

PROBLEMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ORAL ENGLISH IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UDENU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ENUGU STATE, Nigeria

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the problems of teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study was 51 junior secondary school teachers in all the 19 junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. The target population was used for the sample size since it was manageable. The instrument for the study was 12 item structured questionnaire of two clusters titled Problems of Teaching and Learning of Oral English Questionnaire (PTLOEQ). Using Cronbach Alpha, an overall reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained on the PTLOEQ instrument. Research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The finding of the study showed that interference of mother's tongue affect the teaching and learning of Oral English even though there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on how the problem of the interference of mother's tongue affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in secondary schools. The findings showed also that there is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female teachers on how the problem of lack of language laboratories affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools. The study recommended that State government through the Post Primary School Management Board should provide language laboratories for all the junior secondary schools in Udenu local Government Area and Enugu State. Finally, the study concluded that interference of mother's tongue after the teaching and learning of oral English.

Keywords: Teaching, Learning, Mother tongue, Language laboratory, Gender.

Introduction

“The provision of sufficient instruction in oral English is considered an essential prerequisite for acquiring fundamental language abilities. The inclusion of oral English in the English language paper of the teachers' grade II certification test in Nigeria was initiated in 1977” (Usman & Mustafa, 2014). Currently, this aspect of the English language is included as a subsection in the English language papers of the **National Examination Council (NECO)** and **West Africa Examination Council (WAEC)** examinations. Additionally, it has significant importance in English-language syllabuses, particularly in secondary schools. Therefore, it is evident that individuals who are learning English as a second language often have difficulties achieving oral competency, particularly in accurately pronouncing English phonemes. These challenges might arise due to the fact that English is a new language for them or due to interference from their native language or first language.

Nevertheless, there has been a significant focus on the pursuit of Standard English. As a result, anyone learning the English language should strive to achieve a high level of fluency in the standard variety, whether it is Standard English or Received Pronunciation. According to Usman and Mustafa (2014), affirms that the inclusion of spoken English competence became a focal point in the New National Curriculum for English Language in Nigerian Secondary Schools throughout the 1980s. The inclusion of oral English in the curriculum for West African School Certificate students in Nigeria was historically overlooked. According to Roach (2000) and Khan (2016), there was a lack of enthusiasm among instructors and language theorists towards pronunciation education during the 1970s and 1980s. Interference of mother tongue could contribute to the problem of teaching and learning of oral English in secondary school schools.

The term "mother tongue," also referred to as the "first language," describes the first language a person learns when they are young. The term "first language" may not always refer to the initial language acquired in a sequential sense, but it has additional connotations. Likewise, the phrase "mother tongue" does not refer to the physical tongue or language spoken by mothers. The terms L1 (first language) and MT (mother tongue) can be used interchangeably. According to Adeyemi, Oribabor, and Adeyemi (2012), the first language (L1) or mother tongue (MT) refers to the initial language acquired by an individual throughout their early life. The process of language acquisition is distinct from that of language learning. This language serves as a means of encoding the initial notions of the developing child. It has a strong association with the individual's personal or indigenous culture, particularly in the case of individuals who are proficient in many languages. The term mother tongue refers to the language that a multilingual individual uses for their daily activities and possesses the highest level of linguistic proficiency or innate knowledge (Oyewole, 2017). The concept of mother language continues to be a subject of debate within the field of linguistics, with varying definitions attributed to the phrase. According to Yadav (2014), the term "mother tongue" denotes the concept wherein a mother assumes the responsibility of fostering a kid's linguistic abilities, hence establishing the mother's language as the primary means of language acquisition for the child.

If an individual in a marital relationship share the same tribal affiliation, the likelihood of this occurrence is high or has been historically seen. The term mother tongue also refers to a language that people learn either consciously or unconsciously when they communicate in their native tongue (Adeleye & Ogunremi, 2017). Furthermore, language is the means through which a particular community is seen to reside and then evolves into its innate tool for cognition and

interpersonal exchange. Aside from the problem of mother tongue in Oral English, absence of language laboratory facility could also hinder the teaching and learning of Oral English.

The presence of a language laboratory is crucial for the development of oral English skills. According to Roberto as cited in Omotoyinbo (2020), a language laboratory serves as the central hub for language instruction, with an instructor facilitating its operations by offering appropriate resources and creating conducive learning environments. The language laboratory possesses the capability to provide comprehensive instruction in prose or poetry. Currently, the language laboratory has experienced a significant rise in its influence within education. The teaching-learning process is presently characterized by reciprocal exchange of information, knowledge, and skills, in which both the teacher and the learner actively participate.

A language laboratory can be regarded as a dedicated space equipped with instructional technology resources, such as audio, audio-visual, and written materials, that can be distributed to multiple students seated individually at desks or study carrels. This facility offers a diverse range of feedback mechanisms that can be utilized by teachers and as well as learners. According to Asade (2000), the modern language laboratory is a recently developed medium that is significantly influencing the educational system. Subsequently, individuals have the chance to rewind the tape in order to engage in comparative analysis of both the master track and their personal recording (Hmoud,2014; Magsalin,2023). The significance of language laboratories in oral English lessons is comparable to the importance of the teaching techniques and skills employed by educators. Most times language laboratory has nothing to do with the gender of the learners since both the male and female can use the laboratory if it is available for learning.

“One of the most often researched areas related to gender in education is the issue of sex differences, i.e. comparing male and female characteristics and performance. When dealing with the issue of gender and education, it is important to define what gender is and separate it from sex. The need for this differentiation is the implication of the innate in academic performance which is linked to the biology of a person and its effect on human behavior and outcome” (Omachonu & Offorma, 2021). “Additionally, all societies have implicit conceptions of gender, or stereotypes, which they use to differentiate the treatment of girls and boys” (Global Monitoring Report, 2018). It is on this premise that this study explores the problem of teaching and learning of oral English in junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

The aim of the study was to investigate the problems of teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. The problem of the interference of mother tongue in the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools.
2. The problem of language laboratories in the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools.

The following research questions on how the interference of mother tongue and absence of language laboratory affects the teaching and learning of oral English guided the study without putting gender into consideration.

1. How does the problem of interference of mother tongue affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools?

2. How does the problem of language laboratories affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools?

The following null hypotheses involving male and female teachers guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significance difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on how the problem of interference of mother tongue affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools.

H₀₂: There is no significance difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on how the problem of language laboratories affects the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Ezeudu, Jolaosho and Dajan (2020) described survey research design as a type of design that is meant to describe the behaviour of a particular population in an accurate fashion. The study was conducted in Udenu Local Government Area (LGA) of Enugu State. Udenu is one of the seventeen local government areas (LGAs) that made up Enugu State, Nigeria South-East geopolitical zone . The LGA headquarter is situated in Obollo-Afor. Udenu LGA was carved out of Isi-Uzo LGA in 1981. The LGA shares borders the Nsukka LGA and has its administrative center in the town of Obollo-Afor. The population for the study consists of 51 junior secondary school qualified teachers who are teaching English language in all the 19 junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. 14 out of the teachers are male while 37 are female. The total population was used for the sample size since it was manageable. A researcher instrument titled: Problems

of Teaching and Learning of Oral English Questionnaire (PTLOEQ) was used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of 24 items. The questionnaire was be divided into two (2) sections namely; section A and B. Section A consisted of personal information of the respondents (teacher) while section B consisted of items on the problems of teaching and learning of Oral English in senior secondary schools. The section B also consisted of two clusters. Cluster A was on interference of mother tongue while Cluster B was on language laboratories. The instrument was face validated by three experts. One of the experts was from measurement and evaluation and two were degree holders in English Language Education. To ascertain the reliability level of the instrument, a trial testing was carried out in Nsukka Local Government Area which is not part of the main study. 20 copies of the questionnaire were administered to English Language teachers in Nsukka Local Government Area. Cronbach Alpha was used to ascertain the reliability coefficient level of the instrument. The Cronbach Alpha gave a result of 0.72 for cluster A and 0.75 for cluster B. The overall reliability for the instrument was 0.84. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the 2 research questions that guided the study while t-test statistic was used to analyze the 2 hypotheses that guided the study at 0.05 level of significance. Any mean below 2.50 was considered as rejected while those of 2.50 and above were regarded as accepted. Also, any hypothesis less than 0.05 was rejected while those above 0.05 was accepted.

Results

Research Question One: How does the problem of interference of mother tongue affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Problem of Interference of Mother Tongue on Teaching And Learning of Oral English in Junior Secondary Schools

$$n = 51$$

Interference of Mother Tongue	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1. The use of students mother`s tongue affect his/her oral English speaking ability.	3.24	.74	Agreed
2. Students in rural areas most times find it difficult to understand oral English without the use of mother`s tongue.	3.39	.53	Agreed
3. Mother tongue can alter the way student read and speak oral English.	3.25	.69	Agreed
4. Students can adapt to the teaching and learning environment without the use of mother tongue.	3.12	.82	Agreed
5. Students can be greatly affected if they use oral English to explain some concept in the subject itself and not in their mother tongue.	3.10	.64	Agreed
6. Permission to use mother tongue in teaching can affect other language especially oral English	3.08	.66	Agreed
Cluster Mean	3.20	.68	Agreed

Table 1 showed the mean ratings of how interference of mother tongue affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. It showed that the mean ratings of the teachers on items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are more than the 2.50 criterion mean, indicating their high level of agreement with the factors. The cluster mean of 3.20 with standard deviation of 0.68 indicated the level at which the problem of interference of mother tongue affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. In other words, the interference of mother tongue really affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools

H₀₁: There is no significance difference in the mean response ratings of male and female teachers on how the problem of interference of mother tongue affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools.

Table 2: T-Test Analysis of the Difference in the Mean Response Ratings of Male and Female Teachers on How the Problem of Interference of Mother Tongue Affect the Teaching and Learning of Oral English in Junior Secondary Schools.

Gender	N	Mean	Std.		t	Sig	Decision
			Deviation	df			
Male	14	3.26	0.23	49	1.018	.314	NS
Female	37	3.17	0.30				

NS = Not Significant

Table 2 reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female teachers on how the problem of interference of mother tongue affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria, $t(49) = 1.018, p = 0.314$. This implies that the null hypothesis was not rejected since the associated probability value of .314 was greater than the 0.05 significant level.

Research Question Two: How does the problem of language laboratories affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of How the Problem of Language Laboratories Affect the Teaching and Learning of Oral English in Junior Secondary Schools

n = 51

Problems of Language Laboratory	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
7. Absence of language laboratory makes it difficult to achieve the objective of teaching and learning of oral English.	3.06	.70	Agreed
8. Lack of language laboratory makes near ideal pronunciation of native speakers always available when teaching and learning oral English.	3.33	.65	Agreed
9. Absence of language laboratory makes it difficult for students to listen and listen again.	3.14	.72	Agreed
10. Lack of language laboratory for oral English makes immediate correction to be difficult..	3.24	.74	Agreed
11. Lack of language laboratory prevents constant repetition and oral drill of the students.	3.29	.73	Agreed
12. Lack of language laboratory makes it difficult for individual student to practice during the period of oral English.	3.25	.69	Agreed
Cluster Mean	3.22	.71	Agreed

Table 3 showed the mean ratings of how problem of language laboratories affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. It shows that the mean ratings of the teachers on items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 are more than the 2.50 criterion mean, indicating their level of high agreement with the statements of the items. Thus, the cluster mean of 3.22 with standard deviation of 0.71 indicates the level at which the problem of language laboratories affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. In other words, the problem of language laboratories really has effect on the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools.

H₀₂: There is no significance difference in the mean response ratings of male and female teachers on how the problem of language laboratories affects the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools.

Table 4: T-Test Analysis of the Difference in the Mean Response Ratings of Male and Female Teachers on How the Problem of Language Laboratories Affect the Teaching and Learning of Oral English in Secondary Schools.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig	Decision
Male	14	3.15	0.38	49	-.791	.433	NS
Female	37	3.24	0.35				

NS = Not Significant

Table 4 reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female teachers on how the problem of language laboratories affect the teaching and learning of Oral English in junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria, $t(49) = -.791, p = 0.433$. This implies that the null hypothesis was not rejected since the associated probability value of .433 was greater than the 0.05 significant level.

Discussion

The findings revealed that, to a high level, the interference of the mother's tongue affects the teaching and learning of oral English in junior secondary schools in the Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The findings show further that there is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female teachers on how the problem of the interference of the mother's tongue affects the teaching and learning of oral English in secondary schools. This finding authenticates the fundamental tenets of Acculturation Theory by John Schumann in 1978 that the primary driver of second language acquisition is acculturation, which is a conglomeration of social-psychological elements. This finding was in line with that of Oluwole (2008), who found out that "mother tongue influences students' poor performance in English language in the Junior School Certificate examination and that there are other factors contributing to the students' poor performance in the English language". Also, in cognizance with the findings of the study was the study of Oyewole (2017), who found out that "mother tongue interference has an impact on the writing and speaking of English language among secondary school students. The Oyewole finding showed further that mother tongue hinders effective communication among students in class. The reason why mother tongue affects the teaching and learning of oral English in secondary school could be because the students are already addicted to their mother tongue and find it difficult to adjust simply because most of the schools in the study area are located in villages where the local language (mother tongue) is given priority over any other language".

The findings of the study showed that lack of language laboratories affects the teaching and learning of oral English in junior secondary schools in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The findings showed further that there is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female teachers on how the problem of lack of language laboratories affects the teaching and learning of oral English in secondary schools. In support of the finding in the Acculturation Theory by John Schumann in 1978, which holds that students would succeed in second language acquisition if there were fewer social and psychological barriers separating them from second language speakers, In line with the findings of this study was the findings of Ebouh (2022), who found that the use of language laboratories in teaching English language in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone was found to be better than teaching with only English texts. Also in support of this study was the finding of Alufohai and Aziegeb (2016), who revealed that students' academic achievement in French is significantly influenced by the use of language laboratories. The reasons for this finding could be that language laboratories would give students the opportunity to learn how to pronounce words in other languages using earphones, earpiece, and other materials that can aid in the teaching and learning of the new language. By implication, the finding of this study proved that schools in the study area of this study should be provided with language laboratories since it is vital in enhancing their ability to learn oral English.

Educational Implications of the Findings

Based on the discussion and conclusion above, the following are the implications of the findings:

The findings revealed that interference of the mother tongue affects the teaching and learning of oral English in junior secondary schools in the Udenu local government area of Enugu State. The implication of this finding is that avoiding the speaking of local languages in schools can help provide a solution to the problem of teaching and learning oral English. The findings also show that there is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female teachers on how the interference of the mother tongue affects the teaching and learning of oral English in junior secondary schools in the Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. The implication of this finding is that both male and female teachers will be of help in preventing the mother tongue from affecting the teaching and learning of oral English in junior secondary schools in the Udenu local government area of Enugu State.

The findings of the study revealed that a lack of language laboratories affects the teaching and learning of oral English in junior secondary schools in the Udenu local government area of Enugu State. The implication of this finding is that providing language laboratories in all the secondary schools in the study area will help provide a solution to the problem of teaching and learning oral English. The findings also show that there is no significant difference in the mean response ratings of male and female teachers on how a lack of language laboratories affects the teaching and learning of oral English in junior secondary schools in the Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. The implication of this finding is that both male and female teachers believed that the provision of a language laboratory would help in providing solutions to the problem of teaching and learning oral English in junior secondary schools in the Udenu local government area of Enugu State.

Conclusion

From the foregoing findings and discussion, it could be concluded that interference of the mother tongue affects the teaching and learning of oral English in junior secondary schools in the Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. Also, the study found that lack of language laboratories also serves as a problem for the teaching and learning of oral English in junior secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and their educational implications, the following recommendations were made:

- Secondary school students should not be allowed to speak local language when English lesson is on.
- State government through the Post Primary School Management Board should provide language laboratories for all the government own secondary schools in Udenu local Government Area and Enugu State at large.

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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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