Investigating the Effectiveness of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Method on Senior Secondary School Students' Performance in Igbo Poetry in South-East Nigeria

By

Eze, Roseline Ifeoma
Arts Education Department, University of Nigeria Nsukka
eze.roseline@unn.edu.ng
08064008703

Abstract

The study investigate the effectiveness of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method compared to traditional teaching methods in improving students' performance in Igbo poetry in South-East Nigeria. Three research questions were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Quasi-experimental design was adopted for the study with a pretest-posttest control group approach. The population consisted of 120,000 SS2 students across the five states from public schools in South-East Nigeria. A multistage sampling technique was used. In the final stage, a simple random sampling method was used to select 50 students (25 for the experimental group and 25 for the control group) from each school, resulting in a total sample size of 500 students across the five states (10 schools). The instrument for data collection was 40 multiple-choice questions and 5 short-answer questions on Igbo Poetry Performance Test (IPPT) and the CLT Method. The data collected were analysed using mean and Standard deviation. Based on the data analysed, the study identified students' achievement on Igbo Poetry which includes: that CLT significantly enhances students' understanding, creativity, engagement, and performance in Igbo poetry, CLT positively influences students interest and motivation, although its impact on collaboration and critical thinking is less clear. The study also identifies challenges such as increased teacher workload and insufficient training, with recommendations for improving teacher support and resources. It is recommended among others that while CLT is beneficial, addressing implementation challenges can further enhance its effectiveness in secondary schools, Organizing Seminars and workshops for secondary schools, where parents, students and teachers should learn the importance of indigenous language in

human development is important. This will improve students' performance in Igbo Poetry which students finds difficult .

KeyWords: Effectiveness, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Performance, Igbo Poetry

Introduction

Language serves as a fundamental pillar in the transmission and preservation of culture. The Igbo language, one of the major languages spoken in Nigeria, a significant African language spoken predominantly in south-eastern Nigeria is not just a means of communication but also a repository of the Igbo people's rich cultural heritage. Eze (2016) affirms that effective teaching of the Igbo language, particularly at the secondary school level, is crucial for preserving this heritage and ensuring that younger generations appreciate and sustain their cultural identity. Despite its cultural importance, the teaching of Igbo poetry has historically faced significant challenges, primarily due to the limitations of traditional pedagogical methods. These methods according to Anyanwu (2018) which often focus on rote memorization and repetitive exercises, fail to capture the complexities and cultural richness of Igbo poetry. Language and associated cultural knowledge face challenges in the educational context, particularly at the senior secondary school level. The declining interest and achievement in Igbo cultural studies among students necessitate an innovative pedagogical approach to revitalize engagement and learning outcomes. This gap in effective instruction underscores the need for innovative teaching approaches, such as the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method, which may offer a more dynamic and interactive alternative to traditional techniques.

The traditional methods used in teaching Igbo poetry often emphasize memorization and recitation, which are insufficient for fostering a deep understanding of poetic texts. This approach according to Adegbile (2020) tends to reduce the study of poetry to mechanical exercises, neglecting the interpretative and analytical skills crucial for literary appreciation. For example, students may memorize poems and their meanings without developing a true appreciation of the literary and cultural nuances embedded in the texts (Eze, 2022). Such an

approach fails to engage students in meaningful dialogue about the poetry, which is essential for understanding and interpreting complex literary forms.

In contrast, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method offers a more holistic approach by focusing on the functional use of language through interactive and student-centered activities (Brown 2007). CLT emphasizes real-life communication and practical language use, which contrasts sharply with the rote learning prevalent in traditional methods. This approach aligns with Hymes' (1972) concept of communicative competence, which prioritizes the ability to use language effectively in various contexts over the mere acquisition of grammatical forms. Eze & Umo (2021) affirms that by incorporating CLT into the teaching of Igbo poetry, educators can shift the focus from memorization to engagement with the poetic text in a manner that reflects its cultural and emotional significance.

CLT integrates the four core language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing into the learning process through interactive activities such as role-playing, discussions, and group projects (Brown, 2007). These activities promote active participation and collaboration, which are crucial for understanding complex literary texts like poetry. For instance, in the context of Igbo poetry, students can participate in group discussions to analyse themes, cultural symbols, and emotional undertones, thus fostering a deeper appreciation of the poetic material. This interactive approach allows students to explore and express their interpretations of the poetry, enhancing their understanding and critical thinking skills (Hasibuan & Batubara 2012). The effectiveness of CLT in improving language learning outcomes has been well-documented in various contexts. Richards & Rodgers (2001) found that CLT positively impacts students' language proficiency, including their speaking and listening skills. This is particularly relevant for poetry, where the ability to discuss and interpret poetic texts requires strong communicative skills. By engaging students in discussions and interpretative exercises, CLT helps them develop the linguistic and analytical skills necessary to appreciate and analyze poetry more effectively (Eze, Egbe, & Ossai 2020). This approach not only enhances students' understanding of the poetic language but also promotes a greater connection to their cultural heritage. However, the implementation of CLT in the Nigerian educational context is not without its challenges. Ghafar, Sawalmeh & Mohamedamin (2023) highlights

several barriers to the effective use of CLT, including inadequate teacher training and limited resources. Many educators in Nigeria are more familiar with traditional methods and may lack the skills or confidence to implement CLT effectively. This challenge is compounded by large class sizes and limited resources, which can hinder the execution of interactive activities central to CLT. Addressing these challenges according to Hasibuan & Batubara (2012), Hymes (1972), Nassaji (2000) requires comprehensive professional development programs that equip teachers with the necessary skills and strategies for effective CLT implementation. Another challenge associated with CLT is its potential neglect of explicit grammar instruction. Critics argue that CLT's focus on fluency and communicative competence may come at the expense of grammatical accuracy, which is essential for achieving linguistic proficiency (Nassaji, 2000). This issue is particularly relevant in the teaching of Igbo poetry, where an understanding of grammatical structures is necessary for both linguistic accuracy and literary analysis. To address this concern, a balanced approach that integrates grammar instruction within the CLT framework can ensure that students develop both communicative competence and grammatical accuracy (Ellis, 2008).

The integration of CLT into the teaching of Igbo poetry can address several of these challenges by promoting a more engaging and interactive learning environment. For example, using CLT techniques such as role-playing and group discussions can help students better understand and appreciate the cultural and emotional aspects of Igbo poetry. By participating in these activities, students can explore the themes and symbols present in the poetry and express their interpretations in a collaborative setting. This approach not only enhances their understanding of the poetic material but also fosters a deeper connection to their cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the adoption of CLT can help bridge the gap between traditional teaching methods and modern educational needs. By focusing on interactive and student-centered learning, CLT provides a more engaging and effective approach to teaching Igbo poetry. This shift can lead to improved academic performance and a greater appreciation of the cultural and literary significance of the poetry. As a result, students are better equipped to analyze and interpret poetic texts, leading to a more meaningful and enriching learning experience.

To effectively implement CLT in the teaching of Igbo poetry, several strategies can be employed. Professional development programs should be designed to provide teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively use CLT techniques. These programs should focus on both the theoretical and practical aspects of CLT, including strategies for integrating grammar instruction within the communicative framework. Additionally, curriculum reforms should support the adoption of CLT by developing teaching materials and assessment tools that align with CLT principles and provide adequate resources for interactive learning activities (Richards & Farrell 2005).

Moreover, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method offers a promising alternative to traditional pedagogical approaches in the teaching of Igbo poetry. By emphasizing interactive and student-centered learning, CLT can enhance students' understanding of poetic texts and foster a greater appreciation of their cultural heritage. Addressing the challenges associated with CLT implementation, including teacher training and resource limitations, is crucial for realizing its full potential. With the right strategies and support, CLT can significantly improve the teaching and learning of Igbo poetry, leading to better academic outcomes and a deeper connection to the Igbo language and culture.

Statement of the Problems

The declining academic performance of students in Igbo poetry at the senior secondary school level highlights a significant challenge within the Nigerian educational system. Traditional teaching methods, which emphasize rote memorization and repetition, fail to foster a deep understanding of Igbo poetry and inhibit students from critically analysing and appreciating its cultural and artistic elements. This approach leads to poor academic performance and low student engagement, with many students finding the subject area uninteresting or irrelevant. Moreover, the focus on memorization limits the development of students' communicative competence, crucial for interpreting poetic language. The potential benefits of innovative teaching methods, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), face significant obstacles including a lack of trained teachers, inadequate resources, and resistance to change. These challenges hinder the widespread adoption of CLT and contribute to ongoing issues with student performance and engagement.

The drop in performance shows a growing gap between students and their cultural roots. This problem is made worse by the fact that current assessment methods and curriculum do not align well with the principles of communicative language teaching, which adds to students' academic difficulties.

Purposes of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to determine the effectiveness of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Method on Senior Secondary School Students' Performance in Igbo Poetry in South-East Nigeria. Specifically the study determined the:

1. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method and its effects on students' performance in Igbo poetry compared to traditional teaching methods.
2. How the CLT method influences student engagement and interest in Igbo poetry classes, with the goal of making the subject more relevant and appealing.
3. The difficulties in using CLT in Nigerian secondary schools and suggest solutions to better fit CLT into the current education system.

Research Questions:

1. How does the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method affect students' performance in Igbo poetry compared to traditional teaching methods?
2. How does the CLT method influence student engagement and interest in Igbo poetry classes?
3. What challenges are faced when using the CLT method in Nigerian secondary schools, and what strategies can help overcome these challenges?

Method

The study adopted a quasi-experimental design, to find out the effectiveness of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method compared to traditional teaching methods in improving students' performance in Igbo poetry in South-East Nigeria. Specifically a pretest-posttest control group design was adopted for the study. Eze (2022) define quasi-experimental design as the type of research

design that that is interested in studying a particular group of participants that are predetermined. The area of study was in the South-East region of Nigeria, focusing on senior secondary schools. This region, which includes Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states, is predominantly inhabited by the Igbo ethnic group, making it an ideal location for studying the impact of CLT on Igbo poetry performance among students. The population consisted of 120,000 SS2 students across the five states from public schools in South-East Nigeria. A multistage sampling technique was used. In the first stage, stratified sampling ensured representation from each state within the South-East region. In the second stage, a purposive sampling method was employed to select two schools from each state, one for the experimental group and one for the control group, based on factors such as the availability of qualified Igbo language teachers, access to teaching resources, and previous language examination performance. In the final stage, a simple random sampling method was used to select 50 students (25 for the experimental group and 25 for the control group) from each school, resulting in a total sample size of 500 students across the five states (10 schools).

Two main instruments were used for data collection: the 40 multiple-choice questions and 5 short-answer questions on Igbo Poetry Performance Test (IPPT) and the CLT Method Implementation Checklist (CLT-MIC). The IPPT assessed students' performance in Igbo poetry through the 40 multiple-choice questions and 5 short-answer questions, measuring knowledge, comprehension, and application skills. The CLT-MIC monitored the fidelity of CLT method implementation during the intervention phase, assessing the use of CLT strategies such as group activities, communicative tasks, and student- instrument for data collection was the. The questionnaires were constructed in two sections. Section A comprises of 40 items designed to find out the influence of the effectiveness of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method compared to traditional teaching methods in improving students' performance in Igbo Poetry. The Section B comprises of 5 short-answer question items designed to find out items of CLT that influence students' performance in Igbo poetry in South-East Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. The experimental group was taught using the CLT method, while the control group received instruction through the traditional teaching method, allowing for a comparison of students' performance in Igbo poetry before and after the intervention.

The instrument was validated by three experts, one expert in Measurement and Evaluation Unit, and two in Igbo language unit of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka to ensure the instruments measured the intended constructs. Adjustments were made based on their comments. A reliability test was conducted with a small sample of 50 students not included in the main study to identify any ambiguities or difficulties, and item analysis was performed to determine the reliability and validity of the instruments. Reliability of the IPPT was assessed using the test-retest method and a gross reliability coefficient of 0.70 was obtained.

A collection occurred in two phases. In Phase 1, both the experimental and control groups took the IPPT as a pre-test to establish a baseline of students' performance in Igbo poetry. In Phase 2, the experimental group was taught using the CLT method for a period of 8 weeks, while the control group continued with the traditional teaching method. Following the intervention, both groups took the IPPT again as a post-test, and the CLT-MIC was used throughout the intervention phase to ensure consistent application of the CLT method. Two secondary school teachers helped the researcher in administering the questionnaire. The research questions were organized in tables using mean (x) and standard deviation (SD). Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions, were used to summarize the students' performance scores from the pre-test and post-test. Inferential statistics, specifically an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), were conducted to compare the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups while controlling for any differences in the pre-test scores. This analysis determined the effectiveness of the CLT method in improving students' performance in Igbo poetry, with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

The results were presented in accordance with the research question that guided the study

Research Question 1: How does the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method affect students' performance in Igbo poetry compared to traditional teaching methods?

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and frequency distribution on how the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method affect students' performance in Igbo poetry compared to traditional teaching methods

Serial No.	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	CLT method enhances students' understanding of Igbo poetry better than traditional methods.	4.2	0.65	Agree
2	Students taught with CLT show improved creativity in Igbo poetry analysis.	4.1	0.70	Agree
3	CLT increases students' interest and engagement in learning Igbo poetry.	4.3	0.60	Agree
4	CLT method improves students' performance in Igbo poetry assessments compared to traditional methods.	4.0	0.75	Agree
5	Students retain Igbo poetry content better when taught using CLT than traditional teaching methods.	3.9	0.80	Agree
Grand Mean		**4.1**		

Data in Table 1 reveal an analysis of how the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method affects students' performance in Igbo poetry compared to traditional teaching methods. The mean values for all item statements are above 3.5, indicating a positive perception and agreement among respondents that CLT enhances various aspects of learning Igbo poetry, including understanding, creativity, engagement, performance, and retention. The calculated grand mean of 4.1 reinforces this overall positive perception, demonstrating a consensus on the effectiveness of the CLT method. The standard deviation values, which are relatively low, suggest that responses were fairly consistent across the board. The

decision for each item is "Agree," showing the perceived effectiveness of the CLT method over traditional teaching approaches.

Research Question 2: How does the CLT method influence student engagement and interest in Igbo poetry classes?

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and frequency distribution on how the CLT method influence student engagement and interest in Igbo poetry classes.

Serial No.	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Does the CLT method influence student participation in Igbo poetry classes?	3.8	0.75	Agree
2	How does the CLT method enhance students' interest in learning Igbo poetry?	4.2	0.65	Strongly Agree
3	Does the CLT method improve student collaboration in Igbo poetry activities?	2.4	0.85	Disagree
4	CLT method is effective in fostering critical thinking about Igbo poetry?	2.6	0.80	Disagree
5	CLT method motivates students to perform better in Igbo poetry?	4.0	0.68	Agree
Grand Mean		**3.4**		

Data in table 2 above show the influence of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method on student engagement and interest in Igbo poetry classes, using mean scores and standard deviations for various statements. Item on CLT's influence on student participation in Igbo poetry classes has a mean score of 3.8 and a standard deviation of 0.75, showing general agreement that CLT positively impacts participation. The mean score of 4.2 with a standard deviation of 0.65 indicates strong agreement that CLT significantly enhances students'

interest in learning Igbo poetry. Mean of 2.4 and a standard deviation of 0.85 suggest that respondents disagree about the CLT method's effectiveness in improving student collaboration. Similarly, the statement on fostering critical thinking through CLT has a mean score of 2.6 and a standard deviation of 0.80, reflecting disagreement on its effectiveness in this area. The mean score of 4.0 with a standard deviation of 0.68 indicates agreement that CLT motivates students to perform better in Igbo poetry. The CLT method is viewed positively in terms of increasing interest and motivating performance in Igbo poetry because there is a notable disagreement on its role in enhancing collaboration and fostering critical thinking.

Research Question 3: What challenges are faced when using the CLT method in Nigerian secondary schools, and what strategies can help overcome these challenges?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on challenges faced when using the CLT method in Nigerian secondary schools with the strategies to overcome the challenges.

Serial No.	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Teachers face challenges when implementing the CLT method in Nigerian secondary schools?	3.4	0.78	Agree
2	Current resources used in supporting the CLT method in Nigerian secondary schools are effective?	2.8	0.85	Disagree
3	Does the CLT method create additional workload for teachers in Nigerian secondary schools?	3.7	0.82	Agree

Serial No.	Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
4	Are there sufficient training programs available for teachers to effectively use the CLT method?	2.5	0.90	Disagree
5	Are there strategies that can be employed to overcome the challenges of using the CLT method in Nigerian secondary schools?	3.9	0.70	Agree
Grand Mean		**3.3**		

Table 3 reveals the challenges associated with using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in Nigerian secondary schools and strategies to address these challenges. The individual items show challenges teachers face when implementing the CLT method in Nigerian secondary schools. The mean score of 3.4 with a standard deviation of 0.78, indicate that respondents generally agree that teachers face significant challenges with CLT implementation. The question on effectiveness of the current resources in supporting the CLT method in Nigerian secondary schools shows a mean score of 2.8 and a standard deviation of 0.85, suggesting disagreement about the effectiveness of current resources in supporting CLT. The mean score of 3.7 with a standard deviation of 0.82, indicate agreement that CLT adds extra workload for teachers. The item on training programs available for teachers for effective use of CLT method has a mean score of 2.5 and a standard deviation of 0.90, reflecting disagreement on the adequacy of training programs for teachers. Finally, the question on the strategies that can be employed to overcome the challenges of using the CLT method in Nigerian secondary schools has a mean score of 3.9 with a standard deviation of 0.70, showing agreement that strategies can help overcome the challenges associated with CLT.The calculated grand mean of 3.3 show that respondents agree on some challenges and potential solutions while indicating concerns over specific areas, such as resource effectiveness and training sufficiency.

Discussion

According to this research study, result showing the effectiveness of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in enhancing students' performance in Igbo poetry was compared to traditional teaching methods. The findings reveal that the CLT method significantly improves various aspects of students' learning experiences. Data from Table 1 show mean scores above 3.5 for all items related to students' engagement and interest, indicating a general consensus that CLT enhances students' understanding, creativity, engagement, and performance in Igbo poetry. This is consistent with Richards & Rodgers (2014), which highlights that CLT interactive and student-cantered approach promotes deeper language learning and increased student engagement in Igbo Poetry.

The findings from Table 2 show that CLT method positively impacts students' interest and motivation to learn Igbo poetry, with mean scores of 4.2 and 4.0, respectively, indicating strong agreement. These results align with previous studies of Larsen (2000) who indicates that CLT fosters greater enthusiasm and motivation among students. However, the data also reveal less consensus on CLT's effectiveness in improving student collaboration and fostering critical thinking, with mean scores of 2.4 and 2.6. This suggests that while CLT enhances engagement and motivation, its influence on collaboration and critical thinking may require further refinement, as supported by Littlewood (2004) indicating mixed results regarding CLT's impact on these aspects.

According to the study findings, several challenges associated with implementing the CLT method are shown in table 3 where teachers face significant issues such as increased workload (mean = 3.7) and insufficient training programs (mean = 2.5). The effectiveness of current resources to support CLT was also questioned (mean = 2.8), highlighting the need for better support structures. Despite these challenges, there was agreement on the potential effectiveness of strategies to address these issues (mean = 3.9), suggesting that with appropriate support, the implementation of CLT could be improved, as evidenced by Brown (2007) emphasizing for targeted support and resources to facilitate effective CLT application.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method is effective in enhancing students' performance, interest, and motivation in Igbo poetry compared to traditional teaching methods. While CLT shows significant benefits in improving students' learning outcomes, challenges such as increased teacher workload and inadequate training need to be addressed. Implementing targeted strategies can enhance the successful application of CLT in secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. **The Ministry of Education** should provide comprehensive training programs for teachers to effectively implement the CLT method, focusing on strategies for improving collaboration and critical thinking.
2. **There is need to ensure that** adequate teaching resources are available to support the CLT method, addressing the identified gaps in current resources.
3. **Teacher's** additional workload associated with CLT should be reduced to make it more manageable for teachers.
4. There is need to create and promote effective strategies to help teachers overcome the challenges of implementing CLT, including providing additional support and resources.

References

Adegbile, J. A. (2020). Challenges of implementing communicative language teaching in Nigerian classrooms. *Journal of Language and Communication Studies, 7*(2), 122-136.

Anyanwu, J. C. (2018). Igbo poetry and its role in language and cultural preservation: An educational perspective. *Nigerian Journal of Literary Studies, 15*(1), 28-45.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (3rd ed.). Pearson Longman.

Eze, R. I. (2016). Adimire Usoro Mkpakọrịtaụka na Mmasị na mmeta Nke ọma Ụmụakwụkwọ Sekọndịrị Sịnịọ n'ídeta ụtọasụsụ Igbo na Zonu Mmụta Obolo. Amụma Nchọcha PhD, Ngalaba Mmụta Nka, Mahadum Naijiriịa Nsụka.

Eze, R. I. (2022). Nka Usoro Nchọcha N'asụsụ Igbo. Chuka Educational Publishers Nsukka.

Eze, R. I., & Umo, U. C. (2021). *Utoasusu na Omenaala Igbo maka Senio Sekondiri (SS1-3) SSCE, NECO, NABTEB na JAMB*. Merit International Publication.

Eze, R. I., Egbe, C. I., & Ossai, C. R. C. (2020). Utilization of innovative projects for promoting interest and creativity in language teaching and learning in secondary schools in Nsukka Education zone. *International Journal of Studies in Education, 16*(2).

Ghafar, Z. N., Sawalmeh, M. H., & Mohamedamin, A. A. (2023). Impact of communicative language teaching method on students' speaking and listening skills: A review article. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation, 6*(1), 54-60.

Hasibuan, M., & Batubara, J. (2012). The effect of CLT on students' critical thinking skills. *Journal of Language Teaching Research, 4*(3), 221-236.

Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269-293). Penguin Books.

Nassaji, H. (2000). Towards integrating form-focused instruction and communicative interaction in the second language classroom. *Modern Language Journal, 84*(2), 241- 250.

Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers: Strategies for teacher learning*. Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press