



EFFECTS OF INQUIRY METHOD ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDE IN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN KUMO, GOMBE STATE

Ahmed Muhammad Waziri

Department of Educational Foundations,
Federal University of Kashere
ahmed.wazirikumo@fukashere.edu.ng

And

Dr. Mohammed Bularafa Waziri

Department of Education,
University of Maiduguri

And

Dr. Isa Abdulkarim Tilde

Department of Educational Foundations,
Federal University of Kashere

And

Dahiru Aliyu

Department of Arts and Social Science Education,
Federal University of Kashere
dahirualiyu@fukashere.edu.ng

Abstract

The study on the Effects of inquiry method of teaching on student's attitude in learning English Language in Kumo, Gombe state, Nigeria was specifically determined to find out the pretest and posttest English Language Students' Attitude towards English Language learning. The research work sought to find out if there was a significant difference or no significant difference in the students' attitude in English Language when taught using inquiry based method of teaching techniques. This research work had one objective with one corresponding research question and hypotheses. The duration of the research work was ten weeks. The scope of this study was on the effects of inquiry method of teaching which specifically focuses on Listening and Speaking Skills on students' attitude. Students' English Language Attitude Scale (SELAS) was designed and administered to both the control and experimental groups. A total of 155 students participated in the study. Experimental group was made of 82 students while control group was 73 students. The analysis of the data collected was done using appropriate tools in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20th Edition. The study finds out that students taught English Language in SS II using inquiry based method performed better than those taught using conventional method.

Keywords: Inquiry Method, Students' Attitude, Learning, English Language, Kumo

Introduction

The foundation of any meaningful national development is widely acknowledged to rest on the quality of a nation's educational system. For education to effectively drive development, the teaching and learning

process must be purposeful, systematic, and effective. This requires the use of appropriate and evidence-based teaching methods that facilitate the development and implementation of relevant curricula across different subject areas. Teaching methods



refer to the systematic strategies, approaches, and techniques employed by teachers to present subject matter, enhance learners' understanding, shape learners' behaviour, and develop skills and competencies among students (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Effective teaching methods not only improve student engagement and academic achievement but also support lifelong skills development, which is critical for national development (UNESCO, 2020). To achieve meaningful learning outcomes, teachers must select methods that reflect learners' needs, subject complexity, and desired competencies (Hattie & Zierer, 2018).

Teaching methods are commonly classified into two broad strata: teacher-centred and student-centred approaches. The teacher-centred approach comprises instructional methods in which the teacher dominates the teaching-learning process, takes primary responsibility for content delivery, and controls classroom activities and decision-making. In this approach, learners are largely passive recipients of information, while the teacher serves as the main source of knowledge and authority in the classroom. Contemporary scholarship associates teacher-centred methods with traditional instructional practices that emphasize direct instruction, explanation, and repetition, often rooted in behaviourist learning theory (Schunk, 2020).

Conversely, the student-centred approach encompasses teaching methods that prioritize learners' active participation in the construction of knowledge. Rather than functioning as the sole decision-maker, the teacher assumes the role of a facilitator, guide, mentor, coach, or consultant who supports learners' inquiry and problem-solving processes. Student-centred pedagogy emphasizes autonomy, collaboration, critical thinking, and meaningful engagement with learning tasks, thereby fostering deeper

understanding and transferable skills (Weimer, 2017; OECD, 2018).

One prominent student-centred strategy is inquiry-based instruction, which is a pedagogical approach that encourages learners to explore academic content through questioning, investigation, and evidence-based reasoning. Inquiry-based teaching enables students to formulate meaningful questions, seek relevant information, and construct knowledge through guided exploration. This approach promotes ownership of learning, nurtures curiosity, and develops essential academic and professional skills such as critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving (Pedaste et al., 2017). Moreover, inquiry-based instruction allows learners to connect academic content with real-life experiences, making learning more relevant and inclusive, particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse students (UNESCO, 2021).

Empirical evidence from Nigeria suggests that many secondary school teachers predominantly rely on conventional, teacher-centred instructional practices characterized by whole-class teaching, textbook dependency, and extensive use of the chalkboard. In such classrooms, the teacher is viewed as the sole authority and transmitter of knowledge, while students are rarely encouraged to participate actively in practical, creative, or communicative learning activities (Adeosun & Oladipo, 2019; Olatunji, 2022). This overreliance on teacher-centred methods has been associated with learners' negative attitudes toward English language learning and limited development of communicative competence. In response to this challenge, the present study adopts an inquiry-based teaching method, which is expected to enhance students' attitudes toward learning English language among secondary school students in Kumo, Gombe State.



Contemporary research maintains a strong consensus that learners' attitudes play a foundational role in learning outcomes. Positive attitudes toward learning are associated with higher motivation, persistence, and achievement, whereas negative attitudes can hinder engagement and academic success (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2016). Attitudes are generally understood as comprising both cognitive and affective components, involving learners' beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and emotional responses toward learning tasks and contexts (Brown, 2000; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). These attitudes begin to develop early in life and are shaped by multiple social influences, including parents, peers, teachers, and interactions within diverse social and cultural environments. As such, attitudes form an integral part of individuals' perceptions of themselves, others, and the sociocultural contexts in which they live.

In the context of language learning, attitudes toward a language often reflect learners' feelings about the speakers of that language and the social value attached to it. Research indicates that positive language attitudes significantly facilitate second language acquisition, particularly in communicative skills such as listening and speaking (Al-Hoorie, 2017; Sato & Loewen, 2019). Consequently, the measurement of learners' language attitudes provides valuable insights for language teachers and curriculum designers, as it helps explain learners' engagement levels and responsiveness to instructional methods. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study, which seeks to examine how instructional approaches may influence students' attitudes toward learning English language.

The teaching and learning of English language vary considerably depending on learners' proficiency levels, instructional context, and pedagogical approaches adopted by teachers. Contemporary

educational research emphasizes that effective English language instruction should be learner-centred, inclusive, and responsive to students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (OECD, 2018; UNESCO, 2020). Rather than relying solely on rote learning and textbook-based instruction, modern pedagogy encourages active engagement, interaction, and meaningful language use to enhance comprehension and communication skills.

Studies have shown that learners develop stronger language competence when instructional methods actively involve them in listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks that reflect real-life communication (Sato & Loewen, 2019). In line with this view, learner-centred classrooms provide opportunities for discussion, questioning, collaborative activities, and guided practice, which promote deeper understanding and sustained interest in language learning (Weimer, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2017). These approaches are particularly important in second language contexts, where students require constant exposure to meaningful input and opportunities for output to develop fluency and confidence.

In the Nigerian context, research indicates that English language teaching is still largely dominated by teacher-centred practices, which limit students' active participation and engagement (Adeosun & Oladipo, 2019; Olatunji, 2022). Such practices have been associated with students' poor attitudes toward English language learning and weak performance, especially in communicative skills such as listening and speaking.

Inquiry-based teaching is a learner-centred pedagogical approach that emphasizes exploration, questioning, investigation, and reflective thinking. Rather than presenting knowledge as fixed facts, inquiry-based instruction encourages students to construct



understanding through guided discovery and problem-solving activities (Pedaste et al., 2017). Within this framework, the teacher assumes the role of a facilitator who guides learners' inquiry, supports collaboration, and provides feedback.

Research has shown that inquiry-based learning enhances students' cognitive engagement, critical thinking, and motivation by actively involving them in the learning process (Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In language classrooms, inquiry-based instruction allows learners to interact meaningfully with language content, ask questions, negotiate meaning, and apply language skills in authentic contexts. These features make inquiry-based teaching particularly effective for developing listening and speaking skills, which require active participation and communicative practice (Sato & Loewen, 2019).

Furthermore, inquiry-based approaches align with global educational goals that emphasize competence-based learning, creativity, and learner autonomy (OECD, 2018; UNESCO, 2021). Despite its documented benefits, the application of inquiry-based teaching in Nigerian secondary school English language classrooms remains limited, creating a need for empirical studies that examine its effectiveness in improving students' attitudes and learning outcomes.

Attitude is a key psychological construct in educational and language learning research. It refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of an object, behaviour, or experience. According to Ajzen (2005), attitude is not directly observable but is inferred from individuals' responses and behaviours, reflecting their beliefs and evaluations. In language learning contexts, attitude influences learners' motivation, engagement, and willingness to use the target language.

Contemporary studies emphasize that attitudes toward a language are shaped by both internal factors (such as interest and self-confidence) and external factors (such as teaching methods, classroom environment, and societal perceptions of the language) (Al-Hoorie, 2017; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Learners with positive attitudes toward English are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities, practice language skills, and persist in learning despite challenges (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2016).

Empirical evidence further suggests that instructional methods play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward English language learning. Learner-centred and interactive approaches, including inquiry-based teaching, have been found to foster positive attitudes by making learning more engaging, relevant, and meaningful (Adeosun & Oladipo, 2019; Olatunji, 2022). Consequently, understanding students' attitudes provides valuable insights for improving teaching practices and enhancing language learning outcomes.

Effective English language teaching requires learner-centred instructional approaches that actively engage students and promote meaningful communication. Inquiry-based teaching has been identified as a promising method for enhancing students' engagement, motivation, and attitudes toward learning. However, despite its global recognition, there is limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of inquiry-based teaching in improving students' attitudes toward English language learning at the senior secondary school level in Nigeria, particularly in Gombe State. This gap necessitates the present study, which investigates the effect of inquiry-based teaching method on Senior Secondary School II students' attitudes toward learning English language in Kumo, Gombe State.



Statement of the Problem

In an effective English language classroom, learners are expected to be actively involved, motivated, and intellectually engaged in the learning process. Learning is not viewed as a passive act of receiving information; rather, students are regarded as active participants who contribute meaningfully to the construction of knowledge under the guidance of the teacher. Contemporary language pedagogy emphasizes learner engagement, interaction, and meaningful use of language as essential conditions for developing communicative competence.

However, empirical studies indicate that many secondary school English language classrooms, particularly in developing contexts such as Nigeria, are still dominated by teacher-centred instructional practices. These practices often rely heavily on lecture methods, rote learning, and textbook-based instruction, which limit students' participation and opportunities for meaningful language use. As a result, students frequently exhibit poor attitudes toward learning English, low motivation, and limited development of essential language skills, especially listening and speaking (Adeosun & Oladipo, 2019; Olatunji, 2022).

Research further suggests that students' negative attitudes toward English language learning are closely linked to inappropriate teaching methods and insufficient learner engagement. When instructional approaches fail to stimulate curiosity, interaction, and critical thinking, students are less likely to develop positive dispositions toward the language, which in turn affects their fluency and overall communicative competence (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). This situation has created a pedagogical gap, indicating the need for the adoption of innovative and learner-centred teaching

methods capable of enhancing students' attitudes and language skills.

Inquiry-based teaching method, as a student-centred approach, has been identified as a promising instructional strategy that actively involves learners in questioning, exploration, and collaborative problem-solving. Despite its documented benefits in fostering positive learning attitudes and communicative competence, its application in English language classrooms at the senior secondary school level in Nigeria remains limited. If the current reliance on conventional teaching methods continues unchecked, there is a strong likelihood that students' poor attitudes toward English language learning will persist, leading to declining achievement and reduced progression beyond secondary education.

In view of this concern, the present study investigates the extent to which the inquiry-based teaching method improves the attitudes of Senior Secondary School II students toward learning English language in Kumo, Gombe State.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to:

1. Determine the extent to which the inquiry-based teaching method improves the attitude of Senior Secondary School II students toward learning English language compared with the traditional teaching method.

Research Question

The study was guided by the following research question:

1. To what extent does the inquiry-based teaching method improve the attitude of Senior Secondary School II students toward learning English language compared with the traditional teaching method?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:



1. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean attitude scores of Senior Secondary School II students taught English language using the inquiry-based teaching method and those taught using the traditional teaching method.

Methodology

The design of the study is quasi-experimental. Specifically, the study applied pre-test and post-rest non-equivalent control group design. Quasi-experimental design was considered appropriate for the study because two intact classes were used to avoid disruption of normal class lessons. The pre-test was used to partial out differences in the two groups and also to control selection bias which is a threat to internal validity.

The population of this study comprises of all SS II English students in Kumo town, Gombe State. There are at present four (4) Government Senior Secondary Schools in the area of this study. Two of which are co-educational schools while the other two are single schools. The total population of English language II students is 1098 consisting of 734 boys, 364 girls respectively. The study was focused attention on SS II students because they didn't belong to the graduating class and might have learnt some basics of English concepts in SS I. The sample unit for this study was consisted of total of one hundred and fifty-five (155) senior secondary II English language students with 82 boys and 73 girls drawn from the total population.

Considering gender as an important variable to be studied under this work, purposive sampling techniques was used. The purposive sampling technique is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objectives of the study. Awotunde and Ugodulunwa (as cited in Bukar, 2019) define purposive sampling technique as non-probability sampling technique in

which the researcher attempts to select sample that appear to him as being representative of the population defined by the researcher work problem. Therefore, two intact SS II classes were sampled, one of the class was assigned as experimental group while the other one was control group by the used of simple random sampling.

One (1) instrument was used for data collection. That is: Students' English language Attitude scale (SELAS). SELAS was developed by the researcher. The SELAS was made up of section A and B. Section A contained basic information of the students while B contained five-point Likert scale with strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree responses structure. These responses were scored 5,4,3,2,1 accordingly for the positive responds and 1,2,3,4,5 for the negative responses. All the 20 responses in section B of SELAS measured students' attitude towards English Language learning.

The data collected was analyzed using independent t-test to test the null hypothesis of the study. An independent t-test is a type of statistical test that is used to compare the means to two groups. The independent t-test is a type of t-test which is used when the two groups under comparison are independent of each other (Lee, 2015: 220). Therefore, the hypothesis was tested using t-test of independent samples. This is because the pre-test mean scores of the experimental group was compared to the post-test mean scores of the control group. This was done at 0.05 level of significance or $p < 0.05$. While the research questions were answered using mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation.

Results

What are the Pretest and posttest attitude towards English mean scores of the experimental and control groups?

The below is the data answering this research question 1.



Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test Attitude of Students toward English Language in the Experimental and Control Groups

Group		Attitude			Total
		Negative	Neutral	Positive	
Experimental	Pre-test	76(93%)	6(7%)		82(100%)
	Post-test		8(10%)	74(90%)	82(100%)
Control	Pre-test	71(97%)	2(3%)		73(100%)
	Post-test	70(96%)	3(4%)		73(100%)

Table 1 reveals the pretest attitude of students towards English language in the experimental and control groups in Kumo, Gombe State. The result showed that 76 (93%) students in the experimental group had a negative attitude, 6 (7%) had neutral attitude, while none of them had positive attitude before exposure to treatment. Also, 71 (97%) students in the control group had negative attitude, 2 (3%) of the students had neutral attitude, while none of them had positive attitude towards English Language. The Table 7 showed that both the experimental and control groups had negative attitude towards English language before treatment. It indicates that they were at the same level of attitude before exposure to treatment.

After treatment the result showed that 8 (10%) of the students in the experimental

group had a neutral attitude, 2 (4%) while 74 (90%) had positive attitude towards English language. Also, 70(96%) of the students in the control group had negative attitude, 3 (4%) of the students had neutral attitude, while none of them had positive attitude towards Social Studies. Table - showed that majority of the students in the experimental group had positive attitude in the posttest as against the control group who still recorded negative attitude toward English language learning in Kumo, Gombe State.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the experimental and control groups on posttest attitude towards English mean score.

Table 2 contains the result for the hypothesi.

Table 2 ANCOVA Result on Post-test Attitude Mean Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Partial Squared	Eta
Corrected Model	88603.530 ^a	2	44301.765	749.978	.000	.908	
Intercept	8161.648	1	8161.648	138.167	.000	.476	
Pre-test	29.751	1	29.751	.504	.479	.003	
Group	88215.902	1	88215.902	1493.394	.000	.908	
Error	8978.754	152	59.071				
Total	525694.000	155					
Corrected Total	97582.284	154					

a. R Squared = .908 (Adjusted R Squared = .907)



Discussion

The study was aimed at examining the effects of inquiry method of teaching on students' attitude in learning English language in Kumo Gombe state, Nigeria. The study shows significant improvement in the mean score of students in the experimental and control groups. The result revealed that after exposure to inquiry based method of teaching in the experimental groups improved in their attitude towards English Language mean score. Result of the hypotheses 1 showed that both the experimental and control groups had negative attitude towards English Language before treatment. It indicates that they were at the same level of attitude before exposure to treatment. After treatment the result showed that 74 (90%) had positive attitude towards English language. Also, 70 (96%) of the students in the control group had negative attitude.

The result showed that majority of the students in the experimental group had positive attitude in the posttest as against the control group who still recorded negative attitude toward English language in Kumo, Gombe State. This outcome of the study was not a surprise because several studies have showed in the literature review acclaimed the effect of inquiry method based method of teaching on the students all round development, attitude inclusive as a strong factor in students' academic achievement in English language. This finding agreed with Fadel & Khaled (2013) on their study noted that student's attitude relating to a second language influences their learning and mastery of the language. They made conclusion to the effect that attitude improves the progression of the learning second language, influencing the learners' conduct and sentiment towards the language and its customs and society.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions can be deduced that

students taught with inquiry based method of teaching technique performed significantly better than students taught with Conventional Method of teaching. The trend of higher achievement by the experimental group could be as a result of guiding rules in the learning atmosphere provided by the inquiry based method of teaching approach, which helped the students to master the grammatical concepts without much difficulty than the control groups.

Recommendation

It was recommended that;

- 1 Both teachers under training and those in the teaching field should be made to understand how to use the inquiry based method teaching technique.
- 2 To develop in the students' positive attitude government, educational state holders, curriculum planners should ensure the enshrinement of inquiry based method of teaching to stimulates cognitive activities, promote positive attitude and higher academic achievement.

References

- Adeosun, O. T., & Oladipo, S. A. (2019). Teaching methods and students' attitude to English language in Nigerian secondary schools. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 10(21), 98–105. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1225076.pdf>
- Al-Hoorie, A. H. (2017). Sixty years of language motivation research: Looking back and looking forward. *SAGE Open*, 7(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017701976>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Empowered Educators: How High-Performing Systems Shape Teaching Quality*



- Around the World*. Jossey-Bass. <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Empowered+Educators%3A+How+High+Performing+Systems+Support+Teaching+Quality+Around+the+World-9781119265160>
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). *Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development*. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Hattie, J., & Zierer, K. (2018). *10 Mindframes for Visible Learning: Teaching for Success*. Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/10-Mindframes-for-Visible-Learning-Teaching-for-Success/Hattie-Zierer/p/book/9781138548767>
- Mercer, S., & Dörnyei, Z. (2020). *Engaging language learners in contemporary classrooms*. Cambridge University Press. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/engaging-language-learners-in-contemporary-classrooms/1F2B7C2A9F1E4E4E65C35E97D73F0F64>
- OECD. (2018). *The future of education and skills: Education 2030*. OECD Publishing.
- Olatunji, A. O. (2022). Classroom instructional practices and students' engagement in English language learning in Nigeria. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 26(1), 45–59. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/aje/article/view/226112>
- Oroujlou, N., & Vahedi, M. (2016). Motivation, attitude, and language learning. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29, 994–1000. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.11.333>
- Pedaste, M., Mäeots, M., Siiman, L. A., de Jong, T., van Riesen, S. A. N., Kamp, E. T., & Tsourlidaki, E. (2017). Phases of inquiry-based learning: Definitions and the inquiry cycle. *Educational Research Review*, 14, 47–61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2015.02.003>
- Sato, M., & Loewen, S. (2019). *Evidence-based second language pedagogy*. Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Evidence-Based-Second-Language-Pedagogy/Sato-Loewen/p/book/9781138488322>
- Schunk, D. H. (2020). *Learning theories: An educational perspective* (8th ed.). Pearson Education. <https://www.pearson.com/en-us/subject-catalog/p/learning-theories/P200000003275>
- UNESCO. (2020). *Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2020: Inclusion and Education for All Means All*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373725>
- UNESCO. (2021). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO Publishing.
- Weimer, M. (2017). *Learner-centered teaching: Five key changes to practice* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass. <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Learner+Centered+Teaching%3A+Five+Key+Changes+to+Practice%2C+2nd+Edition-p-978111910780>