IMPACT OF MENTORING IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE L2 IN SOKOTO METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

Aisha Abdullahi Ibrahim[i]
Department of Curriculum Studies
and Educational Technology,
Faculty of Education and Extension Services,
Usmanu Danfodiyo University,
Sokoto, Nigeria

Abstract:

This study investigated the impacts of mentoring in teaching English language as a Second (L2) language in Sokoto Metropolis. The study was carried out considering the fact that different factors were studied as they affect the teaching and learning of English language in the area. Owing to the fact that new teachers were recruited and posted in schools, there was need for induction, refresher courses and guidance on how to approach their practices. A descriptive survey research design was used in the study. A sample of 106 English language teachers was randomly selected for the study. A self-developed questionnaire titled "Knowledge of Mentoring in Language Teaching (KNOMILT) Questionnaire" served as instrument of the study. The instrument was validated by three senior lecturers in the Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology and 15 secondary school teachers validated the instrument. The instrument recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of r = 0.87 after test-retest was conducted. The study found that there was inadequate knowledge of mentoring among English language teachers of Sokoto Metropolis. There were challenges in mentoring in English language, and that mentoring can be improved in different ways. The paper recommended among others that the Ministry of Education should intervene in the provision of mentoring services to English language teachers in Sokoto State.

Keywords: mentoring, English as an L2, challenges, teaching

1. Introduction

Teacher mentoring is one mode of professionalizing teaching and providing teachers with up-to-date knowledge and modern art of teaching and materials/resource development. One of the major concerns of stakeholders in education is on how to update the knowledge, practices, and understanding of the promising teachers to discharge their

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[i] Correspondence: email liberianspirit@gmail.com

duties effectively. Researches on teacher education development show that the quality of teachers have a lot of impact on children's learning, effective teaching, quality educational evaluation, supervision, and management of educational processes. Hence, there is need to put in place strategies for enhancing ongoing professional development for teachers in our educational system. Teacher mentoring is therefore an instrument of change which if well managed and utilized will introduce a mentor to a greater wisdom and experience to enable them pass their skills to a fellow in profession.

However, Farrell (2003) in his study of learning to teach English language teachers during the first year from the personal influences and challenges stated that the transition from the teacher training institution to the secondary school classroom is branded by a type of reality shock in which the ideals that were formed during teacher training were replaced by the reality of school. Therefore, the novice teachers have exceptional needs and well-being that are different from their more experienced colleagues in terms of personal influences, experience, and socialization. For this, UBEC (2013) Outline a range of mentoring activities. Mentoring is very wide and can be explained by people in different ways. Mentoring could mean: passing on knowledge and/or skills, formally or informally; looking after people; acting as a sounding board; helping people to put learning into practice; being a role model; being a guide; being a champion; talking to people about their careers; counseling; and coaching.

2. Statement of the Problems

There have been complaints of minimum performance of students especially in English language in Sokoto State. The stakeholders queried that some English language teachers in schools are yet to meet the minimum certification for teaching i.e. the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE). It is obvious that they need to be provided with continuous professional development and support in order to bring them to the minimum acceptable standard. The newly certified teachers need to be placed under the guidance of experienced and exceptional teachers who supervise, monitor, and provide them with academic support. While old serving teachers who do not have the opportunity of attending any refresher course, need teacher mentoring to assist and expose them to varieties of innovations in education.

2.1 Objectives of the Study
The study is designed to achieve the following objectives:
1) To find out the level of English language teachers' knowledge of mentoring in language teaching.
2) To examine the perceived English language teachers' importance of mentoring in language teaching.
3) To ascertain the perceived English language teachers' challenges of mentoring in language teaching.

4) To synthesize the perceived English language teachers' ways of improving mentoring in language teaching.

2.2 Research Questions

1) What is the level of English language teachers' knowledge of mentoring in language teaching?
2) To what extents do the English language teachers perceived the importance of mentoring in language teaching?
3) What are the challenging factors perceived to affect mentoring of English language teachers in language teaching?
4) In what ways can mentoring be improved in English language teaching and learning?

3. Literature Review

3.1 The Concept and Purpose of Teacher Mentoring

Mentoring entails many things to many people. It can be described as a process whereby a more experienced teacher facilitates or guides a less experienced one in educational activities. This can be in form of preparing lesson plans, lesson delivery, development of material resources for teaching, understanding individual differences, utilization of instructional materials, and modes of obtaining feedback from the students among others. UBEC (2013) conceived mentoring according to Oxford advance learner's Dictionary as a process in which an experienced person advices or helps someone with less experience over a period of time. Hay (1990) maintained that mentoring is a one-to-one relationship that supports the growth and development of an individual. This shows that it is a kind of relationship between an older, more experienced person and a younger, less experienced one in which guidance, facilitation, monitoring is conducted for the achievement of a common goal.

It is important to highlight that right from the initial teachers' preparation for teaching, provisions have to be made for the teachers' ongoing professional development on the subject matter, knowledge, and concrete skills to teach, observe, assess and reflect. There is also need for networking with the different stakeholders in education, school management, colleagues, fellow teachers and supervisors to help solve problems and support others through discussions, modelling and coaching, and involvement with other aspect of school and educational change. Isolation and lack of communication between the teacher and contemporaries need to be reduced if we want the best in the educational enterprise (Goizen & Garner, 1990).

Mentors are human beings. Therefore no one is expected to be a perfect mentor. It is necessary to consider the qualities, compatibility as well as the styles of a mentor before he or she is engaged. Mentoring skills are essentials in promoting teacher professional support experience with a view to improving the teaching and learning processes in schools. The first things to consider about the potential mentor must be whether he or

she will be compatible with a mentee. To do this judiciously, one has to look at the key element of compatibility which is trust, respect and ethics, though this will depend on specific mentees (Bloch, 1993).

Teacher development is a continuous and dynamic process. It is not a fixed event. It involves inventions and innovations. The stages are related to the teachers' experience gained in instructional and management practice over their career. They are also related to the degree of support services obtained from colleagues. Thus, the essence of teacher mentoring is geared towards helping each other to facilitate change in the classroom through co-operative and collaborative approach. The success of every school depends on the overall quality of its education system. The teacher as part of the system must be developed, for teacher development within the school must be aimed at the success of each teacher to help children to learn (UBEC, 2013). Teacher mentoring is a school-based initiative which provides focused instruction for uncertified, new and old teachers. Beginning teachers need initial preparation in their subject matter, fluency in the language of instruction, knowledge of how to use instructional materials, and some basic classroom management and reflection skills, most of these skills are best learned through on-the-job practice with coaching, and close supervision while on the job. This strategy is also an appropriate system of standard accreditation to match the preparation Programme so that any teacher who passes through mentoring can work with high standards and achieve a professional status. The teacher mentoring initiative establishes an induction programme, which is essential to guide and support teachers and help develop sound teaching practice and teachers' retention (UBEC, 2013).

3.2 Theoretical Underpinning

This paper employed mutual benefits model of Social Exchange theory developed by Zey in 1984. The model proposed that an individual ventures into a relationship and remains part of the relationship for as long as there is mutual benefit. Two kinds of interaction exist here: induction pre-service teachers and that of in-service teachers. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) defined pre-service program as a kind of training received before employment. These are program undertaken after the completion of the course of study, employment into an organization and socialization before actual practice. The in-service development programmes are periodic updating, upgrading, refreshing and additional professional development received while on the job (reason (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Zey (1984) expatiated that an organization in which mentoring is conducted tends to benefit from the two parties' interaction. Since theory of induction indicates that teaching is a complex task, and teacher education Programmes hardly provide all kinds of knowledge and skills for its effectiveness, a substantial percentage can be acquired while on the job (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ganser, 2002; Gold, 1999; Hegstad, 1999). Therefore, it is necessary for stakeholders in education to provide room for induction of novice employees and continued professional development to succeed as teachers. That is the reason Ingersoll and Strong (2011) stated that the goal of mentoring programs is to improve the performance and retention of novice teachers for their retention in the

service and improve the growth and learning of students. This is clearly shown in figure below:
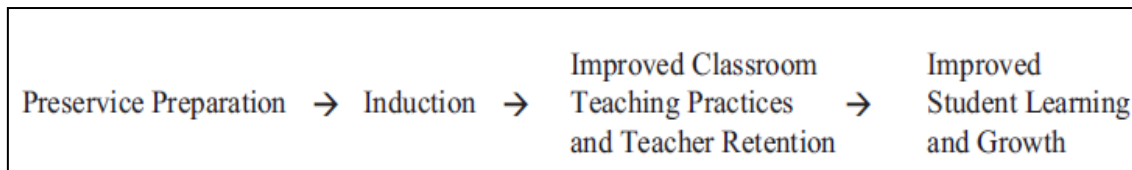

Figure 1: Theory of Teacher Development, adopted from Ingersoll and Strong, 2011, p.3.

4. Review of Related Studies

Albakri, Ismail, and Hartono, Tahir, Abdullah, Sarudin, and Zulkepli, (2021) studied mentoring practice during practicum with perspectives of Malaysian pre-service English language teachers. About 56 pre-service teachers completed their practicum. The quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire on five mentoring factors of personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modeling, and feedback. The study found that out of these five factors, modeling and pedagogical knowledge had a moderate satisfactory level of mentoring experience, with the lowest mean score, as received by the pre-service teachers. However, a considerable issue in mentoring was quality of pedagogical knowledge. The crucial issues to be addressed were equipping mentor teachers with the knowledge and skill of mentoring, mentoring course and guidance, and a mentoring manual should be given to the mentors in order to assist them in providing quality and structured mentoring.

Fletcher and Barrett (2004) forwarded that developing beginning teachers is effective through mentor-based induction. Their study reviewed past research on new teachers' induction and focused on changes in retention of teachers in the services. They found it important to engage in teacher training, organizational change, and data usage by districts.

Goldhaber, Krieg, and Theobald (2020) enquired whether having a productive mentor improves the productivity of mentees. The study synchronized a novel database of the pre-service apprenticeship ("student teaching placements") of teachers in Washington State to investigate the mentor and mentee relationship and the mentees effectiveness and future hopes in the service. The study found strong, and positive relationship between the effectiveness of a teacher's mentor and their own effectiveness in mathematics. There was also a modest relationship in English Language Arts. The study reported that there was a strong relationship in math at early stages of a teacher's career, and would be positive and statistically significant even in the presence of non-random sorting on un-observables of the same magnitude as the sorting on observables. This showed a causal relationship between mentor effectiveness and the future effectiveness of their mentees in math.

Kayi-Aydar (2015) investigated teacher agency, positioning, and English language learners from the voices of pre-service classroom teachers. The study examined the

identity (re)negotiations and agency of three pre-service classroom teachers who received their English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement at a research university in the United States. The data was obtained from a structured interview, journal entries, and narratives positioning. The study found that the teachers took on various, and sometimes conflicting, positional identities in relation to the social context (e.g., mentor teachers, ELLs, etc.). It also indicated that those identities have molded teachers' agency and self-reported classroom practices.

O'Hara, Bookmyer, Pritchard, and Martin (2020) conducted an exploratory and qualitative study to examine the background knowledge and instructional methods needed for teaching of English language learners (ELLs). It analyzed how mentoring practices build secondary schools' novice teachers and content-based instructional capacity in the area. The study examined two independent studies to synthesize and contextualize findings on essential instructional practices in mentoring of new teachers. The study came up with three themes: novice teachers need foundational, theoretical and practical knowledge that underlines the essential practices for academic language development; essential practices must be articulated in detail for enactment by teachers; and balancing of explicit and immersive language of instruction that becomes a paradigm shift for novice teachers. The implications of the study for mentor and teacher professional development highlighted mentors as key to supporting the uptake of dynamic instructional methods needed to enact essential practices, and mentoring is a common strategy for supporting new teachers. There were few models in existence that mentors can be supported in building of academic language development of ELLs.

Rockoff (2008) carried out a study to examine how mentoring can reduce turnover and improve skills of new employees. The study was conducted to measure popular policy for improving the retention and performance of new teachers and the students' outcomes. The study compared the impact of mentoring in New York City, it was a study on mentoring programs conducted nationwide in 2004. A detailed program data was used to examine the relationship between teacher and student outcomes and measures mentoring quality of hours of mentoring received and the characteristics of mentors. Instrumental variables and school fixed effects were used to address potential sources of bias. The study found that there were strong relationships between measures of mentoring quality and teachers' assertion on the impact of mentors on their success in the classroom. There was also weaker evidence of effects on teacher absences, retention, and student achievement. The study also found that the most consistent finding was that retention within a particular school is higher when a mentor has previously worked in that school. This suggested that there is an important provision for mentoring in specific schools. It also found the evidence that students' achievement in both reading and math was higher among teachers that received more hours of mentoring. This supports the notion that time spent working with a mentor does improve teaching skills.

Yuan (2016) researched on the challenges of mentoring on pre-service language teachers' identity formation. The study explored the identity construction of two pre-service language teachers via school mentor and supervisors' interactions in the teaching

practicum. The study was informed by self-discrepancy and possible-selves theory. It was found that negative mentoring dismantled the student-teachers' ideal identities (e.g., "a controlling teacher"). This is believed to impinge on professional learning and growth. The study concluded that practical mentoring services facilitate pre-service teachers' learning to teach.

5. Material and Methods

This study is a descriptive survey research. It is a design in which the researcher sample opinion from the respondents to answer research questions.

The population of the study comprises of all English language teachers from public and private schools in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State. A total of one hundred and six (106) participants were selected through purposive sampling. Majority of the participants fall within the age range of 27-45 years and possess NCE/B.A/B.Ed English Language. The average working experience of the participants is 6-25 years.

The instrument for this is study is self-developed Questionnaire titled "Knowledge of Mentoring in Language Teaching (KNOMILT) Questionnaire." It consists of twenty-five (25) items ranged in five (5) items Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SDA) mode. The questionnaire is divided into five sections. Section A seeks demographic data of the respondents, section B measures English language teachers knowledge of mentoring in language teaching (6 items), Section C seeks the responses of English language teachers of the importance of mentoring in language teaching (7 items), Section D measures the challenges faced by English language teachers on mentoring in language teaching (5), and Section E measures the ways in which these challenges can be overcome and mentoring in language teaching improved (7). The contents, construct, and face of the instrument were validated by 3 senior lecturers in Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto and fifteen (15) seasoned secondary school teachers. Test-retest method was conducted to measure the reliability of the instrument. A Cronbach Alpha of 0.87 was obtained. The data collected was analysed via descriptive statistics in which mean and standard deviation were used. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to analyze the data.

6. Results and Discussion

The result is presented below:

Research Question 1: What is the level of English language teachers' knowledge of mentoring in Language teaching in Sokoto Metropolis?

Table 1: Summary of English language teachers' knowledge of Mentoring

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
	I was taught mentoring in my teacher education course.	2.5	0.6
	I was introduced into mentoring when I was employed as an English language teacher.	2.9	1.0
	I came across mentoring in the course of my personal readings.	1.9	0.4
	I was taught mentoring in the school I was posted.	0.8	0.3
	I was sent for workshop on mentoring in language teaching by the Ministry of Education.	1.2	0.8
	I learnt about mentoring when I attended a conference on mentoring in language education.	1.9	0.4
	Grand Mean	1.87	0.58

Table 1 showed that the respondents have no adequate knowledge of mentoring in language teaching with a mean of 1.9. This lack of adequate knowledge can be attributed to the fact that it is not being treated as a course in teacher education programs, schools do not have mentoring programs, and the Ministry of Education does not encourage mentoring and the nonchalant attitudes of mentors and mentee towards mentoring services.

Research Question 2: To what extent do English language teachers perceive the importance of mentoring in language teaching in Sokoto Metropolis?

Table 2: Summary of the importance of mentoring in language teaching

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
	It introduces novice English language teachers to the social environment of his language teaching.	3.4	0.4
	It brings a mentor and mentee into a close relationship.	3.6	0.5
	It gives teachers direction on what to teach in the language classroom.	3.2	0.6
	It helps English language teachers to know how to utilize instructional resources in the classroom.	3.0	0.3
	It helps English language teachers to identify individuals with special needs.	3.2	0.5
	It improves the performance of the English language teachers.	3.1	0.5
	It improves the performance of the students.	3.7	0.6
	Grand Mean	3.31	0.41

Table 2 showed that English language teachers were optimistic that mentoring in language teaching is important with a mean of 3.31. This can be attributed to its importance in building relationships among English language teachers in schools, cross fertilization of ideas on language teaching, introduction and sharing of language learning problems faced by the language teachers in schools, and identification of some students with special needs to be catered for during mentoring in schools.

Research Question 3: What are the challenging factors perceived to affect mentoring of English language teachers in language teaching in Sokoto Metropolis?

Table 3: Summary of challenges of mentoring in language teaching

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
	Inadequate manpower.	3.4	0.6
	Skeletal knowledge of mentoring.	3.3	0.7
	Nonchalant attitudes of the mentors and mentees.	3.4	0.6
	Inadequate materials for mentoring.	3.1	0.9
	Inadequate fund for mentoring workshops.	3.0	0.9
	Grand Mean	3.3	0.74

Table 3 indicated that there were some challenges in mentoring in language teaching with a mean score of 3.3. The challenges are inadequate manpower, poor knowledge of mentoring, nonchalant attitudes, inadequate materials and poor government intervention in organizing mentoring workshops for English language teachers to introduce novice teachers and update in-service teachers for productivity.

Research Question 4: In what ways can mentoring be improved in English language teaching and learning in Sokoto Metropolis?

Table 4: Summary of ways of improving mentoring in language teaching

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD
	Attending workshops on mentoring in language teaching.	3.4	0.9
	Conducting regular mentoring in schools.	3.1	0.8
	Quality assurance taskforce should include mentoring in their monitoring programs.	3.0	0.9
	School heads should conduct mentoring.	3.3	1.0
	Subject heads should conduct regular mentoring of fellow staff.	3.2	0.8
	Mentoring shall be a course in the courses of teacher education.	3.2	0.6
	There shall be mentoring on newly employed English language teachers.	3.1	0.5
	Grand Mean	3.18	0.78

Table 4 showed that there is need for mentoring in English language teaching with a mean score of 3.18. This ranges from organising and sending English language teachers on mentoring, conducting regular monitoring by the quality assurance department, mentoring by fellow staff, seasoned teachers, and inclusion of the course in teachers training program.

6.1 Summary of Findings
1) There is inadequate knowledge of mentoring by English language teachers in Sokoto Metropolis.
2) The English language Teachers opined that mentoring is important for language teaching in Sokoto Metropolis.
3) There are challenges facing mentoring in English language teaching in Sokoto Metropolis.
4) There are possible ways of improving mentoring in English language teaching in Sokoto Metropolis.

7. Discussion of Findings

The study found that there is inadequate knowledge of mentoring by English language teachers in Sokoto Metropolis. This shows that English language in the teacher education programs rarely introduce prospective teachers into the mentoring services. This finding is in tandem with the finding of Albakri, Ismail, and Hartono, Tahir, Abdullah, Sarudin, and Zulkepli, (2021) that out of five factors in mentoring services, modeling and pedagogical knowledge received a moderate satisfactory level of mentoring experience, with the lowest mean score, as received by the pre-service teachers. And the considerable issue of mentoring was quality of pedagogical knowledge, equipping mentor teachers with the knowledge and skill of mentoring, mentoring course and guidance. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every stakeholder in English language education to perform their duties to a maximum standard.

However, the study found that the English language teachers stressed the important of mentoring in English language teaching and learning in Sokoto Metropolis. This finding supported the findings of Fletcher and Barrett (2004) that found that it is important to engage in teacher training, organizational change, and data usage by districts for the maximum development of the teaching and learning process. Again, Goldhaber, Krieg, and Theobald (2020) supported that a strong and positive relationship between teachers and mentors increased their effectiveness in subject teaching like mathematics, there was also a modest relationship in English Language Arts, and there was strong relationship in subjects at the early stages of a teachers' career. This showed that mentoring energizes, refreshes, and help to acclimatize a novice English language teacher to the new teaching environment. It therefore, is regarded as an aspect of enhancing teacher education programme.

Furthermore, there were challenges facing mentoring in English language teaching in Sokoto Metropolis. This finding supported the findings of Kayi-Aydar (2015) that found that teachers took on various, and sometimes conflicting, positional identities in relation to the social context (e.g., mentor teachers, ELLs, etc.). Therefore, these identities are molded by teachers' agency, schools of services, and fellow. In addition, Yuan (2016) found that negative mentoring services dismantled the student-teachers' ideal identities (e.g., "a controlling teacher"). This is believed to impinge on the professional learning and growth of the teacher and the students.

In addition, the study found that there were possible ways of improving mentoring in English language teaching in Sokoto Metropolis. This finding supported the finding of O'Hara, Bookmyer, Pritchard, and Martin (2020) that English language teachers can be improved by providing them with three themes: the foundational, the theoretical and practical knowledge that underlines the essential practices for academic language development. There should also be essential practices that are articulated in detail for enactment, and the balancing of explicit and immersive language of instruction that becomes a paradigm shift for novice teachers.

8. Recommendations

Based on what has been obtained, it is hoped that mentoring if properly handled reduces the challenges faced by mentors in the discharge of their duties to the barest minimum; recommendations are as follows:

1) Mentors should be given good knowledge of their subject matter and this can be done through refresher courses.
2) Appropriate authorities should provide adequate manpower for mentoring programmes for English language teaching and learning.
3) Mentors are adviced to respect the mentoring profession so that its lost glory will be restored.
4) There should be adequate funding for workshops, seminars, and provision of instructional materials like manuals for mentoring services.
5) Mentors who discharge their duties adequately should be rewarded to serve as a model for other mentors to emulate.
6) Appropriate authorities should device ways of enlightening teachers on the need for mentoring in English language teaching and learning.
7) Mentors should be committed to their profession.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, a mentor is a more experienced, informed, skilled and confident teacher who can serve to provide guidance, supervision, and coaching on-the-job in various aspect of pedagogy and classroom management. Teacher mentoring is especially relevant in schools today because of the presence of large number of unqualified teachers, newly recruited and inexperienced teachers, inadequate opportunity for regular refresher course and inadequate exposure to modern innovations and training in pedagogy skills. Such innovations include the use of mentoring services to facilitate language learning, record keeping and generation of reports for effective English language teaching and learning.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflicts of interests.

About the Author

Dr (Mrs) A. A. Ibrahim is an Associate Professor of Language Education at the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto State, Nigeria. As a lecturer of Language Education, I am committed to delivering lectures, seminars, symposia, conference both domestic and at international levels. I also engage in researches and community services. I am currently a Desk Officer of English Language Teachers Association of Nigeria (ELTAN), North-Western States of Nigeria, Member Teaching English as Second Language (TESOL) and Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) among others. My areas of research are English Language Teaching, English Language Teacher Development, English Language testing, Technology in Language Teaching, National Language Policy etc. Currently, I am the Head of Department, Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology, Faculty of Education and Extension Services at the University.

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