

# Classroom Interaction of English Teachers and Pupils in Public Primary Schools in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State

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## Abstract

The study considers the classroom interaction that exists between English language teachers and primary school pupils. The study adopts a descriptive survey design to describe the existing phenomenon of classroom interaction between public English language teachers and primary school pupils with the samples of fifty respondents among teachers drawn from urban and rural areas of the local government. The study makes use of structured questionnaire that elicits questions to match the research questions. The validity of the instrument is ascertained by experts in Language Education where necessary corrections are pointed out and effected. The instrument is administered to twenty respondents that are not part of the samples and their responses are collected, analyzed through split-half methods and the reliability co-efficient of 0.82 is realized which is considered good enough for the study. The study finds out that domineering tendencies of teachers in English classrooms have negative consequences in pupils' academic achievements. It also finds out that different collaborative strategies can impact positively on pupils' academic achievements. The study discourages negative feedback and bullying to students by teachers in case mistakes are made by pupils. It recommends that teaching of English language should be collaborative while participating strategies be used at the primary schools most especially at the formative stage of pupils.

**Keywords:** Class Interaction, Collaborative, Academic Achievement, Participation, Teaching,

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## Introduction

No doubt, education is seen as the viable tool of developing nations to greatness in order to meet the yearnings and aspirations of citizens. Education shapes the mental aptitude of individuals in ensuring personal growth and national development of a society. A nation that undermines good quality education embraces failure in her goal and objectives. Education is pivotal and central to development. Education in Nigeria is viewed as the key to national development. Adegun (2013) views education as the key to national development and modernization. National Policy on Education, (2014) is explicit on the value of education as it posits that; "Education will continue to be highly rated in national development plans because education is the most important instrument of change as any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by education revolution". This policy statement empowers education to move the nation forward.

Nigeria is a diverse nation of multi-ethnic values that is united by a common interest. Education is placed on executive and residual bills so that both federal and state governments can legislate, pass bills on it. This dual state of legislating on education has a lot of complexities as each state fashions out different educational policies as it deems fit for the state considering the basic needs and situation analysis of the state. Also, the financing of education is another strong determinant of sustaining quality education as federal government cannot solely bear the financial cost of education for all states of the federating unit. This has a lot of weighty consequences on the qualities of education for each state and for Nigeria as a nation. These weighty consequences include; the recruitment standard of teachers into public schools, payment of salaries as at when due, supervision, compliance with the syllabus, scheme and other professional demands. It should be noted that Nigeria has educational policies in theory but finds it very difficult to operate practically as all students at the post primary school levels want to continue with cognitive task even when they have no initial aptitude background to sustain it instead of embracing practical skills that excel them and add value to the nation.

Nigeria structures her education into; primary, post primary and post secondary school levels: 6.3.3.4. Six years in primary schools, three years in junior secondary schools, three years in senior secondary schools and four years in tertiary institutions: Universities, Polytechnics and College of Education. At these different tiers of education, there are professionals called teachers at primary and secondary schools and lecturers at the tertiary levels. Regardless of their nomenclatures, they are the translators of curriculum, syllabus and scheme of work into realities. They are well grounded professional teachers that interpret the curricula into reality, they are the field workers that have interface and direct interactions with their subjects( learners). Ajayi (2023) opines that the mental aptitude and superiority of teachers go a long way to determine the achievement levels of goals and objectives as stated by the curricula.

Ajayi (2023) also posits that there is an assumption that teachers know better than the learners, this assumption seems erroneous as teachers are recently found wanting in teaching delivery at all levels of education as there are many unqualified English language teachers at the foundation levels: pre-primary and primary education. Nigeria is blessed with over 540 languages of which three representing major tribes are recognized at the federal level: Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. From these numerous types of languages, none of the ethnic language could be used as an official language, medium of instruction or lingua franca.

The rivalry has paved way for the emergence of English language as the nation's official language. It is worrisome to note that schools either public or private face dearth of qualified English teachers. This accounts for employment of holders of any discipline to teach English language at the primary school levels. English language is a second language in Nigeria as most Nigerians have their mother tongue (MT) except those that live in cosmopolitan cities where English language is commonly spoken. It is therefore a real task for teachers to teach English language as a subject and as a medium of instruction to other teaching subjects with the exception of the neglected indigenous languages.

English teachers are not just teachers, they are teachers foregrounded in the act and art of learning English language as a second language that deserve competence, sound mastery of subject matter, good methods, effective strategies, objective assessment techniques, and good interaction with cordial accommodating tendencies. English teachers have broad concepts in English language to contend with at the elementary level: sounds in English language, language skills; listening; speaking; reading; and writing; vocabulary, grammar and the rest. All these are to be taught such that pupils can understand with ease and create interest in English language which will serve as a tool for accessing other subjects. Language is the most important tool in classroom interaction, Wellington & Osborne (2001) as it serves various role (communicative, educational, aesthetic, cognitive etc). The role and impact of language in learners' academic performance has been extensively researched over the past two decade ( Groepc 2009, Bangbore 2005, Nomlono 2007).

In order to attain this goal, English teachers need effective classroom interaction with their pupils so that pupils can grasp the mastery of English language with less difficulties. A classroom is a meeting point of teachers and learners where the sole business is to sow knowledge of English language with the intention to making pupils competent in the mastery. Both the teacher and learners are interdependent as they need each other to thrive and realize goals and objectives. Teachers need attentive learners that are cooperative to learn, patient enough to take instructions, confident to ask questions in areas that are not clearly taught and teachers too should not be too domineering, abusive, attacking, bullying but friendly, firm and loaded with quality stuff to deliver quality knowledge to learners. No matter how brilliant and prepared a teacher is, if he is aggressive and insensitive, nothing is attained, objective is defeated, evaluation fails.

Taking into account the learner's communicative needs, it is vital to stress the importance of classroom interaction based on the belief that the EFL classroom should provide learners with maximum exposure to the target language to enhance their learning and develop the speaking skill. Interaction is significant in the process of teaching and learning, especially it is relevant for teachers in order to develop communication (Brown, 2007). Classroom interaction is defined by Brown (2000) as the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas between two or more people resulting in a reciprocal effect in each other. Husain (2011) submits that classroom interaction promotes involvement, enhances learning and motivates the students. Jia (2013) list five strategies of promoting classroom interaction which are:

- a. improving questioning strategies;
- b. attending to learners linguistic levels;
- c. implementing cooperative learning;
- d. building positive teachers-learners report; and
- e. reducing classroom anxiety.

Stella and Jane (2020) conducted a research on the classroom interaction patterns as correlates of senior secondary school students' achievement in Chemistry in Awka Education Zone. The study adopts correlation survey to determine the relationship between classroom interaction patterns and students' achievements in Chemistry with the population of 4,419, made up of 65 chemistry teachers and 4,354 senior secondary one (SS1) students. The sample consists of 12 Chemistry teachers and 450 SS1 students. The study concludes that there is a strong relationship between the amount of talk and mean achievements of students in Chemistry. It concludes, that students should be empowered to control their learning by reducing the amount of teachers' talk.

Oyinloye (2003) submits that in a good classroom interaction, the dramatic personae, that is, the teacher and the pupils must have mutual interaction which will make the learner to be active. He discourages parroting teachers as they may not likely allow the learners to have put into use their potentials. The emphasis is on the interpersonal relationship between the teacher and students that occurs at different levels. This covers a lesson delivery situation during which the teacher and students through their verbal and non-verbal clues have reciprocal effects in each other. Hainre and Little (2019) posit that teachers need to be actively engaged in interaction with their students in order for effective learning to take place. Morham (2018) rounds it up that lasting change does not result from plans, blueprints and events rather it occurs through interaction of participants.

### **Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory**

This study is anchored in the theory of Vygotsky's social interaction theory that supports teacher, better peers, parents' as instruments of effective independent social development. Vygotsky's (1962) indicates that developments remain inseparable from its social and cultural mediation that make a breakthrough in understanding learner's development. In accordance to the socio-cultural theory that Vygotsky's leans on, learning is passed to individuals using three means; instructed learning, initiative learning and collaborating learning. (Valenzuela et al 2002) Collaborative learning within this context implies two unequal participants: teachers and learners to jointly collaborate each other in learning a task in order to effect a relative change.

Two important elements of budding a dependent learners arise from the "Zone of Proximal Development" and "Scaffolding". The two are interrelated which teachers must be conscious of. Good and effective teachers should explore strategies that are good enough to identify the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level potential development as determined through problem solving adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. This requires the provision of relevant and appropriate instructional assistance having discovered areas of challenges to learners. This area is important as teachers need to move closer to learners to dig deep into their challenges and provide succour to them.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It has been generally observed that the standard of education has fallen. This is measured by both internal and external examinations as students perform abysmally. The recent release of Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) results, 2024 draw attention of major stakeholders that education seems to be reducing in its quality most especially in a situation where examination malpractice is reduced to the lowest minimum standard as it is observed in Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) CBT examinations. The Unified Tertiary Examination (UTME) for 2024 has shown that barely a quarter of the total candidates scored

above 200. Statistics shows that out of 1,904,189 candidates that sat for the exams, 1,402,490 (73.7%) candidates scored below 200, the Punch (2024). Also in 2023 West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC) results, in the overall performance, 79.81% of candidates achieved credit and above core subjects; English language and Mathematics, the Punch (2023). The implication of this 2023 WAEC result is that, 20.19% of the candidates that sat for the last examination will be denied admission into tertiary institutions as English language serves as a criterion for admission. This calls for a critical review of how English teachers handle the teaching of English language. Though, there are other factors that could impede success in internal and external examinations, the study wants to find out how classroom interaction can be effectively utilized to bring out the best academic achievement in studies and to make English language classes more attractive and interesting.

### Research Questions

In order to give a focus to the study, the following research questions are raised:

1. What is the pattern of interaction in English language classrooms by English teachers and pupils' in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State?
2. How do English teachers' communication skills influence pupils' academic achievements in Ado Local Government Ekiti State?
3. What is the impact of classroom interaction pattern on pupils' learning experiences?

### Methodology.

The study adopts a descriptive survey design. This enables information to be obtained from a representative sample of a targeted population in order to describe the situation as it exists. The study is carried out in Ado local government area of Ekiti State. Ado Ekiti is the capital of Ekiti State, a traditional town that shares boundaries with many Ekiti towns; Ikere- Ekiti, Ijan- Ekiti, Afao-Ekiti, Iyin- Ekiti, Iworoko- Ekiti and Ilawe- Ekiti. The population consists of all English teachers in urban and rural areas in Ado local government area of Ekiti State. The sample of 160 are drawn from public primary schools through simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection is a self-structured questionnaire, tagged 'Classroom Interaction Pattern Questionnaire [CIPQ] of 23 items

The validity of the items is ensured by subjecting the questionnaire items into scrutiny by experts in Language Education, observations are made and corrections are effected. The reliability is ensured through the selection of forty respondents that did not partake in the study who are administered the questionnaire and data collected are analyzed using split half method at 0.05 level of significance, the correlation coefficient obtained is 0.89 which is considered good enough for the study. Data collected are analyzed through simple percentage.

### Results

#### Research Question 1

What is the pattern of interaction in English language classrooms by English language teachers in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State?

**Table 1**

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	English teachers' rigidity in class control affect pupils' academic achievement	3.42	Agree
2	Teacher - centred approach affects pupils' participation in lesson delivery	3.09	Agree
3	Teachers use pupils' initiatives to aid classroom interaction which make them more productive	3.10	Agree



4	Group work assigned to pupils commonly adopted by English teachers to cater for all pupils of different mental aptitude	2.98	Agree
5	Only a few English teachers use individual work as a pattern of classroom Interaction	2.60	Agree
6	Effective teacher -pupils interaction encourage pupils to pay more attention to learning	2.66	Agree
7	Much dominance of teachers in lesson delivery makes pupils passive		Agree
8	Shared roles of teaching engage more pupils' participation	2.98	Agree
9	Harsh feedback to pupils makes pupils discouraging to participate in learning process	3.40	Agree
10	Bullying pupils over error/mistakes or wrong answer to questions quench the spirit of concentration and learning	2.97	Agree
	Grand mean	2.72	Agree

Mean greater > 2.50 "Agreed", otherwise "Disagreed"

The above results in table 1 reveal the different types of classroom interaction in English language classroom by teachers. The mean values range above 2.60 to 3.42 which indicate that majority of the respondents agreed with the items 1-10 of the table 1. This implies that most teachers agree on flexibility of teachers in classrooms and also discourage teacher-centred approach to teaching English language: Also, majority of teachers, agree that pupils' initiatives encourage participation in lesson delivery while group work where the weak and the strong can relate to share new ideas should be encouraged if properly initiated by teachers. It is also shown that most teachers in public primary schools do not encourage individual works. This might be as a result of the explosive enrolment of students in public schools as private schools are now too expensive in the recent time

Effective teacher – pupils interaction, shared roles of teaching are catalysts that can foster effective teaching and mastery of English language among pupils. Much dominance of teachers, harsh feedback and bullying of students are traits that discourage and drain students' enthusiasm for mastery of English language.

### Research Question 2

How do English teachers' communication skills influence pupils' academic achievements in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State?

**Table 2 Means Analysis of Teachers' Communication Skills.**

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Teachers' choice of complex sentences and difficult vocabulary use affect pupils' academic achievements in English language	3.30	Agree
2	Teachers' unclear directive in lesson delivery confuses students and therefore affect pupils negatively	3.42	Agree
3	Teachers' lack of effective mastery of subject matter put pupils at disadvantage point of grasping what they are taught	3.41	Agree
4	Teachers' competent communication skills motivate pupils and ginger them toward solving academic challenges	3.25	Agree
5	Teachers' effective communication skills enhance strong cognitive development that activates academic achievement	2.72	Agree
6	Teachers' communication skills create an atmosphere of	2.68	Agree

	interdependence by probing into learners' intellectual aptitude at the onset		
	Grand Mean.	3.13	Agree

The result of analyses presented in Table 2 shows the preferences of teachers to questionnaire items. The mean values in the Table 2 range from 2.68 to 3.42 with the grand mean of 3.13. It implies from the respondents' responses that complex sentences, difficult choice of vocabulary will distort the flow of communication in the classroom. Most teachers as shown by their responses agreed that unclear directive by teachers most especially English language teachers could be confusing. English teachers need to be definite and detailed enough with adequate relevant and unambiguous examples when explaining English language concepts to learners. A teacher is not just an individual that stands in front of learners but the one that has appropriate methods and strategies to drive home his points. Most respondents agreed that for teachers to have good classroom interaction, he must have mastered his learning contents. Teachers of English language are different from others as they must master their communication skills, master their tenses, choice of words, right pronunciation, vocal and fluent. These are required in an effective classroom interaction.

### Research question 3

What are the impacts of classroom interaction patterns?

**Table 3:** Mean analysis of difference between the impact of classroom interaction pattern and students' learning experiences.

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Effective paired classroom interaction patterns improve pupils' academic achievements.	3.5	Agree
2	Using teacher-pupil interaction pattern makes pupils to have good mastery of concepts in English language.	2.89	Agree
3	Group classroom interaction makes effective teaching and learning process achieved with ease	3.21	Agree
4	Active classroom interaction enlivens classroom	3.11	Agree
5	Shared classroom interaction pattern encourages mutual responses	3.22	Agree
6	Reading- aloud interaction patterns help language skills	3.15	Agree
7	I read, we read, you read interaction pattern shapes academic achievement of pupils	3.27	Agree
	Grand mean	3.19	

The minimum mean ranges from 2.89 to the highest 3.5. Most respondents agree in the use of paired classroom interaction, teacher- student interaction, group classroom interaction, reading-aloud interaction, I read, we read, you read classroom interaction are all supported by teachers as effective classroom interactions in the classrooms.

### Discussion

From the responses of respondents, rigidity and non-flexibility of English teachers in classroom affect the academic achievements of pupils. This rigidity of self-centeredness contrasts the philosophy of learning as primarily a social activity as enunciated by Dewey (1963). Teachers of English language should have the awareness that English language is a



second language to Nigerian learners which demands for flexibility in teaching pupils. Allowing participating learning of pupils is germane to the acquisition and mastery of English language. Lindeman (1926) opines that nothing reasonable will be gained by learners if the teacher is the sole individual that is doing the work and also the person doing the learning giving no room for learners' participation. This aligns with the position of Brown (2007) that classroom interaction is the basis of L2 learning through which learners are engaged both enhancing their own communicative abilities and in socially constructing their identities through collaboration and negotiation.

Also the finding shows that negative feedback on pupils' academic attainment on continuous basis will affect participatory levels of learners in a classroom interaction. Teachers that stand in the classroom to bully learners on mistakes made by learners either on wrong applications of tenses, wrong pronunciation, bad writing patterns and challenges in reading will not only discourage learners from participation in English classes but will subject such learners to psychological trauma. This is in tandem with Altaeib, (2018) and Fadhel, (2017) whose submissions condemn providing students with negative feedback which makes learners to fear writing and expressing their thoughts and stick only to the words and expressions they always use in order to avoid mistakes.

Shared learning strategy and group work are encouraged from the responses of respondents. Brown (2000) sees classroom interaction as the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect in each other. This reciprocal value has a lot of positive significant effects in teaching and mastery of English language.

At the elementary levels of teaching English language to pupils, this forms the formative or budding stage that teachers must be selective in their choice of words, simple sentences and less difficult vocabulary should be used to convey learning contents to learners. Language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, productive and expressive informal and formal skills should be taught not in complex sentences. Reading and writing, formal skills are developmental literacy skills that every learner needs to access the global window of cognition. This position is in tandem with Snow (2002) that reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. This is in consonance with the submissions of Nomlomo (2002); Bamgbose (2005) that language if well taught impacts on learners' academic performance.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes from the foregoing that for effective mastery of English language as a second language to Nigerian learners, classroom interaction should be participatory, shared with different teaching strategies that abstain clearly from domineering tendencies of teachers in the classrooms. Also it supports the relevance of giving feedback with modesty to learners so that they will not suffer any psychological trauma apart from being discouraged from learning English language and other teaching subjects that English language is used as a medium of instruction. The study equally submits the importance and significance of grading choice of words most especially at the formative stage of learning English language.

### **Recommendations**

Sequel to the above findings and conclusion, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. English language classroom interactions among primary school pupils should be participatory.
2. Different participatory strategies should be evolved in classroom interaction of English lessons.
3. Modest feedback about learners' academic attainment in the class should be ensured
4. Appropriate choice of words should be used to meet the mental aptitude and maturity of learners.

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