

## CHALLENGES IN LEARNING ENGLISH FOR HAUSA STUDENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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**Abstract:** The present study was designed to investigate the problems faced by students in Learning of English at Northern Nigerian Secondary school. The study was limited to public secondary school in Sokoto State of Nigeria. It was observed that in recent times the governments provided a lot of facilities including free training programs for the teachers at secondary level but the Teaching and learning of English is not up to mark. Eighty (80) participants were used for the study which includes 40 male and 40 female. Questionnaires were administered to students. Outcome of the analysis shows that teachers had no proper training of teaching English, proper facilities were not provided and curriculum was not according to the needs of students. These reasons hindered the teaching and learning process of English.

**Keywords:** Difficulties, Students, English, Northern Nigeria

### INTRODUCTION

Language is a very important means of communication. It is very difficult to think of a society without language. It sharpens people's thoughts, guides and controls their entire activity. It is a carrier of civilization and culture (Bolinger, 1968). In the case of the mother tongue, the child learns it easily, due to the favourable environment and by the great amount of exposure to the language. But, learning a second language requires conscious efforts to learn it and the exposure to the second language in most cases is limited (Bose, 2007). Majority of the students have favoured classroom instruction for the second language acquisition (James, 1996). There are so many

factors affect the process of learning a second language, including attitude, self-confidence, motivation, duration of exposure to the language, classroom conditions, environment, family background, and availability of competent teachers (Verghese, 2009). Here the authors took up a study on analysing the various reasons for the problems faced by the second language learner. The reasons identified were: environment, attitude and teacher's competence. Environment and family background play vital role in success of learning process. For example, in Nigerian Northern region, where majority of the people are farmers, have the poor background in education. Moreover, the income of majority of the families is not adequate. Hence, the parents are not interested in giving good education background to their children. In contrast, they are willing to engage the children in some jobs in order to earn money. This is the very basic reason and the affecting factor in teaching. Attitude is yet another affective factor in learning a second language. Attitude is the way that you think and feel about something. The successful acquisition of a second language seems to some extent, contingent upon learners' views of the language learning environment, the learning situation, and how they view the target language and its speakers (Narayanan *et al.*, 2008). Like the environment and attitude, teacher's competence is also a variable factor that affects the second language learning. He should be proficient in the language; his knowledge of and expertise in methods and techniques of language teaching should be of a reasonably high standard (Verghese, 2009).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

English has become the need of day. If we want good reputation in educational society and want to get good job we should have command on English. But it looks dream when we visit to the students at Northern Nigerian Public secondary school. The students of Secondary School are unable to comprehend and unable to speak English as they should according to their educational standard. There are many reasons for their ineligibility. Top of the all are lack of

educational atmosphere, their interest, socio economical background, gender difference, shyness, and lack of confidence etc.

Ahmad *et al.* (2011) conducted a research program on the nature of difficulties in Learning English by the Students at Secondary School Level in Pakistan. The main purpose of their research was to find out the difficulties of 645 secondary school students of Federal and provincial governments including 8 schools from provincial Govt. & 8 from Federal govt. Test was used to collect data which was later analyzed by SPSS 17.0 software. The study revealed that the students of provincial govt. schools faced more difficulties in learning grammar and English as second language as compare to Federal government school.

In Northern part of Nigeria, even after students study English for twelve years, they still faced lack of confidence. They learnt English to write their syllabus to pass the examination and our examination system has no any oral skill test. The correction of English syllabus is very important because it taught only forms of linguistics but fails to develop student creativity. Base on the research carried out by Ahmad *et al.* (2011) study suggested that a planned syllabus with trained teachers and speaking environment in school is very essential to overcome these problems.

Writing also involves full attention of the writer with rhetorical and linguist capabilities. Lack of research creates difficulties in the process of teaching and learning writing skill. Writing involves the topic determination, Editing, revising etc. It is considered that eclectic approach is more beneficial than the genre approach because it provides opportunity to individuals' own creativity. English language itself has a lot of irregularities and it also becomes the cause of difficulties for learners of second Language. Interference of first language also puts influence on the second language learning. Grammar is very important to create correct sentences but lack of the use of correct grammar and lack of vocabulary creates hurdles to learners. Farooq et al (2012) also conducted a survey about Opinion

of Second Language Learners about Writing Difficulties in English Language. They selected four colleges in Lahore, two colleges with one twenty four male students and two colleges with 121 female students. Data collected by questionnaire and the study revealed that students found problems in spelling, vocabulary and in grammar. The current study also suggested that teachers should teach the difference of syntax between first and second language. The reason of these problems was the traditional style of teaching grammar and lack of practice as well. Teachers at primary and secondary school have lack of knowledge about applied linguistics so cramming is increasing day by day (Haider, G2014). In Northern Nigeria teacher is active while students are just passive listeners in classroom. The large size of the class creates a distance between teacher and student. Socio-economic is also the cause of learning difficulties in North because children depends on their parents and have the fear of punishment if they expand their needs and not to fulfilled their expectations.

Teevno (2011) conducted a research about challenges in teaching and learning of English at secondary level class. He worked on the population of 11 English teachers including 7 male and 4 female, 70 students including 40 male and 30 female and also; 6 English experts including 4 male and 2 female. He involved teachers and students in focus group discussion and administered questionnaires and experts were interviewed. The study concluded that Teachers had no proper training in teaching English. It also revealed that proper facilities were not provided and curriculum was not up to the needs of the students. According to research, these reasons create flaws in teaching and learning process.

## **Objectives**

1. To find out the difficulties of the students in learning English at public secondary schools in Northern part of Nigeria.

- To find out the perceptions of the students about strategies used by the English teachers at public secondary school in Northern part of Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

The current study was descriptive in nature. Mix-methods of research were applied. For quantitative part questionnaire was used as research tool and data were collected from Sokoto South, Wamakko and Illela of Sokoto State of Nigeria. Target Population of this research was male and female students of public secondary schools in Northern part of Nigeria. The researcher was narrowed down to the population of three local Government of the state, where 80 students were randomly selected to collect data. The collected data were analysed on SPSS version 21 and results were shown in mean, standard deviation and standard error.

Table 1 showing Difficulties of the students in learning English

Statements	N	Mean		Std. Deviation
		Statistic	Std. Error	
Does mother tongue create problems in learning English?	80	2.13	.12	1.09
Is there any oral test in your examination?		1.18	.13	2.71
Can you speak English with your fellows?		.96	.10	1.84
Do you think that syllabus of English is based on only learning by heart?		2.01	.10	.97
Do your teachers encourage you when you write in English?		1.80	.11	1.03
Do you think that your parents have interest in your learning English?		1.96	.09	.84
Can you solve your grammatical issues?		1.09	.12	2.15
Do you think that you study English as subject not as language?		2.10	.12	1.08
Your society discourage you for English language learning?		1.19	.13	2.26

Statement 1 in the above table shows that mean score is 2.13 while standard deviation is 1.095 which reveals that mother tongue creates lot of problems in learning English. Statement 2 shows that mean score is 1.18 while standard deviation is 2.71 which shows that there is less oral examination at higher secondary level. Statement 3 shows that mean score is .96 while standard deviation is 1.84 which tells that most of the student at public secondary cannot speak English with their fellows. Statement 4 show that means score is 2.01 while standard deviation is .971 which reveals that syllabus of English is based on learning by heart. Statement 5 shows that mean score is 1.80 while standard deviation is 1.036 which shows that teachers encourage the students when they write in English. Statement 6 shows that mean score is 1.96 while standard deviation is .849 which shows that mostly parents have interest in learning English of their children. Statement 7 shows that mean score is 1.092 while standard deviation is 2.15 which reveals that students at public secondary cannot solve their grammatical issues. Statement 8 shows that mean score is 2.10 while standard deviation is 1.086 which shows that most of the students are agree with the statement that they have read English as subject not as language. Statement 9 shows that mean score is 2.26 while standard deviation is 1.199 which reveals that our society encourages students in English language learning.

**Table 2 showing Perceptions of the students about strategies used by the English teachers**

Statements	N	Mean		Std. Deviation
		Statistic	Std. Error	
Are you satisfied with your teacher's method of teaching?	80	1.98	.110	.98
Do teachers employ authoritative style?		2.09	.108	.97
Do you understand your teacher easily?		1.90	.108	.96

Do your teachers give you opportunity to speak English?	80	1.07	.120	2.01
Does your teacher speak English with you?		1.89	.115	1.03
Do you think that your teacher helps you for learning English?		1.99	.112	1.00
Does the teacher use interesting materials to improve your English?		1.04	.116	2.41
Do they like to guide you after your class time?		1.06	.119	2.34
Do you think that present syllabus is useful?		2.42	.128	1.13

Statement 1 in the above table 2 shows that the mean score about the satisfaction of the students towards their teachers' methods of teaching is 1.98 while std. deviation is .98 that clearly tells that most of the students are satisfied with their teachers' methods. Statement 2 shows that mean score is 2.09 while standard deviation is .97 which reveals that teachers apply authoritative style in teaching. Statement 3 shows that mean score is 1.90 while standard deviation is .96 which reveals that most of the students understand their teachers easily. Statement 4 shows that mean score is 1.07 while standard deviation is 2.01 which shows that teachers do not give opportunity to students to speak English. Statement 5 shows that mean score is 1.89 while standard deviation is 1.031 which reveals that most of the teachers

speak English with students at higher secondary level. Statement 6 shows that mean score is 1.99 while standard deviation is 1.00 which shows that teachers help students in learning English. Statement 7 shows that mean score is 1.04 while standard deviation is 2.41 which reveals that teachers do not use any type of interesting material to improve English. Statement 8 shows that mean score is 1.06 while standard deviation is 2.34 which shows that teachers do not guide students after class time. Statement 9 shows that mean score is 2.42 while standard deviation is 1.139 which reveals that present syllabus is useful for learning English.

## DISCUSSION

This study explored the basic problems of Northern Nigerian students at public secondary schools in learning English. Analysis of the data revealed that the mean score for mother interference is 2.13. that is evidence being one of the major problems of the students that plays a vital role as interruption to the learning of English is that they are interrupted by mother tongue while learning English. Mean score for studying English as subject not as language, is 2.10 which means that most of the students at secondary level study English as subject. That is why students are unable to speak English the reason is that they are more interested in passing the examination instead of learning the language as tool. Third major problem is that syllabus of English is content based learning the mean score for which is 2.01. It revealed the fact students spend their time in reading books learning stories and essay by heart. They learn grammatical rules for correction purposes. Much of their time wasted in translation from English to Hausa. It is observed by the mean score 1.96 that parents have interest in their children's learning English. Because English is international language and parents considered the importance of English language and they also know the worth of English as an international language that is why they focus on learning English. Mean score 1.80 reveals that teachers encourage students when they write in English because they want to improve students writing skill and cognitive thoughts. Mean score for oral test is 1.18 which reveals that there is oral tests are



not conducted in higher secondary schools. Mean score .96 reveals that students cannot speak English with their fellows. The reason is that there is lack of English speaking environment. Mean score 1.09 reveals that 2.15% students cannot solve their grammatical issues because English is foreign language and students are unfamiliar with grammatical rules. Mean score 1.19 reveals that society discourage the students because they still have grudge against English language. They still take it as the language of The English.

Regarding the perception of students the study explored the facts about the existing situation. The mean score about the utility of the present syllabus is 2.42. The mean score is highest it is because reading the current syllabus helps them to get good marks. If they go out of syllabus they lose their numbers which ultimately hinders them to improve language skills. Mean score about the statement that teachers are authoritative, is 2.09. This also reveals that teachers are very strict and teachers apply teacher centered approach. The result is that the students become passive learners and their creative ability is damaged. Mean score 1.99 reveals that teachers to some extent help them in learning English but their main focus is just to pass the examination and achieve the objectives of syllabus. Mean score about the understanding of the teachers by the students is 1.90 which shows that students are unable to understand their teachers because in Northern Nigeria there is traditional application of authority which creates unfriendly environment and gape between students and teachers which affect understanding of the students to teachers. Mean score about the teachers' communication in English with students is 1.89 which shows that the teachers rarely speak English with their students because, there is no professional training for language learning skills. Mean score about the opportunity of speaking English is, 1.07 which reveals that teacher did not give opportunity to speak English because of the lack of spoken environment and unfriendly atmosphere. Mean score about the guidance of teacher after the class time is 1.06 which reveals that teachers most of the teachers do not give extra time to students to help them in improving. Teachers

considered that only class time is their duty time after class time students are not their responsibility.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that students are facing many problems in learning English. There are many issues which create problems like mother tongue interference discouragement from society teacher interest etc. To solve these problem teachers training is necessary society must be aware about the importance of English and syllabus should be upgrade and students should encourage when they do any work related to English learning.

The study concludes that in Northern Nigeria students are facing many problems in learning English language such as native language, lack of guideline, limited resources and so on. To solve these problems there is need of refresher courses of teachers, syllabus should be revised and students should be encouraged by the society and teachers. Teachers should adopt interesting methods to teach English language.

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