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Teachers' content knowledge: Implications for teaching practices and students' learning outcomes

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Abstract

Content knowledge is one of Shulman's teacher knowledge. In no small measure, content knowledge promotes learning and contributes to students' learning outcomes. The knowledge of what to teach is a key requirement for effective teaching. This paper assesses the subject matter knowledge that Literature-in-English teachers possess and reveals subject content areas where they exhibit high mastery. This paper examines whether teachers' content knowledge could predict students' achievement in and attitude to Literature-in-English. The study is a descriptive research of the survey type. Data were collected through four research instruments: a classroom observation scale, a classroom content knowledge checklist, a self-constructed students' questionnaire and an achievement test. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The participants consisted of 632 students who were taught Literature-in-English and 127 Literature-in-English teachers. Findings revealed that the observable elements where mastery was shown are knowledge of elements of literary works and literary appreciation skills. However, the study showed that there is knowledge gap in language development and knowledge of values. The findings show that teachers' content knowledge predicted students' learning outcomes (achievement and attitude) in Literature-in-English. The findings raised concerns about pedagogical implications and recommendations for concerned education stakeholders.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature-in-English is one of the various subjects offered in schools that contribute in diverse ways to national and human development. Literature-in-English is a composition in language which tells stories, represents culture, re-enacts ideas or dramatizes real life situations (Okoh, 2012). This subject aids moral, cultural, intellectual, and linguistic development. Its genres, prose, poetry and drama, have peculiar positive impacts on people exposed to them. Duff and Maley (1990) noted that Literature-in-English is taught in schools for linguistic, methodological and motivational reasons. The linguistic aspect equips learners with authentic examples of language, broad range of registers, vocabularies, styles, and text types. For methodological reasons, Literature-in-English gives room for multifarious meanings in literary texts, genuine interaction with the literary texts and diverse opinions among the readers. Literature-in-English is taught in schools for motivational reasons because it projects the real feelings and mood of the writer, helps readers to empathize and motivates learners to read.

Literature-in-English is taught in schools to develop students' potentials in a holistic style. These potentials could be observed in students' learning outcomes such as academic achievement and attitude. Students' academic achievement is the accomplishment of the stated objectives of a course, topic or content taught in Literature-in-English while students' attitude is the dispositions, feelings, reactions, opinions, and beliefs students have towards Literature-in-English. The knowledge of what to teach is a key requirement for effective teaching. In recent years, teachers' content knowledge has attracted increasing attention from stakeholders in education. In spite of this attention, Holvio (2022) affirmed that there is limited literature on teachers' content knowledge and its impact on students' achievement in developing countries. Also, Hill, et al., (2005) posited that what counts as subject matter knowledge for teaching and how it relates to students' achievement have remained inadequately discussed in past research. Invariably, limited literature on teachers' content knowledge, inability to pinpoint what counts as subject matter knowledge for teaching and impact of teachers' content knowledge on students' achievement could have dire consequences on students' academic achievements.

Students' poor performance in Literature-in-English at public examinations and learners' negative dispositions towards the subject in Ekiti State have become worrisome to the students, teachers, school authorities and concerned bodies. This is evident in the West African Examination Council Senior School Certificate results in Ekiti State. Data revealed that 30% of the students have credit pass in Literature-in-English while 70% failure rate was recorded (Ekiti State Ministry of Education and Technology, 2017). Perhaps, teachers' content knowledge could be an important factor that contribute to students' low performance and learners' negative attitude to the subject. This study therefore seeks to investigate whether teachers' content knowledge have implications for teaching practices and students' achievement in and attitude to Literature-in-English.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teachers' content knowledge

Content knowledge which is also called subject matter knowledge is defined as the "concepts, principles, relationships, processes, and applications a student should know within a given academic subject, appropriate for his/her knowledge and organization of the knowledge" (Özden, 2008, p. 634). Koehler and Mishra (2009) described teachers' content knowledge as what teachers know about the subject matter to be learned or taught. It is opined that teachers' knowledge of content has to do with teacher's competence to comprehend and rightly employ subject matter to execute teaching obligations (Hill et al., 2005). Content knowledge is the teachers' ability to appropriately comprehend the content to be taught and understand the structure of the subject taught. It is expected of every teacher to know beyond the stated contents in the curriculum. Teachers are expected to be able to explain why a particular idea or assertion is considered necessary or appropriate and its interconnectedness to other assertions.

Observation reveals that it is expedient to explore the knowledge of teachers about what they profess to teach in Literature classrooms. It, therefore, requires a proficient and skillful teacher to handle the foundations of Literature-in-English (Fakeye, 2012). Teachers' versatility in their discipline goes a long way in determining how Literature teachers introduce each daily lesson to students and the kinds of examples they provide. Content knowledge could be in two forms: substantive (knowledge of learning a discipline) and syntactic (knowledge of practices in a discipline). The knowledge that embodies the central facts, skills, structures, and terms used in a subject, fundamentals, and explanatory and organizational backgrounds in a discipline is called substantive knowledge (Shulman & Grossman, 1988; Garvey, 1996). On the other hand, syntactic knowledge encompasses searching for the "nature of enquiry in a field, the rules of evidence and warrants of truth within that discipline, and how new knowledge is introduced and accepted in that community" (Sehgal & Standish, 2021, p.242).

Researchers of the present study observed that Literature-in-English teachers are restricted to preferred content areas or topics if they are uninformed, incompetent or not knowledgeable about the subject matter to be taught. Teachers who exhibit these features seem to gloss over the unwanted topics and often encourage or mandate students to memorize and arrange their thoughts about the contents using exact format provided by the teacher. This act deprives students a sense of belonging and weakens their thinking faculties. A teacher who understands the topic to be taught uses straightforward words, gives room for discussion and provides better clarifications and illustrations than those whose background is weak and unsound (Fakeye, 2012). It is noted that teachers select some areas in the syllabus that are targeted in internal and external examinations but give little or no attention to some areas where questions are not set for examinations. It is expedient that Literature-in-English teachers are aware and comprehend the objectives of all the teaching contents, concepts, principles, theories, and facts as stated in Literature-in-English Curriculum as this might help them explicitly explain the significance of such contents, concepts, principles, theories, and facts to students which could be of interest to them.

The researchers of the present paper opine that competent Literature-in-English teachers would not only demonstrate magnitude of knowledge of specialty, string relevant information about the subject matter together from different sources, break down concepts effectively, and be abreast of innovations in the subject taught but also fast-track students' acquisition of content taught in classes, dispel their misconceptions and foster learning outcomes. Teachers' knowledge of subject matter could also boost students' self-esteem because students will be exposed to diverse means of organizing ideas without necessarily cramming, thinking and arranging their ideas about the subject in the same way as their teacher. This avenue gives the students a sense of belonging that their views, though not exactly as their teacher, are considered correct despite the forms of its presentation.

Hattie (2009) discovered that expert teachers and experienced teachers are similar in the amount of knowledge they have about curriculum matters or knowledge about pedagogies, but expert teachers are different in how they organize and use subject matter knowledge. Literature teachers with adequate content knowledge have the in-depth understanding of domain-specific concepts in Literature-in-English, have understanding about the correlations among these concepts, and they are equipped with forms and processes of acquiring and applying knowledge of a specific domain of these concepts. The mastery of teachers' subject content should cover the whole aspects of Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, that is, teachers' awareness of the various parts in the cognitive domain which constitute part of Literature teachers' evaluation of content mastery: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation and synthesis of the behavioural objectives. Three core aspects of the subject knowledge that can enable teachers expand their frontier of teaching from simple to complex aspects are: the content of the subject, the organization of the content, and the methods of inquiry used within the subject (Kennedy, 1990)

Literature-in-English comprises several content areas but the four major content areas investigated in the present study are elements in literary works (plot, characters and themes); literary

appreciation skills (knowledge of literary techniques); language development (diction, analytical and inferential skills); and values (feelings, importance of literary works and its application to phenomena). These areas are significant to the present study because they are areas that help readers: derive meaning behind every literary works, understand the significance of the texts, re-create life situations as literary texts, and learn about values, morals and beliefs embedded in the literary texts. The knowledge of these areas give the readers insight to the writers' concerns and holistic view of the literary texts.

Elements of literary works chosen in this study can expose readers to the sequential arrangement of events in a literary work, the central issue raised in the work and any animate figure within a story. Literary appreciation involves reading, comprehension, active reflection, analysis, interpretation, evaluation and making informed decisions by critically judging the theme, style, use of figurative and non-figurative language, and other elements of a literary work (Pawners Paper, 2022). The knowledge of literary appreciation helps students to discover purpose, style, tone, mood, and the logical, chronological, and spatial organization of the text. It helps readers connect the literary work to its historical, political, economic, cultural, and social contexts for easy comprehension of its significance and impact. Language development increases not only readers' vocabulary expansion, grammar development, reinforcement of language skills, sensitivity to language, model for writing skills, and creative thinking and activities but also comprehension and application of the rules of pragmatics, discourse, and social communication for various contexts and purposes. Values are learnt in Literature-in-English when readers read about characters and themes in a literary texts and share their thoughts, feelings and emotions. Readers engage with different attitudes and opinions expressed by the author or the characters in the literary texts, and also transact with the meanings given in the texts. The transaction fosters self-development, moral judgement, moral values, moral action, and understanding of the world.

Studies on teachers' content knowledge

Empirical studies show different results about teachers' mastery of their disciplines and how it informs their teaching practices. Aydin and Boz (2012) revealed that pre-service teachers did not possess understanding of the connections and organizations of the facts of the content taught. They gave answers to questions using definitions from textbook but easily forgot the answers since they memorized. They also find out that some of the pre-service teachers disliked discussion as a teaching method due to dearth of subject matter knowledge. In another study, Shepherd (2013) investigated the impact of teacher subject knowledge on learners' performance in South Africa using a within-pupil across-subject approach. The study showed that teachers' in-depth mastery of subject matter and teachers' ability to transfer the subject matter to learners are of importance. It could be inferred from the study that it is a different thing to have a deep understanding of content and a different thing to be able to transfer that idea meaningfully to learners.

Evidence from educational scene has revealed that teachers' content knowledge is part of teacher knowledge and teacher quality which is easily noticeable when teachers teach and also determines students' achievement. Metzler and Woessmann (2012) investigated whether the mastery of teacher subject knowledge could have impact on students' achievement. They discovered that teacher subject knowledge, which is one of the conspicuous factors of effective teacher quality, could significantly influence students' achievement. However, Mpofu (2016) examined the knowledge possessed by beginner teachers in the teaching of Literature in English. She discovered that the participants possessed knowledge of the curriculum, teaching, and learners, but had inadequate knowledge in the teaching of genres of Literature. Ariel (2021) noted that there "was a significant relationship between teacher's content knowledge in English and learners' academic performance in English" (p.16). Ghazi et al. (2013) noted that possessing teaching professional competencies especially possessing knowledge of subject matter at secondary level is particularly germane "because it deals with the teaching learning process, including the most useful

forms of instructional and behavioural strategies and it also deals with how students' can learn in the best way about the specific concepts and topics of a subject" (p.454).

Ghazi et al. (2013) concluded in their study that the "secondary school teachers working in various districts of their study possessed sufficient knowledge of their subject matter. However, their weakest area is to make the subject matter applicable to the real world situation" (p.459). However, some researchers have different perceptions about the significance of teachers' content knowledge to teaching and learning. Carnoy and Arends (2012) examined students' mathematics achievement gains in Botswana and South Africa. They found out that teachers' content knowledge had no significant effect on learners' achievement in Mathematics. Shepherd (2013) also affirmed that teacher content knowledge had no influence on learners' outcomes in both Mathematics and English subjects. Fakeye (2012) investigated teachers' qualification and subject mastery as predictors of achievement in English Language in Ibarapapa Division of Oyo State while Olowoyeye and Alonge (2014) investigated the impact of teachers' subject mastery and questioning behaviour on students' performance in English Language in selected senior secondary schools in Ikere Metropolis. These studies showed that teachers' mastery of subject matter is significant and contributes significantly to students' academic achievement in English Language.

Findings from these studies revealed that teachers' content knowledge in no small measure fosters students' learning and has impact on students' achievement. However, there are some missing gaps in these studies. The targets of the reviewed studies have been on in-service teachers' and pre-service teachers' content knowledge in Mathematics, science related fields, English language, and academic success in general while teachers' content knowledge in Literature-in-English has received no research attention. Although these studies attested that teachers' content knowledge has positive impact on students' performance in various school subjects, however, what counts as subject matter knowledge for teaching and how it relates to students' achievement in and attitude to Literature-in-English have remained inadequately discussed in past research. The present study, therefore, seeks to investigate: teachers' content knowledge in Literature-in-English, what counts as subject matter knowledge for teaching in Literature-in-English, and whether teachers' content knowledge could predict students' attitude to and achievement in Literature-in-English. Findings from these investigations will add to the existing literature on teachers' content knowledge. To this end, a research question and two hypotheses guide the present study.

Research question

1. Do Literature-in-English teachers exhibit mastery of literary works, literary appreciation skills, language development, and values?

Research hypotheses

1. Teachers' content knowledge significantly predicts students' (a) achievement in Literature-in-English and (b) attitude to Literature-in-English.

METHODOLOGY

This paper presents the results of the implications of teachers' content knowledge on teaching practices and students' learning outcomes. A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted in the study.

Research design

The study adopted a descriptive research design of the survey type. The research design was adopted since the study focused on collecting data on teachers' content knowledge and students' learning outcomes (achievement and attitude). There was no manipulation of variables. Research ethics were observed as respondents' consent was sought and participation was voluntary. Their anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed because respondents' identities were not disclosed under any guise.

Participants

Participants were 632 students who were taught Literature-in-English and 127 Literature-in-English teachers in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study adopted the multistage sampling procedure. The selection of this sampling procedure was considered appropriate because samples were drawn from a large population and widespread groups through progressively smaller units at various stages. At stage one, simple random sampling technique was used to select four local government areas. Stage two, 4 schools were selected from each local government areas using simple random sampling technique. Stage three, 48 schools, altogether, were purposively selected from the sampled local government areas based on the following criteria: the school must have presented students for Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations for at least 10 years and the school must be willing to take part in the study. Stage 4, intact classes of Literature-in-English students in each selected schools were used considering the availability of the teachers and students.

Data collection instruments

Four research instruments were used for data collection: a classroom observation scale, a classroom content knowledge checklist, a questionnaire and an achievement test. 32 observers were recruited as research assistants to observe live classroom performances of 127 Literature-in-English teachers in classrooms. They were selected because they were the most senior Literature-in-English teachers in the selected schools who were not teaching the selected classes of students. The contents observed are elements of literary works (plot, characterization, themes); literary appreciation skills (knowledge of literary techniques); language development (diction, analytical and inferential skills); and values (feelings, importance of literary works and its application to life situations). The duration for the overall observation was 40 minutes with not less than 5 minutes for each element to be observed.

The Observation scale measuring teachers' content knowledge in Literature-in-English was employed to gather information on whether Literature-in-English teachers have the mastery of content knowledge, whether they displayed the mastery of the content knowledge very often, often, sometimes, hardly ever or never, and the degree to which the mastery of content knowledge was evident or absent when the teachers taught. Observers were given guidelines and descriptions of all the classroom activities to be observed. Observers were to observe the following: if the four major content areas in this study were appropriately explained, discussed, applied to life situations, appreciated and adequately supported with illustrations extracted from literary texts; if the four major content areas were appropriately explained, appreciated, applied to life situations, and adequately supported with illustrations but need minor adjustments; if the four major content areas were appropriately explained but not applied to life situations and not supported with illustrations; and if the four major content areas were inadequately and inappropriately explained, not applied to life situations, and not supported with illustrations and hence need major adjustments. The scoring is indicated as follows: excellent (4); good (3); fair (2); poor (1); fail (0).

Although it is expected that Literature-in-English teachers should be familiar with the contents of the subject they teach, however, probably, there could be some content areas that they master most than others. Therefore, the classroom content knowledge checklist addressed the four major content areas in this study so as to observe preferred and less preferred areas. The observation scale included 15 items focusing on the sub topics that are taught under the four major content areas in this study using four Likert-type of very difficult (VD), difficult (D), moderately difficult (MD), not difficult (ND). Students' questionnaire focused on students' attitude to Literature-in-English with 22 items. The content of the questionnaire focused on students' feelings, reactions, opinions, and beliefs about Literature-in-English. These were reflected in statements like how students got along with Literature-in-English lessons; why they studied Literature-in-English; their likes and dislikes for Literature-in-English; why they liked and disliked Literature-in-English, and if and how their teachers' content knowledge contributed to their dispositions to Literature-in-English. The questionnaire was placed on a four Likert-type format (Strongly Agree, Agree,

Strongly Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Students' achievement test in Literature-in-English was drawn in line with Literature-in-English Syllabus. Test was administered on students through essay questions and general objective questions which were drawn from the recommended literary texts and recommended Literature textbooks.

Validity and reliability of the instruments

The face and content validity of the questionnaire and achievement test were ascertained by experts in Test, Measurement and Evaluation (T.M.E) and Language Testing. Thorough scrutiny of the instruments was carried out and necessary corrections, suggestions and comments were effected before the final draft of the instruments. The reliability of the questionnaire and achievement test was ensured by administering these instruments on 350 Literature-in-English students selected outside the sample of the study. A test-retest method was used for the questionnaire and achievement test in Literature-in-English. Through Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, reliability coefficients for students' questionnaire (0.79) and students' achievement test in Literature-in-English (0.86) were obtained respectively. Reliability of classroom observation scale was ensured by defining research objectives and questions; selection of direct observation method and structured observation using a predefined checklist and observation scale to describe data respectively; and training and standardizing observers to ensure that data are collected and recorded in a consistent and accurate manner. Using inter-rater reliability, through Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, the reliability of Classroom Observation Scale (0.82) was obtained.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, mean scores and standard deviations while all the hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics of regression analysis.

FINDINGS

Research question: Do Literature-in-English teachers exhibit mastery of literary works, literary appreciation skills, language development and values?

Literature-in-English teachers who were the participants were rated by themselves and the observers who were the research assistants. The respondents who were Literature-in-English teachers responded to classroom content knowledge checklist in Literature-in-English and the research assistants who were the observers used classroom observation scale measuring teachers' content knowledge in Literature-in-English which were collated and computed.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of teachers' mastery of subject content areas in Literature-in-English

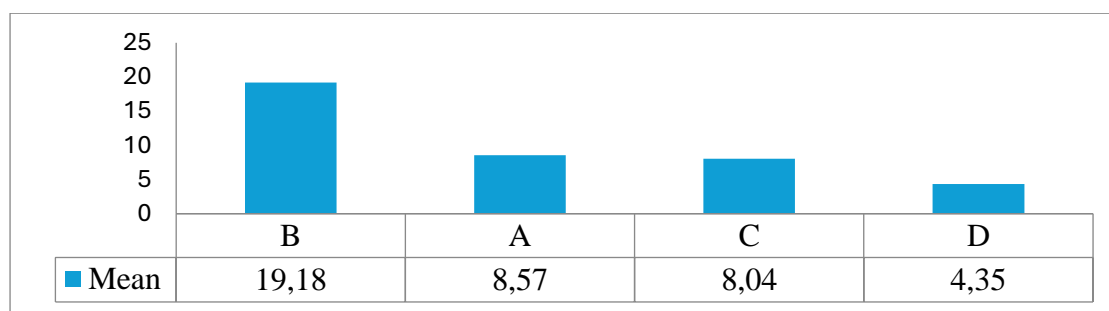
Content Knowledge Elements	Teachers' Rating (Classroom Content Knowledge Checklist)			Observers' Rating (Classroom Observation)			Grand Mean	Rank
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD		
Literary appreciation skills (B)	127	15.16	2.84	127	23.19	5.42	19.18	1st
Knowledge of the elements of literary works (A)	127	5.70	1.44	127	11.44	5.15	8.57	2nd
Language development (C)	127	11.13	2.86	127	4.94	2.23	8.04	3rd
Values (D)	127	4.26	0.99	127	4.44	2.17	4.35	4th

Table 1 shows teachers' mastery of subject content areas in Literature-in-English. From teachers' personal assessment through the classroom content knowledge checklist, the result indicates that Literature-in-English teachers mostly possessed mastery of the subject contents of

literary appreciation skills with 15.16 ± 2.84 mean and standard deviation. Closely followed by the mastery of language development (11.13 ± 2.86), knowledge of the elements of literary works (5.70 ± 1.44) and lastly, values (4.26 ± 0.99) respectively in descending order of mean.

At the angle of teachers’ observers using classroom observation, the table reveals that Literature-in-English teachers had mastery of literary appreciation skills with mean and standard deviation of 23.19 ± 5.42 . This is followed by knowledge of literary works (11.44 ± 5.15), language development (4.94 ± 2.23) and lastly, values (4.44 ± 2.17) respectively. However, on the grand mean scale, the table shows that teachers showed mastery of the subject contents most in literary appreciation skills (19.18). This is respectively followed by knowledge of the elements of literary works (8.57), language development (8.04) and values (4.35). Thus, from the analysis, Literature-in-English teachers’ content knowledge of the subject is noticeable in literary skills as well as knowledge of literary works. Further explanation is provided in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Teachers’ mastery of subject content areas in Literature-in-English



Testing of hypotheses

H_{01} : Teachers’ content knowledge significantly predicts students’ achievement in Literature-in-English.

Table 2. Multiple regression of teachers’ content knowledge and students’ achievement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	55.448	3.810		14.552	.000
Knowledge of the elements of literary works	-.085	.476	-.017	-.179	.858
Literary appreciation skills	.020	.110	.018	.179	.859
Language development	-.098	.357	-.027	-.275	.784
Values	-.327	.242	-.135	-1.355	.178

$R = .277$; $R^2 = .077$; Adjusted $R^2 = .046$; $F_{4, 122} = 2.529$, $p = 0.044$
 $p > 0.05$

Table 2 shows that there is relationship between teachers’ content knowledge and students’ achievement ($R = 0.277$). Thus, teachers’ content knowledge constituted 7.7% of the changes that occurred in students’ achievement in Literature-in-English. Although, at individual level, no single element from teachers’ content knowledge brought about improvement on students’ achievement in isolation of the others. However, on the general scale, the result statistically reveals that $F_{4, 790} = 19.338$, $p = 0.000$. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that teachers’ content knowledge significantly predict students’ academic achievement in Literature-in-English.

The regression equation: $Y = 55.448 - 0.085X_1 + 0.0205X_2 - 0.098X_3 - 0.327X_4$

Where: Y = Students' achievement in Literature-in-English, X₁ = Knowledge of literary works, X₂ = Literary skills, X₃ = Language development, X₄ = Values

*H*₀₂: Teachers' content knowledge significantly predicts students' attitude to Literature-in-English.

Table 3. Multiple regression of teachers' content knowledge and students' attitude

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	p
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	41.029	5.418		7.573	.000
Knowledge of the elements of literary works	-.678	1.532	-.046	-.443	.659
Literary appreciation skills	-.355	2.962	-.016	-.120	.905
Language development	1.756	2.769	.093	.634	.527
Values	1.107	3.006	.044	.368	.713

R=.315; R²=.099; Adjusted R²= .070; F_{4, 122} = 3.359, p=0.012

p>0.05

Table 3 indicates that there is correlation between teachers' content knowledge and students' academic achievement (R=0.315). Thus, teachers' content knowledge constituted 9.9% of the changes that occur in students' attitude towards Literature-in-English. But at individual level, no single element from teachers' contents knowledge could bring about improvement in students' achievement in isolation of the others. However, the result further reveals that F_{4, 122} = 3.359, p=0.012. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that teachers' content knowledge significantly predict students' attitude towards Literature-in-English.

The regression equation: $Y = 41.029 - 0.678X_1 - 0.355X_2 + 1.756X_3 + 1.107X_4$

Where: Y = Students' attitude towards Literature-in-English, X₁ = Knowledge of the elements of literary works, X₂ = Literary appreciation skills, X₃ = Language development, X₄ = Values

DISCUSSION

Findings revealed that the most observable elements where mastery was shown by Literature-in-English teachers include knowledge of the elements of literary works and literary appreciation skills. This shows that Literature-in-English teachers are skilled at teaching the elements of literary works which include plot, characterization, themes; and literary appreciation skills which include knowledge of literary techniques. These areas are cognitive-oriented areas where both internal and external examinations are set. This is the confirmation of the researchers' observation that Literature teachers are more concerned about the cognitive domain of Literature-in-English which is examination and knowledge oriented. The findings of this study is in line with Udu (2017) who found out that English teachers perceived literary works such as appreciating a poem, identifying themes/subject matter, explaining the role of characters, and explaining the sociocultural relevance of a literary work as easy topics.

However, the findings in this present study differ from Udu (2017) because this present study extends beyond mere perception of simple or difficult topics to capture content areas where teachers exhibited mastery. Figure 1 reveals that Literature-in-English teachers exhibited less mastery in language development (appreciation of diction, flexibility play of language and analytical and inferential skills) and values (description of feelings and discovering the significance of literary works by relating the themes in literary texts to situations around the students). The findings are in line with the study of Ghazi et al. (2013) who reported that participants in their study had sufficient knowledge of the content knowledge but they could not relate the subject matter taught

in the classroom to the real world situation. Another findings in Sedau (2004) revealed that language development in literary texts in English literature is one of the difficult areas in Literature-in-English. Although, Udu (2017) countered the findings of this present study that language development and knowledge of values are not knotty areas however, he noted that point of view and the setting of literary works posed as difficult topics in Literature-in-English. Lappan (1999) decries that knowledge gaps in subject matter knowledge “affects how teachers interpret the content goals they are expected to reach with students, it affects the way teachers hear and respond to students and their questions and it as well affects teachers’ ability to explain clearly and to ask good questions.” (p.1)

The findings discussed above show that since Literature-in-English teachers observed in this study are deficient in language development and values, students might not be exposed to language in action in literary texts, independent thoughts, critical judgment, and creative writing which are the parts of the aims and objectives of teaching Literature-in-English (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2009). The researchers of the present study observe that Literature-in-English teachers are more concerned about cognitive domain of knowledge of the elements of literary works and literary appreciation skills which are key areas where questions are frequently asked in examination thereby neglecting the affective domain of knowledge of values. One of the reasons for lack of insufficient knowledge in Literature-in-English is the idea that all teachers who teach English language are competent to teach Literature-in-English appropriately (Simuchimba, 2016). Literature-in-English has its distinctive features that differentiate it from English language. This could affect their approach to teaching the subject. Also, Lappan (1999) explained that there is a difference between *knowing what to teach and teaching what you know. She revealed that* it is simple to develop conventions in teaching so that teachers can simply dodge the parts of the book they like or are not comfortable with. Lappan (1999) reported that “recently, an elementary school teacher told me that in the more than 20 years she has been teaching, she has never taught the geometry sections of her text because she simply does not know the geometry” (p.1). This could be applicable to the present findings.

In addition, results of the study indicated that teachers’ content knowledge significantly predicted students’ academic achievement in Literature-in-English and their attitude to Literature-in-English. The teachers’ mastery of subject matter is an essential factor that determines students’ achievement in and attitude to Literature-in-English. This is in tandem with the study of Fakeye (2012) who posited that a teacher who possesses content knowledge uses simple words, their discussion is more connected and they provide better clarifications and illustrations than those who have weak background. While Adediwura and Bada (2007) noted that the way students perceive their teacher’s mastery of the subject may affect students’ academic achievement. Also, Adegbola (2018) discovered that teacher subject matter knowledge influenced students’ performance in Basic Science. Omonije and Obadiora (2018) also indicated that teachers’ content knowledge contributed to Economics students’ academic performance. Opara et al. (2017) indicated that teachers’ competence in Mathematics significantly predicted students’ attitude to Mathematics. However, the results of the present study negate the findings of Carnoy and Arends (2012) who found no significant effect of teachers’ content knowledge on learners’ gains in Mathematics.

CONCLUSION

The present study discussed the importance of Literature-in-English to national and human development and how linguistic, methodological and motivational benefits have made Literature-in-English an important tool for teaching second language. The benefits inherent in teaching and learning of Literature-in-English cannot be fully harnessed if there are deficiencies in teachers’ subject matter knowledge of the subject to be taught. Therefore, one of the factors that influence students’ learning outcome is teacher’s content knowledge. It is concluded from the findings of their study that Literature-in-English teachers showed mastery of literary works and literary

appreciation skills but did not display sufficient mastery of language development and knowledge of values and these significantly predicted students' learning outcomes in Literature-in-English. Teachers' content knowledge constituted 7.7% of the changes that occurred in students' achievement in Literature-in-English and the 9.9% of the changes that occurred in students' attitude to Literature-in-English. It can be concluded that teachers' content knowledge are predictors of students' learning outcomes in Literature-in-English. However, teachers' insufficient or dearth of knowledge can impede students' learning. Therefore Literature-in- English teachers need to continue to hone subject content knowledge throughout their teaching careers.

LIMITATIONS

Initially, some teachers were reluctant to partake in the study as they considered it strenuous and time-taking. But when they were briefed of the purpose of the study and were assured of their confidentiality, they gave their consents and were enthusiastic about the study. Data were collected from the 632 participants from four local governments in a state, the generalizability of the findings is limited and subject to the number of participants.

SUGGESTIONS

For future research, the instruments could be conducted with more participants and a larger sample and a more diverse population. Also, the study was limited to content knowledge, one of Shulman's teacher knowledge. Further studies could be carried out on other teacher knowledge as predictive factors of students' learning outcomes in school subjects. The findings give way to the following suggestions:

1. Literature teachers should ensure that they pay attention by reading and studying all aspects of Literature-in-English with special attention given to gray areas where mastery is not exhibited.
2. Efforts should be geared by organizing training, seminars and workshops for Literature-in-English for optimal improvement and performance.
3. Literature-in- English teachers need to continue to hone subject content knowledge throughout their teaching careers.
4. Pre-service teachers' content knowledge should be constantly evaluated.

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