



Instructional Dynamics in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) in Nigeria's Teacher Education Programme

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Abstract: This study presents findings from a survey of learning style preferences of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) students and the instructional strategies used by lecturers in three different Nigerian Universities. The instructional strategies focused on meeting the needs of ESL learners through appropriate pedagogical practices. 300 ESL students were the study sample from the three different education faculties. Using the Index of Learning Styles Questionnaire survey (Felder & Silverman, 2002), an attempt was made to match the learning styles of the students with the instructional strategies used by the lecturers. Findings revealed that only one instructional strategy, i.e., "lecture method" was used by lecturers, yet most of the students would prefer a more dynamic mixture of instructional strategies (e.g., visual and multimedia learning) to meet their learning style preferences. We recommend for changes in instructional strategies and pedagogical practices (by the lecturers as well as the institutions).

Keywords: teacher education, learning styles, instructional strategies, ESL

Introduction and Background

Teaching students of English as a Second Language (ESL) is challenging in developing countries. The challenges exist in numerous ways, for example teacher education and training for ESL teachers, using appropriate instructional strategies, and identifying students' learning style preferences. In this context, we examine the training of teachers in the Nigerian educational system, instructional dynamics, and students' learning style preferences at three different Nigerian higher institutions.

Training of teachers for the Nigerian educational system is based on the three models specified by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). The models for training were endorsed by Adesina (1986) and further developed by Ivowi (1991) and Isyaku (2000). Although these models (i.e., comprehensive teachers college, university college of education, and faculties and colleges of education) are implemented at the institutional level, they are highly relevant in teaching

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ESL students in Nigeria. These models impact on how ESL teachers are prepared, credentials are awarded, and ESL standards are maintained. Below, we describe the models in length.

Comprehensive Teachers College

This model is designated to Colleges of Education with full responsibilities to moderate themselves like the universities enabling them to award certificates, diplomas, and degrees in the field of teacher education and ESL. According to this model, comprehensive teachers colleges are established as fully functional units with full rights and responsibilities to award degrees in all undergraduate programmes. Adesina (1986) sees this model as the most suitable in the Nigerian educational context. However, there is little evidence that this model has improved the teaching of ESL in Nigeria.

University Colleges of Education

This model is affiliated to a federal university for the purpose of moderating programmes in subject areas only. In this case, all diplomas and degrees of undergraduate programmes are awarded by colleges of education according to the rules of the university to which they are affiliated.

Faculties and Colleges of Education

In this model, faculties of education remain only for post-graduate training in teacher education, while all undergraduate programmes would be available at identified colleges of education. Given the choice of the modified colleges of education, other recommendations have been made, and these include, restriction of admission into the NCE course for three years to candidates with full secondary education; admission of NCE holders to a B. Ed. degree course for two years in a college of education; direct admission to candidates with full secondary education to the university for a four-year B. Ed. degree programme with 12 months of practice teaching spread over the period of the training; observation of one (1) year probation under supervision before full registration as a teacher. With the Teachers Registration Council (TRCN) of Nigeria in place, registration of teachers is no longer a speculation. Any trained teacher is now qualified for registration on probation as a teacher. The NCCE minimum standards for preparing teachers are based on the guidelines and objectives of general Nigerian education system and teacher preparation.

General education consists of broad background in the mainstream of human knowledge of teaching subjects and knowledge of pedagogy or professional studies and practicum of a minimum of 12 months. By the minimum standards, it is intended that teachers of high competencies would be produced for the system so that a balance between subject matter content and pedagogy will be attained. Trained teachers are thus expected to have the following competencies:

1. Subject matter mastery to enable them sustain cognitive development of students;
2. Pedagogy, by which they can stimulate meaningful learning;
3. Skill processes, by which they can facilitate the development and acquisition of appropriate skills in students;
4. Resourcefulness, which enables them to improvise teaching aids;
5. Behavior motivation, which enables them to provide appropriate services to students;
6. Evaluation techniques, by which appropriate tests are constructed, administered and analyzed; and
7. Moral uprightness, by which they are poised to uphold righteousness at all times in all circumstances (Ivowi, 2008).

Similarly, Obanya (1999) also presented a framework for professionalization of the teaching profession by highlighting the following criteria: a) selection, b) initial preparation, c) internship, d) certification, e) career development, f) comportment, and g) status. First, *selection* has to do with decisions on who should be admitted into the teacher education programme. That also includes the

criteria such as good level of general education, good social standing, and a proven aptitude for teaching. Second, *initial preparation* involves the education and training characterized by rigour with the development of creativity and analytical skills, exemplified by a high level of broad general education, with in-depth specialization in education science principles and pedagogic knowledge. Third, *internship* is the systematic, supervised apprenticeship in various teaching tasks (classroom and out of class activities). It can be concurrent or consecutive. Fourth, *certification* is being licensed to teach or its refusal, if need be, based on results of initial preparation and internship, with a prescribed minimum period of on-the-job post qualification experience. Fifth, *career development* is the systematic, sustained exposure to ideas, knowledge, and techniques. Sixth, *comportment* is the pride of the profession through subscription to appropriate value systems and behavior patterns as seen from professional code of ethics/behavior dressing. It also includes a professional oath, love of learning and interest in continuous self-improvement, commitment to education and improved lifestyle and general enlightenment. Finally, *status* is the social recognition, social prestige and self-esteem that is demonstrated through recognition for the specialized role of the teacher, the incentives and reward systems, with living standards comparable to other liberal professions with pride in oneself and in one's profession.

Teaching English as a Second Language in Nigeria

The National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) specified the use of English as the medium of instruction in schools from primary to university level. Therefore, the preparation of ESL teachers is crucial to the achievement of the nation's educational goals in Nigeria. However, there are many identified teaching issues and challenges related to teaching and learning English in Nigeria such as large classes, limited facilities, and multi-grade classes.

As a way of meeting some of the challenges highlighted above, the National Teachers Institute (NTI, 2008) offers teacher training programme for primary school English teachers. NTI suggests some of the strategies that may improve the existing issues and challenges in teaching and learning of English in Nigeria. The suggested strategies are:

1. Assigning of different topics to different groups;
2. Use of team teaching;
3. Use of substitution tables; and
4. Dictations.

Lawal and Adeosun (2007), in a study of in-service training for primary school English teacher, assert that English teachers were expected to be worthy models of the linguistic and communication skills that they want to impart (e.g., correct usage of English language). Findings from their study reveal that primary level English teachers' had deficiencies in their pedagogical practices, including pronunciation, grammatical competence, and writing skills.

In Nigeria, graduate teachers do not normally teach in the primary school, but the same deficiencies highlighted above have been noticed in them as well whilst teaching English at the secondary school level. There is a shortage of qualified and well-trained ESL teachers in Nigerian schools. This shortage is caused by various factors prevalent in undergraduate and graduate teacher education programmes in Nigeria such as lack of facilities and resources, background of students (which include academic and socio-cultural issues) admitted to the programme, and the quality of instruction.

Similarly, Okonjo (1997) suggested that in order to produce good teachers, there should be an emphasis on improving teachers' competence in English Language (e.g., insistence on A1 in English Language and 2 credits as observation) so that students' learning styles preferences can be addressed. However, the colleges offer little to improve the existing poor mastery of language on the part of their teacher trainees. It, in turn, adversely impact on how these teachers develop their instructional strategies to meet the diverse learning styles preferences of their future students.

The present study examines the ESL teachers' pedagogical practices, particularly focusing on their instructional strategies and the ESL students' learning styles preferences. For this study, we used the following set of research questions:

1. What are the learning style preferences of Education/English students in the three faculties of education?
2. What are the instructional strategies used by lecturers in the teaching/learning process?
3. What facilities and resources were available to faculty staff and students in the teaching/learning process?

We hope this study will help in strengthening the knowledge-base of teacher trainees and their professional practices. Additionally, we maintain that teacher preparing colleges should pay attention to various instructional dynamics (e.g., resources, technologies, and instructional methods).

Conceptual Framework

Instructional Dynamics

Instructional dynamics involves complex input-output processes. Inputs include such as student characteristics, learning styles and expectations, resources, and faculty characteristics. On the other hand, outputs convert the inputs through the educational processes (instructional strategies, models, techniques, and supportive services such as facilities) into outcomes that benefit to instruction of students and faculty staff; and that are also identifiable through assessment and feedback from students.

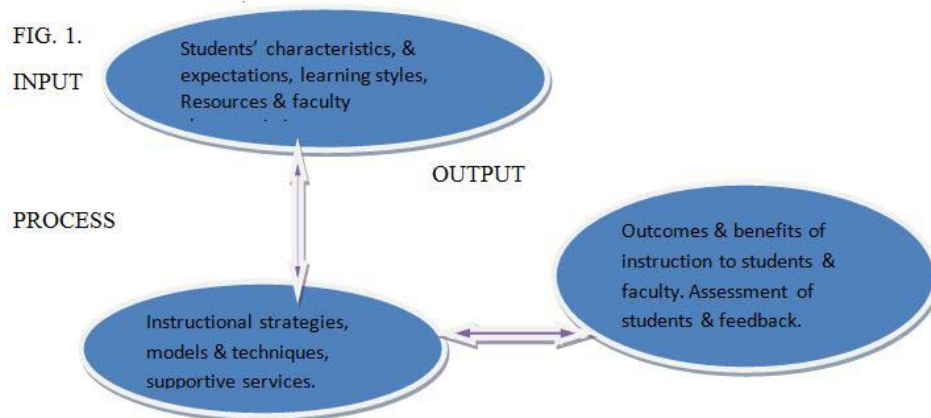


Figure 1 depicts the dimensions identified in instructional dynamics. The input, process and output (Burstein, Oakes, & Guilton, 1992) is a model of an educational system which places a high premium on teacher factor at the input and process stages. The conceptual framework is also linked to the constructivists' approach to language learning, which relocates the concept of learning beyond rote learning of facts and procedures to learning as a process of knowledge creation. Matching instructional strategies with the learning styles of the learners will help to create more active and motivated learners who can then take responsibility for their learning and academic achievement.

The dimensions identified in figure 1 can be linked with ongoing accountability and academic reform in the English/Education programme. It has become necessary for instructors and administrators to turn their attention to major problems and issues in instructional dynamics. These include students' participation, attributes, learning styles, intellectual development, and capacities for critical thought and assessment of students' outcomes. Recent comparative studies and researches carried out by Delgado (2008) and Alfred et al. (2001) were geared towards determining what factors in instructional career preparation will improve student learning, the relationship between student learning needs and expectations, organizational structures, and management practices that can aid

active learning, and the impact of technology on teaching practices complete with access to information and development of literacy.

Instructional Strategies

Instructional strategies refer to the approach a teacher may take to achieve learning objectives. There are five identified categories of instructional strategies. Instructional methods are different from strategies and refer to activities or approaches used by teachers to create learning environments. It is also used to specify the nature of activity in which the teacher and learner will be involved during the lesson. While particular methods are often associated with certain strategies, some methods' may be found within a variety of strategies. Listed below are some identified instructional strategies and methods used in the English Language classroom.

Direct Instruction: Direct instruction includes structured overview, lecture, explicit teaching, drill and practice, compare and contrast, didactic questions, demonstrations, guided and shared reading, listening, viewing, and thinking.

Interactive Instruction: It in general involves debates, role-playing, panels, brainstorming, peer learning, discussion, lab groups, pair- share, cooperative learning groups, jigsaw puzzles, problem-solving, structured controversy, tutorial groups, interview, and conferencing.

Indirect Instruction: Indirect instruction comprises problem-solving, case studies, reading for meaning, inquiry, reflective discussion, writing to inform, concept formation, concept mapping, concept attainment, and cloze procedure.

Independent Study: It includes essays, computer-assisted instruction, journals, learning logs, reports, learning activity packages, correspondence lessons, learning contracts, homework, research projects, assigned questions, and learning centres.

Experiential Learning: It involves field trips, narrative, conducting experiments, simulations, games, storytelling, focused imaging, field observations, role-playing, model-building, and surveys.

Instructional Skills: It comprises explaining, demonstrating, questions, questioning techniques, waiting-time, and levels of questions.

Learning Strategies: Students generally adopt a number of strategies in their learning a second or foreign language. Some of those strategies have been identified in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) as used by learners to negotiate their learning experience. Three identified learning strategies in learning English as a Second Language are listed as code switching, blended learning, skills teaching, and learning.

Bull (2000) gave some suggestions and recommendations on learning strategies to help students become more effective learners with a focus on the students' own learning model, which is a representation of learning style and current strategy use, a form of individualized learning strategy use. Bull and Yingxin (2002) suggested some learning strategies for use in situations of limited resources. Their work introduced what it called an "interactive learning environment" to raise learner awareness on language learning strategy. The strategies proposed by them were based on students' learning style and similarities between new strategies and strategies already used by the students. Oxford (1990) also talks about balancing instructional methods in such a way that all learning styles are simultaneously or sequentially accommodated.

Learning Styles

The ways in which a learner acquires, retains and retrieves information are referred to as learning styles (Felder & Henriques, 1995). Learning styles are thus the individual attributes, characteristics, and experiences that learners bring into the teaching and learning processes. A match between learning styles and instructional strategies is said to contribute to optimal learning environment of benefit to both students and teaching staff. Felder and Solomon (2005) gave descriptions of learning style preferences of students based on their analysis of the data collected using the Index of Learning Style questionnaire developed (also see Felder and Silverman, 2002). The identified learning styles were grouped into four of eight categories:

1. Active and reflective learners
2. Sensing and intuitive learners
3. Visual and verbal learners
4. Sequential and global learners

A brief description of the learning styles shows that whilst active learners learn by doing things or practice, reflective learners prefer to think things through first. Sensing learners are more in tune with their senses and would learn best when information connect to their senses. Intuitive learners are more likely to have sudden flashes of understanding. Visual learners prefer pictures and graphs, or what they can view or see. Verbal learners prefer words or text material. They are also more likely to enjoy copying words or reading a lot of text materials. Sequential learners learn best in a step by step approach or in sequence. Global learners seem to prefer the whole picture at once from where they can then fit in the parts.

The Study and Method Context and Sample

The present study adopted a survey research method. The study was conducted in three Nigerian teacher education programmes at three different faculties of education -- we referred to them as Faculty 1, Faculty 2, and Faculty 3. These faculties admit students with full secondary education into university faculties of education for a four year B. Ed. programme. The undergraduate English Education programme in the universities is a four year programme consisting of two parts: theory and content knowledge and professional development or practicum (See Appendix 1 for further information).

Faculties of Education English/Education students, staff and facilities served as population for the study. The study sample was taken from three university faculties of education in the South-west zone of the Nigeria. The total sample size was 300 participants representing 100 from each university.

Instrument and Data Analysis

As an instrument for this study, we used the Index of Learning Style Questionnaire (ILSQ) to collect data on the students' learning style preferences. We also collected data from observation of lecturers, who taught ESL teacher trainees. Finally, unstructured interviews were also used to validate what was observed.

For data analysis, we employed simple statistical tools including frequency counts and bar diagrams for the survey. For the qualitative data, we analyzed the recorded data from interviews and class observations looking for themes.

Findings

We present findings responding to the three research questions mentioned above. These findings are described below by highlighting and comparing the learning styles preferences of teacher trainees in three different faculties of education -- Faculty 1, Faculty 2, and Faculty 3.

Active and Reflective Learners: Faculty 1 had more “active learners” (71%). One participant stated that, “I understand something better after I try it [subject matter] out.” In contrast, Faculty 2 had only a half of the respondents (54%) stated that they were “active learners,” whereas Faculty 3 had only 42 percent. Similarly, in terms of “reflective learners,” Faculty 3 had the most (56%), Faculty 2 had 45 percent, and Faculty 3 had only 29 percent.

Visual Learners: All the three Faculties had learners, who were likely to learn best with pictures and not words. For instance, a participant said that, “When I think about what I did yesterday I am most likely to get a picture [image showed by the lecturer].” Faculty 1 had 84% of their respondents choosing pictures as their learning style preferences, while Faculty 2 and Faculty 3 had 81% and 80% respectively. However, in our observations we found that majority of lecturers used only lecture methods and note dictations. This is quite opposite to the learning styles preferences of the teacher trainees. This is an indication that they are mostly “visual” learners, and would thus benefit more from the use of more picture, films and role-playing on instruction. The implication is that very few of the learners in the three institutions would learn through the prevailing lecture methods or dictation of notes.

Intuitive Learners: The results also indicate that there are not many “Intuitive” learners in all these three institutions as most of the learners considered themselves to be “realistic” with 78%, 63%, and 69% for Faculty 1, Faculty 2, and Faculty 3 respectively.

Diverse Learners: Although the teacher trainees in all three institutions had some learning styles preferences mentioned above, in general they had a diverse types of learning styles preferences. For example, Faculty 1 had 74% of their respondents choosing “pictures, diagrams, graphs or maps,” whereas Faculty 2 and Faculty 3 had 82% and 60% for “written directions or verbal information” respectively. Similarly, there were many “sensing learners” in the three institutions as indicated in their response to statement 6 in the results from the findings (see Diagrams below). The responses to statements 8 and 9 also indicate that there were sequential and global learners in the three institutions.

The implication of the results of the learning style preferences of the students is the realization that lecturers in the three institutions do not adopt a variety of instructional strategies in teaching. However, it must be noted that there are also not enough facilities available in these three institutions; as result it will make the teaching and learning environment less conducive for catering diverse learning styles. Not a surprise, it was observed that most of the learners are bored during lectures, with their attention elsewhere, and some even skipped lectures altogether. This might have affected teacher trainees’ academic performances as most of them poorly performed in assessments and individual assignments in written and spoken English.

Conclusion

The study has established the need for faculty staff and institutions to adopt a more eclectic approach to meeting the diverse learning needs of their students. The recommendation to institutions and faculties is, therefore, to change their traditional lecture methods such as the use of more varied instructional strategies. At the same time, there is also a need to upgrade facilities and resources in Nigerian higher institution in order to meet the demands of highly qualified and well-trained ESL teachers. There are some language laboratories in Nigerian institutions, but they are under-equipped and hardly used. So, we recommend that the Nigerian teacher preparation institutions and programs

must develop fully equipped language laboratory for Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) in order to yield the desired competencies in the teacher-trainees.

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Appendix I

COURSE OFFERINGS FOR B.A EDUCATION/ENGLISH PROGRAMME

100LEVEL	UNITS
Faculty and University-Wide course (Same as for B.A Education degree)	8
Principal Teaching Subject-English Language (ENG)	16
Principal Teaching Subject-English Language (ENG)	
Subsidiary teaching subject at least 12 units in two Art subjects in the Faculty of Arts outside English Language with at least 4 units in each subject	12
Total	36

Courses in English (ENG)

ENG 101

Spoken English Practice: Segmental

2

ENG 102	Spoken English Practice: Supra- Segmental	2
ENG 103	Elements of English Grammar and Usage I	2
ENG 104	Elements of English Grammar and Usage II	2
ENG 151	Introduction to Poetry	2
ENG 152	Introduction to Novel	2
ENG 153	Introduction to Drama	2
ENG 158	Introduction to Criticism	2
200LEVEL		UNITS
University-wide Course: GAS 201 and 202		4
Faculty of Education core courses		17/19
Principal Teaching Subject – English Language		12
Subsidiary Teaching Subject – A subject in Art (or Education) outside of English Language and includes ASE214 and ASE215		6
Total		39/41

Course I English (ENG)		Units
ENG201	Introduction to English	2
ENG202	The English Language I Nigeria	2
ENG204B	An introduction of English Syntax	2
ENG208	The pronunciation of English	2
ENG251A	Poetry Forms, Conventions, Techniques	2
ENG252	The Novel: Classifications	2
ENG253	A Drama	2
ENG255	An introduction to African Literature	2
	Compulsory course for English/Education Students	
	ASE204 Language Teaching in Junior Secondary School	2

300LEVEL

ENG301	Instruction of Modern English	2
ENG303A	Sociolinguistics of English Language	2
ENG305	General Phonology of English	2
ENG306	The English Language in relation literacy studies	2
ENG362	18 TH Century Literature	2
ENG365	Early English Period	2
ENG367	Oral African Literature	2
ENG368B	Nigerian literature	2
ASE305	Teaching English Language in Senior secondary School	3
ASE315	Teaching Literature in English in Senior secondary School	3

Faculty Core Courses		Units
EDF302	Vocation and Career Guidance and Counseling	2
EDF303	Practicum in Guidance and Counseling	2
EDF305	Methodology of Guidance and Counseling	2
EDF307	Techniques of Continuous Assessment	2

400 LEVEL

Courses in English

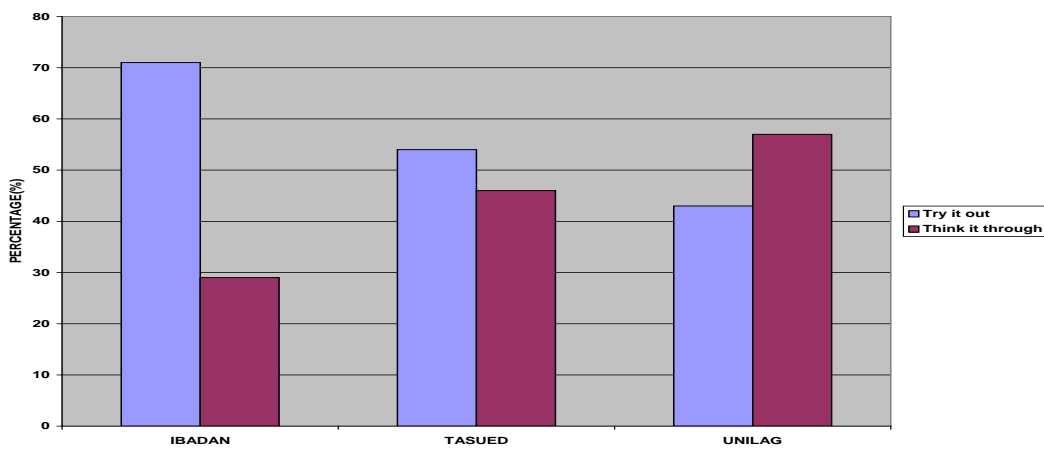
ENG401	Model English Grammar and Usage	2
ENG402	Model English Grammar and Usage	2
ENG409	Linguistic in relation to English Language	2
ENG417	Contemporary of Method in Language Studies	2
ENG455	Modern Drama	2
ENG456	Shakespeare	2
ENG468	Caribbean Literature	2

ASE401	Basic Principle of Curriculum Development	2
ASE416	Project in Education	3
ASE417	Teaching Practice	3
EDA401	Organisation of Primary and Secondary Education in Nigeria	2
EDA400	Curriculum Courses related to Principal Teaching Subject	2

ASE405	Curriculum in English Language	2
ASE410	Curriculum in Literature in English	2

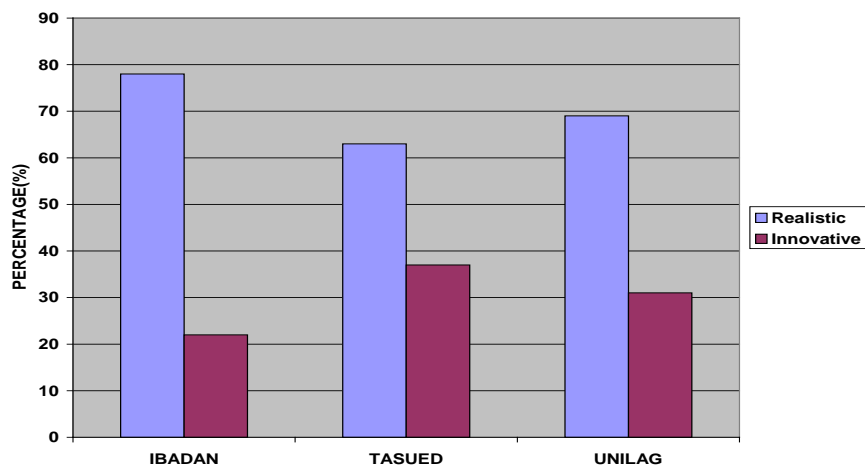
Appendix II

	IBADAN	TASUED	UNILAG
Try it out	71	54	43
Think it through	29	46	57
Total	100	100	100



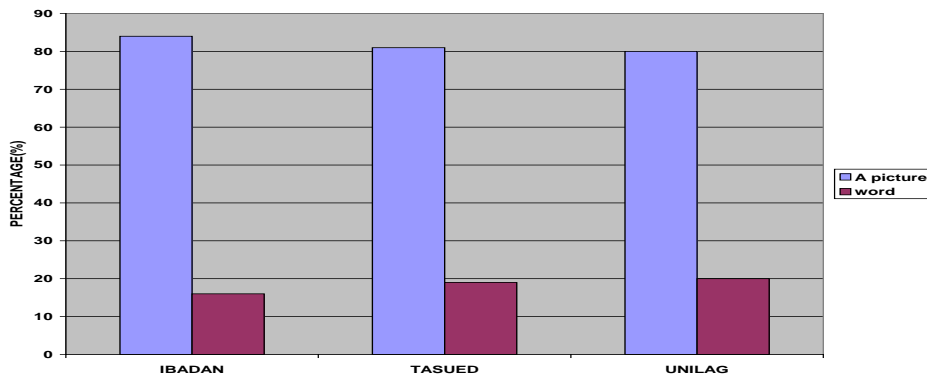
2. I would rather be considered

	IBADAN	TASUED	UNILAG
Realistic	78	63	69
Innovative	22	37	31
Total	100	100	100



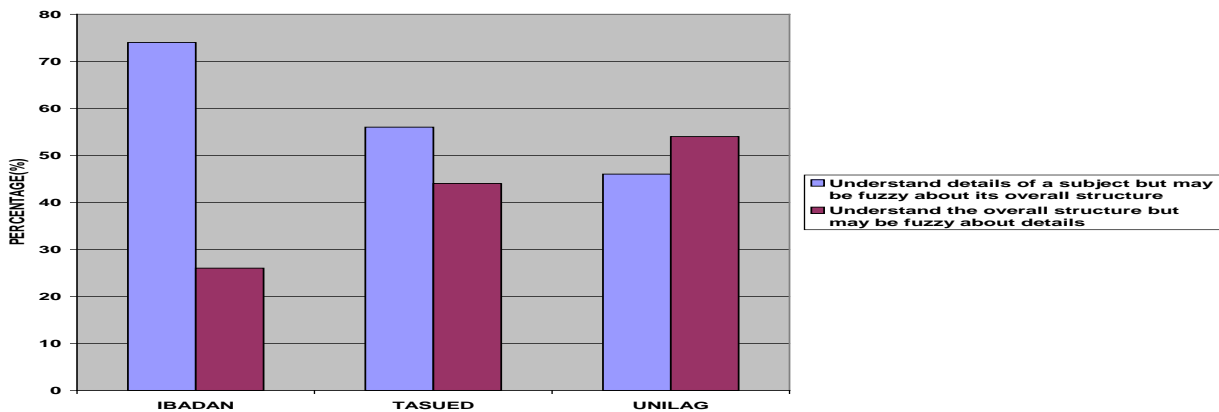
3. when I think about what I did yesterday , I am most likely to get

	IBADAN	TASUED	UNILAG
A picture	84	81	80
Word	16	19	20
Total	100	100	100



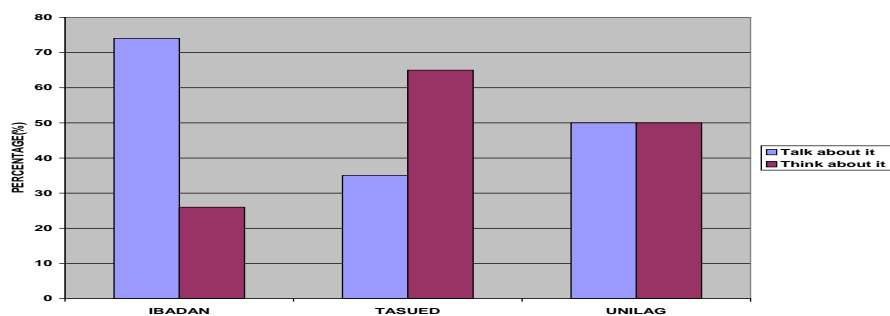
4. I tend to

	IBADAN	TASUED	UNILAG
Understand details of a subject but may be fuzzy about its overall structure	74	56	46
Understand the overall structure but may be fuzzy about details	26	44	54
Total	100	100	100



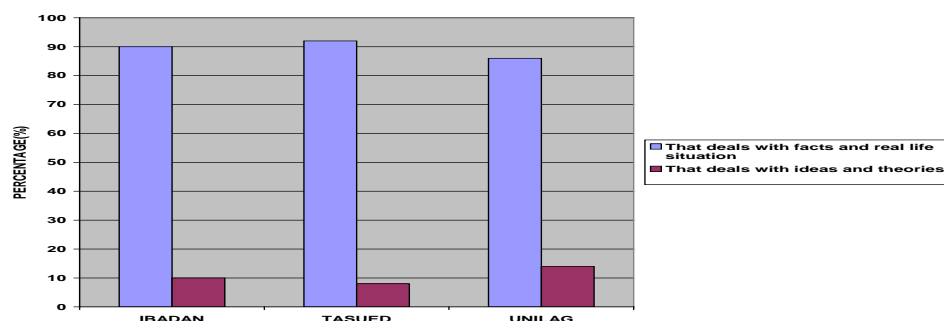
5. When I am learning something new, it helps me to

	IBADAN	TASUED	UNILAG
Talk about it	74	35	50
Think about it	26	65	50
Total	100	100	100



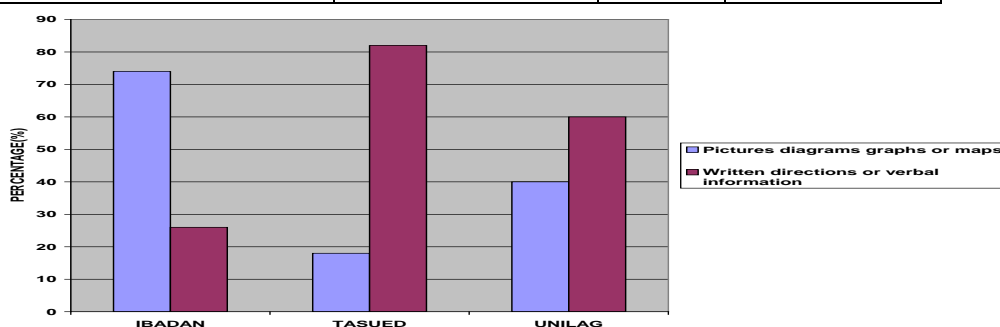
6. If I were a teacher, I would rather teach a course

	IBADAN	TASUED	UNILAG
That deals with facts and real life situation	90	92	86
That deals with ideas and theories	10	8	14
Total	100	100	100



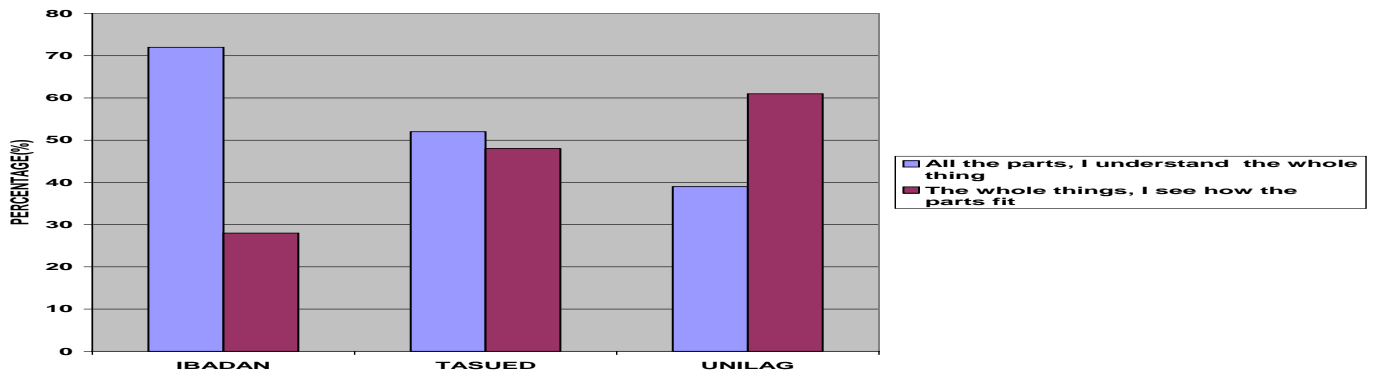
7. I prefer to get new information in

	IBADAN	TASUED	UNILAG
Pictures diagrams graphs or maps	74	18	40
Written directions or verbal information	26	82	60
Total	100	100	100



8. Once I understand

	IBADAN	TASUED	UNILAG
All the parts, I understand the whole thing	72	52	39
The whole things, I see how the parts fit	28	48	61
Total	100	100	100



9. In a study group working on different material, I am more likely to

	IBADAN	TASUED	UNILAG
Jump in and contribute	72	52	35
Sit back and listen	28	48	65
Total	100	100	100

