

# Challenges facing Teaching and Learning of English Language in Public Secondary Schools in Enugu State Nigeria

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## Abstract

*English language is the official language and a very important language in Nigeria. The teaching and learning of English is important for Nigerian students especially in the secondary school level. This study sought to examine the existing challenges to effective teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools. The specific objectives included to identify government factors that contribute to inadequate teaching and learning of English language in the schools; identify student based factors that contribute to challenges of teaching and learning of English language; assess teachers' related factors that affect teaching and learning of English language and ascertain school administration/management based factors that contribute to the challenges. The study adopted survey research method and hundred questionnaires were used. Data were analysed with the use of descriptive statistics (mean) in SPSS. Respondents agreed that government based challenges that impede effective teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools included that government provide heavy workload and curriculum ( $\bar{x}=2.9$ ) and governments do not provide sufficient learning materials ( $\bar{x}=2.6$ ) among others. The students based challenges included that students have anxiety and fear for the subject ( $\bar{x}=2.7$ ) and students have less motivation for English lessons ( $\bar{x}=2.4$ ). Teachers based challenges to effective teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools were that teachers were not well qualified ( $\bar{x}=2.9$ ) and teachers do not use adequate teaching methods and instructional materials ( $\bar{x}=2.8$ ) among others. The school administration based factors that contribute challenges to effective teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools were poor planning of learning structures ( $\bar{x}=2.9$ ), the school administrators provide malfunctioning or inappropriate curriculum ( $\bar{x}=2.9$ ) among others. Hence government needs to provide less workload, relevant curriculum, sufficient learning materials and adequate training for the teachers. Students need to reduce their fear and anxiety, become highly motivated to learn English and practice the use of the language on their own, among others.*

**Keywords: Teaching; Nigeria; Secondary, English**

## Introduction

Teaching and learning of English language is very important in schools because of the usefulness of the language. English is seen as a lingua franca of the world languages and this case has emphasized the importance of teaching and learning of English language in schools all over the world (Solak & Bayar, 2015). Owolabi & Nnaji (2013) stated that, English is an irresistible language as far as development is concerned because "for any nation particularly in the 3rd

world to be relevant and derive the maximum benefit from the opportunities that abound in every area of human need, for personal advancement and national development, English is a *sine qua non*". Teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging task in developing countries in general (Akbari, 2015) and Africa in particular. English language is originally the language of the Angles which is later adopted as the language of classroom, government, business and commerce, education, mass media, literature and internal as well as external communication in Nigeria and most African countries (Fatiloro, 2015). English is very useful for education, business, job performance, communications and many other uses in Africa.

It is important to teach English language in secondary schools in Africa and Nigeria in particular. English language is the official language in Nigeria and medium of instruction in Nigerian schools. Teaching and learning of English language is fundamental for secondary schools in Nigeria. English language is considered by many as the international language (Akbari, 2015). The secondary schools prepare students for university educations in Nigeria. It is a fundamental level of education that lays foundation for admission and choice of career options for students in Nigeria. Secondary school curriculum in Nigeria is designed to encourage all students to achieve their career, intellectual and social potential as well as to understand the relevance of learning in their daily lives (Ahmadi & Lukman, 2015). English and the use of English are compulsory in entrance examinations for all candidates seeking admissions into the universities (Oribabor, 2014). For students of engineering, medicine, accounting, and economics as well as other formal disciplines in the university, English language is compulsory as a pre-requisite for entering into the university (Oribabor, 2014). Hence, effective teaching and learning of English Language is highly recommended for students in Nigeria.

A critical examination of the level of teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools shows that it has not been effectively taught in secondary schools. **Students continue to fail English language in the secondary school certificate examinations. The 2018 senior school certificate examination result showed that 68, 002, representing 21.61%, failed English Language (Daily Post, 2018).** The ineffective teaching of English language in Secondary schools has led to students' poor performance in public and private examinations. Researchers have also come to know that some participant students have faced difficulties because of lack of material on English lessons (Solak & Bayar, 2015). Researchers also recognized the importance of structure of language in English teaching and learning process (Solak & Bayar, 2015). It is difficult for the teachers who are not the native speakers to teach English hence the situation is not satisfactory, particularly in rural areas (Teevno, 2011). In the view of the worrisome mass failure, this study sought to investigate the possible causes of the poor teaching and learning of English language in the schools. The study specifically sought to identify government factors that contribute to inadequate teaching and learning of English language in the schools; identify student based factors that contribute to challenges of teaching and learning of English language; assess teachers' related factors that affect teaching and learning of English language and ascertain school administration/management based factors that contribute to the challenges.

## **Methodology**

The study was carried out in Enugu State, Nigeria. The State is bounded in the northeast by Ebonyi State, on the north by Benue and Kogi States and to the west by Anambra State from which it was carved out in 1991 and in the south it borders with Abia State (Ogbonna and Agwu,

2013). Administratively, Enugu State is divided into 19 Local Government Areas including Isi-Uzo LGA. The study adopted survey research method because it focuses on opinions, attitude, motivation and perceptions. All public secondary schools in Isi-Uzo LGA constituted the population for this study. Multistage sampling method was used to select the sample for the study. In the first stage, Isi-Uzo Local government area (LGA) of the State was selected out of the 19 LGAs in the State. In the second stage, five communities (Neke, Mbu, Ikem, Eha-amufu, Umualor) that made up the LGA were selected. In the third stage, one public secondary school was selected from each LGA making a total of five schools for the study. In the last stage, 20 respondents including students, teachers and school administrators were selected from each school making a total of 100 respondents for this study.

Hundred questionnaires were administered to school administrators, teachers and students (twenty questionnaires were administered to Five English teachers and 15 students in each school). Hence hundred completed questionnaire were used for the study. The instrument was validated by specialists in the field of education. It was also pre-tested in order to include missing information. The questionnaire was divided into four sections based on the objectives of the study. Possible teachers-related factors; students-related factors; government-related factors and school administrative factors were listed for the respondent to select on a four point Likert-type scale of strongly agree (4), agree(3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1). Data were analysed with the use of descriptive statistics (mean) in SPSS. Mean responses of 2.5 and above were accepted as the contributing factors while responses with mean scores below 2.5 were rejected.

## Results and Discussions

### Government based challenges to effective teaching and learning of English Language

Information in Table 1 show that the respondents agreed that government based challenges that impede effective teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools included that government provide heavy workload and curriculum ( $\bar{x}$ =2.9), governments do not provide sufficient learning materials ( $\bar{x}$ =2.6), teachers do not get adequate training from government ( $\bar{x}$ =2.6), among others.

**Table 1: Government based challenges**

| <b>Government-related factors</b>  | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Mean (x)</b> | <b>Remark</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Government provide heavy workload and curriculum                         | 30                    | 37           | 28              | 5                        | 2.9             | Agreed        |
| Governments do not provide sufficient learning materials                 | 21                    | 26           | 45              | 10                       | 2.6             | Agreed        |
| Government do not provide conducive classrooms and learning environments | 15                    | 29           | 30              | 26                       | 2.3             | Disagreed     |
| Teachers do not get adequate training from government                    | 25                    | 25           | 34              | 16                       | 2.6             | Agreed        |
| Salaries are paid appropriately  | 12                    | 26           | 39              | 23                       | 2.4             | Disagreed     |

|  |    |    |    |    |     |        |
|--|----|----|----|----|-----|--------|
| Provide in-service training for teachers | 11 | 10 | 33 | 46 | 1.9 | Agreed |
|--|----|----|----|----|-----|--------|

This agrees with Nwanyanwu (2017) that regular workshops will give teachers of English the opportunities to meet, discuss and practice with colleagues and help them develop professional awareness which is required to make personal decisions in helping learners improve in their classrooms. Results imply that for effective teaching and learning of English language, the government need to provide less workload, relevant curriculum, sufficient learning materials and adequate training for the teachers.

### **Student based challenges to effective teaching and learning of English language**

Entries in Table 2 show that according to respondents the students based challenges that impede effective teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools included that students have anxiety and fear for the subject ( $\bar{x}=2.7$ ) and students have less motivation for English lessons ( $\bar{x}=2.4$ ), Students do not practice use of English ( $\bar{x}=2.4$ ), among others.

**Table 2: Students based challenges**

| <b>Students-related factors</b>                  | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Mean (x)</b> | <b>Remark</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Students have anxiety and fear for the subject   | 23                    | 42           | 20              | 17                       | 2.7             | Agreed        |
| High motivation for English lessons              | 19                    | 28           | 39              | 17                       | 2.4             | Disagreed     |
| Students practice use of English                 | 14                    | 31           | 38              | 17                       | 2.4             | Disagreed     |
| Students family background motivate them         | 20                    | 15           | 41              | 24                       | 2.3             | Disagreed     |
| Irregular classes/Absenteeism to by students     | 30                    | 33           | 20              | 17                       | 2.7             | Agreed        |
| Lack of interest and self-confidence by students | 33                    | 32           | 25              | 10                       | 2.7             | Agreed        |

This agrees with Nwanyanwu (2017) that English is different from these indigenous languages as English can only be learnt in schools in the classrooms where it is taught as a subject hence the majority of learners of English in Nigeria hardly practise English after school and in fact outside the classrooms. It further agrees with Nwanyanwu (2017) that learners quickly revert to their mother tongues once they escape the classrooms or in the case of Nigeria to pidgin which now has the unofficial status of lingua franca for most Nigerian students in Secondary Schools, especially in the cities; as they hang out with their peer group. It also agrees with Fatiloro (2015) that English language learners experience mother tongue interference phenomenon which deals with problems a learner encounters when he transfers the acquired skills in his native or indigenous language to his second language. It further agrees with Muhammad, Ya'u, Aliyu and Hassan (2018) that most students are not interested in learning the language and do not listen to

their teacher and do not learn anything, even if they learn something they will forget it quickly, because they are tired of its repetition. These imply that for effective teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools, students need to reduce their fear and anxiety, become highly motivated to learn English and practice the use of the language on their own.

### **Teachers based challenges to effective teaching and learning of English Language**

Data in Table 3 shows that the respondents agreed that teachers based challenges to ineffective teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools were that teachers were not well qualified ( $\bar{x}=2.9$ ), Teachers do not use adequate teaching methods and instructional materials ( $\bar{x}=2.8$ ) and teachers find it difficult to teach due to the structure ( $\bar{x}=3.2$ ) among others.

**Table 3: Teachers based challenges to effective teaching and learning of English Language**

| <b>Teachers-related factors</b>   | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>)</b> | <b>Remark</b> |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| The teachers of are not well unqualified                                  | 26                    | 46           | 18              | 10                       | 2.9                                | Agreed        |
| Teachers do not use adequate teaching methods and instructional materials | 23                    | 47           | 17              | 13                       | 2.8                                | Agreed        |
| Teachers find it difficult to teach due to the structure                  | 45                    | 33           | 15              | 7                        | 3.2                                | Agreed        |
| Teachers are not well paid  | 30                    | 33           | 36              | 1                        | 2.9                                | Agreed        |
| Teachers have less interest in their jobs                                 | 35                    | 34           | 13              | 18                       | 2.9                                | Agreed        |
| Teachers do not have heavy workload                                       | 10                    | 11           | 46              | 33                       | 1.9                                | Disagreed     |

This agrees with Nwanyanwu (2017) that most teachers of English lack or have no basic skill teaching practice, sufficient exposure and mastery of the structure of English language; related to the above is low levels of personal language proficiency and lack of understanding of second language pedagogy. It further agrees with Muhammad *et al*, (2018), that teachers should be trained keeping in view the changes made in the curriculum and more creative exercises based on four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) should be included in the text book of English. The findings imply that teachers should be adequately prepared and continuously trained especially on how to use different teaching methods and structures for teaching and learning of English language.

### **School Administration based challenges effective teaching and learning of English Language**

Table 4 shows that the respondents agreed that school administration based factors that contribute challenges to effective teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools were poor planning of learning structures ( $\bar{x}=2.9$ ), the school administrators provide malfunctioning or inappropriate curriculum ( $\bar{x}=2.9$ ), Administrators give heavy workload to teachers ( $\bar{x}=2.7$ ), they recruit insufficient number of qualified teachers ( $\bar{x}=2.8$ ) among others.

**Table 4: School administration based challenges**

| <b>School administration factors</b>               | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Mean (x)</b> | <b>Remark</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Poor planning of learning structures               | 34                    | 31           | 23              | 12                       | 2.9             | Agreed        |
| Provide malfunctioning or inappropriate curriculum | 17                    | 63           | 13              | 5                        | 2.9             | Agreed        |
| High availability of appropriate materials         | 10                    | 27           | 46              | 11                       | 2.3             | Disagreed     |
| No infrastructures and facilities                  | 37                    | 30           | 14              | 11                       | 2.7             | Agreed        |
| Administrators give heavy workload to teachers     | 42                    | 25           | 18              | 15                       | 2.7             | Agreed        |
| Insufficient number of qualified teachers          | 33                    | 30           | 25              | 13                       | 2.8             | Agreed        |

This agrees with Muhammad *et al.*, (2018) that the administrators should try to motivate teachers for attending the classes regularly and make use of English language in the class. It further agrees with Muhammad *et al.*, (2018) that they should try to provide required facilities in the schools and professional assistance to the teachers. The implications of these findings include that for effective teaching and learning of English language, the school administration need to properly plan the learning structures, provide appropriate curriculum, reduce workload for the teachers and recruit sufficient number of qualified teachers among others.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This study recognised the need to look at the reasons for failure and ineffective teaching of English Language in secondary schools in Nigeria. This arises from the need to provide information on various challenges that need to be tackled for more effective teaching and learning of English in the schools. This study concludes that certain factors contribute to challenges to effective teaching and learning of English language in the State. Government based challenges that impede effective teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools included that government provide heavy workload and curriculum and insufficient learning materials among others. On the students' part, they have anxiety and fear and less motivation for English lessons. Teachers were not well qualified and do not use adequate teaching methods and instructional materials among others. The school administration had poor planning of learning structures, provide malfunctioning or inappropriate curriculum among others.

For effective teaching and learning of English language, the government needs to provide less workload, relevant curriculum, sufficient learning materials and adequate training for the teachers. Students need to reduce their fear and anxiety, become highly motivated to learn English and practice the use of the language on their own. Teachers should be adequately prepared and continuously trained especially on how to use different teaching methods and structures for teaching and learning of English language. The school administration need to

properly plan the learning structures, provide appropriate curriculum, reduce workload for the teachers and recruit sufficient number of qualified teachers among others.

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