational board. The problem is so much that it has led to the widely acclaimed fallen standard of education in Nigeria. Several accusing fingers are pointed at teachers for being responsible for the fallen standard of education in the country, because some suggest that the quality of education depends on the teachers' communication skills in the performing of their duties. Students' academic performance as observed by Ayodele, (2015) is one of the acceptable yardsticks for measuring the success or otherwise of any educational setting including colleges of education, because it shows how students deal with their studies and how they accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers.

Statement of the Problem

English language proficiency is essential for academic success in Nigeria, serving both as the medium of instruction and as a unifying language across disciplines, yet, persistent evidence reveals poor academic performance and negative attitudes toward English among Colleges of Education students in Nigeria's North-West zone. These challenges not only jeopardize the academic success of these prospective teachers but also threaten the future quality of English instruction in basic and secondary schools, where they are expected to serve as educators (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2014; West African Examinations Council [WAEC], 2022; National Commission for Colleges of Education [NCCE], 2020). For the past six years (2019–2024), persistent evidence has revealed poor academic performance and negative attitudes toward English among Colleges of Education students in Nigeria's North-West zone.

From my observation as a researcher working closely with Colleges of Education, many students exhibit weak foundational knowledge, minimal interest in English courses, and poor retention of learned concepts. Inconsistent use of learner-centred instructional methods and limited teacher motivation further worsen these challenges, making it difficult for students to engage meaningfully with the language. Dauda, Usman, and Muhammad (2024) observed widespread failure in English among tertiary students in Katsina State, attributing it to limited vocabulary, ineffective teaching methods, and lack of motivation. Despite English's central role in teacher education, limited research has systematically examined how teacher-related factors, particularly communication skills, influence academic performance and attitudes in English within Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. Analyze the relationship between teachers' communication skills and the academic performance of College of Education students in English language in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.
2. Investigate the relationship between teachers' communication skills and the attitudes of College of Education students towards learning English in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between teachers' communication skills and the academic performance of College of Education students in English language in the North-West Zone of Nigeria?
2. How do teachers' communication skills influence the attitudes of College of Education students towards learning English in the North-West Zone of Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses was tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. **HO₃:** There is no significant relationship between teachers' communication skills scores and the academic performance scores of College of Education students in English language in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.
2. **HO₄:** There is no significant relationship between teachers' communication skills scores and the attitudes scores of College of Education students towards learning English in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.

Methodology

This study employed an exploratory correlational research design. It is a non-experimental research method where the researcher looks for relationships between variables, Cohen et al (2018). The method help the researcher to investigate how certain independent variables (teacher-related factors like communication skills,) relate to dependent variables (student outcomes such as performance, and attitude) without manipulating any of these variables. The population for this study consisted of all public, federal, and state Colleges of Education in the North-West Zone of Nigeria. The North-West Zone includes the states of Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Jigawa, and Zamfara. The study targeted both students and teachers from these Colleges of Education. Specifically, the population comprised two hundred and eighty-two (282) English Language lecturers and two thousand five hundred (2,500) NCE Level II students enrolled in English Language programs across the fifteen (15) public Colleges of Education in the zone. Of these institutions, six (6) were owned by the federal government, while nine (9) were state-owned

The researcher determined the sample size from the target population by selecting five Colleges of Education based on ownership structure, two (2) from the federal level and three (3) from the state level. The sample Frame from these five colleges consisted of seventy-eight (78) English Language lecturers and four hundred and seventy-six (476) NCE II English Language students. The researcher employed a multi-stage sampling method, which combined different

sampling techniques to ensure the representation of both federal and state Colleges of Education. The English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) was used to measure students' academic performance in English language. The instrument was adapted from standardized examination materials developed by the Jigawa State College of Education, School of General Studies (2023/2024 Academic Session). The test comprised both multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank items designed to assess students' knowledge of key aspects of English language, including grammar, comprehension, vocabulary, and sentence construction. Each item carried equal marks, and the total score reflected the students' level of academic achievement.

English Language Attitude Questionnaire (ELAQ) was used to assess students' attitudes toward learning English language. The instrument was adapted from the work of Gardner (1985), which focuses on the socio-psychological aspects of language learning, particularly attitudes and motivation. The questionnaire consisted of structured items based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1).

The Classroom Observation Rating Scale (CORS) was used to assess teachers' communication skills during classroom instruction. The instrument was adapted from Danielson's Framework for teaching (2007), particularly the domain related to classroom communication and interaction. The scale included indicators such as clarity of explanation, questioning techniques, feedback provision, use of appropriate language, and non-verbal communication (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact). Each item was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from Excellent (5) to Not Observed (1). The validity and reliability of the instruments were carefully established before the main study. To ensure content and face validity, the three instruments—English Language Achievement Test (ELAT), English Language Attitude Questionnaire (ELAQ), and Classroom Observation Rating Scale (CORS)—were subjected to expert review. Five experts in Language Education, Measurement and Evaluation, and Educational Psychology examined the instruments in terms of clarity, relevance, representativeness, and alignment with the research objectives. Their observations and recommendations led to necessary modifications in item structure, wording, and content coverage to ensure that the instruments adequately measured the variables under investigation. To establish reliability, the instruments were pilot-tested using the test-retest method. The instruments were administered twice to respondents outside the study sample with an interval of two weeks between the first and second administrations. The scores obtained from both administrations were correlated using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient to determine the stability and consistency of the instruments over time. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.99 for the English Language Attitude Questionnaire (ELAQ), 0.75 for the English Language Achievement Test (ELAT), and 0.98 for the Classroom Observation Rating Scale (CORS). These coefficients indicate that the instruments possessed high reliability and were therefore considered suitable for the study, as the values exceeded the acceptable benchmark for educational research.

Results

Research Question 1. What is the relationship between teachers' communication skills and the academic performance of College of Education students in English language in the North-West Zone of Nigeria?

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Communication Skills and the Students' Academic Performance

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication Skills	66	1.80	4.60	2.94	0.65
Academic Performance Scores	217	17.00	63.00	38.72	10.14
Valid N (listwise)	66	-	-	-	-

The results from table 1 reveal that teachers' communication skills, as assessed by the respondents (N = 66), had a mean score of 2.9364 with a standard deviation of 0.64609. This suggests a moderate level of perceived communication skills among teachers, with values ranging from a minimum of 1.80 to a maximum of 4.60. Academic performance scores of students (N = 217) ranged from 17.00 to 63.00, with a mean of 38.7189 and a standard deviation of 10.14064. The wide range of academic scores indicates variability in student performance, which may be influenced by multiple factors, including teachers' communication skills.

Research Question 2. How do teachers' communication skills influence the attitudes of College of Education students towards learning English in the North-West Zone of Nigeria?

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations of both Teachers' Communication Skills versus Students' Attitudes

Statement	N (Valid)	Mean	Std. Deviation	% Disagree	% Undecided	% Agree	% Strongly Agree
The teacher's communication style helps me understand complex English topics	217	4.07	0.93	10.1%	9.7%	42.9%	37.3%
The feedback provided by my teacher is constructive and he helps me improve	217	3.96	1.01	8.8%	22.6%	31.3%	37.3%
My teacher uses language that is appropriate for our level of understanding	216	3.50	1.35	23.5%	16.7%	31.9%	27.8%

Statement	N (Valid)	Mean	Std. Deviation	% Disagree	% Undecided	% Agree	% Strongly Agree
The teacher encourages us to ask questions and express our opinions inclass	217	3.91	1.09	13.8%	12.9%	38.7%	34.6%
My teacher uses non-verbal communication (e.g., gestures, facial expressions) effectively in the classroom	217	3.95	1.07	10.6%	22.1%	26.7%	40.6%

The results from table 2 indicate that teachers' communication skills have a significant influence on the attitudes of College of Education students towards learning English in the North-West Zone of Nigeria. The findings revealed that students generally perceived their teachers' communication style positively in relation to the teaching and learning of English language. The item on whether the teacher's communication style helps students understand complex English topics recorded a mean score of 4.07, indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents. A large proportion of the students (80.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 10.1% disagreed and 9.7% remained undecided. This suggests that most students considered their teachers' communication style effective in simplifying difficult English concepts. Similarly, the statement on whether the feedback provided by teachers is constructive and helps students improve obtained a mean score of 3.96. The result indicates that students generally viewed teacher feedback as beneficial to their academic improvement. About 68.6% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, whereas 22.6% were undecided and only 8.8% disagreed. This implies that constructive feedback plays an important role in enhancing students' learning experiences and performance in English language.

The findings further showed that teachers' use of language appropriate to students' level of understanding received a mean score of 3.50, reflecting a moderate level of agreement among the respondents. While 59.7% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that their teachers used language suitable to their level of comprehension, 16.7% remained undecided and 23.6% disagreed. The result suggests that although many students found the teachers' language appropriate, a considerable number still experienced challenges in understanding classroom communication. In addition, the item concerning whether teachers encourage students to ask questions and express their opinions yielded a mean score of 3.91, indicating a generally positive perception among the respondents. The majority of the students (73.3%) agreed or

strongly agreed that their teachers encouraged classroom participation, while 12.9% were undecided and 13.8% disagreed. This finding suggests that most teachers created a classroom environment that supported interaction and active student engagement.

Furthermore, the statement on the effective use of non-verbal communication by teachers in the classroom recorded a mean score of 3.95. The result indicates that students perceived non-verbal communication, such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language, as an effective instructional strategy. About 67.3% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, whereas 22.1% were undecided and 10.6% disagreed. Overall, the findings imply that teachers' communication style positively influenced students' learning experiences and understanding of English language concepts.

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers' communication skills scores and the attitudes scores of College of Education students towards learning English in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.

Table 3: Results of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation between Teachers' communication skills and the Academic Performance of College of Education students in English language in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.

Variables	N	Mean	Std	r ²	P	Decision
Communication Skills	66	2.94	0.65	-0.101	0.421	Not Sig
Academic Performance Scores	217	38.72	10.14			

The findings table 3 showed a very weak negative correlation ($r = -0.101$) between teachers' communication skills and students' academic performance, which was not statistically significant ($p = 0.421$, $p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis is retained. The mean score for communication skills was 2.94 (SD = 0.65), while the mean academic performance score was 38.72 (SD = 10.14), indicating moderate levels for both variables.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between teachers' communication skills scores and the attitudes scores of College of Education students towards learning English in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.

Table 4: Results of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation between Teachers' communication skills and Attitude of College of Education students in English language in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.

Variables	N	Mean	Std	r ²	P	Decision
Communication Skills	66	2.94	0.65	-0.021	0.868	Not Sig
Attitude Towards Learning	217	3.93	0.68			

The findings from table 4 revealed a very weak negative correlation ($r = -0.021$) between teachers' communication skills and students' attitudes toward learning English, which was not statistically significant ($p = 0.868$, $p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis is retained. The mean score for communication skills was 2.94 ($SD = 0.65$), while the mean score for students' attitudes was 3.93 ($SD = 0.68$), indicating a generally positive attitude toward learning. The near-zero correlation suggested that variations in teachers' communication skills had little to no measurable impact on students' attitudes.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that teachers' communication skills had no statistically significant relationship with students' academic performance and attitudes toward learning English language in Colleges of Education in the North-West Zone of Nigeria. This outcome provides an important perspective that challenges widely held assumptions in language education research.

Firstly, the result indicating a non-significant relationship between teachers' communication skills and academic performance ($r = -0.101$, $p > 0.05$) suggests that communication alone may not be a strong determinant of students' achievement in English language. Although descriptive findings showed that teachers possessed moderate communication skills, this did not translate into improved student performance. This contradicts earlier studies such as Alamgir Khan et al. (2017), Sani and Garba (2019), and Musa and Ibrahim (2022), which reported significant positive relationships between teacher communication and academic achievement.

However, the present finding aligns with the study of Eze and Obi (2020), which reported a weak and non-significant relationship between teacher communication and students' academic outcomes. This similarity suggests that in certain educational contexts particularly those characterized by systemic challenges communication skills alone may be insufficient to influence academic performance. Secondly, the study also revealed a non-significant relationship between teachers' communication skills and students' attitudes toward English language ($r = -0.021$, $p > 0.05$). This finding is particularly interesting because descriptive results indicated that students generally had positive attitudes toward English learning, and they acknowledged the usefulness of teachers' communication practices (e.g., clarity, feedback, encouragement).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that teachers' communication skills do not have a statistically significant influence on students' academic performance and attitudes toward learning English language in Colleges of Education in the North-West Zone of Nigeria. Although teachers demonstrated moderate levels of communication competence and students reported generally positive attitudes, these variables did not show meaningful statistical relationships. This indicates that effective communication alone is not enough to enhance academic success or shape learners' attitudes in this context. The study therefore concludes that student learning outcomes in English language are multifaceted, requiring the integration

of other critical factors such as instructional strategies, motivation, learning environment, and socio-cultural influences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers of English language in Colleges of Education should be encouraged to improve their communication skills through regular workshops, seminars, and professional development programmes. Emphasis should be placed on clarity of instruction, effective feedback, appropriate language use, and interactive classroom communication, as these were found to influence students' academic performance in English language in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.
2. Teacher education institutions and educational administrators should promote positive teacher–student interaction in the classroom in order to improve students' attitudes toward learning English language. Teachers should adopt supportive and motivating communication practices that encourage students to participate actively, ask questions freely, and develop confidence in the use of English language, thereby fostering positive attitudes toward learning English among students.

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