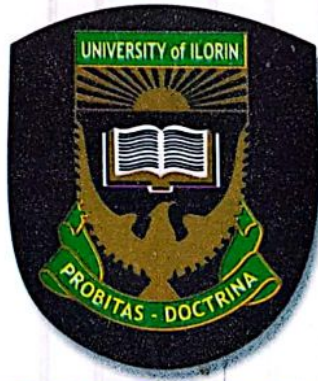




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LECTURERS' PERCEPTION OF THE ROLES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ON LEARNING OF SHORTHAND IN KWARA STATE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Teaching and learning of shorthand have become imperative in achieving classroom instructional delivery. Thus, this paper examined lecturers' perception of the roles of the English language on teaching and learning of shorthand in Kwara State tertiary institutions. The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population comprises 14 tertiary institutions available in Kwara State and purposive sampling method was adopted to select 56 Business Education lecturers in Kwara State tertiary institutions. Research questions raised to guide the study. A validated questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.70 was used for data collection. Percentage and mean score were used to answer the research questions. The findings showed that lecturers had a positive perception of English language on the teaching and learning of shorthand. Based on the findings, it was recommended that good knowledge of the English language should not be compromised in studying teaching and learning shorthand.

Keywords: English language, Shorthand writing, Teaching and Learning of Shorthand, Lecturers' Perception

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Shorthand is the act of representing spoken sound by written sign and this was invented in the year 1837. It is an abbreviated symbolic writing method or shortcuts that can be made quickly to represent letters of the alphabet, words, or phrases which increases speed and brevity of writing as compared to longhand as a common method of writing a language. The process of writing in shorthand is called stenography, from the Greek *stenos* (narrow) and *graphein* ('*Stenos*' = narrow + '*graphie*' = writing). It has also been called brachygraphy, from Greek *brachys* (short) and tachygraphy, from Greek *tachys* (swift, speedy), depending on whether compression or speed of writing is the goal. The word stenography emanated from two Greek words known as '*stenos*' (narrow) and '*graphein*' (writing) (writing). This system of shorthand writing provides symbols or abbreviations for words and common phrases, which allow people that are skilled to write quickly as people speak. Abbreviation methods are alphabet-based and use different abbreviating

approaches. Shorthand is considered as one of the essential ingredients in training the secretaries and for the course to be meaningful. Shorthand writing was widely used in the past, before the invention of recording and dictation machines.

This system of writing was devised after a profound and epoch-making study of the phonetic structure of the English Language (Isaac Pitman, 1987). Every language has its sound system distinct from other languages. In English language, for instance, each word consists of a series of sound carefully arranged together and needs to be pronounced in a certain way. White (2009) stated that one of the entries behaviour expected of a shorthand student is masterly in the English language and that lack of masterly in English is also displayed in the candidates' scripts during marking. He further said that mastery of English language is a must for students to perform better in shorthand because dictation passages are transcribed in English language. There are twenty-four (24) consonants sound and nineteen (19) vowels sound in English language and twenty-four (24) consonants sound, twelve (12) vowels and four (4) diphthongs in shorthand. This shows that, shorthand lecturers need to incorporate sound and phonetic to the teaching of shorthand and emphasis on the areas that are relevance to the students for effective teaching to manifest. This will improve students' penmanship in shorthand writing.

The relationship between English Language and teaching or learning of shorthand writing is identified. Ezugwu (2002) affirmed that shorthand writing has differentiated markedly the typist from the secretary and the invention of shorthand has made the secretary a member of the team that pilots the affairs of any business concerns. However, to become proficient in Pitman shorthand, the knowledge of the English language cannot be overlooked. This is because, it is faster even up to ten times faster than longhand, elegantly austere, and has been adapted for use in many languages other than English. There are many benefits attracted to the use of shorthand. In many cases, it is used to help document events in a fast-paced situation, such as a courtroom or breaking news. It is also used for closed captioning so that deaf people can easily read the words being spoken in real time on the screen. Mishelia (2015) was of the opinion that shorthand skills have provided opportunities to many graduates of other disciplines who otherwise would have been roaming about the street in search of jobs but who had to undergo evening shorthand classes and typing studies to be employed as secretaries. Today, some journalists still make use of shorthand in order to quickly capture important information for breaking news stories and quickly changing situations. For individuals to learn shorthand, students must attend classes and become certified in the skill. Most courtroom reporters have official shorthand certification in order to be hired. This requires practice and many hours of education on the different styles, methods, and preferred execution of shorthand for people to become really good at transcribing information quickly and correctly.

Shorthand writing facilitates speed and saves a lot of time when taking down spoken words. It also makes possible a verbatim record of spoken words as much the same time as the speaker speaks. This has enhanced its general acceptability and popularity in the world of business. With the growing interest, in efficient system of business, the inventors of shorthand make it much easier for speed writing and help to reduce the problem of communication for management officials.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

English language plays significant roles in teaching of shorthand. It engrosses the student's attention in teaching and learning of shorthand. To acquire good communication skills or to excel in communication skills, one has to acquire expertise in all the four skills which include Listening, Verbal Communication, Interpretation and Inscription Skills. Before a student acquires all these skills, he/she must develop an interest towards the subject or language. English language and shorthand writing are inseparable for effective teaching and learning to take place. A good shorthand writer must have adequate knowledge of sound English language this will enable the writer to write and transcribe an accurate work. Shorthand writing is based on a sound knowledge of English Language and this is made up of two main features. That is, segmental feature which is simply the vowels and consonants while the supra-segmental features are – stress rhythm and intonation. Onuigbo, (2006) classified the vowels and consonants as individual sound segments and added that the features of stress, rhythm and intonation affects the quality of the sounds, and acted over longer sequences. While White (2009) emphasized that students have to improve on English and spelling while learning shorthand. He further said that the lecturers advise learners to sharpen their powers of concentration and alertness. This is an essential attribute for shorthand writing.

Cognitive - mental skills (knowledge), affective – growth feelings or emotional areas (attitude or self) and psychomotor – mental or physical skills is an important aid to effective teaching and learning of shorthand to take place. Since shorthand is the art of representing spoken sounds by writing signs as heard in English language, obviously, shorthand writing is based on the sounds knowledge of English words and serves as a key to understanding shorthand. It also helps in reading, writing and speaking abilities which assist in the advance transcription of shorthand passages. For learners to gain effective penmanship these methods are necessary for the teaching and learning of shorthand (Anigara, 2012).

Programmed Method: This method makes it possible for the teacher to present the subject content and this enables the students to practice effectively for the acquisition of rightful skill, the flexible scheduling gives room for both the teacher and the learner to adjust in the teaching and learning sequence. This gives room for the

teacher's area of interest; the individualized instruction gives room for the learners to learn according to their ability and level of performance. This really helps their ability and level of performance. This really helps the teacher because it erected a good relationship between the teacher and the learner (Cash, 2011).

The discussion method gives both the teachers and the learners the opportunity to know their areas of weakness and perfection and shear ideas with others. This gives room for retention of learnt subject matter in Pitman shorthand. The shorthand teacher has varied methods to adopt for his teachings to be effective (Crank, Anderson & Peterson, 2009). While Okoduwa and Onoyovwi (2010) recommended the following approaches to effective shorthand teaching: (i) define the aims and objectives; (ii) identify students problems; (iii) previews knowledge; (iv) organize the classroom; (v) recommend teaching aids; and (vi) outline shorthand sequence, penmanship, reading, drilling and speed. Teaching and learning of shorthand at any levels of the educational system must be handled by experts because it is a course that cannot just be handled by anybody but rather by well-trained person who has the knowledge and good methods of impacting learning effectively. Teachers need to possess knowledge of the subject matter and pedagogical training. Shorthand teachers must have good sight, sound hearing habit, and good voice proper dissemination of knowledge. There are many fine distinctions in the shorthand characters, differences in shading, the placing of dots and dashes accurately, strokes that show minute variations in length, that keen sight is absolutely essential.

The study of business education in tertiary institutions, most especially in office technology and management option, shorthand has been regarded as one of the significant courses that student must pass before certification of results. For some decade ago, the performance of students in shorthand is nothing to write home about. Right from the time, the nomenclature of the programme was changed from secretarial studies to office technology and management it has de-emphasized the importance of shorthand. For this reason, students are no longer serious about the course since they felt that the course is not relevant. Cray (2014) was of the opinion that students consider the course as a battle which they need to succeed. Some reasons adduced for failure in the subject include the nature of the course, lack of student's interest, poor knowledge of English language (phonics), inadequate of shorthand laboratory/equipment, the misconception of people about the relevance of the course to this present age.

With little interaction and experience of the researcher it was observed that knowledge of students in the English language has significant influence on learning of shorthand most especially in Advanced Transcription. The students find it very difficult to transcribe the passage correctly and shorthand is basically a form of

phonetic writing. The similarities that exist between the writing of shorthand and English Language may determine the performance of the teachers and students in the teaching and learning of shorthand. Pitman (1987) said that the purpose of writing shorthand is to represent letters as briefly and as distinctly as possible. That is why this study investigated lecturers' perception of English Language on teaching and learning of shorthand in Kwara State tertiary institutions.

Teaching and learning of shorthand in tertiary institutions in Nigeria for some time now have undergone some tremendous challenges which have resulted in poor performance of students at all levels. Despite the enthusiasm of students toward teaching and learning of shorthand at the early stage of introduction of the course and the length of time in acquiring the skill on the part of lecturers and the students, the morale is no more there. This has resulted in students struggling to acquiring the shorthand competency at all cost. It got to time, that the students find it difficult to produce a perfect transcription in a readable manner. Obviously, from the time of restructuring the curriculum of business education in order to meet up with globalization students' attitude have changed toward effective learning of shorthand. For this reason, the students have neglected the importance of English language in the successful writing of shorthand in terms of correct punctuation, the use of comma; full stop, past and present tense, etc. which serves as an aid to successful shorthand writing.

Utoware and Kren-Ikidi (2014) postulated that attention is being shifted globally to the new trend of ICT (e-learning) as a new technology tool for diverse technological and educational application but the roles of English language in shorthand writing cannot be jettisoned.

The main purpose of the study was to investigate lecturers' perception of the English language on teaching and learning of shorthand in Kwara State tertiary institutions.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design of survey type was adopted for the study. The population covered all the 14 institutions in Kwara State (five universities, two polytechnics and seven colleges of education). The 56 lecturers of business education departments in those institutions were purposively chosen as the respondents to the research instrument.

The instrument used for data collection was researcher-developed instruments titled Lecturers' Perception of the Roles of English Language on Teaching and Learning of Shorthand in Kwara State Tertiary Institutions (LPRELTLISKSTI). LPRELTLISKSTI was divided into Section A and B. Section A elicited information on the area of specialization and the type of Institutions of the respondents. Section B

contained 15 items, asking questions on the lecturers' perception of English Language in the teaching and learning of shorthand in the tertiary institution. The lecturers' perception of English Language in the teaching and learning of shorthand was structured on a Four Likert rating scale of SA, A, D, and D. The modality for scoring the instrument ranges from 4-1 (4,3,2,1). The average mean scores is 2.5. Any score ranging from 2.5 and above indicates a strong perception while a mean score below 2.5 indicates a low perception of English Language Lecturers on the teaching and learning of shorthand in tertiary institutions. The instrument was validated for adequacy and appropriateness of the study. This was done by presenting it to three experts in the Department of Educational Management University of Ilorin. Based on their suggestions, the instrument was modified to suit the study. In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument of the study, 20 copies of the instruments were administered to Business Education Lecturers. Split-half method and Cronbach Alpha procedure were used to measure its reliability. The test yielded a co-efficient value of 0.70 which indicated that the instrument was deemed reliable for the study.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In response to the Research Question: What is lecturers' perception of the roles of English language on the teaching and learning of shorthand in Kwara state tertiary institution?

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of lecturers' perception of the roles of English language on the teaching and learning of shorthand in Kwara state tertiary institution

S/No	Statements	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Mean	Decision
1	English Language is an essential key for effective teaching and learning of shorthand to take place	30(53.6)	26(46.4)	-(0%)	-(0%)	3.54	High
2	Knowledge of phonics is an added advantage for writing shorthand	27(48.2)	28(50.0)	1(1.8)		3.46	High
3	English Language enhances students ability to identify spoken sound by written signs	24(42.9)	32(57.1)			3.43	High
4	English Language aids the ability of Pitman shorthand	34(60.7)	20(35.7)	2(3.6)		3.57	High
5	Listening aids learning skills development through English that determines successful teaching and learning of shorthand	22(39.3)	33(58.9)	1(1.8)		3.38	High
6	Phonetic structure in English Language forms the basis of the various shorthand system in existence	17(30.4)	36(64.3)	3(5.4)		3.25	High
7	Proper vocalization in shorthand writing requires good knowledge of English Language	33(58.9)	23(41.1)			3.59	High
8	Knowledge of vowels in English Language is synonymous to vowels in shorthand writing	22(39.2)	32(57.1)	2(3.6)		3.36	High
9	Competence in English Language is a vital tool for training of shorthand students	38(67.9)	18(32.1)			3.68	High
10	Knowledge of English Language is a major requirement for shorthand	22(39.3)	29(51.8)	2(3.6)	3(5.4)	3.25	High
11	English Language enables shorthand students to transcribe accurately	26(46.4)	29(51.8)	1(1.8)		3.45	High
12	Shorthand students/writers should have the ability to differentiate between vowels/consonants and transcribe into English Language	23(41.1)	33(58.9)			3.41	High
13	In English Language and shorthand, the essence of taken	32(57.1)	23(41.1)	1(1.8)		3.56	High

Items, as shown in Table 1, reveal the respondents' opinion on the perception of English language on the teaching and learning of shorthand in Kwara State tertiary institutions. Respondents' opinion was ranged between the mean score of 3.25 and 3.68. This implies that respondents agreed that English Language is imperative and required for teaching and learning of shorthand in Kwara State tertiary institutions. Going by the item analyses in Table I: English language is key ingredient for learning shorthand (3.54 mean score); knowledge of phonics in English language is an added advantage for writing shorthand (3.46 mean score); English languages enhances students' ability to identify spoken sound by written sign (3.43 means score); English language aids students understanding of Pitman method of shorthand (3.57 mean score); listening and learning through English language determines successful teaching and learning of shorthand (3.38 mean score); phonetic structure in English language is the basis of learning shorthand (3.25 mean score); proper vocalization in shorthand writing requires good knowledge of English Language (3.59 mean score); vowels in English language is synonymous to vowels in shorthand writing (3.36 mean score); competence in English language is a vital tool for training of shorthand writers (3.68 mean score); shorthand students/writers should have the ability to differentiate between vowels/consonants and transcribes into English language (3.41 mean score); and for shorthand students to gain effective penmanship knowledge of English Language is required (3.66 mean score). Meanwhile, the weighted mean score (3.47) shows that respondents were of the positive opinion that English language plays important roles in teaching and learning of shorthand in Kwara State tertiary institutions.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The finding showed that lecturers had a positive perception of English language on the teaching and learning of shorthand in Kwara State tertiary institutions. The results revealed that English language plays a significant role in teaching and learning of shorthand. It engrosses the student's attention in teaching and learning of shorthand. The study is in line with Onuigbo (2006), which found that a good shorthand writer must have adequate knowledge of sound English language. This would enable students/writers to write and transcribe accurately.

5.0 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

In reference to the findings of this study, it could be concluded that English language played a significant role in teaching and learning of shorthand at any level of the educational system. Although, many people are clamouring that shorthand is no more relevant in the course of the study compared to what is obtainable in the yesteryears. This is the opinion of myopic thinkers. Today shorthand is still relevant in many organizations and that is the reasons why the students need to understand the

concept of learning shorthand. For students to learn at a faster rate the knowledge of English language is very important. Shorthand teacher at any level irrespective of their educational background, need to know that the knowledge of the phonetic structure of English language will serve as an additional advantage in the teaching and learning of shorthand. Many people are now earning their living through the use of shorthand skill.

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

- i. good knowledge of English language should not be compromised in studying, teaching and learning of shorthand;
- ii. for effective teaching and learning of shorthand to take place phonics learning in English language should be made compulsory for students; and
- iii. adequate provision of necessary learning facilities for teaching and learning English language and shorthand should be provided.

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