

The Imperative for The Teaching of Literature in English in Secondary Schools in Yobe State

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Abstract- This research investigates factors responsible for the absence of literature in English in secondary schools in Yobe State, with the view to creating awareness among all stakeholders on the need to revive teaching and learning of the subject so as to maximise opportunities relating to it. The research adopts a quantitative research design, using a questionnaire to collect information. Yobe state grouped all the secondary schools of the state into three zones; Damaturu, Potiskum and Gashua. Three schools were selected from each zone, and 4 and 20 staff and students respondents respectively were taken from the nine schools. This sampling brings the total of 36 and 180 staff and students respondents respectively. The data was collected through direct administration of the questionnaires in the study area. Frequency and percentage statistical tool was used to analyse the data. The findings reveal that a lot is wrong with teaching staff of the subject, pertaining to qualification and work experience. Majority of the staff are graduates but into mainstream language or language education. Acute dearth of teaching resources and students' poor reading culture has been bedeviling the subject. Both staff and students are optimistic that Yobe state Government and parents can turn around the misfortune of the subject. On the positive, both staff and students are aware that literature with its broad potential can improve English language and facilitate communication, create opportunity to study more courses thereby bringing more jobs to the state indigenes. Other benefits of literature which the respondents admit include improvement on university admission, improvement on social and cultural cohesion, and interestingly, improvement on security. It is concluded that all the stakeholders fully appreciate the problems and prospects of literature in English in Yobe State. Hence, it is recommended that, with this level of awareness, Yobe state Government and

all the other stakeholders should make concerted efforts toward improving the status of literature in English so as to benefit from the all the potentials of the course.

Indexed Terms- Literature, Teaching, stakeholders, English Language, Students, Teachers.

I. INTRODUCTION

In terms of literacy rates and educational achievements, Yobe state is about the most backward state in Nigeria. According to 2006 population census, of the 551, 698 number of children between the ages of 6 – 14, only about 11% were in primary school; of the 445, 366 between the ages of 15 – 24, 12% were in junior secondary school; and of 92, 504, only 14% were in senior secondary school (Daura & Audu, 2015). This statistics indicates a high rate of illiteracy, which demands commitments from all stakeholders in education in the state.

The official language of communication in Nigeria is English language; therefore, teaching in Nigerian schools is largely done in English. It is therefore vital for students to be proficient in English language. A good knowledge of the language facilitates learning in school. However, in Yobe state, many of the students have limited knowledge of English, and therefore, struggle to learn in both secondary and tertiary institutions. Kaigama et al, (2019) confirmed that many students in Yobe State have very poor communication skills in English, which usually impedes their studies in schools. The situation is so bad that many university students in the state cannot express themselves properly.

This fundamental problem informed the research. It is therefore, an attempt to find answers to questions regarding the poor standing of literature in English in

especially public secondary schools. And whether sensitization effort can revive its teaching, whether admission opportunities of Yobe state students can improve and whether at the end, work force will also improve in the state.

The project aims at creating awareness on the need for re-introduction of literature in English with the aim of improving proficiency in English language in secondary schools of Yobe State. It is hoped the project will bridge this expensive knowledge gap so that there is improvement in all areas relating to English language, and education generally in the state.

As a way of remedy, we intend to reach out to some stakeholders in education in the state regarding the subject matter. We believe that the responses from the target population will give us insight into the remote causes of this problem, and that will afford us the opportunity to sensitize the government, students and the general public on this very important subject matter.

It is hoped that the Government of the state can benefit from the insight into the issue of literature the research will provide. Most importantly, the students of the state will benefit by gaining more language skills and increased chances of admissions and job more opportunities.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research work is to create awareness among all the stakeholders in the state on the subject and its impact on study and work. Specific objectives include:

1. To investigate factors responsible for the absence of literature in English in secondary schools in Yobe State,
2. To create awareness among all stakeholders on the need to have Literature in English in the secondary schools so as to maximise opportunities relating to the course,
3. To ensure that more Yobe State indigenes gain admission into universities to study English language, Law, Mass Communication and so on,

4. To ensure, in the long run, that qualified indigenous English language teachers are available to teach in Yobe State schools,

1.3 Research Questions

- I) Are there factors responsible for the disappearance of literature in English as a subject in secondary schools of Yobe State?
- II) Can the teaching of literature in English be revived in secondary schools of Yobe State?
- III) Can admission opportunities of Yobe State indigenes to study professional courses in Nigerian universities be improved via resuscitation of literature in English?
- IV) Can work force development in the state be improved through sensitization efforts?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

An overwhelming body of literature abounds on the impact of literature in English, in English language teaching and learning, and on the problems and challenges of teaching the subject in secondary schools across the globe.

2.2. The Role of Literature in English Language Teaching and Learning

Studies have proven the importance of Literature in English in language classroom. Okyar (2021) found literature to be an important resource for language proficiency and personal development in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, and the varied contributions of the different genres of literature on English language teaching and learning. In addition, Duncan & Paran (2017) discovered literature as an important catalyst for language skill acquisition, and intercultural understanding among immigrants and the British in the multi-cultural UK society. The study also found significant vocabulary development in the students. Both studies Okyar (2021) and Duncan & Paran (2017) confirmed linguistic as well as personal development of students with involvement of literature in language learning. While the two researches above found students' personal development in literature, Schrijvers et al. (2017) found reading literary texts yielding perception of self and others.

Similar to Okyar's (2021) finding, Muhammad (2013) also found that literature provides resources for the learning of English language. However, because language is inherently figurative, Muhammad's finding goes slightly different where he found that not only the language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing, the literary resources of a target language can be used in ESL/EFL situation to teach aspects of that language such as grammar and vocabulary.

2.4. Problems and Challenges to the Teaching of Literature in English

It is pertinent to mention that a study was conducted by Dahiru (2020) on the challenges of teaching literature in English in secondary schools of Yobe and Borno states – one of which is our research area, and both are states in the north-eastern geopolitical zone of the country. He found that the reasons for the non-teaching of the subject include socio-cultural issues, lack of teachers and gender issues. Interestingly, the first item of his recommendation is “sensitisation” of stakeholders in secondary education in the two states. Similarly, Ugwu (2022) carried out a survey on the challenges facing effective teaching of the course. She found lack of enlightenment and hence lack of parental support, low language proficiency, poor learning environment among others to be impediments to the teaching of the subject. Although her findings differ from Dahiru's but they add to the challenges militating against the teaching of the subject.

2.5. Efforts towards Improving the Teaching and Learning of Literature in English

Exploration of the efforts toward improving the teaching and learning of literature took Smith & Feng (2018) to compare the traditional, skill-based reading instruction and literature circles studies to find out about reading motivation and performance. Two-gifted-student groups were created and subjected to the two different learning methods. The post-test of the two groups revealed literature-circle group's high motivation to read and discuss literary texts with their peers. Similarly, Talenta & Himawati (2023) explored literature circles to find out about students' reading engagement. The findings of the research are similar to those of Smith & Feng. However, Smith & Feng's use of comparison of the literature circle with

the skill-based in direct involvement with students is more reliable than Talenta & Himawati's study of the literature circle alone. Another similar research is Jacobs' (2016) M.A. Thesis on whether literature circles can facilitate reading comprehension and motivation. The research found improvement in reading and motivation. Literature circles as a learning strategy is gaining ground with secondary school students.

Part of improving English Language Teaching ELT is Cruz's (2010) effort at reconciling language and literature. The study explored and found that literature as well as culture can help students establish intimate connection with a target language in EFL situation, because the two systems mutate according to the communicative needs of the native and foreign language use. In this context, literature provides authentic material (natural use of the language), and an aesthetic use of the spoken language, which enriches the language. The research reasserts what Master Shakespeare' shows in Shakespeare in Love “...language found a soulmate in literature, and they are inserted in a mystical halo called culture...”

Recently, with Alfaruque et al. (2023), it is now working toward integrating the teaching of literature with technology and digital tools. Their experiment with technology and digital tools proved that computer digital tools such as visualisations, storytelling through videos among others have proved to impact on the students' reading of literary texts. High motivation and involvement of technology in the teaching and learning of literature are recent efforts towards quality instruction in literature.

2.6. Literature and the Learning of Other Courses

Lao & Stephen (2000) found that a large percentage of participants in their research believed what they learned from the study with literature can facilitate learning of other university courses.

2.7. National Policy on Re-introduction of Literature
As a way of improving language proficiency at country levels, Suliman & Yunus (2014) have on assessing the teachers' readiness to revamp the subject literature, found that the teachers were happy

to be a catalyst to this development. Besides, they reported the Malaysian Minister of Education announcing the re-introduction of Literature in English in secondary schools, aiming at the improvement of the entire Malaysian education system. The announcement was necessary because the course was at the verge of extinction.

Much of the research energy is geared towards studying the role the subject plays in teaching and learning of English language.

III. SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Samples will be collected from the participants who are broken into hierarchical groups. The stratified nature of the population calls for the use of Stratified Random Sampling Technique to work out the sample for the research. Working upwards, the participants at the lowest stratum are the students from the three zones of the state. Teachers of English from all the study areas form the next layer (Biggam, 2011).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data from the questionnaire will be subjected to frequency and percentage statistical analysis.

4.1. Data Presentation and Analysis of Findings

4.1.1. Staff Age Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 25	05	14%
25 – 30	07	19%
30 – 35	09	25%
35 – 40	13	36%
40 – 45	02	6%
Total	36	100%

Table 4.1.1 above indicates the age distribution of the staff respondents. It shows that 13 of the 36 respondents, representing 36% are within the age range of 35 – 40 years. Another significant finding on the table shows that 7 respondents, which is 19% of the total respondents are on the age brackets 25 – 30.

The assumption here would be people do not start teaching early enough, probably until all possibilities of getting “better” jobs turned bleak. In addition, when they reluctantly take a teaching job, they do not stay long, as table 4.1.4 below would also corroborate. People do not start early and leave teaching job early. The danger ahead is that the older teachers who have to continue because they have crossed escape level are already due for retirement. Soon the system would be left with uninterested and thus volatile teachers.

4.1.2. Educational Background

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Master's Degree and above	03	8%
Bachelor's Degree	27	75%
N.C.E.	06	17%
Total	36	100%

The table above shows the teaching qualifications of the respondents. It would be tempting to applaud that great majority of the teachers, 27 of them representing 75% hold Bachelors degrees. At the extremes, those with Master's degrees are insignificant, and those with N.C.Es are ideally not qualified for teaching at senior secondary levels. Table 4.1.3 below would give a shocking revelation on the overwhelming 81% of teachers holding Bachelors degrees.

4.1.3. Area of Specialisation

Specialisation	Frequency	Percentage
Language	14	39%
Literature	07	19%
Language Education	15	42%
Total	36	100%

Table 4.1.3 above shows that 15 respondents, which is 42% are into language education (B.ED). This means more than half of the total respondents hold degrees in education. Furthermore, 14 respondents, amounting to 39% are into language stream. Only 7

respondents, 19% hold degrees in literature. The interpretation here is that teachers of English in secondary schools in Yobe State, 81% of them holding Bachelor degrees mainly qualify as Language and Language Education teachers, taking about equal numbers. Together they take almost the whole teaching strength of English. Even the literature teachers that constitute the 19% of the teaching force mainly come from private secondary schools.

4.1.4. Work Experience

Years	Frequency	Percentage
5 – 10	20	56%
10 – 20	13	36%
20 – 30	03	8%
30 – 40	00	00%
40 – 45	00	00%
Total	36	100%

The table above on work experience shows that 56% of the respondents served for at least 10 years. 36% served for between 10 and 20 years. This indicates that teachers leave teaching jobs half through the work experience. Table 4.1.1 above on Age Distribution indicates people with higher ages teaching, but this table indicates disproportionately fewer work experience. Hence, the trend of starting late and leaving as soon any better job comes up. The future of teaching in secondary schools is scary. Once the current elderly teachers are gone, secondary schools will suffer from gross, and indeed volatile under staffing.

4.2. Questionnaire Data

A. Staff Questionnaire

4.2.1. Is literature in English taught as a course in your school?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	06	17%
No	30	83%
Total	36	100%

Table 4.2.1 above shows that 30 out of 36 of the respondents, which is 83% of the respondents confirm that Literature in English is not taught in their schools. Only 6 respondents, perhaps from the private schools among the school population offer the course.

4.2 Does your school have qualified teachers to teach literature in English?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	03	8%
No	33	92%
Total	36	100%

The data on table above show that 33, which is 92% of the respondents say there are no qualified teachers to teach the subject. Only 3 respondents, just 8% of them are positive. Perhaps again, teachers who studied courses other than Literature teach Literature in English.

4.2.2 Are there adequate resources for the teaching of literature in English in your school?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	05	14%
No	31	86%
Total	36	100%

In addition to lack of qualified teachers teaching the course, the table above also indicates that 31 respondents, equal to 86% of them confirm there are no adequate resources to teach Literature in English. An insignificant 5 respondents, which is 14% of the respondents say there are resources.

4.2.3 Is the deteriorating reading culture among students of Yobe State a challenge to the teaching of the subject?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	29	81%
No	07	19%
Total	36	100%

Table 4.2.4 above indicates that 29 respondents, equivalent to 81% of the research subjects lament on students' poor reading culture as an impediment to the teaching of Literature in English in secondary schools. 7 respondents, which is 19% of them are not bothered by the problem.

4.2.4 Do you think the Government of the state can change the status of the subject?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	78%
No	08	22%
Total	36	100%

This table shows that 28 of the 36, which are 78% of the respondents are confident that Yobe State Government can turn around the status of Literature in English in the secondary schools of the state. The 8 respondents who disagree do not seemingly question the capability of the Government but rather the will power to correct the situation.

4.2.5 Do you think parents can play a part in resuscitating the subject?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	25	69%
No	11	31%
Total	36	100%

The table above indicates that 25, 69% of the respondents have confidence in parents to resuscitate the teaching and learning of Literature in English. However, a good number of the respondents, 11, and 31% of them rather think it may be the responsibility of the Government.

4.2.6 Do you think recruiting teachers, providing resources and creating conducive atmosphere can revive teaching of the subject?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	31	86%
No	05	14%
Total	36	100%

In table 4.2.7 above, 31 respondents, which is 86% believe that providing resources and creating conducive atmosphere can revive teaching of the subject. This confirms the respondents' trust in the Government, expressed on table 4.2.5, that the Government can change the status of the course.

4.2.7 Do you think creating awareness can help revive the status of the subject?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	97%
No	01	3%
Total	36	100%

The table above shows 35 and overwhelming 97% of the respondents believe creating awareness can help revive the status of Literature. This is a proof that creating awareness in all the stakeholders of the subject is almost the best means to resuscitate and gain from all the potentials of the subject.

4.2.8 Do you think lack of a credit pass in literature in English denies many Yobe State indigenes admission to read some courses in Nigerian universities?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	09	25%
No	27	75%
Total	36	100%

This table presents data on awareness. 27 respondents, which are 75%, indicate lack of awareness that lack of a credit pass in literature in English denies many Yobe State indigenes admission to read some courses in Nigerian universities. The data on this table strongly supports the information on table 4.2.8. There is need for awareness on the course. Only 9 respondents, 25% are aware that indigenes of the state suffer from lack of requirement to study some courses in the university.

4.2.9 Do you think poor communication skills of students of Yobe State can be improved through the teaching of the subject?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	34	94%
No	02	6%
Total	36	100%

Table 4.2.10 has the respondents' strong faith in Literature in English. 34 and remarkable 94% of the respondents believe poor communication skills of secondary school students of Yobe State can be improved through the teaching of the course. Only negligible 2, 6% of the respondents think otherwise.

4.2.10 With its social and cultural potentials, do you think literature in English can facilitate social and cultural harmony in the state?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	19	53%
No	17	47%
Total	36	100%

On table 4.2.11, 19 out of the 36 respondents, well over half of them believe that literary studies can facilitate cultural cohesion among the diverse cultural groups in the state. However, 17 of the respondents, constituting 47% do not think so. This finding corroborates Duncan & Paran (2017) who have through a survey, found an overwhelming support for literature, from teachers and students in the study schools in language skill acquisition, and intercultural understanding among immigrants and the British in the multi-cultural UK society.

4.2.11 Do you think the emphasis on morality in our African literature can inculcate valuing of human life and dignity in secondary school students, thereby improving security situation in the state?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	32	89%
No	04	11%
Total	36	100%

This table shows that 32 participants, constituting 89% of all the participants believe in the didactic function of literature. They are optimistic that the moral values in Literature can inculcate valuing of human dignity in secondary school students and hence, improve security situation in the state. Only 4 representing 11% of the respondents find it hard to believe.

4.2.12. If you think literature in English improves students' communication skills, do you also think the subject can further facilitate the learning of other subjects?"

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	34	94%
No	02	6%
Total	36	100%

The table above indicates that 34, which are 94% of the respondents, think in addition to improving students' communication skills, Literature in English also facilitates the learning of other subjects. Only negligible 2, 6% of the respondents do not think the proposition is true with Literature.

4.2.13. Do you think the subject can improve the students' opportunities in the faculty of arts and humanities, and equally offering more job opportunities after graduation?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	31	97%
No	05	3%
Total	36	100%

The table above presents data on admission in Faculty of Arts and job opportunities for Yobe State students in universities. 31 respondents, 97% of all the respondents confirm that with credit pass in Literature an opportunity will open for students to study more courses in the Arts and Humanities, which means more employments for the citizens of the state. The 5 respondents representing just 3% perhaps cannot imagine the state reviving the subject.

4.2.14 Can literature in English with all its potentials restore the former glory and confidence of professionals in the state?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	33	92%
No	03	8%
Total	36	100%

The table above indicates that 33 respondents, constituting 92% of the respondents are sure that the confidence that good communication skills offer professionals of the past, which has now dwindled remarkably, will be restored with boost in literary studies in secondary schools of the state. Only 3 respondents, 8% of the total find it hard to believe that Governments of the day can address the situation.

B. Students' Questionnaire

4.2.1 Are you aware you are in the Art class?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	119	66%
No	61	34%
Total	180	100%

The table above indicates that 119 of the 180 student respondents, constituting 66% are aware they are in the art class. These shows there are Art classes in the secondary schools of the state. The 61 students, representing 34% of the respondents for the questionnaire are not negligible. It may be understood that this level of awareness is achieved with the students in private schools.

4.2.2 Would you like to study any of English, Literature, Law, or Mass Communication in the university?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	136	76%
No	44	24%
Total	180	100%

Table 4.2.2 confirms the awareness on table 4.2.1. 136 respondents, 76% of them would like to study the Art courses in universities. Similarly, about the same number of students that are unaware they are in the Art class on table 4.2.1 would not like to study such courses. 44 respondents, which is 24% either think of studying other courses or have no idea what to study in the university.

4.2.3 Do you know literature is a compulsory requirement for admission to study the above courses in the university?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	137	76%
No	43	24%
Total	180	100%

On the table above, 137 respondents, equivalent to 76% are aware that Literature is a compulsory requirement for admission to study some of the Art courses. 43 of them, which are 24%, are unaware of the admission requirement for such courses.

4.2.4 Do you speak English like your teacher of English language?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	51	28%
No	129	72%
Total	180	100%

The table shows that 129 of the participating students confirm that they do not speak like their teacher. However, 51 out of them, which are 28% insist they speak like their teacher.

4.2.5 Do you know that reading novels can improve your English and increase your confidence?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	157	87%
No	23	13%
Total	180	100%

The data on the table above shows that 157 respondents constituting 87% agree that reading

novels can improve their English and increase their confidence. 23 of them, which are 13% do not think so.

4.2.6 Do you know that good English can help you understand other subjects?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	167	93%
No	13	7%
Total	180	100%

Table 4.2.6 indicates that 167, 93% of the respondents agree that good English can help them understand other subjects. 13 of them, 7% do not associate good English with understanding of other subjects. Lao & Stephen (2000) found similar result with university level EFL students in Hong Kong. The students confirm that the improvement they got in reading rate and vocabulary increase from reading literature can help them in understanding of other university courses.

4.2.7 Do you understand other peoples' culture when you read their literary works?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	152	84%
No	28	16%
Total	180	100%

The table shows that 152 respondents, which constitute 84%, confirm the proposition that reading other people's literary works leads to understanding of their culture. 28, 16% of them do not agree.

4.2.8 Can understanding of other peoples' culture make you live in peace with them?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	156	87%
No	24	13%
Total	180	100%

Table 4.2.8 indicates that 156, also 87% of the students maintain that peace can be achieved from understanding of other people's culture through

reading their literature. This table completes an interesting related development – transition from reading to peace making. Only 24 students who represent only 13% could not associate reading with peace making.

4.2.9 Do you believe literature teaches knowledge of right and wrong?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	145	81%
No	35	19%
Total	180	100%

On the table above, 145 representing 81% of the respondents believe Literature inculcates the knowledge of right and wrong. 35 of 180 respondents, only 19% of them disagree to this proposition.

Can this knowledge of right and wrong bring peace and security in Yobe State?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	147	82%
No	33	18%
Total	180	100%

This table shows that 147, 82% of the respondents believe that the knowledge of right and wrong can bring peace and security. 33, 18% do not believe Literature has that function. This finding confirms the information on table 4.2.8 that literary studies can bring peace and security in the state.

4.2.11. Do you believe literature is important and there is need for its teaching in all secondary schools of Yobe State?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	165	92%
No	15	8%
Total	180	100%

Table 4.2.11 above summarises all the information on all the tables. It asks finally if the respondents believe Literature is important and whether there is need for

its teaching. 165 respondents, equals to 92% align with the proposition. Only 15, 8% think otherwise.

English so as to increase their chances of admission in universities, and job opportunities,

CONCLUSION

This research is a sensitisation effort, aiming to create awareness among the stakeholders in Yobe state on the need to revamp the teaching/learning of literature in secondary schools of the state. To accomplish this task, we collected information from staff and students on the status of the subject as a secondary school course, and many potentials of the course outside secondary education. A large body of research confirmed before this research, many factors are responsible of the deteriorating condition of literature in English such as lack of qualified teachers, lack of resources, poor reading culture, lack of awareness, ignorance among many others. Consequently, we conclude that the stakeholders in the secondary schools have fully appreciated the unpalatable condition of literature in English, and have indeed seen the importance and the need to improve on the teaching of the subject in secondary schools. Besides, they are confident that they, Government and parents can collectively improve the condition of the subject and education generally in the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To complete the success of this research, we recommend the Government to do the following:

1. The Government as the major stakeholder should continue the sensitisation on the virtues of literature in English in secondary schools of Yobe state, including those benefits of the course at the long run such as re-orientation of the youth toward respect for values and human dignity,
2. Government of the state should as a matter of emergency, source and equip the secondary schools with teachers of the subject, motivate them adequately so that they contribute immensely in the effort toward reviving the course,
3. The state government should procure adequate resources for the teaching of literature in English in all the secondary schools of the state,
4. Parents should motivate their children who are in the Art class to study and pass literature in

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