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The Teacher Factor in the Integration of Language and Literature Among Junior Secondary School Students in Niger State

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Abstract

This study investigated the teacher-related factors influencing the integration of language and literature instruction among Junior Secondary School (JSS) students in Niger State, Nigeria. A mixed-methods research design was employed to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into teachers' perceptions, instructional practices, and pedagogical challenges associated with language-literature integration. The study involved 144 teachers selected through a stratified multistage sampling technique across the three senatorial zones of the state. Data were collected using structured classroom observation schedules, teacher questionnaires, and student interviews, and subsequently analysed using descriptive statistical tools and thematic content analysis. Findings revealed a significant disparity between teachers' positive perceptions of the pedagogical value of integration and the extent of its practical implementation in classroom settings. Teachers strongly acknowledged the educational relevance of integrating language and literature for promoting real-life language application, vocabulary enrichment, and higher-order cognitive development, with a grand mean score of 4.29. However, reported classroom implementation practices were comparatively lower (grand mean = 3.85), particularly in relation to fostering interactive learning and reducing rote memorisation. Although respondents rated their academic qualifications and English language proficiency highly, lower confidence levels were expressed regarding pedagogical competence in literature-based instructional activities (mean = 3.75) and adequacy of professional training for integrated teaching approaches (mean = 3.62). Major constraints identified include overcrowded classrooms, inadequate literary materials, limited instructional time, and insufficient professional development opportunities. Classroom observations and student interviews further confirmed that language and literature were predominantly taught as separate disciplines, with minimal learner-centred engagement. The study concludes that while teachers recognise the instructional value of integration, inadequate pedagogical preparation and structural limitations hinder effective implementation. The study therefore recommends curriculum revision in teacher education programmes to incorporate specialised training and supervised practical experiences in language-literature integration pedagogy.

Keywords

Teacher factor;
Language-literature integration;
Pedagogical competence;
Junior Secondary School;
Niger State

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Introduction

English occupies a central position in Nigeria as the official language of government, the principal medium of instruction from upper primary school through higher education, and the primary language of national examinations and certification. Weaknesses in English language proficiency consequently carry direct implications for educational progression, labour-market access, and civic participation. Evidence from national assessment records consistently indicates that many Nigerian secondary school students underperform in English, particularly in reading comprehension, written expression, and oral communication (Fakeye & Ogunsiji, 2009; Adeyemi & Ajibade, 2012). These challenges are especially pronounced in parts of Northern Nigeria, including Niger State, where English is frequently acquired as a second or third language after indigenous languages and Hausa, thereby placing a heavier burden on school-based instruction and teacher expertise.

In response to these persistent weaknesses, scholars and curriculum theorists have increasingly advocated the integration of language and literature as a pedagogical strategy capable of supporting holistic linguistic development. Literary texts expose learners to authentic language use, culturally meaningful contexts, and discourse structures that promote inferencing, interpretation, and reflective thinking. When systematically linked with language pedagogy, literary texts can serve as a foundation for vocabulary enrichment, grammar awareness, oral communication, and writing development in ways that are both cognitively engaging and contextually relevant (Ihejirika, 2014; Nnamdi-Eruchalu, 2021). Contemporary research further supports the view that literature-based instruction enhances communicative competence and higher-order thinking, provided that such integration is explicitly mediated by the teacher through

structured activities and guided interaction (Hossain, 2024; Zakaria et al., 2025).

Despite the pedagogical logic for integration, classroom evidence from Nigerian secondary schools indicates that its potential benefits are not being fully realised. English language and Literature-in-English are frequently taught as parallel, compartmentalised subjects, with literature reduced to plot recall, character identification, or examination preparation, rather than used as a resource for language development (Ugwu, 2022). Curriculum implementation research identifies several contributory factors, including inadequate teacher preparation, limited professional development opportunities, large class sizes, and resource constraints, all of which restrict the adoption of interactive, integration-oriented pedagogy (Ava et al., 2024). Consequently, learners are often denied meaningful opportunities to engage critically with texts while simultaneously developing core language skills (Mbah et al., 2023).

Across the reviewed literature, teacher quality consistently emerges as the most decisive variable shaping the extent and effectiveness of integration in English language classrooms. Teacher quality in this context encompasses three interrelated dimensions: language fluency, pedagogical content knowledge, and mastery of subject content in both language and literature. Studies demonstrate that teachers who possess high levels of linguistic accuracy, deep conceptual understanding, and strong pedagogical skills are more likely to design tasks that connect literary interpretation with communicative learning outcomes (Ihejirika, 2014; Igbokwe et al., 2023). Conversely, where teachers exhibit limited fluency, weak content knowledge, or reliance on transmissive approaches, literature tends to be treated superficially, thereby undermining opportunities for language development (Oparinde, 2020).

Despite increasing recognition of these dynamics, empirical research that places the "teacher factor" at the centre of inquiry in relation to language-literature integration remains limited, particularly within Junior Secondary Schools in Northern Nigeria. Existing research tends to concentrate on curriculum structure, resource availability, or student-related challenges, with insufficient attention to how teacher attributes and competencies mediate integration in real classroom contexts (Emodi & Eme, 2022; Ugwu, 2022). This study addresses that gap by foregrounding teachers as key agents of curriculum implementation and investigating how their qualifications, fluency, pedagogical competence, and subject content knowledge influence the extent and quality of integration in English language classrooms across the three senatorial zones of Niger State.

Statement of the Problem

Although national curriculum frameworks in Nigeria emphasise communicative competence and advocate the complementary teaching of language and literature, observable outcomes in many Junior Secondary Schools suggest these intentions are not effectively translated into practice. Persistent underachievement in English language examinations and widespread weaknesses in students' linguistic abilities indicate that prevailing instructional approaches remain inadequate (Fakeye & Ogunsiji, 2009; Adeyemi & Ajibade, 2012). Previous studies have frequently explained these trends by focusing on curriculum design, instructional materials, or student-related factors such as motivation and study habits. While these dimensions are important, they do not sufficiently account for the central role of teachers as primary implementers of integration-oriented pedagogy.

Evidence from curriculum implementation research demonstrates that teacher-related variables such as qualification, pedagogical

competence, and subject content knowledge are critical determinants of instructional quality (Ava et al., 2024). However, there is limited empirical investigation into how these variables specifically influence the integration of language and literature in JSS classrooms in Niger State. Existing studies on Literature-in-English teaching frequently highlight challenges of examination orientation and limited classroom interaction without connecting these outcomes directly to measurable aspects of teacher quality (Ugwu, 2022; Mbah et al., 2023). This study therefore addresses the lack of systematic, context-specific evidence on how teachers' language fluency, pedagogical competence, and subject content knowledge affect integration in JSS English instruction in Niger State.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the teacher factor in the integration of language and literature among Junior Secondary School students in Niger State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the educational significance of integrating language and literature in JSS English instruction in Niger State.
2. Investigate the ways in which teachers facilitate or constrain the effective integration of language and literature in English language classrooms.
3. Assess the quality of teachers in terms of their academic and professional qualifications, language fluency, pedagogical competence, and subject content knowledge in both domains.
4. Identify the challenges teachers encounter in integrating language and literature, and propose context-appropriate strategies for enhancing English language acquisition in Niger State.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the educational significance of integrating language and literature in JSS English instruction in Niger State?
2. In what ways do teachers promote or hinder the effective integration of language and literature in English language classrooms?
3. What is the current level of teacher quality with respect to qualification, language fluency, pedagogical competence, and subject content knowledge in language and literature?
4. What challenges do teachers face in integrating language and literature, and what practicable measures can enhance integration and improve students' learning outcomes in English?

Significance of the Study

This study advances scholarly understanding of language-literature integration by foregrounding the teacher factor as a central explanatory variable in JSS English instruction. Conceptually, it contributes to ongoing debates on teacher quality by disaggregating it into language fluency, pedagogical competence, and subject content knowledge, and by examining how these dimensions interact within authentic classroom contexts (Thejirika, 2014; Igbokwe et al., 2023). Empirically, the findings provide evidence-based insights for education policymakers and administrators in Niger State regarding teacher recruitment, deployment, and professional development initiatives that prioritise integration-relevant competencies. The study also offers practical guidance to teachers by identifying effective strategies for integrating literary texts with language skills in resource-constrained settings (Hossain, 2024; Zakaria et al., 2025). For curriculum planners and textbook developers, the results highlight

areas where existing instructional materials either facilitate or inhibit integration, thereby informing future curriculum revisions.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design that integrated quantitative and qualitative strands to provide a comprehensive understanding of the teacher factor in language-literature integration in JSS English classrooms in Niger State. The quantitative strand generated measurable evidence on teacher characteristics, levels of integration practice, and relationships among key variables, while the qualitative strand provided interpretive insight into classroom processes, instructional practices, and contextual influences that could not be fully captured through numerical data alone. The study population comprised 4,170 Junior Secondary School teachers and their students across the three senatorial zones of Niger State, Nigeria, as reported by the Federal Ministry of Education (2020). Both teachers and students were included because integration is not only a product of teacher competence and instructional design but also a classroom process reflected in learners' experiences. The population covered both urban and rural schools, thereby capturing variations in teacher deployment, school resources, and instructional contexts across the State.

A stratified multistage sampling procedure was employed to ensure equitable representation across senatorial zones. Public Junior Secondary Schools were first stratified by zone, after which four schools were selected from each zone using probability-proportional-to-size sampling, yielding twelve schools in total. Within each sampled school, twelve teachers were randomly selected through simple random sampling, producing a total teacher sample of $n = 144$. Three instruments were used for data collection: (i) a structured classroom

observation checklist assessing teachers' language fluency, pedagogical competence, interactional techniques, questioning strategies, and subject content knowledge as demonstrated in lessons involving language and literature; (ii) a teacher questionnaire soliciting demographic characteristics, academic and professional qualifications, teaching experience, exposure to professional development, beliefs about integration, and self-reported instructional practices; and (iii) a student feedback instrument eliciting learners' perceptions of classroom interaction, exposure to literature-based activities, and the extent to which lessons supported language development.

Content validity was established through expert review by specialists in English language education and educational measurement, who evaluated the clarity, relevance, and alignment of instrument items with the research objectives. A pilot study was conducted in two non-sample schools, and data from the pilot phase were analysed using Cronbach's alpha to determine internal consistency, with a minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70. Inter-rater reliability procedures were applied to the observation scoring process to minimise subjective bias.

Data collection proceeded in three sequential phases. Classroom observations were first conducted during regular English language lessons, with each teacher observed on at least two occasions to reduce situational bias. The teacher questionnaire was subsequently administered to align observed practices with self-reported information. Finally, student interviews were conducted in each participating school. All field activities were supported by trained research assistants. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard

deviations), and qualitative data from observation field notes and student interviews were analysed thematically, with emergent themes organised around instructional strategies, classroom interaction dynamics, perceived challenges, and contextual constraints. The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical research standards. Official approval was obtained from relevant educational authorities and school administrators prior to fieldwork, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained through anonymisation and secure data handling.

Table 1 shows that female teachers (52.8%) were slightly more represented than male teachers (47.2%). In terms of qualifications, the majority held the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE; 59.0%), followed by those with a bachelor's degree (29.2%), while very few held a postgraduate diploma (6.9%) or master's degree (3.5%). This distribution indicates that while teachers possess the basic required qualifications, advanced degrees are uncommon. Regarding area of specialisation, most teachers specialised in English Language alone (63.9%), with fewer specialising in Literature (15.3%) or in both English and Literature (12.5%).

This pattern suggests that many teachers are more confident in language instruction than in literary studies. The majority of teachers had 6-10 years of teaching experience (40.3%), indicating a moderately experienced workforce. Most respondents were from semi-urban schools (50.0%). Crucially, a majority (61.8%) reported not having received any in-service training on integrating language and literature, a finding that contextualises the lower scores recorded in Tables 3 and 4 and likely contributes to the gap between teachers' positive beliefs about integration and their actual classroom practices.

Data Analysis and Results**Table 1:** Background characteristics of the 144 teacher respondents.

| Variable | Category | Frequency (N) | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Gender | Male | 68 | 47.2 |
| | Female | 76 | 52.8 |
| Highest Qualification | Academic NCE | 85 | 59.0 |
| | B.A./B.Ed. | 42 | 29.2 |
| | PGDE | 10 | 6.9 |
| | M.A./M.Ed. | 5 | 3.5 |
| | Others | 2 | 1.4 |
| Area of Specialisation | English Language | 92 | 63.9 |
| | Literature | 22 | 15.3 |
| | English & Literature | 18 | 12.5 |
| | Others | 12 | 8.3 |
| Teaching Experience | 1-5 years | 35 | 24.3 |
| | 6-10 years | 58 | 40.3 |
| | 11-15 years | 32 | 22.2 |
| | 16 years and above | 19 | 13.2 |
| School Location | Urban | 40 | 27.8 |
| | Semi-urban | 72 | 50.0 |
| | Rural | 32 | 22.2 |
| Received Training | In-Service Yes | 55 | 38.2 |
| | No | 89 | 61.8 |

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 2: Teacher ratings of the educational significance of integrating language and literature (N = 144).

| S/N | Item | M | SD |
|-----|--|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | Integrating language and literature helps students understand English usage in real-life contexts. | 4.42 | 0.651 |
| 2 | Literary texts provide meaningful opportunities for vocabulary development in English lessons. | 4.38 | 0.710 |
| 3 | The use of literary texts enhances students' reading comprehension skills more than isolated language exercises. | 4.25 | 0.782 |
| 4 | Integrating literature into language teaching improves students' oral communication abilities. | 4.10 | 0.825 |
| 5 | Language and literature integration supports higher-order thinking skills such as interpretation and inference. | 4.30 | 0.741 |
| | Grand Mean | 4.29 | 0.742 |

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The results in Table 2 show a high overall level of agreement among teachers regarding the educational value of integration, with a grand mean of 4.29. Item 1, concerning understanding English usage in real-life contexts, recorded the highest mean (M = 4.42, SD = 0.651), indicating strong and consistent agreement. Item 2, covering vocabulary development through literary texts, also achieved a high mean (M = 4.38, SD = 0.710), reflecting broad consensus on the role of literature in expanding learners' lexical repertoire. Item 5, addressing higher-order thinking skills such as inference and interpretation, yielded M = 4.30 (SD = 0.741), with slightly greater variation possibly reflecting differential preparedness to teach these skills through literary texts. Item 3, on

enhanced reading comprehension relative to isolated exercises, recorded M = 4.25 (SD = 0.782).

Item 4, on improving oral communication, had the lowest mean (M = 4.10, SD = 0.825) and the highest standard deviation, indicating the greatest divergence of views, likely attributable to challenges such as large class sizes and limited training in using literature for spoken language practice. Collectively, these findings support the position advanced by Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2021) that literary engagement is essential for ESL proficiency, while simultaneously identifying areas where teacher support is most urgently needed.

Table 3: Teacher self-report data on integration-related classroom practices.

| S/N | Item | M | SD |
|-----|--|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | I consciously plan my English lessons to link literature texts with language skills such as grammar and writing. | 3.85 | 0.881 |
| 2 | Classroom activities I design encourage students to discuss, analyse, and use language drawn from literature. | 3.92 | 0.810 |
| 3 | My teaching approach allows students to interact actively with literature texts rather than memorise content. | 3.78 | 0.923 |
| 4 | I use questioning strategies that connect literary interpretation with language learning objectives. | 3.80 | 0.851 |
| 5 | My teaching methods promote meaningful classroom interaction during integrated language-literature lessons. | 3.88 | 0.848 |
| | Grand Mean | 3.85 | 0.863 |

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The means in Table 3 range from 3.78 to 3.92, representing a consistent decline from the values reported in Table 2 and thereby indicating a measurable gap between beliefs about integration and actual instructional practice. Item 2, designing classroom activities for discussion and analysis, recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.810$), suggesting a degree of inclination towards interactive tasks, though with notable variability. Item 5, promoting meaningful classroom interaction, followed at $M = 3.88$ ($SD = 0.848$), indicating that while its importance is recognised, consistent implementation is hindered by contextual factors.

Item 1, consciously linking literature with grammar and writing in lesson planning, yielded $M = 3.85$ ($SD = 0.881$), suggesting that systematic lesson-level connections between the two domains are not yet routine. Item 4,

employing questioning strategies that connect literary interpretation with language learning objectives, recorded $M = 3.80$ ($SD = 0.851$), reflecting modest and inconsistent use of this approach. Item 3, encouraging active textual interaction over memorisation, had the lowest mean ($M = 3.78$) and the highest standard deviation ($SD = 0.923$), confirming that rote-oriented approaches prevail in many classrooms, with marked variation across the sample.

These findings are consistent with Ugwu's (2022) observation that literature in Nigerian secondary schools is frequently reduced to plot recall for examination purposes rather than used as a linguistic resource, and corroborate qualitative data from classroom observations, where questioning strategies focused primarily on factual recall rather than analysis.

Table 4: Teacher self-assessments of quality dimensions relevant to language-literature integration.

| S/N | Item | M | SD |
|-----|--|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | I possess adequate academic and professional qualifications to teach both English language and literature effectively. | 4.15 | 0.721 |
| 2 | My level of spoken and written English fluency enables me to model correct language use for students. | 4.02 | 0.735 |
| 3 | I have sufficient pedagogical skills to teach language through literature-based activities. | 3.75 | 0.951 |
| 4 | I have strong subject content knowledge in both English language and Literature-in-English. | 3.98 | 0.830 |
| 5 | My training has adequately prepared me to integrate language and literature in Junior Secondary School classes. | 3.62 | 1.022 |
| | Grand Mean | 3.90 | 0.852 |

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 4 reveals an asymmetrical pattern of teacher confidence. Items relating to formal qualifications and language fluency attracted the highest ratings: Item 1 (possession of adequate academic and professional qualifications) recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.721$), and Item 2 (English fluency enabling modelling of correct language use) was also highly rated ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.735$), indicating broad confidence in credentials and linguistic competence. Item 4 (strong subject content knowledge in both language and literature) yielded $M = 3.98$ ($SD = 0.830$), suggesting a moderate degree of confidence that nonetheless falls short of the high ratings accorded to qualifications and fluency alone. The most notable declines appear in the pedagogical

dimension: Item 3 (pedagogical skills for literature-based language activities) recorded $M = 3.75$ ($SD = 0.951$), reflecting uneven and inconsistent preparedness. The lowest rating of all was recorded for Item 5 (training preparation specifically for integration), at $M = 3.62$ ($SD = 1.022$), with the highest standard deviation in the table, indicating that teachers feel their pre-service and in-service training has not adequately equipped them for this specific task. This asymmetry supports the argument advanced by Aava et al. (2024) that inadequate teacher preparation and limited professional development remain major structural barriers to implementing a holistic English curriculum in Nigeria.

Table 5: Teacher ratings of challenges and perceived enablers of integration.

| S/N | Item | M | SD |
|-----|--|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | Large class sizes limit my ability to effectively integrate language and literature during lessons. | 4.55 | 0.621 |
| 2 | Lack of appropriate literary texts and teaching materials affects my use of integration strategies. | 4.20 | 0.857 |
| 3 | Time constraints within the school timetable hinder effective integration of language and literature. | 4.38 | 0.743 |
| 4 | Inadequate professional development opportunities affect my competence in integration-oriented teaching. | 4.15 | 0.886 |
| 5 | Regular in-service training would significantly improve my ability to integrate language and literature effectively. | 4.65 | 0.583 |
| | Grand Mean | 4.39 | 0.738 |

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 5 reveals that challenges to integration are both structural and systemic. Item 1 (large class sizes) rated highly ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.621$), confirming that dense class environments make the management of interactive literature-based activities physically and pedagogically difficult, compelling teachers to revert to lecture-dominated, transmission-based methods. Item 3 (time constraints within the school timetable) also registered a high mean ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.743$), as a crowded curriculum provides insufficient room for the extended engagement that genuine integration requires. Item 2 (lack of appropriate literary texts and materials) yielded $M = 4.20$ ($SD = 0.857$), leaving teachers without the fundamental instructional resources necessary to use literary texts as vehicles for language learning. Item 4 (inadequate professional development opportunities) achieved $M = 4.15$ ($SD = 0.886$), reiterating the pattern observed in Table 4. Item 5 (regular in-service training as an improvement measure) recorded the highest mean overall ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.583$), with the greatest agreement and least variation, strongly indicating that teachers perceive sustained, hands-on professional

development as the most critical intervention needed, in preference to one-time workshops. These findings extend Hossain's (2024) observation that even when teachers appreciate the benefits of literature-based instruction, resource constraints frequently drive a return to traditional, compartmentalised methods.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal a coherent and concerning pattern: teachers in Niger State hold strong positive beliefs about the educational value of integrating language and literature, yet are unable to translate these beliefs into consistent instructional practice. This belief-practice gap is empirically grounded across Tables 2 and 3, which show that the high level of agreement regarding the significance of integration (grand mean = 4.29) substantially outstrips self-reported integration-related practices (grand mean = 3.85), particularly the encouragement of student interaction over memorisation ($M = 3.78$). Classroom observations corroborated these self-reports:

language and literature were frequently taught as separate activities, questioning strategies centred on factual recall rather than interpretive reasoning, and memorisation dominated over meaningful textual engagement. Student interviews reinforced these findings, with learners reporting teacher-centred lessons and infrequent use of discussion or group work.

The demographic profile established in Table 1 provides a structural explanation for this gap. The majority of teachers (63.9%) specialised in English Language alone, while only 12.5% held qualifications in both English and Literature. Moreover, 61.8% had received no in-service training specifically focused on language-literature integration. This specialisation gap directly informs the teacher quality findings in Table 4, where confidence in formal qualifications and English fluency was markedly higher than confidence in pedagogical competence for literature-based activities ($M = 3.75$) and training preparedness for integration ($M = 3.62$). The asymmetry between high self-rated qualifications and lower pedagogical readiness suggests that pre-service teacher education has not adequately addressed the pedagogical dimensions of integration, a finding that aligns with Aava et al.'s (2024) characterisation of inadequate teacher preparation as a structural barrier to holistic English curriculum implementation in Nigeria.

The challenges enumerated in Table 5 situate this pedagogical gap within broader institutional and resource constraints. Large class sizes ($M = 4.55$) fundamentally undermine the viability of interactive, group-based literature activities, pushing teachers towards safer, whole-class transmission methods. Time constraints ($M = 4.38$) are equally significant: a crowded timetable forecloses the sustained close reading and discussion that integration necessitates. The lack of appropriate literary

texts ($M = 4.20$) is a particularly acute constraint in Niger State's school context, as teachers cannot use literature as a language resource if relevant, age-appropriate, and culturally meaningful texts are unavailable. This is consistent with Ugwu's (2022) documentation of a crisis in the availability of teaching resources for Literature-in-English across Nigerian secondary schools. The near-unanimous endorsement of regular in-service training ($M = 4.65$) as a remedial measure is a significant signal: teachers are not resistant to integration but are structurally under-resourced to enact it.

The qualitative data from classroom observations and student interviews add interpretive depth to these quantitative patterns. The disconnect between teachers' stated awareness of integration's value and their observed classroom behaviour points to what curriculum implementation researchers describe as an "enactment gap": the space between intended curriculum, perceived curriculum, and operational curriculum. Student perspectives are consistent with the observation that literature's communicative potential is largely unrealised at the classroom level in the sampled schools. These findings reinforce Mbah et al.'s (2023) conclusion that teaching English language and literature as two separate subjects in Nigerian secondary schools carries significant negative implications for learners' overall linguistic development.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative evidence confirms that the teacher factor particularly pedagogical competence for integration and training preparedness is the most pivotal internal determinant of whether language-literature integration is realised in practice. Language fluency and subject content knowledge are necessary but insufficient; what is demonstrably lacking is the specific

pedagogical knowledge and practical skill required to operationalise integration in diverse, resource-constrained classroom settings. This conclusion is supported by Igbokwe et al.'s (2023) finding that teacher effectiveness in English language instruction is closely linked to the quality of subject-specific pedagogical training, and by Oparinde's (2020) emphasis on learner-centred, activity-oriented pedagogical approaches as the most effective mode of English language teaching in Nigerian secondary schools.

Conclusion

This study has established that the teacher factor is central to the successful integration of language and literature in Junior Secondary School English instruction in Niger State. A significant and consistent gap exists between teachers' positive beliefs about the educational value of integration and their actual classroom practices, a gap attributable primarily to insufficient pedagogical competence for literature-based instruction, inadequate training preparation specifically for integration, and a range of structural and institutional constraints.

Classroom observations and student interviews confirmed that language and literature are frequently taught as separate, examination-oriented activities, with memorisation prevailing over meaningful interaction and critical engagement. The structural determinants of this gap like large class sizes, absence of appropriate literary materials, time constraints, and limited professional development are not insurmountable, but they require deliberate, sustained intervention at multiple levels of the educational system. The findings provide clear empirical direction: addressing the belief-practice gap in Niger State will require targeted investments in pre-service and in-service teacher education, provision of context-appropriate literary resources, and structural

revisions to school timetabling to accommodate integrated instruction. Without such support, the persistent separation of language and literature teaching will continue to limit the quality of English language acquisition among JSS learners in Niger State.

Recommendations

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

1. Teacher training institutions should revise curricula to incorporate specialised courses on language-literature integration, including practical, supervised teaching experiences prior to graduation.
2. The Niger State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and the Professional Teachers' Institute should institute regular, hands-on professional development programmes focused on integration-oriented pedagogy, incorporating classroom demonstrations, peer observations, mentoring cycles, and structured follow-up support.
3. School principals and local government education administrators should facilitate subject-based professional learning communities, enabling teachers to deepen content knowledge in both domains, co-design integrated tasks, and share pedagogical resources.
4. Both pre-service and in-service programmes should incorporate language proficiency development components, including oral communication workshops and structured feedback opportunities, given that fluency modelling is foundational to integration-oriented teaching.
5. The Niger State Government and educational administrators should

reduce class sizes through infrastructure investment and teacher recruitment, supply age-appropriate literary texts to under-resourced schools, and revise timetables to create adequate time for integrated, discussion-based English lessons.

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