

Devulcanizing Classroom Practices in Junior Secondary School in Imo State with Collaborative Strategies

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Abstract

This study examined the use of collaborative strategies in the teaching and learning of English Language in the Junior Secondary Schools in Imo State. This paper is unique as it embraced many aspects of the strategies with the aim of providing consolidation of prior learning from core content to make learners optimally use their language potentials. Descriptive survey design with a population of one thousand, two hundred and seventy-nine (1,279) JSS students and with the use of stratified random sampling technique sample of 255 was used. Constructivist Theory of language pedagogy highlighted an in-depth study of literature for the study. Collaborative Strategies Questionnaire (COSQ) was an instrument for data collection. Students were visited in their various schools to fill in the questionnaire. The data collected was analyzed using mean rating analysis. The results showed that majority of the students do not use collaborative strategies in their English Language learning process. We recommend that School authorities should organize seminars that would orient teachers on the importance and ways of using collaborative strategies in the classrooms. Curriculum developers should incorporate activities that encourage collaborative learning activities.

Keywords: Strategies, Pedagogy, Mind Mapping, Think-Pair-Share, Brain Storming.

Introduction

Applied linguists and other educationists have continued to delve into researches would uncover new approaches, theories, methods, techniques, and strategies for effective language teaching and learning. In the recent past, most applied linguists have introduced more interactive strategies in order to eliminate the defects of the previous methods, and involve the learners actively in the language teaching-learning process. While the Mentalist theory emphasizes the development of the mental faculty of the learners through learning of the rules, memorization of the rules, translation from the mother tongue to the target language, memorizing language forms and paradigms; the behaviourist-structural linguists saw language learning as habit formation and resorted to shaping the language habits of the learners using mechanical exercises and exposing learners to the corpus of language structures. The cognitivists-generative linguists assert that man is pan intelligent being and has the innate ability to reason and learn. As a result, they saw no need for the drills as learners can generate their own sentences instead of mimicking the teacher.

The need to devulcanize, overhaul and expunge those obsolete teaching and learning styles that are not in tandem with twenty first language learning is timely.

Collaborative learning terms are said to attain higher level thinking and preserve information for longer times than students working individually. Groups of students tend to learn through discussion, clarification of ideas and evaluation of others' ideas.

Statements of the Problem

- Both Intra-lingual and inter-lingual issues have been identified as the major variables hindering the acquisition of English as a language. More so, monotonous application of the same methods and techniques by teachers in the activities, thwarts students' interest since most of them basically project themselves by exhibiting teacher-centered styles and learning behavior.
- Students are more passive and so their bid to grasp language contents more actively has been subjugated to rote learning. It becomes imperative to turn the story around in the twenty first century and beyond.
- There is urgent need to resolve second language teaching and learning activities where students experience learning interactively, collaboratively, and friendly. This paper work is poised to showcase those collaborative strategies values that would make students more proactive in their English language acquisition.

Traditionally, teacher-centered approach or Teacher Talking Time [TTT], was where teacher assumed the sole teaching; the focus was on teaching rather than on learning. Students on the other hand, were merely listeners and passive recipients of the classroom discussions. Part of the issues in classroom management was that students were deprived of freedom to express their perceptions and to collaborate and interact with their mates. Even when they seemed to interact, they were labeled noise makers and were severely punished for expressing themselves openly in the classroom (Emeribe 2018). Traditional or conventional method of teaching involves teacher directing the learners to learn through memorization and recitation techniques, thereby not developing students' critical thinking, involving them in problem solving and decision making skills. Traditional teaching and learning methods were teacher-centered and did not give learners ample opportunities to practice and use the target language. Creative and critical thinking abilities of learners were relegated to the background. This language type of language learning rapidly led to constraint motivation.

Conversely, the twenty-first century pedagogy which this paper points out is based on learner centered. Teaching is not only facilitative, but also guided, interactive, where learning is tagged on the four Cs, communication, Critical thinking, Creative, and Collaboration. Students discover learning themselves but no are longer spoon fed, they experience and link theory with practice.

The main objective of this study is to examine the use of collaborative strategies in teaching and learning English language amongst junior secondary school students.

The descriptive survey research design was adopted as a leading method to carry out the work under the following subheadings:

1. to find out the frequency the Junior Secondary School students utilize collaborative strategies in their English Language learning process;
2. to review the roles students play in a collaborative classroom situation;
3. to find out the extent the collaborative strategies enhance students' learning performance; and
4. to investigate the extent large class size affects the use of collaborative teaching and learning strategies.

In order to maximize the variables available in addressing the research problems of this study, the under listed questions were given as means to facilitate data collection.

1. How often do Junior Secondary School students utilize collaborative strategies in their English Language learning process?
2. What roles are expected of students to perform in a collaborative classroom?
3. What extent does the use of collaborative strategies enhance students' learning performance?
4. What extent does large class sizes affect the use of collaborative teaching and learning strategies?

Definition of Terms/ Review of Related Literature

A teacher is a leader, a collaborator at the classroom level and so, she/he has inner worth and commands respect by all. A good teacher keeps in mind the rights of others, and deals with them fairly. He knows that those he is collaborating with are free learners/ students who must use their heads and not follow blindly. Kaitholil (1998) highlights two main extremes of teaching styles as autocratic and democratic. The former exercises autocratic controls over the group by means of an organized system which is difficult to overcome; such a teacher conveniently ignores the interest, values and programmes of the members. He creates and maintains social gap between the group on the one side and his cronies on the other side. Democratic style however, portrays teachers that take decisions on the basis of consultation with members of the group and not arbitrarily. He seeks participation and involvement of every member in the activities of the group. The teacher decentralizes responsibility and promotes good feeling and mutual respect among the members. He encourages interpersonal contacts as a means to strengthen the structure and functioning of the members. The democratic style is in with collaborative classroom teaching and learning.

Over the years, the traditional methods of teaching have dominated teaching and learning in Nigeria. Those methods as have noted encouraged rigid classroom arrangement where students sit in rows facing the teacher who is perceived as the fountain of knowledge and controls all classroom activities. And so, the traditional methods like the lecture method, storytelling, demonstration, and others make all students passive recipients of knowledge. Although these traditional methods of teaching and learning are effective in some way. They help the teacher to cover the course outline within a very short period. They also help

learners to acquire a wide range of knowledge derived through research by the teacher and they help in developing listening and note taking skills among the students.

Compelling evidences have shown that interests of students and constant motivations are intricately interwoven and fundamental to learning. Learning task can be made more interesting if the teacher engage the learners in interactive activities that can reduce tension, stimulate their imagination and creative thinking. This is the reasoning of constructivist theorists and researchers who have explored the effects of collaborative teaching and learning strategies in the classroom.

Numerous roles are displayed by teachers in collaborative teaching style in the twenty-first century classroom as Oluwari (2021) opines. The teachers present materials to the students, monitor their progress, and reinforce the occurrence of collaborative behaviors. In that case, the teachers are to let the students know exactly what they are expected to do; they go further to facilitate group work by asking questions to help students redirect their work, they further provide additional instructions to students who may be struggling with their tasks, finally they then reinforce students. The foregoing processes are practical oriented and more involving.

Collaborative strategies as Richard (2010) reiterates provide students' opportunities to engage actively with new materials as they learn, allowing them to process the information, think through problems and arrive at their own meaning. These strategies enhance retention.

Some of the Collaborative Strategies

In collaboration teaching, there are various strategies employed by the teacher/facilitator to engage students in interaction in order to enable them complete their task in the classroom. They include: concept mapping, jigsaw, mind mapping, think-pair-share, brain storming, card sort, mentoring, peer instruction, play method, scaffolding, among others.

Concept Mapping

A concept map is a visual learning and thinking tool that is used to organize and structure knowledge. It is a way to visually display the relationship between concepts, ideas, and piece of information. It is hierarchical, with one main idea or focus question and several sub-topics, key concepts and related ideas. The concepts help to organize ideas and see how they relate. Sakiwo and Waziri (2015) in Novak (2010) point out that Concept map is a geographical tool for organizing and representing knowledge in networks of concepts and linking statements about problem or subjects. According to Richardson (2015), learning takes place by the assimilation of new concepts and propositions into existing concept and propositional frameworks held in the schema by the learner. The importance of prior knowledge is being able to learn new concepts which are crucial factors influencing learning. That is why teacher should ascertain foregoing factor and build a new knowledge on it. A meaningful learning involves the assimilation of new concepts and propositions into existing cognitive structures.

The concept mapping learning strategy was born out of the constructivist theory of learning which holds that the learner constructs or builds his knowledge as opposed to the previous traditional teacher-centred method (Basso and Margarita, 2004). The idea was based on Ausubel's (1968) assimilation theory of cognitive learning which states that meaningful learning takes place when new knowledge is consciously incorporated into the concepts and ideas previously acquired by the learner. (Clark and James, 2004).

In order to build up the steps in connection with concept mapping, Novak (2004) identifies them as follows: a. Identify the key concepts, in a paragraph. b. Rank the concepts by placing the broadest and most inclusive idea in the top map. c. Work down the paper and add more specific concepts. d. Specific examples of concepts can be added below the concept tables.

Jigsaw

Jigsaw teaching techniques is one of the collaborative techniques invented by Aronson in 1971. This technique can be used to teach any subject. It involves the encouragement of listening, engagement, interaction, peer teaching and cooperation by giving each member of the group an essential part to play in the teaching and learning process (Oluwari, 2021). Students are provided with opportunity to become efficient in a particular subject and share that knowledge with their peers. This technique promotes both self and peer teaching which requires students to understand the material at a deeper level.

To establish jigsaw technique, students of an average class of forty are divided into competency group of four or five students each of the groups is given a list of sub-topics to research. Individual member of each group then breaks off to work with the 'expert', that is the group working on the same topic with theirs, after which they return to their 'home' group and each of them will teach the 'home' group what has been reached on from the 'expert' group.

Brainstorming

This refers to a group or individual snappy creativity technique geared towards finding a solution to a specific problem by gathering a list of ideas spontaneously. It is also an individual/pair or group creative activity aimed at generating pools of ideas spontaneously. Brainstorming, according to Swain (2010) is a modern conference with particular scenery in order to create a list of ideas that can be used as a clue to guide students in solving a problem while such as images, words and parts of words are added. Major ideas are connected directly to the central concept, and other ideas branch out from those major ideas.

Mind Mapping Strategy

In a more recent discovery, Buzan (2010), mind mapping is another strategy in classroom teaching and learning. Mind map, as Arulselvi (2017) points out, is a diagram used to virtually organize information; which is often created around single concept. A typical mind

map is a visual representation of central main topic from which nodes, sub-nodes, groupings, branches, or areas are classified with the goal of representing semantic information. It can also be used for generating, visualizing, organizing, note taking, problem solving, decision making, revising, and clarifying course topic so that the teacher can get started with assessment task. Mind maps do not only show facts, but also show complete structure of a subject, and the relative importance of individual parts of it. It helps students to associate ideas, think creatively and make connections that might not otherwise be made. It helps the teacher to introduce or bring together multiple words that are linked to one subject. In vocabulary teaching in language situation, mind mapping provides extra space for further new words, connection or subgroups that can be easily and quickly added. It encourages individual expression of creativity and provides visual representation of a subject. According to Kurtus (2005), Mind mapping is a strategy that allows learners to explore the richness of language learning to recover the relations of different kinds that exist between subject matter.

Peer Instruction

Peer Instruction, (PI) according to (Oluwari 2021) is a research based pedagogy for teaching of large class size. It is a method created to help make lectures more interactive and to get students intellectually engaged with what is going on. Its main aim is to improve students' performance and also used to identify students difficult areas. PI is an instruction strategy for engaging students during class through structured questioning process that involves every student. This makes the students to voice their ideas and resolve understanding by talking with their peers. It promotes critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills.

Think-Pair-Share

Think-pair-share is a collaborative learning strategy in which students work together to solve a problem or answer a question about an assigned task/reading. This strategy requires students to think individually about a topic or answer to a question, and share ideas with a classmate. Discussing an answer with a partner helps to maximize participation, focus attention, engage students and enhance comprehension of the reading material. (Rasinkski & Padek, 1996). This strategy was first developed by Hyman (1981). It is a strategy in which students work together to solve a problem or answer questions about an assigned task. Think-pair-share strategy provides learners a safe environment for everyone to ask questions, and also find out why some answers are right or wrong. There could be disagreement, arguments as the learners discuss, they can refer to their textbook for solution or invite the teacher who is always around to monitor and facilitate the learning. Think-pair-share strategy can be used at the beginning of the lesson, middle or at the end of the lesson in teaching any subject.

Constructivists Theory

The collaborative teaching and learning is rooted in the Constructivists theory of learning. The constructivist's theory is an off shoot of the cognitive theory of learning which focuses on the structure and development of individuals thought, processes and understanding. And this concept of learning is traced to Jean Piaget and John Dewey, whose theories of childhood development gave birth to Constructivism. According to Kliebard (2014). Active learning conditionalizes knowledge; experimental learning has been a major way of actualizing the Constructivist theory.

Similarly, Smith (2009) writes that education must engage with, and expand experience; those methods used to educate must provide for exploration, thinking and reflection and interaction with the environment necessary for learning. Also, that democracy should be upheld in the educational system. Learning process should be experiential learning through real life experience to construct and conditionalize knowledge which is consistent with the constructivists' views. The cognitive ideas were further developed by Vygotsky 1978. The concept of collaborative learning is largely rooted in Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory (SCT) which views learning as inherently, a social process activated through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Vygotsky (1986) socio-cultural views have contributed significantly to social constructivist epistemology and highlight how learning is mediated in accordance with the context and experience with peers.

Learning from the socio-cultural perspective, is essentially a social term rather than individual in nature, where interaction constitutes the learning process. The constructivists also assert that strategies used in teaching and learning process should encourage the students to work in groups on a task, in order to construct meaning for themselves and by so doing, they take ownership of their learning while the teacher serves as facilitator of learning, instead of information transmitter (Warschawer, 2007). In this way, teachers become guides, helping students to discover knowledge for themselves through multiple perspective. For developing their own understanding in this way, knowledge occurs as learners construct realities from their own experiences.

Method

Descriptive Survey design was used as a method to actualize the Paradigm shift in the twenty first classroom activities.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all Junior secondary school students in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State. The secondary schools are sixteen (16) in number with the population of students is 1,279. Stratified random sampling technique, enabled the researchers to select two hundred and fifty-five junior secondary school students from the sixteen public schools. The schools are as follows:

Table I: Sample Table

s/n	Sample Size Schools	Students' Population SS1-SS3	Sample students 20%
1	Comprehensive secondary Sch. Agbala	116	23
2	John F. Kennedy Int'l Sec. Sch. Obibiezena	216	43
3	Emii secondary technical school	173	35
4	Community secondary sch. Emekuku	301	60
5	Development Sec. Sch. Mbaoma Emii	161	32
6	Emekuku High School	312	62
Total		1279	255

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire known as Collaborative Strategies Questionnaire (COSQ). The researchers went to the sampled schools and requested students to fill the questionnaire presented them.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the respondents were tabulated and the scores recorded. Responses received were analyzed using the mean rating. Responses equal or greater than 2.5 were taken as accepted, while responses less than 2.5 were rejected. Thus:

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$$

Where $(\bar{X})$ = mean

Σ = summation sign

F = frequency

X = Score

N = Total number of respondents

$$\frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

The four point likert Scale of Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent, Very Low Extent have been used for rating.

Most Often (Most Often)

Often (Often)

Less Often (Less Often)

Never (never)

Results and Discussion

How often do students use collaborative strategies in learning English language and learning process?

Table 2: Mean Responses of use of collaborative strategies in learning process.

s/n	Questionnaire Items	Most Often	Often	Less Often	Never	Total	X	Decision
1	Concept mapping	30 120	85 255	72 144	68 68	255 587	2.3	LE
2	Mind mapping	40 160	64 192	59 118	92 92	225 562	2.2	LE
3	Jigsaw	102 408	111 333	30 60	12 12	255 813	3.1	VHE
4	Think-pair-share	60 240	48 144	104 208	43 43	255 635	2.5	HE
5	Brain storming	25 100	48 144	61 122	121 121	255 487	1.9	VLE

Table 2 above, contains questionnaire items 1-5. Each item was responded to by 2.5 respondents. The items sought information on the extent students are engaged with collaborative strategies in learning process. Items 3 and 4 jigsaw and Think-pair-share showcased very high extent and high extent respectively because their corresponding mean scores of 3.1 and 2.5 were above and boarder line of the the reference mean. On the other hand, items 1 and 2, represented by concept mapping and mind mapping mean scores are 2.3 and 2.2, respectively are evidence that learners hardly use them as collaborative strategies. Brain storming variable, in the result hot the lowest score of 1.9. The findings therefore, show that English language teachers minimally use collaborative strategies in teaching and learning process. The 3.1 and 2.5 results do not stand to qualify that students utilize collaborative strategies in their English language learning Process.

Question Two: What roles do students in a collaborative leadership classroom play?

Table:3 Mean Responses on the roles of students in a collaborative classroom.

s/n	Questionnaire items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Total	X	Decision
6	Goal setting	101 404	79 237	40 80	35 35	255 756	2.9	VHE
7	Designing learning tasks and monitoring	98 392	81 243	66 132	10 10	255 777	3.0	VHE
8	Self-assessment/ summarizing	111 444	46 138	45 90	53 53	255 725	2.8	HE
9	Construction of new knowledge	88 352	71 213	37 74	59 59	255 698	2.7	HE

10	Generating ideas together/ reaching consensuses	99 396	90 270	51 102	15 15	255 783	3.8	VHE
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Table 3 above contains questionnaire items 6-10. Each item was responded to by 255 respondents. The respective mean analysis for each of the questionnaire items are 2.9, 3.0, 2.8, 2.7 and 3.8. The mean scores for each of the items show that goal setting, designing learning tasks and monitoring, self-assessment, construction of new knowledge and generating ideas together are the roles of students in a collaborative classroom. Their corresponding results show that there are roles preformed by students in a collaborative classroom. In that case, although the students are actively involved in the collaborative classroom setting as the results show that; their teachers need to be more proactive in maximizing the myriads of those collaborative strategies to match the students' active roles. The paradigm shift as Emeribe (2018) demonstrates need to incorporate many other collaborative strategies that will make students more autonomy in the class.

Question Three: What extent does the use of collaborative teaching and learning strategies enhance students learning performance?

Table 4. Mean Responses on the Extent Collaborative Teaching and Learning Strategies enhance students learning performance

s/n	Questionnaire items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Total	X	Decision
11	Increases critical thinking	59 236	73 219	68 136	55 55	255 646	2.5	HE
12	Develops their communication skills	101 404	99 297	35 70	20 20	255 791	3.1	VHE
13	Develops students' creativity	123 492	50 150	56 112	26 26	255 780	3.1	VHE
14	Increase problem solving skills	62 248	77 231	60 120	56 56	225 655	2.6	HE
15	Develops team spirit	80 320	70 210	60 120	45 45	255 695	2.7	HE
16	Reduce anxiety involved in working alone	91 364	80 240	54 108	30 30	255 742	2.9	VHE
17	Gives them opportunity to learn from their peers	93 372	65 195	41 82	56 56	255 705	2.8	HE
18	Increases retention	89 356	75 225	48 96	43 43	255 720	2.8	HE
19	Encourages visual representation of ideas	93 372	90 270	38 76	34 34	255 752	2.9	HE

Table 4 above, contains questionnaire items 11-19. Each item was responded to by 255 respondents. The respective mean analysis for each of the items are 2.5, 3.1, 3.1, 2.6, 2.7,

2.9, 2.8, 2.8 and 2.9. The mean scores for each of the items shows the extent the use of collaborative strategies in teaching and learning process enhance students' critical thinking, develops their communication skills, develops their creativity, increase problem solving skills, develops team spirit, reduces anxiety involved in working alone, gives them opportunity to learn from their peers, increases retention and encourage visual representation of ideas. The cumulative mean of 2.8 as greater than the reference mean of 2.5 reveals the extent collaborative teaching and learning strategies enhance students' learning performance. This goes father to reiterate the findings of Arulselvi (2017).

Question Four: To what extent does large class size affect the use of collaborative teaching and learning strategies?

Table 5. Mean Responses on the Extent large class size affects the use of collaborative teaching and learning strategies

s/n	Questionnaire items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Total	X	Decision
20	Rigid time allocated to subjects	88 352	79 237	60 120	28 28	255 737	2.9	HE
21	Space factor	94 376	81 293	60 120	20 20	255 759	2.9	HE
22	Inability to manage difficult students	112 448	90 270	25 50	28 28	255 796	3.1	VHE
23	Rigid classroom arrangement	129 516	68 204	40 80	18 18	255 818	3.2	VHE
24	Emphasis on teaching rather than learning	109 436	90 270	36 72	20 20	255 798	3.1	VHE
25	Overcrowded classroom	130 520	56 168	49 98	20 20	255 806	3.2	VHE

Table 5 above, contains questionnaire items 20-25. Each item was responded to by 255 respondents. The respective mean analysis for each of the items are 2.9, 2.9, 3.1, 3.2, 3.1 and 3.2. The mean scores for each of the items shows the extent large class size, rigid time allocated to subjects, space factor, inability of teachers to manage difficult students, rigid classroom arrangements, emphasis on teaching rather than learning and overcrowded classroom affect the use of collaborative teaching and learning strategies. The cumulative mean of the negative variable items 20- 25, which are above the boarder line of 2.5 highly indicate and further confirm and affect the use of collaborative teaching and learning strategies.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn; English language teachers do not use collaborative strategies in teaching and learning process. There are

roles performed by students in a collaborative classroom. The use of collaborative teaching and learning strategies enhance students' learning performance. Large class size, to a large extent, affects negatively the use of collaborative strategies in teaching and learning process. There is need for teachers, learners, curriculum planners and other education stake holders to model themselves to the twenty first century new dimension of effective teaching and learning. By so doing, the paradigm shift to which this paper advocates will be thus realized.

Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made, thus:

1. Teachers should enroll in in-service training and seminar that will improve their abilities and knowledge on how to actualize these collaborative strategies in the classroom.
2. Urgent need to constantly make use of the collaborative leadership strategies at all levels of teaching and learning. Teachers managing and facilitating collaborative strategies, as a matter of urgency should monitor effectively the classroom activities.
3. Federal and State Ministries of Education with the assistance of the government both at the federal and state levels should help fund the implementation of these strategies in our secondary schools.
4. Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Owerri has organized a workshop for lecturers on the twenty first teaching methods. Teachers are to pass on those enriching outcomes of the workshop to their student- teachers. A teacher trained, is a whole nation trained.

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