

TEACHER COMMITMENT AND PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE AS PREDICTORS OF STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AKINYELE LOCAL GOVERNMENT, IBADAN, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

English grammar is an important aspect of English Language. Proficiency in it is indispensable for fluent oral and written communication. This study examines the relationship between teacher commitment and pedagogical content knowledge as predictors of students' achievement in English grammar in Akinyele local government, Ibadan, Nigeria. Using a descriptive research design, the study involved a simple random sampling of 200 students and 8 teachers from 4 secondary schools. Data were collected using the Teacher Commitment, Pedagogical Content Knowledge Rating Scale, and the English Grammar Achievement Test. The results showed low achievement in English grammar ($x\bar{=} 8.07$), despite teachers' high commitment ($x\bar{=} 3.34$) and pedagogical content knowledge ($x\bar{=} 3.46$). However, neither teacher commitment ($r = -0.132, p > 0.05$) nor pedagogical content knowledge ($r = 0.202, p > 0.05$) significantly correlated with students' grammar achievement. The findings suggest that while teachers exhibit positive attitudes and sufficient knowledge, these factors do not directly enhance student performance. The study recommends ongoing professional development for English teachers to improve their instructional strategies and foster a collaborative learning environment where they can share knowledge and best practices to enhance students' achievement in English grammar.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Teaching, Knowledge, Commitment, English Grammar

Introduction

The English language serves as both a core subject and the primary medium of instruction in Nigerian secondary schools, playing a vital role in communication, administration, education, and social interaction (Bamgbose, 2021). A credit pass in English is a prerequisite for admission to higher education institutions, highlighting its significance in the educational system. Consequently, English is taught as a second language, focusing on the four essential language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Al-Hassan & Mansour, 2023).

English grammar is fundamental to effective communication and various educational outcomes. It encompasses the rules necessary for constructing

grammatically correct sentences and effective language use. Wang & He (2021) define grammar as both a skill and the ability to apply it effectively, while Ahmed & Yasmeen (2021) describe it as the knowledge enabling speakers to judge grammatical correctness. Consequently, grammar instruction is essential for assessing students' capabilities in writing and comprehension (Adelabu & Adeyemi, 2018).

In secondary schools, grammar is taught to enhance students' abilities in essay writing, reading comprehension, and summary writing. Mastery of grammar is crucial for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, as success in using the language correlates strongly with their understanding of grammatical rules (Sharafeeva, 2022). Grammar provides a framework for acceptable language use, governing aspects such as tenses, punctuation, and sentence structure (Williams & Lee, 2024). Thus, effective grammar instruction is integral to the English curriculum in Nigeria, facilitating the development of language skills (Obeka, 2021).

Despite its importance, many Nigerian students struggle with grammar, which negatively impacts their performance in English language examinations conducted by bodies like WAEC and NECO (Adewale & Oduyemi, 2020). For instance, research shows recurring grammatical errors, including poor tense usage and punctuation mistakes, leading to low pass rates in English (Ibrahim, 2022). Statistical data from WAEC indicates fluctuating pass rates, often around 50-60%, with significant challenges observed during the pandemic (West African Examinations Council, 2023).

Several factors contribute to students' difficulties in mastering English grammar. Teacher quality, including qualifications, commitment, and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), is paramount. Competent teachers effectively employ instructional strategies that enhance students' understanding of grammar (Wei & Cheng, 2024). However, gaps between teacher training and classroom demands often hinder effective teaching (Nasri & Estaji, 2023). Additionally, committed teachers who are passionate about their work significantly influence student motivation and achievement (Afolabi & Fakokunde, 2021).

The mastery of English grammar is crucial for students' academic success and effective communication. Despite the recognized significance of grammar instruction, many Nigerian students face challenges in achieving competence. Addressing these challenges requires a focus on improving teacher quality, commitment, and pedagogical content knowledge. Furthermore, innovative instructional strategies must be implemented to enhance students' understanding and application of grammar in practical contexts. Ultimately, improving grammar proficiency in Nigeria is essential for better academic outcomes and effective public communication.

These studies indicate that pedagogical content knowledge is closely tied to the specific concepts being taught and extends beyond mere subject matter expertise; it evolves over time through teaching experience. The findings suggest that pedagogical content knowledge can be a predictor of students' learning outcomes in various subjects. Given that these studies were conducted in different contexts, further research

is essential. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the roles of teacher commitment and pedagogical content knowledge as predictors of students' achievement in English grammar in junior secondary schools within Akinyele Local Government, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

English grammar is a vital component of language learning across all educational levels, as it significantly influences communication by allowing students to articulate thoughts, convey meaning, and communicate effectively. Research indicates that teacher-related factors are crucial to students' achievement and success in English language learning, with competent teachers having a more positive impact on learning outcomes. Key teacher factors identified as essential for teaching grammar include teacher commitment and pedagogical content knowledge. This study investigates these two factors as predictors of students' achievement in English grammar in junior secondary schools within Akinyele Local Government, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

A solid understanding of grammar, which encompasses the rules, principles, and structures governing the use of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, enhances students' ability to use language accurately. However, despite the importance of English grammar, many students continue to struggle in this area. While previous studies have explored the influence of teacher and student-related factors on achievement in various aspects of the English language, there has been limited investigation into how teacher factors—specifically teacher commitment and pedagogical content knowledge—affect students' learning outcomes in English grammar among junior secondary school students in Akinyele Local Government.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Examine the level of students' achievement in English grammar.
2. Assess the level of teachers' commitment to teaching English grammar.
3. Evaluate the rating of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in English grammar.
4. Analyze the relationship between teachers' commitment, pedagogical content knowledge, and students' achievement in English grammar.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of students' achievement in English grammar?
2. What is the level of teachers' commitment to teaching English grammar?
3. How is teachers' pedagogical content knowledge rated in the context of teaching English grammar?
4. What is the relationship between teachers' commitment, pedagogical content knowledge, and students' achievement in English grammar?

Methodology

For this study, a descriptive survey design was employed, targeting English Language teachers and junior secondary school students in the Akinyele Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo State. The area comprises a total of thirty-five (35) schools, from which four (4) schools were randomly selected for the study. The participants included JSS2 students, with fifty (50) students randomly chosen from each selected school, resulting in a total of 200 respondents. Additionally, eight (8) teachers—two (2) from each school—were randomly selected for observation.

The instruments utilized in this research included the Teacher Commitment Questionnaire (TCQ, $r = 0.71$), the Teacher Pedagogical Content Knowledge Rating Scale (TPCKRS, $r = 0.73$), and the English Grammar Achievement Test (EGAT, $r = 0.81$). The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts and means, to assess the demographic information of the participants. Inferential statistics, including Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), were also employed. All results were interpreted at a significance level of 0.05.

Answering Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the rating of students' achievement in English Grammar

Table 1: Students' Achievement in English Grammar

Scores	Frequency	Percent
10	15	7.5
11	15	7.5
12	13	6.5
13	4	2.0
14	4	2.0
15	2	1.0
16	2	1.0
Valid 2	2	1.0
3	10	5.0
4	10	5.0
5	14	7.0
6	22	11.0
7	25	12.5
8	36	18.0
9	26	13.0
Total	200	100.0

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00001	200	2	16	8.07	2.852
Valid N (listwise)	200				

Table 1 displays the level of achievement in English grammar among secondary school students. The mean score for students' performance in English grammar was 8.07, which is below the established threshold and falls within the range classified as low. Consequently, this indicates that secondary school students' achievement in English grammar is low.

Research Question 2: What is the rating of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge?

Table 2: Mean Response of Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Items	Rater 1		Rater 2	
	x \bar{x}	Std. Dev.	x \bar{x}	Std. Dev.
1. Teacher demonstrates a deep understanding of the lesson.	3.50	.926	4.00	.756
2. Uses effective instructional strategies to teach the lesson.	3.00	.535	2.50	.756
3. Provides clear explanations and demonstrations	3.50	1.069	3.63	.744
4. Adapts teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students.	3.50	.756	3.25	.707
5. Creates a positive and inclusive environment.	3.00	1.069	3.75	.707
6. Utilizes various teaching resources, such as textbooks, online materials, and interactive tools.	2.13	.835	2.88	.641
7. Encourages active student participation and engagement in the lesson.	3.25	1.165	4.25	.707
8. Provides constructive feedback to students on their performance.	2.50	.756	3.38	.518
9. Demonstrates ability to address common misconceptions and errors.	2.75	.886	7.25	10.82
10. Shows proficiency in using grammar teaching aids, including worksheets, flashcards, and visual or audio aids.	2.75	.707	2.38	.518
11. Effectively address students' questions and concerns about lesson.	3.38	.744	3.63	.744
12. Provides adequate practice exercises for students.	3.50	.756	4.13	.835
13. Communicates with learners in simple English.	3.38	.916	4.50	.535

14. Links prior knowledge to present learning.	3.38	.744	4.63	.744
15. Uses time effectively.	3.00	.926	3.13	1.246
Threshold: 3.0	3.10		3.82	
3.10 + 3.82/2= 6.92/2= 3.46				

Key: 1= Poor 2= Fair 3= Good 4= Very Good 5= Excellent.

Table 4 revealed the mean response of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. The score of the two raters were $\bar{x} = 3.10$ and 3.82 respectively. The average mean gives $\bar{x} = 3.46$ which was greater than the threshold of 3.0 . This means that the teachers had high pedagogical content knowledge.

Research question 3: What is the level of teachers' commitment to teaching?

Mean Response of Teachers' Commitment to Teaching

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std.
1	I enjoy teaching	7 87.5	1 12.5	0 0	0 0	3.88	.354
2	I do not miss my lessons.	6 75.0	2 25.0	0 0	0 0	3.75	.463
3	I mark exercises and home-works promptly.	6 75.0	1 12.5	1 12.5	0 0	3.63	.744
4	Taking up teaching job is a mistake	0 0	1 12.5	3 37.5	4 50.0	1.63	.744
5	I do not wait for students to call me before I go for my lessons.	4 50.0	4 50.0	0 0	0 0	3.50	.535
6	I make out time to give extra-lessons to my students to cover the syllabus.	2 25.0	4 50.0	2 25.0	0 0	3.00	.756
7	I have passion for teaching.	5 62.5	0 0	2 15.0	1 12.5	3.38	1.06
8	I give remedial lessons to weak students after school hours.	2 25.0	2 25.0	2 25.0	2 25.0	2.50	1.19
9	I ensure that my teaching materials, resources, and assessments are relevant to the lessons.	6 75.0	1 12.5	1 12.5	0 0	3.63	.744
10	I take time to prepare my lessons ahead of the class.	7 87.5	1 12.5	0 0	0 0	3.88	.354
11	I give corrections to every assessment I conducted	4 50.0	3 37.5	0 0	1 12.5	3.38	.744
12	I spend time with students outside classroom on subjects related with the lesson.	0 0	4 50.0	4 50.0	0 0	2.50	.535
13	I deliberately engage in personal development.	3 37.5	5 62.5	0 0	0 0	3.38	.518

14	I teach grammar lessons using ample examples.	8 100	0 0	0 0	0 0	4.00	.000
15	I organize my lessons with diligence	8 100	0 0	0 0	0 0	4.00	.000
Average Mean: 3.34 Threshold: 2.5							

S.A: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, D: Disagree, S.D: Strongly Disagree

Table 5 shows the teachers' commitment to teaching. The result indicates a weighted mean of 3.34 which is greater than the threshold set at 2.50. This implies that the teachers had positive commitment to teaching.

Research question 4: What is the relationship between Students' Achievement in English Grammar, Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge, and Teachers' Commitment to Teaching.

Table 6: Correlation between Students' Achievement in English Grammar, teachers' pedagogical Content Knowledge and Teachers' Commitment to Teaching

Variables	Students' Achievement in English Grammar	Teacher Commitment to Teaching	Pedagogical Content knowledge
Students' Achievement in English Grammar	1.00		
Teachers' Commitment to Teaching	-.132 (.755)	1.00	
Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge	.202 (.631)	.723* (.043)	1.00

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Students Commitment	8.07	2.852	200
Teacher Commitment	50.00	1.852	8
Pedagogical Content Knowledge	52.13	6.512	8

Table 4.5 show that there is no significant relationship between students' achievement in English grammar and teachers' Commitment to Teaching ($r = -.132$, $p (.755) > .05$); as well as teachers' pedagogical content knowledge ($r = .202$, $p (.631) > .05$).

Discussion of Findings

Students' Level Achievement in English Grammar

The findings of this study indicate a low level of performance among students in English grammar. It is evident that many students in Nigeria struggle with English grammar, as reflected in their poor performance on external examinations. This issue was corroborated by the reports of the Chief Examiners for the West African Senior

Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) English Language in 2020. The report identified several weaknesses in students' understanding of English grammar, including inadequate knowledge and usage of tenses, subject-verb agreement, and sentence construction. Many students produced essays characterized by poorly structured sentences, direct translations from their native language, and a lack of foundational grammar skills. This suggests that students are not achieving the expected level of proficiency, which hinders their advancement to higher education (Adebayo & Alabi, 2021).

Moreover, the persistently high failure rates in English at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) level have prompted various policy interventions from educational stakeholders (West African Examinations Council, 2021). Since 2011, Chief Examiners' reports have emphasized that students' inability to express themselves clearly in English has adversely affected their performance in other subjects, including mathematics. The reports noted that candidates exhibited a weak understanding of basic grammar, tense usage, and sentence structure (Obeka, 2021). Additionally, many candidates displayed noticeable punctuation errors, such as incorrect capitalization, and frequently used excessively long run-on sentences without proper paragraphing (Olatunde & Bello, 2022).

Students' Achievement in English Grammar

The results of this study indicate that teachers possess a high level of pedagogical content knowledge. This finding is not unexpected, as the teachers demonstrated a strong understanding of the content and how it should be organized for effective learning. Furthermore, quality learning occurs when teachers guide students through a clearly sequenced instructional process. Abell and Lederman (2020) emphasized that the postmodern perspective on teachers' knowledge now encompasses everyday affective and performance practices. They identify four domains of teacher knowledge in English language teaching: technical, content, institutional, and economic knowledge. Technical knowledge involves mastery of teaching techniques, methodologies, and strategies that enhance students' skills in areas such as listening, reading, counting, and speaking. Content knowledge encompasses a strong grasp of the structure and components of the language, including phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and all related aspects of the English language. Ahmed and Yasmeen (2021) further supported this by outlining essential qualities for effective teachers, including mastery of general and subject-specific teaching strategies, knowledge of learners, understanding of learning theories, principles and methods, as well as a good personality as a leader and a positive attitude toward students and the subject matter.

Conversely, Coenders and Verhoef (2024) noted that while Nigerian teachers possess content knowledge and various teaching methods, their understanding of how to effectively apply these skills is lacking. Jimenez-Aleixandre, Cachapuz-Rodrigues, and Praia (2021) observed that public schools may have highly qualified teachers, but

the irregular attendance of these teachers due to disruptions in the academic calendar is a significant issue. In contrast, private school owners often require their teachers to maintain regular attendance. Magnusson and Krajcik (2023) reported that a teacher lacking both academic and professional qualifications is likely to exhibit a negative attitude toward teaching and learning their subject. They also noted that a teacher who is academically qualified but works under unfavorable conditions is likely to be less dedicated than an unqualified teacher working in a supportive environment. Smith, Sinclair, and Tomlinson (2019) established that the impact teachers have on their students is significantly influenced by their training, pedagogical practices, and development experience.

Teachers Commitment to Teaching

This finding indicates that teachers exhibit a positive commitment to their teaching responsibilities. Adetunji (2018) explains that this commitment is demonstrated through teachers' efforts to enhance student engagement in learning and improve academic achievement. A strong commitment to teaching elevates the quality of learning, as it often motivates teachers to deliver their lessons with enthusiasm (Alonge, Obadare, and Oladunni, 2020). Research on teacher job commitment reveals that it is a crucial factor in evaluating teacher effectiveness. In Nigeria, there are limited studies documenting the influence of teacher commitment on academic achievement.

For instance, in a study involving 320 senior secondary students from the Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State, Adetunji (2018) examined how teachers' commitment affected students' performance in summary writing among SSS2 students. The research utilized a summary writing achievement test and a teacher commitment questionnaire, employing a survey research design. The findings indicated that the level of teachers' commitment significantly influenced students' achievement in summary writing. The study recommended enhancing welfare packages for teachers to improve their job commitment and overall job satisfaction.

Similarly, Alonge, Obadare, and Oladunni (2020) explored the extent to which teacher commitment predicted students' achievement in Oral English in the Kajola Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The study involved 240 SS1 students and adopted a descriptive research design, utilizing a teacher commitment scale and an Oral English achievement test. The results showed that oral English achievement improved with higher levels of teacher commitment. The researchers recommended incorporating teacher commitment into promotion criteria to enhance teacher dedication and improve students' academic performance.

In another study involving 200 senior secondary students in the Ona Ara Local Government Area of Oyo State, Adetunji (2018) investigated how teachers' commitment influenced students' achievement in Yoruba vocabulary among SS2 students. This study also employed a survey research design, using a Yoruba vocabulary achievement test and a teacher commitment questionnaire. The findings indicated that teachers' commitment positively impacted students' achievement in

Yoruba vocabulary. The study suggested that improving welfare packages for teachers could increase their commitment to teaching.

Relationship between teacher pedagogical content knowledge, teacher commitment, teacher qualification and student achievement in English grammar

This finding indicates that there is no significant relationship between students' achievement in English grammar and both teachers' commitment to teaching and teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. This aligns with the assertion made by Jimenez-Aleixandre, Cachapuz-Rodrigues, and Praia (2021), who found that teachers' pedagogical content knowledge was not significantly correlated with students' achievement in Chemistry. This lack of significance may be attributed to other factors related to the students and their environment.

One such factor is student attitude, which can significantly impact achievement in English language learning. Positive attitudes are crucial as they influence learners' language proficiency and overall success in language acquisition (Martin & Collie, 2022). McCarthy, Lambert, and Fitchett (2023) emphasized that the essence of language learning lies in the learner's motivation and attitude toward the process. This is consistent with the findings of Nasri and Estaji (2023), who studied factors affecting learning achievement among Business Administration students at the Higher Vocational College level in Northeastern Vocational College. Their results indicated that student attitudes toward learning had a statistically significant impact on learning achievement, explaining 28 percent of the variance at the 0.05 significance level.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) explored how personal variables, such as vocabulary knowledge, self-efficacy, and peer influence, could predict learners' achievement in English grammar. Their survey utilized a questionnaire, a learners' self-efficacy scale, a vocabulary test, and an English Grammar Achievement Test. The findings revealed a positive relationship between vocabulary knowledge and students' achievement in English grammar.

Environmental factors also play a role, as indicated by research showing that classroom environment variables can affect students' achievement in English language learning. An effective classroom environment should be well-ventilated, comfortable, quiet, clean, and equipped with educational materials, all of which contribute to students' motivation and study intentions, ultimately leading to better learning outcomes. This perspective is supported by Martin and Collie (2022), who noted that a conducive classroom atmosphere enhances learners' ability to learn effectively. Therefore, it is essential for instructors to create an environment that fosters learning, in line with Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of the environment.

Conclusion

The study examined the roles of teachers' commitment to teaching and pedagogical content knowledge as predictors of students' achievement in English

grammar within the Akinyele Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The findings indicated that these two independent variables were not effective predictors of students' achievement in English grammar. In conclusion, the study revealed that students' achievement in English grammar is low, and neither of the teacher factors significantly influences students' performance or their attitudes toward English grammar. While teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and commitment to teaching were found to be high, they did not significantly impact students' achievement. Additionally, the study identified that other factors, including those related to students and the learning environment, are more influential in predicting students' success in English grammar.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. English language teachers should participate in ongoing professional development programs aimed at enhancing their commitment to effective grammar instruction strategies. This could involve workshops, courses, or seminars that focus on modern methods for teaching grammar and addressing common grammatical misconceptions among students.
- ii. It is essential to cultivate a collaborative learning culture in which teachers routinely share knowledge and best practices with one another. This collaboration will sustain their pedagogical content knowledge and contribute to improved student achievement in English language learning.
- iii. Recognizing and celebrating students' progress and achievements, along with providing specific guidance on how to correct and enhance their grammar usage, is crucial. This approach fosters a positive learning environment and encourages continuous improvement in students' grammar skills.
- iv. The government should establish a supportive work environment that acknowledges and appreciates teachers for their efforts, thereby enhancing their commitment to teaching.

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