

**STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING LOW ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS**

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BENIN CITY**

**JANUARY, 2023**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
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## CERTIFICATION

We certify that this study was carried out by **Benedicta Efe OSAYUWU** in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. It is adequate in scope and quality for the partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Ed.) in English and Literature.

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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my parents, Mrs. Osayuwu Doris and late Mr. Osayuwu Peter for their love, support and encouragement throughout the period of the programme.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, the researcher expressed her heartfelt gratitude to her project supervisor, Mr. A.E. Osawaru for his tremendous support, guidance and advice throughout all the stages of my writing this project. This project would not have been successful without his co-operation and inputs. Indeed, it was a great learning experience.

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Above all, she is thankful to the God almighty, the author knowledge and wisdom for his countless love, mercies and protection.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines strategies for improving low academic performance in English language in secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. Over the years, there has been a consistent decline in students' performance in English Language. This sordid situation has caused teachers, parents, curriculum experts and evaluators a serious concern.

To carry out this investigation, data were collected from thirty- eight (38) English language teachers randomly from twenty secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area. Analysis of the data revealed that poorly trained English language teachers, poor instructional delivery, lack of infrastructural facilities, teachers' attitude toward innovation, and the traditional content/knowledge oriented curriculum were factors associated with students' low performance in English language.

Based on the findings recommendations were made on strategies that will improve the quality of performance in the subject. In this work, data collected in the area of material, facilities and human resources available for teaching the subject, using questionnaire, personal interview and relevant textbooks. Put together, the research questionnaire distributed were forty.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background of the Study**

The modern trend in education and the complex nature of learning and instruction have made the role of the teachers more challenging. This new role does not just involve the more transmission of information to students but it involves looking at the problems associated with learning and instruction. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013) in Nigeria emphasized that our children should be educated properly so that they can acquire skills and competencies that would enable them function well and solve problems in the society. The accomplishment and realization of these important educational goals in Nigeria lies in the new trend in the educational approaches.

These new approaches to learning and instruction expose the students to conceptualize and effectively manage their own learning and thus reinforce their learning and transfer their training in practical situations. Despite the new approach to learning and instruction, English language at the Senior Secondary School level in Nigeria has been plagued with poor

results and low achievements. Annual results from West African Examinations Council (WAEC) reveal woeful performances from the students who have made enrolment for English language examinations a yearly ritual. It is worrisome to note too that the performance of these students has continued to deteriorate year after year. It is understood that if the situation in English Language remains like this, it will affect both the economic and technological growth of the state. This is because a good mastery of English language is mandatory on all students in order to do well in other secondary school subjects. Students who are handicapped in English language are therefore likely to be handicapped in the acquisition of skills in arts and technological related subjects.

From the foregoing, therefore, we can conclude that English language is an indispensable language of communication in Ovia North East Local Government Area.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research as stated above concerns itself with the study of strategies for improving low academic performance in English language by suggesting possible solution to the following questions:

- i) What are the attitude/feelings of the students towards the studying of English language?
- ii) What account for the decline in performance in the subject (English language)?
- iii) Do they have enough material and human resources for the teaching and learning process?
- iv) Do they understand the subject very well?
- v) Does the Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE) syllabus have either a positive or a negative effect on the student performance?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to find out strategies for improving the performance of secondary school student in English language. Specifically it ought to:

- i) To find out the types of facilities available in the secondary schools for teaching English language.
- ii) To identify the methods of teaching used in teaching English language.

- iii) To identify the extent to which teachers are motivated to teach English language.
- iv) To identify strategies for improving the low academic performance of students in English language.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i) What type of facilities is available for teaching English language in secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State?
- ii) What are the methods of teaching adopted by English Language teachers?
- iii) To what extent are English Language teachers motivated?
- iv) What are the strategies for improving the low academic performance of students in English Language?

### **Significance of the Study**

This research work intends to investigate the student achievement in the subject. The research will be significant in the following ways:

- i) The findings of the study will shade light on the nature, contents examination and performance level of the SSCE examination.
- ii) The findings of the study will contribute meaningfully to knowledge of teaching and learning English language especially with the role of English in the day-to-day communication.
- iii) The findings of the students will also benefit Ministry of Education in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State by recruiting qualified teachers in order to improve the performance of the students.

### **Delimitation of the Study**

The study covers strategies for improving low academic performance in English Language in Secondary Schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. Respondents were drawn from selected secondary schools in Kaduna North Local Government Area.

### **Definition of Terms**

- **Performance:** This relates to the execution carried out or putting into effect the task, job or operation.
- **Teacher:** A professional trained to impart knowledge to pupils/students.
- **Assessment:** Evaluation or estimation of the nature, value or quality of something or a subject.
- **Effectiveness:** It is the ability to determine appropriate objectives, that is, the degree at which School's goals are met within established resources "doing the right thing."
- **Indiscipline:** This can be described as a mode of life not in conformation with rule and non-subjection to contain. The term connotes the regulations capable of obstructing the smooth and orderly function of the school system
- **Reading:** Is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print.
- **Writing:** Writing is the process by which an author uses his mental ability to put words to paper as well as the result of that process.

- **Speech:** Expression of or the ability to express thoughts and feelings by articulated sounds.
- **Mother Tongue:** This is the original and first language of an individual which they acquire from their parents.
- **L2:** This is language two. This is a second that is learnt as a second language in addition to their mother tongue.
- **FGN:** Acronym for Federal Government of Nigeria.
- **Curriculum:** Curriculum is the subjects comprising a step by step guide of a course of study in a school.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explains the views of several authors on intricate issues that are of relevance to English Language. The chapter elaborates and discusses the history of English Language in Nigeria, its status, its importance, and the need for standard knowledge of English Language in Kaduna, English language as an aid for teaching other subjects, the problem of teaching and learning of English Language. It also discusses learning, simple forms of learning, theories of learning and factors that influence learning and finally the strategies for improving low academic performance in English language.

#### **A Brief History of English Language in Nigeria**

English Language came to Nigeria through contact with the Europeans been acknowledge because of trading between Europeans and Nigerians. The Trans-Atlantic Coast was used to trade in goods and slaves. Because of the Berlin conference of 1884/85, the European power divided the African states and subsequently made Nigeria a colony of Britain,

thereby introducing English language as the official language of Administration in Nigeria. British colonizers also began to train people to how to speak English language.

English language then assumed a very significant role in Nigeria so much that English language became a dominant language especially after independence.

### **Status of English Language**

English language enables us to enjoy the fruit of liberal education; it brought about the message of political democracy and the sense of national unity. The learning of English language brought us within the orbit of western civilization. By the time, it was initiated into the Nigeria system it had become the major vehicle to modern scientific civilization and advancement in our political, economic and social system to keep us growing with the rest of the world. English language is a bridge across widely separated nations and Nigerians maintain contact with the outside world. Although, the English in Nigeria are of varieties, which are mostly different from the native English, it is the language of technology, a passport

of education advancement and prestigious employment as in order advanced nations.

English language serves various functions in Nigeria. Apart from being a lingua-franca, it is also a status symbol. That is, if a Nigerian speaks English language, he will be seen to an enlightened person and is, in the olden days, highly regarded as being a language of commerce, mass media and government social interaction. In the area of business and commerce, English language is used to write records, write contract agreements and advertise products. English language aids teaching and learning activities and textbooks are written in English language.

By far, the most important role of English language in Nigeria today is its use as a medium of social communication since there are many different indigenous languages in Nigeria about 350 languages (Ahmed and Odiwo, 1999). In practice therefore, English language is the only effective medium of social gathering and interaction between Nigerians from different linguistic background. This is why national activities are conducted in English language. From the foregoing therefore, we can conclude that

English language is an indispensable language of communication in Nigeria at personal, national and international levels.

## **Importance of English Language in Nigeria**

The importance of English language as a school subject derives mainly from its utilitarian value to the larger Nigerian society. English is the official language of administration and commerce. It is a major language of science. Above all, Salami (2002) has emphasized the importance of the use of English language in improving communication among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. He further highlighted the need for improving the quality of spoken and written English language among school children.

However, one of the current educational problems of public interest is that of poor level of achievement especially in public examinations (Kolawole, 1998; Kolawole and Dele, 2002). The problem of underachievement among school children has persisted in many subject areas (Ivowi, Okebukola, and Oladokun, 1992; Falayajo, 1997) this poor level of achievement may be due to poor foundation in English Language at the primary school level. In recognition of the importance of English language for enhancing educational attainment as well as for improving communication ability of citizens, the government has made the English a core subject (FGN, 2004). It is also compulsory for students to have credit in

English language. Thus, it becomes very importance for the correct form of English language to be taught in our schools (Adeyanju, 1987).

### **The Need for Standard Knowledge of English Language**

Anything built on a strong and solid foundation stands firm and the same applies to the acquisition of English language with the primary school as the watershed in the educational pursuit of every child. It is most important to part into the child, correct form of education and English language in particular. The knowledge children grab and absorb into their brains at their tender ages takes time to wear out.

There are different aspects of English language, which include Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. Yet each of them has its challenges in the teaching and learning process. For a good future in our political, social and economical front, our children need to learn good Standard English language and education in general. International and national advancement depends on the good education given to the future leaders (children).

English language serves as a second language (L2) to the Nigerian child, the aims of teaching English language, as a second language in

Nigeria is to equip leaders with the variety of language skills. This include the ability to listen and understand grammatically correct English, to enable learners of English language to understand the sound system of the language and correct them to make meaningful utterances. In other words, the learners should be able to speak English language fluently so that other people who speak the language will understand them.

In short, the aim of teaching English language is to teach the learner to understand the four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The status of English language in Kaduna been discussed earlier and the fact that obtaining an appreciable proficiency in it determines your scholastic ambition and career prospect makes the teaching and learning of English imperative. The multi lingual nature of the Nigeria society where between 350-400 languages are spoken, makes English language to be a second language (L2) in Nigeria and also absolutely important. However, the teaching and learning of English language skills is not without its problems.

### **Problems of Teaching and Learning English as a Second Language Reading**

As defined by Nuttall (1982) is reading in terms of reading aloud, or decoding, settles for extraction of meanings from written messages. Similarly, Widdowson (1979) has defined reading as “the process of getting linguistic information via print”. The problem with these definitions is that those who have trouble with reasoning or fail to learn from reading will be said to have reading problems. Thus, our definition of reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print. Learning to read is a process of transfer from auditory signals to visual ones. Reading can clearly be seen as a cognitive activities.

### **Writing**

Writing is not only the process the writer uses to put words to paper but also the result product of that process. This process and product are also conditioned by the purpose and place of writing (its audience and genre). Writing in a second language is further complicated by the issues of proficiency in the target language, first language literacy and differences in culture and rhetorical approach to the text. Instruction in writing can effectively improve student proficiency in a number of key areas. Approaches to instruction have variously targeted process, product and

purpose of writing. More recent approach both to its teaching and to assessment recognizes the need to integrate all aspects of writing.

## **Teaching and Learning**

Teaching writing has, since the 1970s reflected this same multiplicity of perspectives as the research. Raimes (1991) outlined four approaches that dominated the teaching of writing at different times. A slightly later survey (Raimes 1999) added approaches that have focused on social issues such as genre and on ‘critical’ approaches to writing pedagogy. One of the key areas in growth of teaching writing over the past 20 years has been in English for academic purposes. The recent sharp increase in the number of applications to higher education from countries without a strong background in the English language has highlighted the need for specialized support (Jordan 1997; Bjork, Brauer, Rienecker & Jorgensen, 2003).

## **Teaching Writing**

Although proficiency in writing is somewhat related to overall language proficiency, particularly at the lower end of the scale (Cumming, 1989), improvements in general language proficiency do not necessarily affect and student’s proficiency in writing in their L2. however, writing instruction can be effective in raising efficiency in a number of areas. Recent approaches to instruction have recognized that; while weak areas can and

should be specifically addressed, writing must always be seen as culturally and socially situated.

Cumming (2002) cautions writing teachers to be very wary of exercises that tries to break writing down into component skill such as exercises often eliminate portions of the task that are important to the personal and cultural significance of the writing.

This more eclectic and holistic approach recognizes that learners' needs are different at various stages in their learning and that teachers must develop tasks to accommodate this. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) give a detailed discussion of teaching approaches at beginning, intermediate and advanced levels of mastery. At lower level, frequent, short writing activities can help to build familiarity and develop a useful, productive vocabulary. The variety and length of tasks can be extended for intermediate level students – developing themes that are more complex and building a repertoire of strategies for effective writing. Advanced level students need to develop a greater understanding of genres and the place of writing in particular discourse communities. There is also a need for the development of strategies and establishment of their own voice in the second language.

## **Instructions Effect in Writing**

Despite the dearth of models of learning to write, there is an assumption that instruction in writing does not have an effect and that the knowledge required of a writer is learnable and the skills trainable. It is central to writing instruction that writers make progress as a direct result of the instruction they receive. In a general second language learning context, a student's progress in writing is often assumed to be simply a part of the overall increase in their language proficiency. Whilst it is clear that students' ability to write clearly and accurately depends to an extent on their general level of proficiency in the target language (Bardovi-Harlig 1995; Cumming 1989) there are aspects of proficiency that are either specific to students' writing or that may be specifically seen to develop through writing (Weissberg, 2000).

Instruction affects student accuracy in the use of the target language in their writing and also the range of choice of structure and vocabulary available to them for use in training. Tsang and Wong (2000) studied the effects of explicit grammar teaching on student writing. They claim that there were indications that the students were able to write with greater

readiness and use more mature syntax instruction affects the students' understanding of the cultural and contextual appropriacy of particular structures or vocabulary, their understanding of the norms and expectations of the target genres reading form, and their understanding of the norms of the target genres regarding the choice of information and its sequencing and structuring. Archibald (1994) investigated how the discourse proficiency of secondary school students writing in English as a second language developed in different age groups. He found that students improved in their use of discourse markers and links and they developed a better feel for the contextual appropriacy of their language.

Shaw and Liu (1998) analyzed the ways in which the features associated with academic register changed over the period of a pre-sectional course in English for academic purposes. They found an increase in areas such as impersonality, formality, and hedging in the students' writing at the end of the course. They contribute this to an increased understanding of the norms of academic writing and a move away from a single 'neutral' variety of English that learners tend to use for all purposes. Archibald (2001), also

using pre-sectional course students, found that teaching had a significant effect on the structure and organization of the students' writing.

Instruction in the processes of composition has an effect on the students' ability to reflect on their writing and to produce more effective and appropriate texts in the target language. Sengupta (2000), working with secondary school students, describes the effects of giving instruction in revision strategies to writers of English as a second language. He found that explicit teaching of these strategies had a measurable effect on the quality of the students' final draft.

Cresswell (2000) reported on the effects of students learning to self-monitor their writing and to pay attention to the process and the organization of their writing. He reported improvement in the students' ability to pay attention to the content and organization of their writing. Connor and Farmer (1990) found that teaching second language writers' topical structure analysis to use as a revision strategy had a positive effect on the clarity of focus of the final texts. At a more general level, Akyel and Kamisili (1997) reported on the effects of EFL writing instruction on composition in both first and second languages. They found that the students used similar

composing strategies in both their L1 (Hausa) and L2 (English) and that writing instruction in the L2 had a positive effect on their writing processes and on their attitudes to writing in the two languages.

The direct effects of different types of feedback on student writing have also been analyzed. Ferris (1997) found that changes made by students in response to teacher comments did have a positive effect on the overall quality of their papers. Vallamil and de Guerro (1998) investigated the impact of peer revision on L2 writing and found that it had a positive effect on the quality of the final draft. Berg (1999) trained students on how to give effective peer response to writing. She found that this training had a positive effect on the students revision types and on the quality of their texts.

### **Assessing Writing**

Assessment in writing should asks students to demonstrate their membership in the community of fluent writers of English (Hamp-Lyons & Kroll 1997:17). It should reflect not only the stage of general linguistic proficiency of the student, but also their ability to use the forms appropriately within the social and professional conventions of writing in the target language. The assessment of students' level of proficiency in writing

and of its change over time has been the subject of a considerable amount of recent research (see Kroll, 1998). Assessment has tended to mirror instruction with new approaches to assessment accompanying changes in teaching.

Assessment of the classroom work involved in writing has been carried out through portfolios (Belanoff, 1997). Feedback has been given on the written product through the reader responding to the writer's message (Ferris, Pezone, Tade & Tinti 1997) or through directly evaluating the form of the product. Assessment of the product of writing has involved assessments of the overall quality of the text, usually using a holistic or a primary or multiple trait scoring system (Hamp-Lyons 1991b; Kroll 1998). Other assessments of the product of writing have involved assessments of linguistic accuracy (Polio, 1997).

Assessments of the quality of the text as a product using a variety of holistic and/or multiple trait scales are perhaps the most common ways in which students' writing is assessed. Such scales are most easily applied to situations in which large numbers of students need to be assessed simultaneously and are often associated with mass testing. Holistic

assessment became popular in the mid 1970s and is still one of the most common forms of assessment for shorter pieces of writing. The rater or raters read the text quickly and, based on guidelines, give an impressionistic mark. If the text being marked shows uniformity in the writer's proficiency in language use, knowledge of the genre, skills of text production, then this holistic mark may indeed be fair representation of the writer's performance. The writing of second language learners, however, often displays marked differences of proficiency in the various facets of writing, and holistic marking in these cases becomes difficult and suspect. The problems relate both to the adequacy of the scheme to represent the writers' efforts (Hamp-Lyons 1995; Connor-Linton 1995) and relatedly, to rater reliability (Vuaghan 1991).

Hamp-Lyons (1995) suggests that a multiple trait scheme – one that scores a number of different facets or traits in a student's writing – has advantages over holistic marking in that it can highlight than cover differences in proficiencies within a student's writing. She claims that multiple trait schemes are more reliable than holistic approaches, that they provide more diagnostic information to the student and the teacher, that they

highlight salient features of the text, and that they have greater validity (Hamp-Lyons, 1991).

Certainly, multiple trait scoring has the attraction of at least recognizing that student writing in a second language often displays quite variable levels of proficiency in different areas. There is a danger, however, of it being seen as reducing writing to a series of discreet skill areas that can be quantified and assessed separately from one another. Traits are not separate or separable features of a piece of writing, they are interwoven and interdependent and their analysis provides different perspectives on the text. An important question is whether the perspectives chosen in a particular scheme are different enough from one another to warrant being scored separately.

### **Listening**

In the areas of second language acquisition research and second language teaching, listening has always been the most forgotten and least researched of the four macro skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening). In fact, until not long ago, listening was not considered a separate and independent skill in itself, with its own characteristics, purposes and micro

skills, but as an activity or means by which the other macro skills could be taught and acquired. The focus of this research will be in one of these specific areas, namely, the use of learning strategies in listening comprehension. It will not only identify the kinds of learning strategies used by second language learners while listening, but it will also provide ways in which learning strategies can be taught and learned in a EFL/ESL classroom. In this sense, understanding the learning strategies that more students that are successful use, while listening will permit teachers to provide more and better opportunities for students (both successful and less successful ones) to listen to and practice with different listening segments while making use of learning strategies. This article will promote the use and teaching of learning strategies for the listening skill as a means of making learning easier, faster, more enjoyable and even more meaningful to students because they will be aware of what they are doing and why.

### **Listening is different from Reading**

There are many skills necessary to listen to spoken English. Some skills are similar to the skills used in reading. However, many important listening skills are different from reading skills. That is why if you want to

learn to listen, you must practice listening. Listening skills are different from reading skills because speech is different from writing. Below are some of the main ways speech is different from writing.

### **Speech Consists of Sounds**

The biggest difference between speech and writing is that speech consists of sounds. This is very important, because processing the sound adds a completely new set of skills that are not necessary for reading.

You must know the sound system; if you do not, you cannot understand the speech.

You must also know how the sounds change in fast speech. Fast pronunciation is very different from the dictionary form of the word. The English sound system varies from place to place, and from speaker to speaker.

### **Speech Uses different Language**

Written English consists of neat, correct sentences; speech does not. Speech usually consists of idea units. Each unit is a short piece of spoken language; usually about two seconds long, and consisting of just a few words; on average about seven words. Sometimes idea units are complete sentences,

but sometimes they are not. The main difference between spoken idea units and written sentences:

- Spoken idea units are usually shorter than sentences.
- Speech usually has simpler grammar – idea units are usually strung together – but writing usually has more grammar that is complex. Speech contains many mistakes, and grammatical errors; so it also has corrections and repairs. Written language is usually more correct and polished. Speech contains many pauses and hesitations. There are also fillers, meaningless words that give the speaker thinking time. Examples of fillers are um, well now, uh, let me see. Written language has none of those.
- Spoken language is more modern and up to date; there are more slang words, swear words, new expressions, figures of speech, and humor. Written language tends to be more conservative and old-fashioned.

In speech, many things are not actually stated. Speakers often use their tone of voice, or stress and intonation to express important information. For example, emotions such as pleasure and anger, attitudes such as disbelief or sarcasm, and so on, are often not clearly stated in words.

## **Speech is fast**

Speakers decide how fast they will speak, and most speakers speak very fast. So listeners have to listen fast. When reading, the reader can choose a comfortable reading speed, but the listener cannot choose the listening speech. Listeners must listen at the speaker's speed.

The speed of the speech is called the "speech rate". It is very important for a second language listeners: usually, as the speech rate increases, comprehension decreases. If the speech rate is too fast, comprehension stops.

Because speech is generally fast, the listener must get the meaning very quickly and very efficiently. There is no time to stop and wonder about the language used (e.g. the vocabulary or grammar). That means that listening must be automatic.

## **Language Comprehension**

Listening and reading also have many things in common. Both listening and reading are a form of language comprehension. In both cases, we are trying to get some meanings from the language. It is important to understand how comprehension works.

## **Types of Knowledge**

To understand the meaning, listeners use their knowledge. They use not only knowledge of the language but other types of knowledge too. The most important types of knowledge used in comprehension are:

*Knowledge of the language:* This includes knowledge of the vocabulary, the grammar, and the way longer, discourse is structured. Also knowledge of the sound system for listening, and the writing system for reading.

*Knowledge about what has already been said:* This is important because we usually understand things based on what we have already understood of what came earlier.

*Knowledge about the situation in which the speech is taking place:* This is important, because it gives us expectations about what might come next.

*Knowledge about the world:* We use our background knowledge about the world and how it works to help us understand everything.

## **Applying Knowledge**

Not only do we use different types of knowledge in comprehension, but also this is applied in complex ways.

There is no fixed way in which this knowledge is applied. Listeners have expectations about what they are hearing, and they use whatever knowledge seems relevant. Any relevant information might be used.

Comprehension is a guessing game. Not all the necessary information is clearly stated. We use our knowledge to make inferences about the meaning. We do not always listen to every word, but make inferences based on the four types of knowledge.

Comprehension is not about understanding what words mean, but is understanding what speakers mean. Even after getting the meaning of the words, the listener (or reader) must still try to understand what the speaker means by that. Not everything is clearly stated, and it is often necessary to figure out the real meaning. This means making inferences. Inferences are the core of comprehension. Many people assume that the meaning is contained in the passage, and the listeners' job is to get the meaning out of the message. That is not true! The meaning is not in the passage, but is construction by the listener.

### **Reasonable Understanding**

Because the listener (or reader) constructs meaning by making inferences based on knowledge, different people might make different inferences, and get different understand of the same passage. This happens because listeners vary.

Different people have different knowledge and different ideas about the world. A person with more knowledge about something may understand more than a person with less knowledge. Different people have different purposes of listening. Some people may want all the details, and others may only want to get the general idea. Therefore, they will get a different understanding. Different people have different interests. If something is interesting, people pay more attention and will understand more.

So different listeners, who hear the same thing, may have different ideas about what the speaker means. That is ok, because these different ideas about the speaker's meaning may all be reasonable. Now here is the important thing: there is often no single correct understanding of a piece of language, but a number of possible understandings. The purpose of listening is to get a reasonable understanding of what the speaker said, not the 'correct' understanding.

### **Mother Tongue (First Language) Inferences (Speaking)**

Macalay (1982) quoting Chase (1956) point out that the structure of the language an individual habitually uses, influences the manner that the individual understands his environment. How he perceives the world depends greatly on his language citing (Carool, 1956), which also highlights latent risks in the retention of meaning and the achievement of understanding, if one were substituted literally for another with the intention of expressing the same thought, there is bound to be change because the picture of the inverse shifts from tongue to tongue.

Because some schools use more of the mother tongue than the second language (English) at the first stage of the pupils' primary education, the child tends to become more competent in the grammar of his mother tongue than that of the second language. However, he will tend to have greater reading competence in English at the later stage of the primary education than his mother tongue. There are some students that have problems with problems education than his mother tongue. There are some students that have problems with pronunciation because there are canonical patterns in English language; they are sometimes absent in other languages. Such could

be seen in the way the phonemic limits, combine to form meaningful linguistic unit that are systematically patterned; but the patterns vary from one language to another.

Thus, the various differences which exist between the patterns of English and other languages (mother tongue) constitute obstacles for other speakers e.g. Hausa speakers of English language. The language has only canonical patterns i.e. CV, and as CVC as in (a) CV Biyar “five” (b) CVC Nan = “Here”, “C” stands for consonant and “V” for vowel. It is significant that while Hausa operates mainly on two canonical patterns, English operates on eight or more. Thus, the six patterns, which are absent in Hausa language areas, are phonetic problems for the Hausa learners of English language.

English cluster, which may be up to three in numbers in syllable final position, are extremely difficult for speakers of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba language, Dustan (1969) said, “signs of these difficulties may be seen in the way in which English words are being altered when borrowed into one of these languages. An example could be borrowed from one of the pupils/students pronunciation of “screw driver” pronounced as “Skrudriva”

that is (cc/cu/cu/cu/cucu) instead of (ccu/cccv/cu). This showed the student was substituting one consonant for another or introduced vowel sounds in between the consonants (Dunstan, 1966).

It is therefore out of an effort to develop a new set of language habit against a background of different mother tongue habit that give rise to problem.

It was observed that the problems of English language learning and teaching are so complex and varied that no single person can claim to have a close acquaintance with them all. Several scholars have addressed the core problems of communicative competence in the use of English language as L2 and it is used as the main language of instruction in Nigeria's education delivery process. It is unfortunate that most government schools leavers (apart from product of elite private schools) do not possess the required competence in the four language skills for both cognitive and communicative functions. The nagging problem however concerns the quality of English that is taught and used in the school system. The concern being expressed in informed educational circles is the extent to which the

variety and quality of English being learnt and use in the school system can serve in achieving Nigeria's educational goals and the objectives.

### **Poor English Language Background**

This is very important for the efficiency in spoken English. The home is a natural setting for language learning and so is the level of education of the parent. If the parents are very educated especially in English, they would be able to encourage the speaking of correct English at home. By this spoken English, achievement of the children is favorable for they tend to interact at home in English and exposure to things that would enlighten the child is within his reach.

The reverse is the case with illiterate parent who would see the buying of magazines, books etc as expensive. They might not be opportune to buy such educative device that might encourage the children education. These kinds of children (who are limited in exposure of English) are a bit backward because their only practicing ground is the classroom and school. The parent's level of education, their interest in the child's education, the child's spoken English, the provision of home educative device and the use of

English at home as a medium of communication are of great importance such as textbooks, magazines, television etc.

### **Phonological Problems**

According to Bright and McGregor (1986) sound features that are not common to both first language and second language will pose problems for the learners of the second language for they tend to be strange to the learners. Those features that are common to both languages will not be difficult to grasp. For example, pronunciation problems are not expected where phonemes in Hausa and English are similar. Some Hausa pupils have problems with phonemes that are absent in Hausa language but present in English language.

These problems are observable in the interdental fricative shift, stress pattern and the collocation in free variation of such phonemes as /p/ and /f/, /v/ and /b/, /p/ is absent in Hausa and so it is substituted with /f/ (Dustan, 1979; Nuttal, 1969).

/F/ is pronounced as /p/ as in /pa/ while /fat/ as /pat/ and /v/ is absent in Hausa and being replaced with /b/ as in /van/ pronounced as /ban/ and /vent/ as /bent/ (Ahmad, and Odiwo, 1999). These problems could be

minimized if the teachers of the student accept and realize that the problems exist or could be traced and efforts are made to read works on constructive studies on English pronunciation.

### **Orthographic Problems**

Alsian (1969) realized this problem when he wrote, “apart from the limitation attributed to the un-stimulating environmental conditions which many children have to face to learn English and the inadequacy of their teachers qualification, the conventional orthographic system of English language seems to be an added source of difficulties for children learning to speak English”.

This was observed in some students (Hausa speakers of English) who tend to write as they pronounce. Nuttal (1965) stated that in Hausa every consonant letter represents a sound and always the same sound; this is also true of the vowels, although there are some variations especially in the sound of the word. The distinction between long and short vowels is not presented in the orthography but they tend to write what they pronounce which is mostly wrong. E.g. “screw driver” being pronounced and written by a student as “skrudriva” (Dunstant, 1966).

Though the teacher may be or will be particularly patient with his/her students and so carefully repeat any new word stressing its pronunciation, meaning and use to the students before asking each and everyone to repeat what was pronounced.

### **Inconducive Language Environment**

The English learning environment of schools is not a very conducive one. The linguistic environment in which English is taught could be said to be hostile due to a wide range of dialects which diverge greatly from Standard English that should be taught in schools. The languages exert some influence on the phonology, syntax and grammar of English due to lack of homogenous and favorable environment to enhance the learners' efforts. This produces a particular kind of English called Nigerian English (Grieve 1965; Tomori 1974). Thus, it is this variety of English, which is different from the standard English (tagged) that is being spoken outside the classroom.

Some students are the cause of their problems. Some pay little or no attention in class or even absent themselves from school. This tends to affect the child's overall understanding of some concept. The teacher may try to

give the students particular attention and extra-time for explanation, but the student may seem low at grasping for his mind is elsewhere. This could be attributed to little or no discipline at home or psychological problem.

### **Parental Problems**

Parents are normally happy and feel a sense of pride and fulfillment, knowing that their children are learning English but most parents offer little encouragement. The reinforcement of meaningful experiences in the English language learning process of a child is very important. Most parents only provide little opportunities for their children to practice English in real life situation (Cowley, 1972), some of these students from school go home to help their parents hawk wares. This brings these students among the illiterate lots who cannot even speak the sub-standard variety of English thus causing the students to speak in their mother tongue. This also makes the classroom and schools the only ground for such students.

### **Inefficiency or Insufficiency of Teachers' Methods and Materials**

The base of educational pyramid is the primary school. The problems are therefore crucial and needs immediate solutions. Most importantly is the problem of inadequate provision of qualified teachers. The widening and

deepening of these teachers studies in the language also is vital due to the fact that they are the imparter of this knowledge (English) and it is what is imparted that reflects in the students. This should be given serious thought (Bright and McGregor, 1986; Ahmad and Odiwo, 1999).

It is common to think of learning as something that takes place in school, but much of human learning occurs outside the classroom, and people continue to learn throughout their lives.

Because learning continues throughout our lives and affects almost everything we do, the study of learning is important in many different fields. Teachers need to understand the best ways to educate children. Psychologists, social workers, criminologists and other human-service workers need to understand how certain experiences change people's behaviours. Employers, politicians and advertisers make use of the principles of learning to influence the behavior of workers, voters and consumers.

Learning is closely related to memory, which is the storage of information in the brain. Psychologists who study memory are interested in how the brain stores knowledge, where this storage takes place, and how the

brain later retrieves knowledge when we need it. In contrast, psychologists who study learning are more interested in behavior and how behavior changes as a result of a person's experiences.

There are many forms of learning, ranging from simple to complex. Simple forms of learning involve a single stimulus. A stimulus is anything perceptible to the senses, such as sight, sound, smell, touch or taste. In a form of learning known as classical conditioning, people learn to associate two stimuli that occur in sequence such as lightning followed by thunder, in operant conditioning, people learn by forming an association between a behavior and its consequences (reward or punishment). People and animals can also learn by observation that is, by watching others perform behaviours. More complex forms of learning include learning languages, concepts and motor skills.

### **Forms of Learning**

Although psychologists who study learning have focused the most attention on classical conditioning, operant condition, and observational learning, they have also studied other types of learning, including language learning, learning by listening and reading, concept formation, and the

learning of motor skills. These types of learning will involve the principles of conditioning and observational learning, but they are worth considering separately because of their importance in everyday life.

### **Language Learning**

Learning to speak and understand a language is one of the most complex types of learning, yet all normal children master this skill in the first few years of their lives. The familiar principles of shaping, reinforcement, generalization, discrimination, and observational learning all play a role in a child's language learning. However, in the 1950s American linguist Noam Chomsky proposed that these basic principles of learning could not explain how children learn to speak so well and so rapidly. Chomsky theorized that humans have a unique and inborn capacity to extract word meanings, sentence instruction, and grammatical rules from the complex streams of sounds they hear. Although Chomsky's theory is controversial, it has received some support from scientific evidence that specific parts of the human brain are essential for language. When these areas of the brain are damaged, a person loses the ability to speak or comprehend language.

## **Learning by Listening and Reading**

Because people communicate through language, they can learn vast amounts of information by listening to others and by reading. Learning through the spoken or written word is similar to observational learning, because it allows people to learn not simply from their own experiences, but also from the experiences of others. For example, by listening to a parent or instructor, children can learn to avoid busy streets and to cross the street at crosswalks without first experiencing any positive or negative consequences. By listening to and observing others, children can learn skills such as tying a shoelace, swinging a baseball bat, or paddling a canoe. Listening to the teacher and reading are essential parts of most classroom learning.

Much of what we read and hear is quickly forgotten. Learning new information requires that we retain the information in memory and later be able to retrieve it. The process of forming long-term memories is complex, depending on the nature of the original information and on how a person rehearses or reviews the information.

## **Learning Motor Skills**

A motor skill is the ability to perform a coordinated set of physical movements. Examples of motor skills include handwriting, typing, playing a musical instrument, driving a car, and most sports skills. Learning a motor skill is usually a gradual process that requires practice and feedback. Learners need feedback from a teacher or coach to tell them which movements they are performing well and which need improvement. While learning a new motor skill, the learner should direct full attention to the task. Some motor skills, if learned well, can be performed automatically. For example, a skilled typist can type quickly and accurately without thinking about every keystroke.

### **Strategies to Improve Low Academic Performance**

The trend of general poor performance in English language is not peculiar to Nigerian students and schools. It is worldwide problems existing even in developed countries like America. For example, Graves (1977) complained about the poor state of English language in American schools. Harwood (1980) in [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) in acknowledging the problem in English went further to explain that English situation in American school was a gloomy one. With the performance of students in

English language declining steadily in the senior secondary schools in Kaduna, teachers, parents, curriculum experts and evaluators are worried. Against this backdrop, the study was set up to provide strategies to improve on the low academic performance in English language in Kaduna.

The strategies are divided into five (5) parts:

Strategy 1: Intensify learning

Strategy 2: Provide professional development to ensure skilled teachers.

Strategy 3: Expand learning options

Strategy 4: Assess to inform teachers

Strategy 5: Intervene early and often.

Strategy 1 Research indicates making assignment easier is no solution to poor performance. Simpler lesson offers no assurance that students will achieve better test scores. Intensifying learning on the other hand, affords better results. A recent study conducted by the consortium in Chicago School Research underscores the assertion that students who are given more challenging critical thinking higher quality, tougher assignments out perform less-challenged students on standardized tests (Newmann, Bryk & Nagaoka, 2001 January) in Beyond Social Promotion and Retention. Intensifying

learning helps build high-achieving schools, which in turn are most likely to produce successful, high-achieving students.

High achieving schools are rigorous schools; they develop rigorous standard, a rich curriculum knowledgeable and skilled teachers and meaningful learning experience as essential element (Wheelock, 1998).

***Rigorous Standard:*** Having a clearly defined set of standards helps teachers concentrate on instructions, make clear to students and parents grade level expectations and ensure that students are prepared for the next grade.

***Effective Teachers:*** Hiring effective and well trained teachers is one of the most important measures schools can take to intensify learning for all students. Outside of the home environment, teachers are the number resources in helping students succeed. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's future (Darling-Hammond, 1997); teachers' expertise has a direct correlation on high student achievement. "Student who have high effective teachers three years in a row scores on much as 50 percentile points higher on achievement test than those who have ineffective teachers for three years in a row".

Darling-Hammond (1998) effective teacher “knows the content they are teaching, engage students in learning and challenge them to greater accomplishments.”

***Meaning Learning:*** Skilled teachers intensify learning by providing authentic instruction and meaningful assignments while holding high expectation for all students. Such assignments deal with the significant concepts of a discipline, incorporate higher-order thinking skills, and are connected to the “real world” and allow substantial time for discussion and ideal sharing among student (Peterson, 1995).

Furthermore, teachers can employ several learning models to create active learning environment that reflect a shift in the relations among teachers, students and knowledge. Active environments require collaboration and communication and encourage more analysis, synthesis and evaluation that the traditional classrooms.

***Strategy 2: Provide Professional Development to Ensure Skilled Teachers:***

High quality professional development is intricately linked to improved teaching and learning. In the fields ranging from English, Mathematics and Science to early childhood, elementary, vocational, and gifted education,

teachers who are fully prepared and certified in both their discipline and in education are more highly related and more successful with student than are teacher without preparation.

Professional development proves more effective when it involves teachers working with colleagues on integrating standard and revising curriculum, working with diverse population and changing forms of student assessment (Cook & Fine, 1997; Darling Hammond, 1997).

Darling – Hammond (1997) recommends organizing teacher professional development around standard for students, teachers, creating, and funding mentoring programs for beginning teachers, allocating state and local spending to support high-quality professional development, and embedding professional development on the daily work of teachers through joint planning, study group, peer coaching and research.

Teaching is a complex activity that requires substantial time to implement, assess and refine instructional techniques. Finding time for such activities as study groups, action research, coaching and collaboration must be a priority for all schools (Cook and Fine; Darling – Hammond, 1997).

### ***Strategy 3: Expand Learning Option***

With the diverse population of students in schools today, educators must strive to create a system that reflect and celebrates diversity and allows children to reach high standards. Educators can provide new path to learning by providing more learning options for students. Not all children learn in the same way, or in the same time.

One way schools can create expanded learning paths is through flexible scheduling. By reorganizing the school day or school year, educator can more effectively use time to support all learners and participate in ongoing professional development.

Teachers can expand learning options by reorganizing or differentiating instruction. At its most basic levels differentiation consist of effort of teachers to respond to variance among learners in the classroom. Whenever a teacher reaches out to an individual or small group to vary his or her teaching in order to create the best learning experience possible, that teacher is differentiating instruction, the success of differentiation rests on several key principles:

Differentiation must occur with high-quality curriculum and instruction, assessment and instruction, all students participate in respectful work, the teacher understands, appreciates and build upon student differences.

To expand learning options, two methods of reorganizing class groupings are effective:

*Multiage grouping:* In which children of different ages are grouped in a single classroom and remain with the same teacher for more than one year.

*Looping:* In which a teacher stays with a class of children for two or more grade levels. Teachers who are trained to work with mixed aged and ability groupings, multiage classrooms can accommodate variations in learning, performance, paces of learning and they can foster sustained, caring relationship. Teachers working in multiage classrooms can maximize learning time, because they know their students learning and social needs at the beginning of each year. No time is wasted on long review period. Children in multiage classroom show academic progress over time that equal or exceeds that of their peers in same age classroom.

Looping allows teachers and children to stay together for longer period and reaps many of the same benefits seen in multiage grouping.

#### ***Strategy 4: Assess to Inform Teachers***

The primary aim of assessment is to foster worthwhile learning for all students (Porter 1995) by guiding classroom instruction. Assessment that provides detailed information about students' academic progress, including what they know, what they can do, how they learn and where they are having problems, can ensure that children instructional needs are met.

M.C Collum et al (1999) recommends the use of performed assessment and informal assessment tool (such as rubrics, checklist and anecdotal records) to guide instructions and better inform teaching. Such assessment provides information about the way children think. What they understand and strategies used in their learning. To be truly effective, alternatively performance based assessment should be continuous throughout the school year. Student assessment must be ongoing and feed on daily decisions that teachers make regarding appropriate instruction and student assistance.

#### ***Strategy 5: Intervene Early and Often***

If students are to be held accountable for their academic performance and held high educational standards, school must provide adequate opportunities for students to meet expectations on time.

The key to such intervention strategies are identifying children early on who need extra help and providing a number of ways for students to receive support. For example, early reading intervention programs can provide intensive support at the onset of a child's school career.

In addition to early intervention, schools need to give children different ways to achieve success. Offering an array of intensive intervention throughout the grades school will ensure support is available to children who were not identified early, who need extended opportunities to succeed. Regardless of how schools extent time, numerous options exist for using it effectively.

Providing one-on-one tutoring with a teacher or cross age tutoring with an extra period on the problem subject area (double-dosing) and giving special assistance and targeted services to students with learning disabilities and other special needs.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, an attempt is made to highlight the basic methods procedure that will be use by the research to conduct the study. These are research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, research instrument, procedure for data collection and method of data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

The information required the purpose of this study was already available, no manipulation of any variable is required. Therefore, expost-facto research design was sued. In this design, an assessment of students performance in English language was looked into.

#### **Population of the Study**

The target population of this study were teachers of English language in junior and senior secondary in Kaduna North zone who also participate in the junior and senior school certificate examination over the past three years. And also the students of the junior and senior secondary schools in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

## **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

For the purpose of selecting the sample for this study, two secondary schools in Kaduna North local government were randomly selected. Using purposive sampling from the population. The schools listed above were schools under the Local government under study. It is on this basis that five (5) schools were selected for this study, the schools were as follows:

<i>Junior Secondary Schools</i>	<i>Senior Secondary Schools</i>
Ekosodin Primary School	Ekosodin Secondary School
Impact Academy, Evbomore	Impact Academy, Evbomore

## **Research Instrument**

Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection for this study. The researcher developed a questionnaire for the study made up of two (2) sections. Section 'A' is on personal data of the respondents consists of six (6) items these are age, gender, marital status, highest educational qualification, rank and years of experience. Section 'B' on Assessment of students performance in English Literature at the Senior secondary schools in Kaduna North in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

### **Validity of the Instrument**

Expert and supervisor were contacted for necessary corrections, constructive criticism, to validate the instrument and suggestions were effected thus certifying the content validity.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

A pilot study was carried out with 5 respondents from Rimi College Kaduna and 5 from Government Junior Secondary School, Kawo to pre-test the efficacy of the questionnaire. The 10 respondents did not form the main investigation. The respondents were requested to indicate their responses to each question by ticking one of the responses built on the likert 5-point scale. This was to ensure that individual organization about the role of teacher in classroom management.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researcher used primary method of gathering data for this study. Questionnaire was the instrument used in data collection. 40 questions were written in simple English and distributed to the sample or target population of respondents. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents and

a grace of one day was given to enable them fill and return the questionnaires.

Questionnaires was used because it is a simple and easy method of gathering data as well as provide the researcher with information that are of significance to the research work.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

This research adopted simple percentage as statistical technique to analyze and interpret the results. The adoption of this method by the researcher is test the variability of the performance in English language.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION AND**  
**FINDINGINS**

**Introduction**

The data presented in this chapter was obtained from the responses of teachers of English language of the selected secondary schools. The responses cover the area of low academic performance in English language.

**Presentation of Results**

The sum of forty (40) questionnaires were administered to the teachers, thirty eight (38) were returned representing nine five (95) percent and two representing five (5%), percent were not returned. Below is the analysis of questionnaires sent, returned and not returned.

**Table 1: *Analysis of Questionnaires distributed***

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Returned	38	95
Unreturned	2	5
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>40</i></b>	<b><i>100%</i></b>

Out of the 40 questionnaires distributed out, 38 representing 95% were returned while the remaining 2 representing 5% were not returned for reasons best known to them.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Male	16	42
Female	22	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table reveals that 16 representing 42% of the respondents are male, while the remaining 22 representing 58% of the respondents are female. This implies that majority of the respondents are female.

**Table 3: How long have you been teaching English language?**

<i>Types of Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Less than a year	5	13.2
1 -3 years	9	23.7
3 – 5 years	10	26.3
5 years and above	14	36.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table indicates that 5 representing 13.2 of the respondents have been teaching English language for less than one year. 9 representing 23.7% of the respondents have been for less than three years. 10 representing 26.3% have taught English language for almost five years and fourteen representing 36.8% of the respondents have been teaching English for more than five years.

**Table 4: The responses of teachers in line with additional training since they took up their appointment.**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Yes	38	100
No	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table indicates that thirty-eight representing 100% of the respondents have not any form of training to enhance their performance in the teaching of English language since they took up their performance in the teaching of English language since they took up their appointment with the state.

**Table 5: Responses of the teachers in respect to the availability of facilities for teaching English language**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Yes	-	-
No	38	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table indicates that all the respondents representing 100% ascertain that there are no facilities in place for teaching of English language.

**Table 6: The responses of teachers in respect to method used in teaching English language**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Traditional method	38	100
Others	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table indicates that thirty-eight 100% of the respondents, no other method of teaching English language except the traditional method.

**Table 7: The Responses of teacher in accordance with motivation in teaching English language**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Traditional method	-	-
Others	38	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table indicates that no thirty-eight representing 100% of the respondents has been motivated in any way aside their monthly salary.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Findings in the study have pointed out that poorly trained English language teacher, poor instructional delivery and lack of motivation for the teachers are most critical factors associated with student poor performance. Therefore, there is need for a serious concern as these poorly trained

teachers are employed to teach and prepare the secondary school student for the outside world.

Findings in the study have pointed out that poorly trained English language teacher and poor instructional delivery are most critical factors associated with student poor performance. This harmful poor performance has being a source of concern to parent and stakeholders in education. This finding agree with the findings of Dabalen et al (2000) who in there world bank report scored Nigeria grade low in English language. They stated that the percentage of unemployment in the metropolitan area in Nigeria is because of poor quality of the graduates, particularly in the communication skills. According to them, this graduate exhibit “poor ability in the oral and written expression in English language”. Therefore, there is need for a serious concern as these poorly trained teachers employed to teach and prepare the secondary school student for the outside world. Their poor training background also have serious implication for instructional delivery. What do you expect of the students’ performance in English language? Your guess is as good as mine. Of course a woeful performance.

Lack of infrastructural facilities was established to be associated with students' low performance in English language. Many of the students come from a technologically advanced home where all sort of modern gadgets such as radios, television sets, films videos, satellites exist. These same students find themselves in boring and rowdy traditional classrooms, which hardly have any facilities. The classrooms are usually poorly equipped and in most cases dilapidated. It is not surprising, therefore, that these students perform poorly. Criticism are made to teachers' attitude towards innovation. This is because they have failed to take into account the dynamic nature of English language curriculum. One must also point to the fact that teachers have continue to bore students definition and drills in grammar, vocabulary and speech work. The traditional content/knowledge oriented curriculum is still very much practiced.

These teachers have also clung fast to the old-fashioned ways and have refused to embrace the new trend of the total curriculum experience of the modern teacher. Pring (1976) and Onwuka (1985) had criticized the content/knowledge oriented curriculum like the one practiced by the teachers

of English language. Such curriculum does not go beyond merely imparting knowledge to the students.

Trifonovitch (1981) had also explained that students are usually placed in a disadvantageous position when they learn a second language. To crown it all, the general students' apathy in English language may be occasion and worsened by the poorly trained teachers in whose care they are entrusted in the classroom. The unchallenging classroom and teachers poor attitude toward innovation in the instructional delivery process also contributes to the general students' apathy in the subject, and consequently poor performance in school Certificate Examination in English language.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary**

This research work is concern with the study of strategy for improving low academic performance in English language by proffering possible solution to the following questions:

- What are the attitude/feeling of the student towards the studying of English language?
- What account for the decline in performance of the subject (English Language)?
- Do they have enough material and human resource for the teaching and learning process?
- Is the subject well understood when taught?
- Thus, the SSCE English language syllabus has either a positive or a negative effect on the student.

#### **Conclusion**

The study has examined the factors associated with student low academic performance in English language. The result of the study showed

that all the respondents agreed that poorly trained English language teachers, poor instructional delivery, lack of infrastructural facilities, teachers' attitude towards innovation, the traditional content/knowledge oriented curriculum and the general students' apathy in English language.

Writing in a second language can and does inform classroom practice. It has focused on the complexity of writing and the interplay of the various issues that must be addressed by teachers and learners who approach writing in a second language. There has been considerable interplay in recent years between research into writing and learning and instruction in writing. Much of the research has direct relevance to the classroom, and classroom practice and observation are the source of many research studies. The rising profile of second language writing and particularly of writing for academic purposes has also led to proliferation of resources aimed at both teachers and students.

### **Recommendations**

In order to enhance students' performance in English language, the following recommendations are hereby projected:

1. Training for English language teachers should be identified. In addition to the pedagogy, teacher trainees should be open to the elements of more content area in English language.
2. A good teaching of English language should be combination of the use of relevant and adequate instructional facilities that will ensure mastery of English skills.
3. Government should provide favourable classroom environment and laboratory that will stimulate teaching and learning of English language in our secondary schools.
4. English language teachers should engage more in diagnostic approach to the planning of educational experiences and activities for their students. Such experience and activities should match students' interest, motivation and level of understanding. In fact, teachers should make learning of English language meaningful and vivid for the students.
5. Having also discussed that mother tongue in school contributes or influence student performance in English language should be used as a medium of communication within and outside the classroom. Both

teachers and student should endeavour to improve their proficiency level of the language.

6. Teachers need to do more than teaching theories in the class. Proper method of teaching and appropriate instructional materials should be adopted to compliment teacher's knowledge this goes a long way in influencing teaching and learning process in English language. Materials selected should be commensurable with grade or maturity level of student.
7. Good teaching habit and library study should also be developed in the students. Students should be encouraged to approach reading with alertness and critical mind. They should be made to develop taste for books that are significant in the achievement of good result in English language.
8. Schools should organize debate and essay competition among students within and outside their schools. Student should also be given the opportunity to explain point and the teacher without any intimidation should correct express views in class discussion and any error made, as

these will enhance a proper evaluation of learners' performance or progress in English language.

9. Provision of well-equipped library should be made in the schools and community. Textbooks that are useful in English language should be of great amount in the library to augment student efforts.
10. Teachers must continually update their knowledge within their discipline. They must keep information about new methods and materials that will make their teaching more effective. These can be achieved by participating in in-service courses, workshops, participating in and attending professional meetings and embarking on postgraduate program, which can extend their present knowledge as well as expose them to areas within which they have no previous contact.

Above all, if all the recommendations are adhered to, there will be great improvement on students' performance in English language.

## **Suggestions for Further Studies**

It is not enough to propose strategies on improving low academic performance but also being able to implement it effectively. Therefore, it is suggested that further research in the area of implementing the strategies for improving low academic performance.

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## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS FACULTY OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF BENIN BENIN CITY

Dear Sir/Ma,

#### REQUEST FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE IN FILLING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

I am an undergraduate student in the department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Benin. This research is titled “Strategies for Improving Low Academic Performance in English Language in Secondary Schools” Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State”. Please note that any information provided shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. Many thanks, as I appreciate your sincere and genuine reactions to the questions.

**Name of Researcher: Osayuwu Efe Benedicta**

#### SECTION A: Personal Data

Please Kindly tick  the box closest to the answer:

1. Sex: Male  Female
2. Age: 20-25 years  21-25years  25 years and above
3. Marital Status: Single  Married  Divorced
4. Religion: Christianity  Islam  Traditional  Others
5. Educational Qualifications: Secondary  Tertiary  Others

#### SECTION B: Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State

In this section, please tick the option to the question that best describes your opinion, by rating how true each of the following is to you on these two (2) point-scale. Key: YES, OR NO

1. Have you heard of “strategies for improving low performance”? Yes ( ) No ( )
2. Is low performance in English language a problem? Yes ( ) No ( )
3. Are there functional libraries in every secondary school in the local government area Yes ( ) No ( ) Not sure ( )
4. Are there functional libraries in secondary schools? Yes ( ) No ( )

5. Do you think establishment of functional libraries will help curb the problem of low performance? Yes ( ) No ( )
6. Do you think adequate manpower can help curb the problem of low performance? Yes ( ) No ( )
7. Do you think the establishment of well-ventilated lecture theatre can improve teaching and learning? Yes ( ) No ( ) Not sure ( )
8. Do you think the establishment of well-spacious classroom can improve teaching and learning Yes ( ) No ( )
9. Do you think teachers, parents and students are aware of e-library? Yes ( ) No ( )
10. Do you think having functional libraries can help improve teaching and learning? Yes ( ) No ( )
11. Do you think they are very much aware about its use? Yes ( ) No ( )
12. Do you think the sensitization will be helpful? Yes ( ) No ( )
13. Do you think our classrooms are large enough to enhance the teaching and learning process? Yes ( ) No ( )
14. Do you think there are adequate furniture in our classrooms/lecture halls? Yes ( ) No ( )
15. Do you think having adequate furniture in our classrooms can improve teaching and learning? Yes ( ) No ( )
16. Do you think reduction in class number of students can help improve teaching and learning? Yes ( ) No ( )