

Research Articles

Repositioning Secondary School Students' Performance in SSCE Through the Digitalisation of Prose Literature Teaching Materials

Abstract

The abysmal failure recorded in the yearly results of Senior Secondary School Examinations Literature-in-English is an indication that there are problems associated with the teaching-learning process. Whilst reading is a literacy skill that must be taught, prose literature helps students to enhance their knowledge whilst building their language capacity; an important skill needed to thrive in the global work space. Existing works of literature have concentrated largely on the influence of social media on user's English almost to the exclusion of the effects of not deploying online resources in the teaching of secondary school students. This paper analyses the performance of two hundred and fifty students through Mayer and Moreno's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (1999). Findings reveal failure in prose literature is traceable to the inability of students to express their thoughts. Further findings show that students learn better when digital contexts are created. Furthermore, the challenge of students' indifference to reading literary texts can be addressed when teachers use multimedia and collaborative and cooperative learning strategies to improve performance. Part of the recommendation given is to provide training for teachers to aid the application of corresponding pedagogy in the teaching of literature in English.

Keywords: Prose Literature; Non-digitalisation; Multi-media Learning; Secondary Schools; Improved performance

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1.0 Introduction

The worsening performance of students in external examinations shows there is an underlying challenge with the mastery of the content of the syllabus recommended for the students. This is such that the students cannot express their thoughts while the teachers lack pulsated wisdom, ethical principles, and proven prowess in the application of the pedagogical knowledge required in the teaching of prose literature. For instance, the Examiner's report on students' performance in Literature-in-English in WASSCE 2020-2023 revealed that only a few of the candidates who registered for the examination seem to have a good knowledge of the texts with only a few quoting important portions of the texts to support their points.

Recognising the place of multimedia in literacy and students' unbroken ties with social media is pivotal to redirecting teaching pedagogy to meet with the demands of the 21st century. Hence, technological advancement has placed instructors of Literature-in-English the responsibility of appropriating their teaching of the subject. To this end, the communication capacity and the pedagogical approaches of a teacher can make a difference in the learning process of literature in English as a subject of study in secondary school Jibowo (2000, 2016). Conversely, while teachers are to be blamed for lacking passionate delivery to enhance students' performance, limited language proficiency and students' poor performance show that there is a disconnect between the cognitive ability of students' comprehension of prose texts and the application of such literacy to the skill of analysis Oladunjoye (2023:20).

From the standpoint of Eaton (2010), Jibowo (2016) and Oladunjoye (2020) language education is undergoing radical changes both in content and pedagogy. Memorisation and rote learning of the 17th and 18th centuries are giving way to innovative approaches to knowledge delivery. On this premise, there is a need for the 21st-century teacher to deploy alternatives in lecture delivery, and classroom management while capturing learners' proficiency level, interest area, and heterogeneous nature.

1.1 Teaching of Prose Literature: The 21st Century Challenge

Prose Literature entails the manipulation of language for self-expression. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council NERDC, (2009) posits that among several objectives, the purpose of teaching Literature-in-English includes: creating cultural awareness, enhancing language skills, personal development, and adequate preparation of students for the school certificate examination. The primary concern of Literature-in-English is to enhance students' language skills and maximise their learning experience through their exposure to different cultures in an ESL setting. Prose Literature enhances extensive reading habits in students while developing their speaking, writing, analytical, and critical skills.

Anka, Ibrahim, and Yabo (2017) opine that Literature-in-English can help students gain proficiency in the English Language. Rankhambe & Patrol (2016) on the other hand aver that literature provides students with the leverage of accessing different worlds, a vast variety of people, cultures, and places in reality and beyond defying the boundaries of time and space.

The Literature class of the 1980s and 1990s enjoyed stage plays and film shows to teach Non-African texts such as Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet* and some African literary pieces such as Efuwa .T. Sutherland's *Marriage of Anansewa*, Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to Blame*, Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* and Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Bottled Leopard* Consequently, what is obtained in the 21st century classroom is diametrically different from the practices in the mid and

late 20th century. The paradigm shift is identifiable in the 21st century language education which uses language and cultural knowledge as a window to communicate to others around the globe. To this end, there is a need to improve teaching prose using multimedia digital technology.

Yasen & Shakur (2015) and Oladunjoye (2023) pointed out that aural activities such as the application of audiovisual learning devices in classroom settings can be incorporated into prose classes to enhance effectiveness in teaching and at the same time improve performance. For instance, ICT multimedia software can be in the form of digital education and can also be used in converting print-based content to digital media. This is such that students can easily relate to their education instructional materials outside of the formal classroom setting.

To improve students' performance in Literature in English, learning should be geared at a horizontal level. The implication of this is that students are left with their peers during the learning process while the teachers take minimal positions of guidance and supervision. Jarvis (2012) and Grandel (2006) pointed out that one way a learner can gain autonomy in learning is to maximise self-access materials for declarative and procedural knowledge. By implication, the deployment of multi-media resources in the teaching of literature gives the learner the opportunity for self-learning in a self-initiated and self-control manner. Given this, the primary concern of technology in the teaching of prose literature is for the learner to make optimal use of personalized self-learning to enhance the student's performance in external examinations. It is envisioned that the position of this study will engender a situation whereby digitalised teaching of prose will be prioritised by teachers of literature thus catalysing enhancing autonomy in the learning of English Literature

2.0 Literature Review

Many students of Literature-in-English perform poorly in external examinations because of the evaluation methods deployed by the teachers in the teaching of the subject. Based on this fact, Ugwu (2022:160) noted that the failure rate recorded yearly shows that there is a challenge in the teaching-learning process. This is such that poor learning environment, acute shortage of recommended textbooks, low language proficiency, and misconceptions about the value of literature are some of the issues militating students' performance.

Matos (2012) as cited in Oladunjoye (2023:24), stresses that 'reading literature can be compared to coming to terms with a different culture as readers are often presented with characters and contexts which are new to them' The vagary of this literary template is the inability of students to express their thoughts in English. The question therefore is who and what builds up students' expressive ability. Mubita and Mwinza (2020) advise that retraining teachers through continuous professional development (CPD) is one effective means of building their capacity in the teaching of literature in English. By engaging in regular training, especially on how to deploy multimedia in teaching, learners can gain some level of autonomy while achieving more academic gains. This study shall focus on repositioning the performance of students in Literature-in-English through digitalization of teaching materials.

Danner and Musa (2019:87) in discussing the strategies that can be deployed in teaching Literature-in-English, reveal that teachers can improve the students' performance if they adopt an active performance-based and technologically enhanced teaching method. The source believes that teachers can utilize online resources and materials available to gain knowledge for productive teaching and development of learners.

Numerous studies on factors affecting students' performance in Literature-in-English for instance (Amuseghan & Momoh, 2013; Fatimayin, 2017; Morinson, 2018; Dewitt & Gamaliel, 2020) observe that most recommended prose texts are perceived as inappropriate and irrelevant to the learning needs and interest of the students. Consequently, students develop negative attitudes towards the subject because they are not motivated to learn. The use of bad pedagogy in the presentation of ideas is especially pertinent among teachers, as the use of engaging instructional strategies does not encourage interaction and participation of learners during lessons. One of the causes of the worsening performance is the fact that lack of productive strategies such as digital voicing, voice recording, role play, group discussion, and hearing skills to improve the language awareness of the students. In light of this problem, this research was conducted to investigate the different ways by which pedagogical issues can be addressed, and the way Literature-in-English can be repositioned for improved performance among students.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Mayers' Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML) to explain possible ways learners construct meanings when words, visuals. Audio and other multimedia constituents are combined. Mayers' (2009) work on cognitive psychology, educational psychology and multimedia learning marked a turning point in educational practice. Mayers' (2001, 2003, 2008) have three basic assumptions: human beings process information through two channels: visual/pictorial and auditory/verbal channel, individuals have limited capacity assumption and are constantly engaged in active process. In this framework, Mayers' suggests that learners are able to construct knowledge in meaningful ways when they observe appropriate material, organize those materials into coherent mental structure, and integrate the information gotten from interaction with those materials with existing knowledge.. He is of the opinion that adopting multimedia approach fosters generative processing in learners. Mayer then proposes that training teachers to learn about and use technology is fundamental to reaching result-oriented teaching. Consequently, Mayers' (2009) suggested that multimedia instructional material should be learner-centered because learners' interest increase when teachers design activities that reduce cognitive load. Invariably, Mayer seems to suggest that when cognitive load is reduced, learners use the free capacity in their brain for deep processing during learning. Mayers' framework is instructive to this study because the theory posits that adopting effective multimedia instructional method in teaching enhances interactivity and help learners build a coherent mental representation from the presented materials.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted mixed methodological approach to achieve its goals. First, the research design adopted for this study was the survey research method. A pre-test was given to the students where they are told to discuss how racism acts as a major obstacle in Adah's journey in the United Kingdom in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*. The required variable in the literary analysis was viewed as an appropriate evaluation tool since the participants have been studying the text in preparation for their forthcoming Senior Secondary School examination. The treatment applied was the reading of the analyses by each student for a period of four weeks. The researchers marked the essays and made necessary corrections. The procedure was repeated for all the recommended prose texts. By the end of the term, the students wrote a post-test assessment essay, same as the pre-test. After the pre-test, the story in the literary text was adapted through Storybird, while the Quizizz offers avenue for

revision activities.

Respondents comprised fifteen (15) purposefully selected final year students who are in Arts class and will be writing literature in English in the West Africa Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination across ten (10) schools in Ago-Iwoye, Ijebu North Local Government Area, Ogun State comprising five private and five secondary schools making a total of two hundred and fifty (250) participants. The Public Secondary Schools whose literature students participated in the study were: Ago-Iwoye Secondary School, Itamerin Comprehensive High School, Methodist Comprehensive Secondary School, Ago-Iwoye, Muslim High School and Fowoseje Comprehensive High School while the Private secondary schools include: The International School Olabisi Onabanjo University, Amazing Grace Secondary School, Kings Gift Secondary School, Children Embassy International School and Lakuns Secondary School. The rationale for the selection of the selection of the public schools was based on their popularity, and strategic locations within Ijebu North LGA, while that of the private schools was based on proximity.

The study adopts Mayer Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (2001) to reinforce the position of this study that learners can build meaningful connections more from pictures, graphic images, and videos than from words alone. The data for the study were obtained using the questionnaire.. The questionnaire instrument is a five-item questionnaire that is based on a three-point scale of Agree (A), Undecided (U), and Disagree (D). The researchers administered the questionnaire to the students. All the items in each of the two hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were responded to by the students who offered Literature-in-English in the selected schools the copies were returned to the researcher for analysis. Simple frequency and percentage scores were used as statistical tools to analyse the results.

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 RESULTS

SECTION A: BIO-DATA OF THE RESPONDENTS

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	149	59.6
Female	101	40.4
Total	250	100
School (Public/Private)	Frequency	Percentage
Public School	158	63.2
Private School	92	36.8

Total	250	100
Class	Frequency	Percentage
Junior Secondary School	88	35.2
Senior Secondary School	162	64.8
Total	250	100
Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
9-12	11	4.4
13-15	210	84
16 Above	29	11.6
Total	250	100

Source: Field Work, 2024.

TABLE 2

RESPONSES					
Agreed		Disagreed		Undecided	
F	%	F	%	F	%
172	68.8	20	8	58	23.2
You have a device with browsing facilities					250 100%

It can be used for the autonomous study of prose texts	4	146	58.4	94	37.6	250 100%
Yours use handheld devices for studying prose texts frequently	10	200	80	25	10	250 100%
Multimedia effectively conveys course content	15.2	56	22.4	156	62.4	250 100%
Multimedia communicates course expectations clearly	10.4	199	79.6	25	10	250 100%
Multimedia integrates real world community issues into the course curriculum	18.4	82	32.8	122	48.8	250 100%

Self-directed learning through multimedia can complement formal instructional time	38	61	24.4	94	37.6	250 100%
It fosters a supportive and intellectually stimulating research	82	10	4	35	14	250 100%
Assists you in identifying and accessing relevant resources to enhance your understanding	39.6	56	22.4	95	38	250 100%
Provides timely and constructive feedback on assignments and exams.	61.6	25	10	71	28.4	250 100%

Source: Field Work, 2024.

4.0 Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: There is significant difference between the academic performance of secondary school students before and after exposure to digitalised prose literature teaching materials.

TABLE 3: Paired Sample t-Test of Students' Performance Before and After Exposure to Digitalised Prose Literature Materials

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Decision
Pre-test	250	42.36	10.24		
Post-test	250	63.18	9.87	24.61	Reject H_0

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 3 indicates that the mean score of students before being taught digitalised prose literature was 42.36 (SD = 10.24) while the mean score after the students were taught using digitalised prose literature teaching materials was 63.18 (SD = 9.87). The t-value calculated was 24.61 and the degrees of freedom were 249, which gave a p-value of 0.000, indicating that this value was less than the level of significance of 0.05.

Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that there is a significant difference between the students' performance before and after being given literature teaching resources in digital form of prose literature. The finding reveals that the digitalisation of the prose literature resources has a great impact on the academic performance of the students in S.S.C.E Literature-in-English.

The data in table 4 revealed that the majority of respondents were male (59.6%) compared to female (40.4%), highlighting the importance of ensuring gender-inclusive teaching materials. Additionally, with 63.2% of respondents coming from public schools, any digital materials developed must be accessible and adaptable to the resources available in such settings. Moreover, the higher representation of Senior Secondary School students (64.8%) compared to Junior Secondary School students (35.2%) suggested that the focus of digital materials should primarily target senior students preparing for their S.S.C.E exams. Furthermore, given that the majority of respondents (84%) fall within the age bracket of 13-15 years old, it's crucial to develop engaging, interactive materials tailored to the specific needs of adolescent learners. These findings emphasize the need for inclusive, accessible, and effective digital teaching materials to enhance student performance in Prose Literature and S.S.C.E examinations.

The distributions presented provided insights into respondents' perspectives on the use of digital devices and multimedia in studying prose texts and their effectiveness in enhancing learning experiences. A significant portion of respondents (68.8%) agreed that they possess a device with browsing facilities, indicating widespread access to digital tools among the surveyed population. However, there's less consensus regarding the usefulness of these devices for autonomous study of prose texts, as only 4% agreed, while 58.4% disagreed.

Regarding the frequency of using handheld devices for studying prose texts, a minority (10%) agreed to do so frequently, while the majority (80%) disagreed. Similarly, opinions on whether multimedia effectively conveys course content were divided, with 62.4% undecided while fewer agreed (15.2%) or disagreed (22.4%). The 62.4% respondents who were undecided whether the multi-media can

effectively convey course content material reveal that most of the students have hitherto not been exposed to learning through digital technology. This subsequently explains the respondents' lack of consensus on whether multimedia effectively communicates course expectations, integrates real-world community issues into the curriculum, or complements formal instructional time, as respondents were mostly undecided or disagreed.

However, the majority (82%) agreed that multimedia fosters a supportive and intellectually stimulating research environment, indicating recognition of its potential for enhancing learning experiences. Additionally, a significant portion (61.6%) agreed that multimedia provides timely and constructive feedback on assignments and exams, suggesting its utility in assessment processes.

Thus, conducting a pre-test demonstrates

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that there is a varying level of students' acceptance of the use of digital devices and multimedia when they are taught prose literature. Thus, while some learners recognised the potential benefits of the new media, others remained undecided or skeptical about their effectiveness in enhancing learning experiences. The study submits that digital devices, equipped with browsing capabilities, are widely accessible among students in the population sample. Additionally, few of the learners agree whether digital devices could effectively support autonomous study.

To improve students' performance in external examinations, it is therefore recommended that; schools implement digital literacy programmes to ensure teachers and students possess the necessary skills for effective digital utilisation in teaching pedagogy. Additionally, support should be extended to teachers who teach literature in English in public and private schools to ensure the integration of digital tools into their teaching and evaluation processes. Also, refining digital initiatives to optimise student learning experiences that will improve performance in prose literature studies, including exams like the S.S.C.E, should be introduced.

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