

Teachers' perception of the impact of English language skills of students on media and information literacy

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Abstract

Background: Effective communication is the goal of media and information literacy, and English language skills aim to enhance proper communication through the language. Relevant literature has established the role of English skills in the acquisition of media and information literacy. However, there is no sufficient study to x-ray teachers' perception of the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy.

Objective: This study sought to evaluate the teachers' perception of the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy.

Methodology: The study employed a descriptive survey design and purposive sampling method. A structured questionnaire (which served as the instrument for the study) was developed by the researchers. A total of 103 teachers responded to the instrument that provided data for the study. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, mean scores, and standard deviation to answer the research question, while a *t*-test was used to test the hypotheses.

Result: The findings revealed that English language skills contribute significantly to the acquisition, enhancement, development, expansion, and explosion of media and information literacy. It is observed that both English and media literacy skills are aimed at the actualization of effective communication. Secondly, the findings showed that the acquisition and utilization of English skills by the students will make them media and information literate, and thereby positioning them for sound, logical, and robust media engagement.

Unique contribution: This study has provided additional empirical data to support the position that English language skills facilitate the acquisition of media and information literacy.

Conclusion: English language skills have an immense impact on media and information literacy.

Key recommendation: Teachers of English language should instill in their students, the appropriate English language skills for effective media and information literacy.

Key words: Impact; Information Literacy; Media; Perception; Teachers.

Introduction

The explosion and pluralization of the digital and media technologies have made media and information contents very affordable and easily accessible for many young people in recent times. Modern-day media like television, smartphones, video games, movies, music, print media (newspapers and magazines), software, and the Internet come in different formats; and these media channels involve different kinds of devices or objects through which their contents are delivered. Onwubere (2019a) highlighted 'that apart from the general broad media channels of the print and broadcast, other information providers which act as veritable sources of information include: libraries, museums, archives, Internet as well as other information organizations and citizens who produce their content'. Given this development, the need for a concerted inculcation of media and information literacy skills in our students is increasingly necessary and mandatory because of the frequency and complexity of some of these content messages on the various media channels. The students should be able to cultivate the appropriate abilities aimed at media

and information literacy. These should include the capacity to access media at the elementary level, to analyze it critically on certain parameters, to appraise or evaluate it based on that analysis, and to also be able to produce unbiased media contents (Mediasmarts.ca, 2020).

Media and information literacy refer "to the skillset, attitudes, and knowledge a person needs to enable him or her to effectively engage with media and other information providers that will help to develop critical thinking and life-long learning skills needed for socialization in one's environment" (Onwubere, 2019b). According to Loftis (2015), information literacy is a set of abilities that demand that people should be able to recognize when information is needed and they should have the ability to locate, evaluate and use the needed information effectively. It also involves the ability to clearly and effectively communicate information in various formats and styles required. According to American Library Association (2017), media and information literacy are crucial skill in the pursuit of knowledge; an essential skill for navigating the information age, and for enabling the society to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively. It further outlined some indicators to identify an information literate student. These include the ability to determine the extent of information needed; access the needed information effectively and efficiently; evaluate information and its sources critically; incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base; use information effectively to accomplish specific purposes; understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information; and access and use information ethically and legally (America Library Association, 2017).

Media and information literacy are core constituents of information and communications technology education and they enable students to develop critical thinking skills and approaches for the optimization of searches, evaluations, and the authentication of information and investigation of questions of plagiarism and copyrights. According to Mediasmarts.ca (n.d), Media and information literacy equip the students to critique media illustrations, and further help to teach the people how to distinguish between fantasy and reality as they compare media violence and real-life violence, media heroes and real-life heroes, and media role models and real-life role models and other expectations of life. Media and information literacy assist students to understand how media descriptions can influence the way different groups in society are assessed. It also helps to deepen people's understanding of diversity, distinctiveness, and variance. It supports the students' personal and social development by engaging them in the 'real world' matters and realities. This allows the students to see themselves as active citizens and potential contributors to public discourse (Mediasmarts.ca)

In a nutshell, media and information literacy is the skill required to review, critique, and digest information created and disseminated by the various media, and it is also to assist the students to interpret which information is credible or not (Onwubere, 2019a). Onwubere (2019b) posited that media and information literacy can make students critical thinkers and creative producers of media messages and it can systematically integrate the students into their environment by enabling them to make informed decisions on the incidents within and around their vicinity. She further opined that the knowledge of media and information literacy can alleviate the impending adverse effect of media and empower the students as citizens to make quality and useful decisions.

Notwithstanding the above, it is however observed that the feasibility and the simplicity of achieving media and information literacy can be made possible with the acquisition and utilization of English language skills. With the aid of English language skills, a vast amount of information and ideas can be retrieved, read, interpreted, evaluated, assimilated, and stored. According to Aririguzoh (2007), the English language is a collection of words -written or

spoken- that has meaning and it is the channel for the transmission of knowledge, ideas, meaning, and culture of knowledge. Akhtar (2016) and Alemi (2016) affirmed that the English language is not just a language of communication of ideas and thoughts alone but also a learning language of wider communication, new technology, and globalization. Its essence and impacts are phenomenal and exceptional, and they can be felt virtually in all the facets of human life.

Speaking, writing and listening are important skills for effective communication. These skills are essential in every language, not just English. Without these skills, effective communication will be challenging. According to Alemi (2016), speaking, reading, listening and writing are the basic and fundamental English language skills in the acquisition of any knowledge. Onwubere (2019b) however quipped that apart from the four fundamental language skills that have been identified in the English language, some other essential skills also exist and they are equally very important in the enhancement of the utilization and consumption of media messages. Some of them include inference and deduction; critical and creative thinking; cultural awareness; and building on previous knowledge.

It should be noted that English language skills are the competencies a student acquires to enable him or her to fully internalize the content of any communication she/he engages in the English language. English language skills create the opportunity for the encoder to explore, experience, value, and appreciate language. The grammar and vocabulary of the language are so rich in metaphors, idioms, and other figures of speech that a creative media content provider can explore to add value to his message (Aririguzoh, 2007). By implication, the impact of English language skills on the acquisition of media and information literacy cannot be overemphasized. The skills are pivotal to the advancement of the information age, globalization, and information explosion. Summarily, media and information literacy is the ability to communicate and be communicated to efficiently and effectively, and this is the main purpose of English language skills- to enhance communication.

Teachers' perception means the way teachers see, view, or the opinion they have about a phenomenon or an action. The way teachers perceive the impact of English language skills on students' media and information literacy may be positive or negative. The three important components of perception include exposure/awareness, pre-existing cognition and behaviour. For example, for a person to form perception about something or someone, exposure/awareness are cardinal. Without this, perception will not take place. After exposure or awareness, comes the role of already existing information about a person has. People do not naturally think the same and this has a way of influencing their perception. Finally, comes behaviour, which is usually based on how a person assesses the information and draws conclusion. The perception teachers have about what affect students will typically be driven by the fact that they have substantial knowledge of students. Another variable that may influence teachers' perception is gender. This is because gender plays an important role in determining how people think, behave and even process information. Men and women are not the same even in terms of looks and body build, this difference is likely to manifest in teachers' perception about their students. Male teachers may or may not differ significantly in their perception about any phenomenon or variable. The report from a study conducted by Otemuyiwa (2017) found that there was a significant difference between the perception of male and female teachers on the factors responsible for students' performance. It is against this background that this study examined teachers' perception of the impact of English language skills of students on media and information literacy.

Statement of the Problem

Media and information literacy depends on the appropriate skills to be effectively and efficiently comprehended and actualized. The role of English language teachers in the school system is to ensure the inculcation and facilitation of English language learning. It is to equip the students with sufficient English language skills that will enable the students to disseminate and analyze media contents and to infuse in the students the capability to find and use the information correctly and functionally. It is therefore expected that English language teachers would be information literates themselves and they should possess the skills to train their students for media and information literacy with the aid of English language skills. This paper sought to evaluate English language teachers' perception of the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to:

1. Evaluate teachers' perceptions of the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy of students.
2. Ascertain whether there is a significant difference in the teachers' perceptions of the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy of students based on the teachers' gender.
3. Determine if there is a significant difference in the teachers' perceptions of the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy of students based on the teachers' location.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perception of the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy of students based on the teachers' gender.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perception of the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy of students based on the schools' locations.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. It was conducted in Kwali and Gwagwalada Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised entirely all the English language teachers in the public senior secondary schools in the two area councils of the FCT. This study employed the descriptive survey design and a simple random sampling method was used to select ten senior secondary schools in the two area councils. Purposive sampling method was adopted by the researcher to select all the English language teachers in each of the 10 schools. A total of 103 teachers (38 males and 65 females) responded to the instrument employed to generate data for the study. The instrument was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers and tagged "Teachers' Perception of the Impact of English Language Skills on Media and Information Literacy (TPIELSMIL)". Two measurement and evaluation experts from the Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, and two English language teachers from one of the public senior secondary schools in the FCT (who were not part of the population) validated the instrument. A correlation coefficient of 0.72 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha. The instrument consisted of 10 items that were raised to answer

to test the hypotheses that guided the study. The instrument was designed following 4 points Likert rating of 'strongly agreed, (SA), agreed (A), disagreed (D), and strongly disagreed (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The data generated for the study were analyzed using SPSS descriptive statistical tools. Frequency counts, mean and standard deviation were employed to achieve the study objectives with a set mean value of 2.50, while the *t*-test was utilized to test the two hypotheses formulated for the study at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Analysis

Table 1: Mean Responses of Teachers’ Perception on the Impact of English Language Skills on Students’ Media and Information Literacy

SN	ITEMS	N	Mean	St. dev	Decision
1	English language skills facilitate media literary, critical thinking and problem-solving	103	3.28	0.59	Agreed
2	English language skills do not aid the acquisition of media and information literacy	103	1.57	0.72	Disagreed
3	The English language promotes communication skills required to function in the society	103	2.97	0.89	Agreed
4	English language skills enhance the ability to distinguish between emotions from reasoning	103	3.22	0.79	Agreed
5	English language skills do not contribute to the knowledge of various media formats specificity	103	2.22	0.66	Disagreed
6	English language skills boost communications and information management	103	3.66	0.65	Agreed
7	English language skills aid accurate identification of the core issues	103	3.53	0.74	Agreed
8	The English language offers the media consumer and content provider the opportunity of experiencing, valuing and appreciating the language	103	3.35	0.68	Agreed
9	English language skills promote the demonstration of critical judgment and interpretation abilities	103	3.17	0.86	Agreed
10	English language skills do not facilitate social inclusiveness and citizen participation	103	1.39	0.66	Disagreed
Cluster Mean/Standard/Deviation Average			2.84	0.096	

Teachers' responses to research question 3: "What are the teachers' perception on the impacts of English language skills on media and information literacy?" showed that teachers agreed to items 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9 with mean scores of 3.28, 2.97, 3.22, 3.66, 3.53, 3.35 and 3.17 respectively. The teachers, however, disagreed with items 2, 5, and 10 with mean scores of 1.54, 2.22, and 1.39 respectively. This implies that English language skills have an impact on media and

information literacy based on the teachers' perception as reflected in the cluster mean score average of 2.84.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perception of the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy of students based on the teachers' gender

Table 2: T-test Analysis of the Mean Score Responses of Teachers' Perception of the Impact of English Language Skills on Media and Information Literacy based on the teachers' gender.

	N	Mean	S.D	DF	t.cal	Table	Decision
Male	38	24.03	5.77	101	2.88	1.96	t _c >t _t
Female	65	27.75	7.26				

From the above table, the result of the *t*-test analysis indicated that the calculated t-value of 2.88 was greater than the established critical t-value of 1.96 when tested at 0.05 level of significance at the degree of freedom of 101. This means that the formulated hypothesis which states that 'there is no significant difference in the teachers' perception of the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy based on the teachers' gender' is not accepted.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perception of the impacts of English language skills on media and information literacy based on the schools' locations

Table 3: T-test Analysis of the Mean Score Responses of Teachers' Perception of the Impacts of English Language skills on Media and Information Literacy based on the schools' locations

	N	Mean	S.D	Df	t-cal	Table	Decision
Urban	59	26.29	5.62	101	0.92	1.96	t _c <t _t
Rural	44	25.37	4.56				

The result of the *t*-test analysis in table 3 above revealed that the calculated t-value of 0.92 was less than the established critical t-value of 1.96 when tested at 0.05 level of significance with the degree of freedom at 101. There is, therefore, evidence to accept the hypothesis that states that 'there is no significant difference in the teachers' perception of the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy based on the schools' locations.

Discussion

The main finding of this study established that English language skills have a significant impact on media and information literacy of students based on the teachers' perception. The English language teachers, in the public senior secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, unanimously agreed that English language skills considerably contribute to the acquisition, enhancement, development, expansion, and explosion of media and information literacy because

both the English language skills and media literacy skills have the same goal to actualize in ensuring effective and efficient communication. This finding is in agreement with Loftis (2015) that asserted that the acquisition of information literacy skills facilitates "social inclusiveness and citizenship participation, information management, high level of critical judgment, and the ability to distinguish reasoning from emotions.

The teachers also agreed that when students competently acquire English language skills and utilize them appropriately, the students will become excellent media and information literates which will further position them for unbiased and robust media criticism. Aririguzoh (2007) and Onumah (2019) corroborated the finding by asserting "that media and information literacy skills are capacities or abilities that will equip students to be able to critically review any piece of information by probing into it, analyzing and evaluating the content of the information before it is being used". This implies that for an effective and unbiased critical review of any media content or information, the relevant English language skills would be employed. Other findings of this study established that the teachers' gender affected their perception index on the impacts of English language skills on media and information literacy, while teachers' locations do not affect their perception index. The implication of this finding suggests that the male and the female teachers that participated in the study differ in the way they perceived the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy. This is supported by the report from previous study where Otemuyiwa (2017) found that teachers' gender influenced their perception on students' performance. Grizzle (2014) affirmed that there some cross-cutting social and cultural elements that shape, affect, or limit the capacity of women and men to participate on equal terms in media and information society.

The teachers, however, had a unanimous opinion on the perception index of urban and rural teachers on the impact of English language skills to media and information literacy. This implies that the location of the teacher-respondents does not have any influence on the variables. The teachers believe that wherever you are as a student, diverse media information and content will get to you one way or the other, and there is a need to be able to access, evaluate, and critique it before it is consumed or disseminated. This process can only be easily possible with the acquisition and utilization of language skills.

From the above discussions, it has been empirically established that English language skills have a significant impact on media and information literacy. It has also changed the paradigm of media and information literacy. Therefore, students need to be familiar and rooted in English language skills to be able to utilize them appropriately and efficiently to achieve the aims of media and information literacy.

Conclusion

This study evaluated the perception of teachers on the impact of English language skills on media and information literacy. It also ascertained if there are differences that exist in the teachers' perceptions of English language skills on media and information literacy based on the teachers' gender and locations. The study found out that English language skills have an immense impact on media and information literacy.

Recommendation

Based on the above findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers of English language should instill in their students the appropriate English language skills for media and information literacy.

2. Seminars and training should be constantly organized for teachers by relevant organizations on the skills for the acquisition of media and information literacy.
3. The Nigerian Senior Secondary School Curriculum should be reviewed to emphasize media and information literacy in the English Language teaching and learning process.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest whatsoever as

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