

# ATTITUDINAL PROBLEMS TOWARD THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SOME SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN HAWUL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

Matta Zharkahye<sup>1</sup> and Teneke Gabriel<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Language and Communication Art, Centre for Distance Learning, Modibbo Adamawa University of Technology, Yola, Nigeria  
Email: mattahawul@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Department of Languages, State Polytechnic, Yola, Nigeria  
Email: tgg1wat@yahoo.com

## ABSTRACT

*This work examined the attitudinal problems toward learning of English language in some secondary schools in Hawul Local Government Area of Borno State. A descriptive survey design was used for the study. Sixty-six (66) respondents comprising of sixty (60) students and six (6) English language teachers were randomly sampled and questionnaires addressing likely Eleven (11) attitudinal problems in learning English Language were administered. The Likert-type scale of four (4) response pattern was used to rate the responses of the respondents. Data were analyzed using simple percentages. The findings reveal that mother tongue influences the students' poor performance in English language in secondary school. There are other factors contributing to students poor performances in English language. These include, learning environment, poor methods of teaching, lack of good textbooks, poor language background and lack of professional growth development of teachers. On the whole, the performance of students in English language is poor and if the observed facts from this study are not timely tackled; there will be drastic decline in standard of education.*

**Keywords:** English language, attitudinal, problems, education

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, a country adjudged into a transition stage in her march toward education cannot give priority to English language as her official language. English is a Nigerian official language that is to say. English is the language of the government (officialese), public Administration (bureaucratise), the legislative and law court (Legalese). It is also the language of commerce and business, medium of instruction of literary creative writing and of inter-personnel communication (Odumuh, 1989). Bamgbose (1982) had earlier documented that knowledge and command of English is a practical necessity for those aspiring to proceed beyond primary education or to a position in government or public offices. More importantly

implication (sociolinguistic and pedagogical) is at the primary schools where the foundation is laid. This foundation must aim at giving the pupil a thorough command of correct and current English language.

However, the position of English as an official language created a problem, and gives a false impression about the language. There is a complex linguistic situation in which English as official language serves the nation, but it is understood by less than 10% of the people (Bamgbose 1982). The situation arises from the historical, mother tongues, political, educational and linguistic causes.

The desire to find out why students have poor performance in English language in public qualifying examination could make one to consider the factors that affect learning of English in schools. It can be clearly stated that physical conditions have a great effect on learning and can alter students' performance either positively or negatively. Classrooms that are badly littered and over-crowded can be excessively de-motivating, but unfortunately many of them still exist in our schools. Vitally important is the visibility of the chalk black board to the students and the atmosphere in which the language is taught.

The methods of teaching students also have some impact on their performances in English language. If they find it deadly boring they will probably become de-motivated, whereas if they have confidence in the method they will find it motivating. All these constitute the problems for this research work.

The aim of this research study is to look at the attitudinal problems toward learning of English language taking a case study of some selected secondary schools in Hawul local government area of Borno state Nigeria.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Design of the study**

The design for this research is descriptive survey design. The use of this design is pertinent because an in-depth description and interpretation of the existing practices of learning English language in the sample schools would be required. Questionnaires were used to determine the opinion of respondents on their attitudinal problems in learning of English language in secondary school at Hawul local government area of Borno state.

### **Questionnaire reliability and validity test**

All the tools used for the questionnaire were tested for reliability and validity in line with the scores and the choice of the scale. It is important to establish the consistency of scores obtained by the same persons when reexamined with the same test on different occasions. This test-retest reliability coefficient gives an estimate of the error of measurement, or the range of fluctuation likely to occur in a single individual's score as a result of irrelevant, chance factors (Anastasi, 1988). To test this, the same test is administered to the same sample on two different occasions.

### **Study Area and Population**

This study was carried out in secondary school located at Hawul local government area of Borno state. The research studied three (3) secondary schools namely Government Day Secondary School, Yimirshika, Government Secondary School, Sakwa and Government Girls

Secondary School, Shaffa in Hawul Local Government Area of Borno state. The major targets are the students and teachers of English language.

**Sampling Technique**

Total number of 132 respondents from the three schools was sampled. Twenty English language senior secondary students was sampled from each of the three secondary schools using simple Random sampling. Two English teachers per school were sampled. A total of 60 students and 6 teachers participated in this study.

**Instrument for data collection**

The main instrument for data collection for this study was structured questionnaire.

**Rating Scale.**

Likert - type scale of four (4) response pattern was used based on the weights needed for scoring respondents choice(s)

Strongly Agreed	SA	4
Agreed	A	3
Disagree	D	2
Strongly Disagree	SD	1

The respondents (teachers and students) were required to read the statements (Hose structure) and tick (x) to show the one that most described their opinions in the four (4) points rating scale as given above and the reverse for negative statement.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

After securing the consent of the school authorities in the schools to be used the importance and need for cooperation were discussed with the teacher(s) and their students. Data collection was carried out by using questionnaire and simple percentages, ANOVA and graphical representation were used for data analysis.

**RESULTS**

Tables below Show the scores allotted to each of the attitudinal problems that the respondents responded to in accordance to the questionnaire administered to them.

**Table 1.** The responses of respondents on avoidance of English language

<b>Attitudinal Problem</b>	<b>Strongly Agreed</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
I used to avoid English language despite the importance	36	39	46	22	143
Percentages (%)	25.2	27.3	32.2	15.3	100.0

**Source:** Survey (2010)

Table 1 above shows that 32.3% of the respondents disagree with the fact they were avoiding English language while 15.3% strongly disagree.

**Table 2.** The responses of respondents on difficulty of English language

<b>Attitudinal Problem</b>	<b>Strongly Agreed</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
English language is a difficult subject	96	30	36	14	176
Percentages (%)	54.5	17.0	20.5	8.0	100.0

**Source:** Survey (2010)

From Table 2 above 54.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that English language is a difficult subject while 8.0 strongly disagree to this view.

**Table 3.** The responses of respondents on effects of mother tongue of English language

<b>Attitudinal Problem</b>	<b>Strongly Agreed</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
Speaking of mother tongue affects understanding of English language	156	30	18	9	213
Percentages (%)	73.2	14.2	8.45	4.24	100.0

**Source:** Survey (2010)

Table 3 information detailed that 73.2% respondents strongly agreed that speaking of mother tongue affects understanding of English language while 4.24% strongly disagree to this opinion

**Table 4.** The responses of respondents on preference of mother tongue to English language

<b>Attitudinal Problem</b>	<b>Strongly Agreed</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
I prefer my mother tongue "Bura"/ Hausa to English Language	128	66	12	6	212
Percentages (%)	60.4	31.2	5.66	2.83	100.0

**Source:** Survey (2010)

The preference of mother tongue "Bura"/Hausa to English language was strongly agreed to by 60.4% while 2.83% strongly disagree as shown on Table 4.

**Table 5.** The responses of respondents on higher performances in Hausa compared to English language

<b>Attitudinal Problem</b>	<b>Strongly Agreed</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
I use to have higher score in Hausa language compared to English Language	100	69	20	8	197.0
Percentage (%)	50.8	35.0	10.2	4.0	100.0

**Source:** Survey (2010)

Table 5 data showed that 50.8% strongly agreed with having higher performances in Hausa compared to English language while 4.0% strongly disagree to this attitudinal problem

**Table 6.** The responses of respondents on the need to master oral and written English language to perfection

<b>Attitudinal Problem</b>	<b>Strongly Agreed</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
There is a need to master oral and written English language to perfection	144	54	14	5	<b>217</b>
Percentages (%)	66.3	24.9	6.5	2.3	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Survey (2010)

Majority of the respondents (66.3%) strongly agreed to the need to master oral and written English language to perfection while 2.3% strongly disagree to the view as shown in Table 6.

**Table 7.** The responses of respondents' feelings on speaking fluent English language among friends

<b>Attitudinal Problem</b>	<b>Strongly Agreed</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
I feel comfortable to speak English language fluently in the midst of friends	92	93	10	7	<b>202</b>
Percentages (%)	45.5	46.0	5.0	3.5	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Survey (2010)

The issue on speaking fluent English language among friends was strongly agreed to by 45.5% and Agreed by 46% of the respondent being an attitudinal problem in learning the language. 3.5% strongly disagree with the fact (Table 7)

**Table 8.** The Responses of respondents on being error conscious when interacting in English Language

<b>Attitudinal Problem</b>	<b>Strongly Agreed</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
I am error's conscious when interacting in English Language	108	117	0	0	<b>225</b>
Percentages (%)	48.0	52.0	0.0	0.0	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Survey (2010)

All respondents agreed to the importance of being error conscious when interacting in English language. Though, 52% agreed while 48% strongly agreed as documented in Table 8.

**Table 9.** The Responses of respondents on difficulty of English grammar than other subjects

Attitudinal Problem	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
English grammar is very difficult than other subjects	96	103	16	0	215
Percentages (%)	44.7	49.3	6.0	0.0	100.0

**Source:** Survey (2010)

In all 94% of the respondents supported the item addressing English as a difficult subject than others. Out of these, 49.3% agreed while 44.7% strongly agreed as shown in Table 9.

**Table 10.** The responses of respondents on the influence of environment on performances in English language

Attitudinal Problem	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Environment use to influence performances in English Language	168	57	2	4	231
Percentages (%)	72.7	24.7	0.9	1.7	100.0

**Source:** Survey (2010)

Table 10 showed that 72.7% of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that Environment use to influence performances in English Language while 0.9% disagrees to this.

**Table 11.** The responses of respondents effect of students interest in their teachers on their performances in English language

Attitudinal Problem	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Student's interest in teacher affects their performances in English language	120	87	14	0	221
Percentages (%)	54.3	39.4	6.3	0	100.0

**Source:** Survey (2010)

54.3% strongly agreed that student's interest in their teacher affects their performances in English language while 6.3% disagree (see Table 11)

Table 12 detail the rating of the respondents' response to each of the attitudinal problem. From this table, the item 'Environment use to influence performances in English Language' was rated highest value- 10.26%, followed by 'I am error's conscious when interacting in English Language- 9.99%, Student's interest in teacher affects their performances in English language rated the third place with 9.81% while I used to avoid English language despite the importance had the lowest percentage rating of 6.35% followed by English language is a difficult subject. The chi-square ( $X^2$ ) value 434.10 and degree of freedom (df) 30 shows a very strong association between these attitudinal problem based on the responses of the respondents. The information on Table 13 showed that largest percentage of the respondents

scored highest for strongly agreed that all the information considered are attitudinal problems affecting studying of English language in the studied community

**Table 12.** Rating of the respondents response to each attitudinal problem

S/NO	ATTITUDINAL PROBLEMS	TOTAL SCORE	% WEIGHT
1	I used to avoid English language despite the importance	143	6.35
2.	English language is a difficult subject	176	7.82
3.	Speaking of mother tongue affects understanding of English language	213	9.46
4.	I prefer my mother tongue “Bura”/ Hausa to English Language	212	9.41
5.	I use to have higher score in Hausa language compared to English Language	197	8.75
6.	There is a need to master oral and written English language to perfection	217	9.64
7.	I feel comfortable to speak English language fluently in the midst of friends	202	8.97
8.	I am error’s conscious when interacting in English Language	225	9.99
9.	English grammar is very difficult than other subjects	215	9.55
10.	Environment use to influence performances in English Language	231	<b>10.26</b>
11.	Student’s interest in teacher affects their performances in English language	221	9.81

Chi-square ( $X^2$ ): 434.10; Degrees of Freedom: 30

**Table 13.** Score weight of the respondents rating

	RATING	Mean ± SEM
1	Strongly agreed	113.09±10.98 <sup>a</sup>
2	Agreed	67.73±8.87 <sup>b</sup>
3	Disagree	17.09±4.06 <sup>c</sup>
4	Strongly disagree	6.82±2.00 <sup>c</sup>

All data with different superscripts are significantly different ( $p < 0.001$ )

## DISCUSSION

English language as “lingua franca” is the official language in Nigeria and has been used as means of communication in all facets of life and businesses. From the table 1 above critical analysis of the respondents strictly opposed avoidance of English language as students. This could negate this factor as attitudinal problem among students in Hawul Local Government area secondary schools. This indicated that most student don’t avoid English language

classes because they appreciate the importance of this language. English is a Nigerian official language. It is the language of the government (officials), public Administration (bureaucratise), the legislative and law court (Legalese). It is also the language of commerce and business, the medium of instruction of literary creative writing and of inter-personnel communication. These functions and roles are well set out in Odumuh (1989). These people are mindful of this importance. Majority of the students oblige to the fact that English language is a difficult subject (Table 2) This may be as a result of students' inability to understand every aspect of the language. The same observation was made by Oluwole (2008) when he reported on the impact of mother tongue on students achievement in English language.

Mother tongue was assessed by the respondents to affects understanding of English language and will also prefer English language taught in mother tongue for easy understanding. This result is similar to be observation of Akinbote and Ogunsanwo (2003) who opined that the use of mother tongue in the process of teaching and learning in early years helps, not only to preserve and value's one culture but also to develop it lexically.

The influence of the mother tongue reflected in the students performances in English and Hausa languages during internal and external examinations as majority strongly agreed to better performances in Hausa compared to English language (Table 4 and 5)

The importance of mastering oral English which is a key tool to communication was strongly agreed to. This is in agreement with the old sayings that "Practice makes perfection".

Majority of the respondents strongly agreed to the fact that Environment use to influence performances in English Language hence this was scored highest goal of 168 while least score of 36 was allotted to I used to avoid English language despite the importance (Table 12) The response of respondents on environment is in agreement with the report of Brophy (1987) who applause environment as a motivating factor that enhanced learning. He further stated that Children's home environment shapes the initial constellation of attitudes they develop toward learning.

A notable attitude in learning English language in Nigerian secondary schools is the fact most students agreed to be error's conscious when interacting in English Language, hence this was accorded the highest score, 117 under the agreed as responded by the respondents While very few agreed to the fact that English language is a difficult subject and that Speaking of mother tongue affects understanding of English language hence these two items had the lowest score, 30. This implies that most students are always afraid of making mistakes; teachers need to encourage them so that they can stop shying away from mistakes. If such student is extrinsically motivated this may be an encouraging factor for being INTRINSICALLY motivated (Lepper, 1988).

The Disagree rating for I used to avoid English language despite the importance scored highest value of 46 and I am error's conscious when interacting in English Language the lowest of 0. This needs to be noted in curriculum policy formulation and training of professional teachers that students don't really avoid attending English language classes but are always error conscious, hence they need to be encourage and motivated so as to alleviate the effect of these two attitudinal problem.

Conclusively, the findings reveal that mother tongue influences the students' poor performance in English language in secondary school. There are other factors contributing to students poor performances in English language. These include, learning environment, poor methods of teaching, lack of good textbooks, poor language background and lack of professional growth development of teachers. On the whole, the performance of students in English language is poor and if the observed facts from this study are not timely tackled; there will be drastic decline in standard of education

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The author wishes to acknowledge Mr Kunle Lawal, a staff of Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri who enlightened us on the concept of Attitudinal Problems and Dr. Sogbesan, O. Amos of Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola who proof read the manuscript.

### **REFERENCES**

1. Abdullahi, I. and Areequ, S. (2001). The teachers dimension of the UBE Teacher supply utilization and retention. *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences, JASSKON* 3(1).
2. Allwright, D. and Heinks, J. (2009). *The developing a language learning: An introduction to exploratory practice*. Basingstoke: plagrave Macmillan
3. Ames, C. A. (1990) "Motivation: What Teachers Need to Know." *TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD* 91(3): 409-421.
4. Bamgbose, A. (1982). *Standard in Nigeria English. Issue of Identification "The other tongue" urbana*. University of Illionis press.
5. Brophy, J. (1987) "Synthesis of Research on Strategies for Motivating Students to Learn." *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP* (October 1987): 40-48. EJ 362 226
6. Doughty, C. and Williams, J. (1996). *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
7. David, A.O. (2008). The impact of mother tongue on students achievement in English language secondary certificate examination in Western Nigeria Ibadan Nigeria.
8. Ellis, N. (2002). Frequency effects in language processing. *Studies in Second language acquisition* 24(2): 143-188.
9. Harker, R. (2000). "Achievement gander the single-sex coeducation debate". *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 21(2):204-218.
10. Jegede, O. (2009). Producing teachers for UBE through open and distance learning. UBE Forum. *Journal of Basic Education*
11. Kolawole, C. O.O. and Dele, A. (2002). "An examination of the National policy of language education in Nigeria and its implication for the teaching and learning of the English Language" Ibadan. *Journal of Education Studies* 2(1):12-20.
12. Lepper, M. R. (1988) "Motivational Considerations in the Study of Instruction." *COGNITION AND INSTRUCTION* 5 (4): 289-309.

13. Lightbrown, P. (1990). Process Product research on second language learning in classroom cited in the study of SLA (Rod Ellis)
14. Lyster, R. and Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learners uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classrooms. *Studies in Second language Acquisition* 19:37-66
15. Lyster, R. and Mori, H. (2006). Interactional feedback and instructional counterbalance. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 28:269-300
16. Marshall, H. H. (1987) "Motivational Strategies of Three Fifth-Grade Teachers." *The Elementary School Journal* 88 (2): 135-50. EJ 362 747.
17. Odumuh, A. E. (1989). "The co-existence of English and Nigeria languages" *Ilorin Journal of Language and Literature*, Department of Modern European Language, University of Ilorin
18. Oglan, G. R. (1997). Parents, learning and whole language classroom. Urbana; Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
19. Okeke, C.O. (2004). "Gendered voice in a Heterogenous classroom: moving qualitative research forward within the Nigerian Educational research, tradition the African symposium" *An on-line educational research Journal* 4(2): 1-14.
20. Okoro, D.C. U. (2000). "Basic Education imagines issues, challenges and constrains in the state of Education in Nigeria" *Publication of UNESCO*, Nigeria. Abuja Office. Pp34-51.
21. Stipek, D. (1988) *MOTIVATION TO LEARN: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988. 178 pages
22. Tarone, E. and Swierzbin, B. (2009). *Exploring learner language*. Oxford University Press, London.
23. Tarone, E., Bigelow, P. and Hansen, N. (2009). *Literacy a second language oracy*. Oxford University Press, London.
24. Tuoyo, M. U. (1999). Inspection and Supervision as practices of quality control in the school system. *In*. Fadipe, J.O. and Oluckuhwu, E. E. (Eds). *Educational Planning and Administration* (NIEPA, Nigeria).
25. Williams, D. (1990) *English language teaching an Integrated Approach* Ibadan spectrum Books Limited.