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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TEACHING OF PRONOUNCIATION OF ENGLISH IN  
NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at examining the challenges of teaching Oral English in Secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo state. Related literature was reviewed, examining relevant materials and works which centre on the challenges facing the teaching of Oral English in secondary schools.

Questionnaires were administered in four different schools to elicit responses from students and teachers of Oral English. Statistical Software for the Social Sciences version 20 and Chi square were employed in the analysis of the collected data. From the findings, it was deduced that teachers and students attach reasonable significance to the learning of Oral English, adequate time is not allotted on the school timetable for teaching Oral English, there are no language laboratories in schools and services rendered by government arms and agencies are grossly inadequate as far as Oral English is concerned.

It was recommended that government at all levels should ensure that functional language laboratories should be set up in schools, government should provide more funds for procurement of instructional materials, policy makers should ensure curriculum content for Oral English is implemented, specialists should be employed to teach Oral English and parents should encourage their wards in the learning of Oral English.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

English language is a West Germanic language that was first spoken in early medieval England and is now a global lingua franca. It is spoken as a first language by the majority population of several sovereign states English language was introduced in Nigerian in the early 19th century by the British colonial administration. Although English language is a foreign language to Nigeria, it is widely used in Nigeria as the lingua franca the sense that is not indigenous, but widely used in Nigeria as the second language (Finocchiaro 2009). The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary defines English language as the standard educated language.

Performance could also be defined as an achievement of a notable action offering satisfaction because one has use of English language; the society gets the educated man power it requires to satisfy a large measure of its socio-economic aspirations and needs. This work therefore, is an attempt to examine the performances of male and female students in English language with particular reference to Senior Secondary Schools in Esan Central Local Government Area (Finocchairo 2010).

Language is primarily a tool to be spoken, rather than a subject for close and critical attention. This is quite so in some respect, but Gimpson 2008 observes that "there are important human problems into which language enters intimately and on which it exerts such a profound influence that an understanding of its mechanism would materially contribute to their solution.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

This study therefore, looks into the problems encountered by teachers in the teaching of oral English and factors militating against them in their experience of teaching oral English as well as the problems encountered by students in the learning of oral English.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

- 1) To identify the impacts of Problem of the teaching oral English within the academic environments and performance in schools.
- 2) To identify if methods of teaching oral English are effective

#### **Significance of the Study**

It is expected that this study will make both theoretical and practical contributions towards the teaching and learning process of spoken English. This study will be of good significance to the academic community as it will serve at a reference point for further research works.

#### **Scope of the Study**

The study is limited to the oral aspect of English language as a result of the complexity of the language and focuses solely in senior secondary school students in Esan Central Local Government, Edo State.

#### **Limitation of the Study**

The problems ranged from inadequate finance, time factor, availability of intellectual resources and poor and uncooperative attitude of some of those who were to provide the required data and necessary information.

#### **Definition of Terms**

**Teaching:** this is the act of imparting or inculcating knowledge, skills or desirable behavior into students.

**Oral English:-** spoken verbal language. It is the Science of speech sounds, their production and signs used to represent them.

**Local government:** the third tier of government, closer to people in the grassroots.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Phonology on the other hand is the study of the properties of the sound system of a language, which speakers have mastered or internalized by the time they are competent users of it. Phonology is not only concerned with establishing which units of sound a language uses but also how to make use of them. It examines the relationship between sounds in a language and takes account of the sound system in general (Gimson 2013).

Communication, which is done through language, is a basic requirement in the life of any group of people. We can say that the basic function of language for any nation would include the use of language for its socio-cultural affairs and administrative management. Language is the lifeblood of a people's culture, for through language, the norms of a culture are kept alive and handed down from generation to generation (Davidson 2006). Nigeria is a multilingual society where a common national indigenous language does not exist and the resultant effect is ethnic rather than national consciousness and unhealthy rivalry among the linguistic groups rather than enhance unity, loyalty, allegiance and national development (Ruiz-Funes 2001).

**Research Design**

The design used in this study is a descriptive survey which made use of questionnaire designed purposefully to investigate the problems of effective teaching of oral English in secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government, Edo State.

**Research Population**

Research population comprised of one hundred (100) students learning oral English in four senior secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government, Edo State and their English language teachers which totaled fourteen (14) in number. Purposive sampling technique was used. Samples were taken from students in the final level of senior secondary schooling in order to evaluate their performances in oral English and their attitude to oral English as well as those of their teachers. The schools visited were:

- Saint Monica, Ishan
- Baptist Boys High School, Ishan
- Community Grammar School, Ishan
- Maxhill College

**Instrumentation**

The instrument used to collect data from the respondents was a researcher designed questionnaire. This was constructed to seek information about the factors inhibiting the teaching and learning of oral English in selected secondary schools. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section focused on the personalities and potentialities of the teachers and students while the other part was based on teachers' and students' attitudes towards the teaching and learning of oral English.

**Validation of Instrument**

The instrument designed for this study consisted of questionnaire.

**Analysis of Data**

The statistical data device employed in analyzing the data was the descriptive method. Statistical software for the social sciences (SPSS) version 20 and chi square were employed for the analysis of the data collected and interpretation.

**Test of Hypotheses Hypothesis 1 states that:**

The students of oral English in Esan Central Local Government, Edo State attach significant importance to the learning of oral English. Hypothesis 1 was treated by question five in the students' questionnaire.

Ho= students attached no significance to the learning of oral English

H<sub>1</sub>= student attached significance to the learning of oral English

$\alpha=0.05$

Reject Ho if asymptotic significance is less than 0.05

Decision: reject Ho since asymptotic significance is less than 0.05

Conclusion: Table 4.4. I-Here as a result of which the H<sub>0</sub> hypothesis as stated is rejected while H<sub>1</sub> is accepted. Students did attach a reasonable significance to the learning of oral English.

**Students' Responses to the Significance of Oral English**

**Table 4.4.1 Importance of oral English by students**

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	73	50.0	23.0
No	27	50.0	-23.0
Total	100		
$\chi^2=21.60$	asymp.sig 0.000		

**Hypothesis 2 states that:**

Teachers of oral English in Esan Central Local Government, Edo State attach significant importance to the learning of oral English. Hypothesis 2 was treated by question four in the teachers' questionnaire.

Ho= teachers attached significance to the teaching of oral English

H<sub>1</sub>= teachers attached no significance to the teaching of oral English

α=0.05

Reject Ho if asymptotic significance is less than 0.05

Decision: Accept Ho since asymptotic significance is greater than 0.05

Conclusion: Table 4.4.2 -Here as a result of which the H<sub>0</sub> hypothesis as stated is accepted while H<sub>1</sub> is rejected. Teachers attached significance to the teaching of oral English.

**Teachers' Responses to the Significance of Oral English**

**Table 4.4.2 Importance of Oral English by teachers**

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	10	6.5	3.5
No	3	6.5	-3.5
Total	13		
$\chi^2 (z=3.769)$		asymp.sig 0.052	

**Hypothesis 3 States that:** Adequate time is allotted on the time-table for teaching Oral English in Schools in Esan Central Local Government, Edo State. Hypothesis 3 was treated by question thirteen on the teachers' questionnaire.

Ho= significant Time is allotted for teaching of oral English

H<sub>1</sub>= significant Time is not allotted for teaching of oral English

α=0.05

Reject Ho if asymptotic significance is less than 0.05

Decision: Reject Ho since asymptotic significance is less than 0.05

Conclusion: Table 4.4.3- Here as a result of which the H<sub>0</sub> hypothesis as stated is rejected while H<sub>1</sub> is accepted. Teachers believe that significant Time is not allotted for teaching of oral English.

**Teachers Responses to the Time allotted for teaching Oral English**

**Table 4.4.3 : Time allotted for teaching of oral English.**

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	2	6.5	-4.5
No	11	6.5	4.5
Total	13		
$\chi^2 = 6.231$		asymp.sig 0.013	

**CONCLUSION**

This study investigated the problems encountered in teaching and learning Oral English in Secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government, Edo State. From the analysis of the corrected data as recorded, it was deduced that teachers and students attach a reasonable significance to the learning of Oral English.

It was also concluded that adequate time is not allotted on the school time-table in Secondary schools in Esan Central Local Government, Edo State for the teaching of Oral English, significant number of schools do not have language laboratories.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Policy-makers and curriculum planners should ensure materials are available for the implementations of what is the content of Oral English. It is also their responsibility to organize workshops, conferences,

seminars and in-services training for teachers to update their knowledge. Only qualified English should teach Oral English

Having realized the important role played by Oral English in the students language development, parents-teacher associations should be more than equal to the task in giving necessary assistance in their own capacity to foster effective teaching and learning of Oral English as the need arise. They can assist with the provision of appropriate instructional materials and textbooks.

Besides the above, parents should from time to time encourage their children and wards to take Oral English seriously as they can end up showing positive attitudes towards learning Oral English.

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