



## The English Language and the Second Language Learners' Perception in a Multicultural Nigeria: An Appraisal

Ijeoma C. Ojilere<sup>1\*</sup>, Chinomso P. Dozie<sup>2</sup> & Mmachi Akudo Chidozie<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English/Literary Studies, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Use of English Unit, Directorate of General Studies, Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>Department of English Language, School of Languages, Imo State College of Education, Ihitte-Uboma, Imo State

**Corresponding Author:** Ijeoma C. Ojilere, E-mail: ijeomaojilere@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to evaluate the impact of English as language of formal learning using some schools from the three senatorial zones in Imo State as well as teachers' challenges in the use of this target language as a pedagogical tool. Through a random sampling process, 1200 copies of pretested and validated questionnaire written in English were administered to selected students from these regions. Key Persons Interview was also used to supplement the questionnaire data. 895 copies of questionnaire representing 74.6% were duly completed and returned for analysis. Studies showed that students' perception of English as a language of education is one in which they feel compelled and have rather come to terms with its usage as a result of its imposition by the British colonialists, acceptance by the Nigerian government and general implementation as an official language. Findings revealed that 68.5% feel the need to fall back on their local language for clarification of some sort while 14.5% of the respondents have little or no need to use the mother tongue but 17% have occasional inkling to resort to their mother tongue for proper understanding. This interference is expected in a multilingual nation like Nigeria which has instituted bilingualism and multilingualism to her citizenry. The study established that the use of English accounts for some of the challenges in academic performance of students and therefore recommends that teachers, parents and government must strive to reiterate the need to inculcate and acculturate this official language as an ineluctable tool for academic success and societal integration.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The significance of English as a veritable tool for effective communication has maintained an unwavering stance in both local and international milieu. Its multifaceted functions span through the horizon as second language to non-native speakers and foreign language to non-English speakers. It is inarguably a connective device that unites individuals from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds particularly in a multicultural Nigeria. The general acceptance as a global language and usage account for the manifold roles English plays in our society particularly and the nation in general.

Furthermore, the advent of the English Language in the nation has institutionalized bilingualism as most Nigerians are seemingly bilinguals by virtue of necessity occasioned by language infestation. It is also a known fact that English exists alongside the very many vernaculars such as Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Ibibio, Ijaw, Kalabari and as such regarded as the high variety while the vernaculars, the regional roles are tagged the low variety. Bilingualism by extension, typifies our core Nigerianness. As a multilingual and multicultural nation, Nigeria has exposed her nationals to manifold languages other than that which exists in their immediate environment as first language which accounts for the several disinterests among some citizens who have continued to grudgingly acquire this language. Young learners of English are faced with the gruelling task of imbibing this global language at all cost for both learning and integration in the society. In Nigeria,

indigenous languages have no place in official and educational matters although official recognition was accorded to the three major languages that represent the three geo political zones, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. These languages are not usually mutually intelligible and so are not widely accepted as other supposedly minor linguistic groups continue to clamour supremacy of their languages. Several policies have thus, been put in place to ensure the indigenous languages do not become extinct which did not particularly favour the English language as the indigenous ones were taken into major consideration before the adoption of the policies. However, the English language still thrived to earn its prestigious status.

As a global language, studies have shown that English has attained an enviable status such that other languages spoken around the world are merely relegated to the third place as is the case in Nigeria where it has assumed a pride of place as other indigenous languages clamour for some degree of relevance. Finegan (1989), however, asserts that English is the only language known for its rapid widespread than other languages; some other renowned researchers equally admit to this exulted position of the English language as unbeatable, unstoppable, unflinching and a lingua franca, Anderman & Rogers (2005), Saur (2006:187). Also, Crystal (1997) authenticates this global status of English considering the trifurcated roles of first, foreign and official language which substantiate its generic attribute. The emergence of this language has undoubtedly generated unwholesome debates notably its supremacy over the very many indigenous languages spoken in the nation as well as the acceptance and implementation of the language in the educational sector where teaching is practically done in English, hence, the students are expected to get acquainted and avail themselves the opportunity of easy learning of the language. The efficacy of the English language in bonding and creating mutual understanding across millions of people of diverse cultural, ethnic and linguistic background is beyond measure. Considering that English assumes a messianic role which bridged the language barrier and unintelligibility that existed around the nation as a result of ethnic diversity, the perceived downsides cannot be ignored particularly in the areas of teaching and learning where it is believed to be somewhat deficient in knowledge transfer. On the issue of English as a lingua franca, second language learners' attitude on the task of playing by the formal norms of the language and the extent to which this conformity will assist in formal learning and international intelligibility remains a grey area. In addition, there is a growing concern on students' perception of this

language as a learning tool and their overall impression, assessment and efficacy towards comprehension of lessons. Similarly, pre-school teachers' actual take on this language will be understudied so as to uncover their difficulties or ease in the use of English as an instructive tool. These among others form the purpose of this study which include:

- a. To investigate students' attitude towards English as official language and medium of instruction.
- b. To examine Pre-school teachers' perception of the use of this language as a veritable tool in pedagogy.
- c. To explore the various challenges of learning English in a multicultural society.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Every research work is believed to have a theoretical standpoint which invariably supports the overall study structure, therefore, this work adopted the theory of affordances as developed by James .J. Gibson in 1979. The theory is primarily concerned with that which is predominant and prevalent in an environment that actually conditions inhabitants' interaction and learning modes while one strives to get acquainted in order to fit in perfectly as well as its appropriateness to the individual. In other words, one's ability to acculturate in a given environment is dependent on the ability to get one's need satisfied in a given environment. This explication therefore, points to the complexities of language learning in a multilingual society particularly for a bilingual and the degree to which the environment influences or shapes one's learning process. It further brings to the fore the various challenges that second language learners undergo in a bid to have their needs met. These needs are a pivotal trench through which an individual could either get his needs fulfilled or mar the process of acculturation. Generally, humans are known to adjust and manipulate a given situation for their benefit but Gibson advises that the ripple effect of such act may be detrimental and that one's knowledge of an extant affordance prevalent in a given environment is a surest way to mingle in an unfamiliar situation. On the flip side, some authors have delved in to the affordance study, notably, Eleanor Gibson, Jakob Von Uexkull, Donald Norman. Willaim Gaver interestingly made a threefold categorization of the affordances to include: perceptible, false and hidden. An affordance is termed perceptible when there is core information which is perceivable by an actor as he strives to act upon the existing affordance. A false affordance

depicts an unreal disposition which negates any possible reality and so requires no further action. A hidden affordance on the other hand, indicates an obscure situation with immutable opportunities for action even though unbeknownst to the actor for its existence. Basically, false and hidden affordances may generate unwholesome misinterpretation, ignite needless errors and perhaps, go the wrong way while, perceptible affordance draws a direct nexus between discernment of an existing affordance and appropriate action taken to that effect.

## **2.2 Review of Previous Studies**

Learning a second language in a multilingual environment can be an arduous task particularly when the target language is sine-qua-non to integration in the society and attainment of educational qualification. It is important to note that learning a second language is one thing but navigating the nitty-gritty of its applicability and usage is yet another. Given the intricacies that surround the advent of English in Nigeria and the apparent reactions from its learners, it is vital to survey previous studies on second language learners' perception of English around the globe.

Anyanwu (2016) examined the socio-cultural factors that bear on the use of the English Language among Nigerian undergraduates in some tertiary institutions which account for most communication breakdown both in teaching and learning of the language. The researcher observed that poor socio-economic background, nonchalant attitude towards English learning, interference among others are instrumental to this appalling mindset of these undergraduates as regards English as a pedagogical tool. The study also showed that students are less attuned to the use of English courses slated to enhance their proficiency at the nymph stage in their pursuit for advanced learning as they rely on slangs/pidgin for informal interactions. She therefore, recommends that digitizing English language instruction, multilingual and cultural creativities and teachers' hands-on approach will go a long way in salvaging this ugly trend in the use of English among undergraduates. On the other hand, Finnish attitude towards English is an enviable trait due to the positivity it portends. It is that which they believe prevails in all the facets of their social lives and so one's knowledge of English is considered a prestige accomplishment as that of the ability to read, (Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2004:10). This delineates the status which English has over Swedish which is the official language of the Finns.

Similarly, Ebere (2016) examined the cultural and socio-economic implication on secondary school

students' academic performance in the West Coast Region of Gambia. Results from the study demonstrated significant influence of culture and socio-economy on students' performance as well as parents' poor educational level. These point to the varying perception of ideas, norms, cultural disparities/beliefs and language discordance prevalent in a multicultural society which in turn have undue control of the students' mindset who are torn between understanding the need for this western education and the overall cultural implication of no adherence to the custom of the land which often has severe punitive measures. Gambia is culture oriented and abounds in her inextricable beliefs that pay less attention to girl-child education as is the case in Africa and this undeniably hampers students' performance in schools particularly as regards early marriage.

In addition, Mercado (2018) investigated the extent to which language registers influence the development of students' writing skills in Universidad Técnica de Ambato using both qualitative and quantitative approaches while adopting the pre-test and post-test writing techniques in order to ascertain their applicability in both formal and informal parlance. The study revealed that most students were at home with social context as a precursor to the appropriate register to adopt in written English while some grappled with appropriating the contextual need in their writing. This was clearly demonstrated as their general knowledge of the various registers was instrumental to the suitability of the formality or informality writing to be adopted in any given context. Again, the writing skills and vocabularies of these students were significantly advanced demonstrating unhinged mastery of these language registers.

Furthermore, Reko (2019) did a comparative study of the attitudes of teachers of English as a second language (ESL) and English as foreign language (EFL) towards English as lingua franca in Finland and USA drawing the margin between the native and non native teachers. He pointed out that the native teachers are seen as key players who adhere strictly to the formal norms of English where as non native teachers are known to deviate here and there. Consequently, this deviation according to the researcher enhances hitch free communication as opposed to the infringement of communication which the native teachers envisage. The researcher also acknowledged the efficacy of English as a veritable tool in teaching, learning and overall development of participants which invariably culminates to communicative competence. In all, this review has

shown that ELF is assessable for users in a Standard English prone environment which instigates the need for conformity.

Also, Thompson (2019) investigated the nature of early child pedagogy in a socio-cultural multiplicity in Ghana. A qualitative approach was adopted to explore teachers' perception of cultural diversity in teaching at the kindergarten level as regards storytelling, learning materials and rhyme rendition. Having duly collected data from the respondents and proper observations made, analysis revealed that imbibing and conforming to the socio-cultural context teaching method is a first step toward enhancing children's language acquisition, literacy augmentation and general cognitive growth. Also, teachers repeatedly demonstrated the zeal to carry these pupils along in their quest for learning through rigorous trainings considering their context and further drawing the curriculum to suit the cultural environment as well support the children's education.

In the light of these previous studies, it is evident that English usage in a multicultural society has its baggage as citizens especially students constantly strive to attain seeming competence and mastery for purposeful academic pursuit and engagement. The above studies clearly indicated the various challenges faced with the learning of this foreign language by second language learners in other nations but the current research shall evaluate the perception of the students in conforming to the use of this language for pedagogy. In addition, the teachers' notion will also be explored since they are the actual drivers that steer the application for knowledge transfer.

## 2.3 METHODOLOGY

### 2.3.1 Study Area

This study was conducted in Imo State precisely the public secondary schools which are known to have significant number of students and are mostly second language learners of English. The samples were drawn to capture schools from the three educational/senatorial zones in the state, namely: Owerri, Okigwe and Orlu. Owerri educational zone is known to have the highest students' concentration with nine local government areas under its jurisdiction namely: Aboh Mbaise, Ahiazu Mbaise, Ezinihite Mbaise, Ngor-Okpala, Mbaitoli, Ikeduru, Owerri West, Owerri North and Owerri municipal. Okigwe educational/senatorial district comprises seven local government areas made up of: Isiala Mbano, Ehime Mbano, Onuimo, Nsu, Etiti, Obowo and Ihitte Uboma. Orlu senatorial/educational zone is made up of eleven local government areas which include: Orsu, Isu, Njaba, Nwangele, Nkwerre, Ideato

North, Ideato South, Oru East, Oru West, Ohaji Egbema and Oguta. Thus, two schools were systematically selected to represent both the modern and rural areas. Data were collected from public senior secondary students. These are Nigerians from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds drawn from Girls secondary school, Owerri(GSSI) and Ahiazu Secondary School, Mbaise(ASSM) (representing the Owerri zone); Ibeafor Secondary School, Ehime Mbano(ISS) and Ezinachi Community Secondary School, Okigwe(ECSS) (representing Okigwe zone), Township Comprehensive Secondary School, Amaifeke(TCSS) and Community Secondary School, Amaokpara Umudei, Nkwerre(CSSN), (Orlu zone). These samples were systematically selected while the pretested and validated questionnaire distributed equitably to investigate students' attitude towards the use of English as a medium of learning as well as the various challenges they encounter as second language learners of English. These students are young adults aged 15 years and above. However, the researcher sought consent from the school management and appropriate information regarding the study given to the respondents before commencement as it is wont prior to any data collection procedure in order to gain the trust of the respondents. The subjects for the interview were basically preschool teachers who are seen as groomers of these children as they make their ways to the academic world.

### 2.3.2 Study Design

This is a cross-sectional questionnaire and structured interview-based survey study. The questionnaire was designed in the check-list format for ease of response and the eleven item questions were made to elicit objective selection from the under listed options. In order to supplement and substantiate the data collected and result, six- item structured interview questions were administered to pre-school teachers in order to ascertain their perception of English as a pedagogical tool for preschoolers. To achieve the purposes of the study which are to investigate the attitude of students towards English, explore teachers' perception of English as a pedagogical tool and the undue challenges of learning with the target language, senior students from selected public secondary schools around the three major ethnic groups were chosen for the study as well as preschool teachers who are known to groom these pupils as they engage in official learning in their infantile stage. Although, the education policy postulates that learning should be done in the native language of the pupils but that has always been flouted because of the need and interest of all and sundry to acquire and further demonstrate their mastery of the target language. The copies of questionnaire were

disseminated to the students in the senior secondary levels in all the selected samples and the interview conducted among all the preschool teachers in the selected samples.

**2.3.3 Sampling Technique**

This study used the systematic random sampling for the selection of the samples for the questionnaire distribution and random sampling for the selection of interviewees. This involved systematic selection of two samples each from the list of all the secondary schools in the study areas and random picking of the teachers for the interviews at the preschool levels.

**2.3.4 Study Instrument**

Data for this research were collected using pre-tested and validated questionnaire and structured interview written by the researchers. The questionnaire was written in English and designed in a check-list format while stating the purpose of the study to aid comprehension by the respondents. The questionnaire comprised two parts; one centred on the demography of the participants which included: gender, student's status, tribe and English proficiency level. The other part contained eleven items which addressed the following: their language of formal learning, the frequency of the English as a pedagogical tool, the possibility to fall back on one's mother tongue for clarification of thoughts, the subjects students wish were taught in their local language, how fascinating do the students find English, students' view about English, the assessment of teacher's use of English as a means of knowledge transfer, the influence of the mother tongue in learning in English in schools, second language learners' perception of English, the probable challenges that abound in the use of this target language in a multicultural Nigeria etc.

**2.3.5 Data Collection**

The ratified form of the questionnaire was distributed to the samples during normal school periods. The objectives of the study were clearly stated and the

students showed great interest in the exercise. Informal verbal consent was sought from the heads of the various schools to enable us carry out this task. Data collection spanned approximately one hour considering the time spent on clarification of unfamiliar terms under the supervision of some senior members of staff. The structured interview data on the other hand, was organised for the preschool teachers during the break periods as agreed by the various heads after approval for the task was granted. Informal introduction was made which stirred the interest of the respondents and further set them at ease as well as the aims and significance of the study were undoubtedly elucidated. Responses to the interview were collected using the audio tape recorder having obtained consent from the respondents. Each interview session was introduced in order to avoid needless muddle up of responses. Ethical considerations were considered, reaffirmed and upheld during the duration of the data collection.

**3. DATA ANALYSIS**

The data obtained from both the questionnaire were analysed using frequency tables and simple percentage calculations.

A total of one thousand two hundred copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents in the six selected schools. Two hundred copies were equitably distributed to each school and the participants involved only the senior secondary students from SS1 TO SS3. The summary of the distribution and level of returns are presented herein.

**Table 1** shows the response levels from the various schools. A total of one thousand two hundred copies were evenly distributed and the overall response rate was 74.6 % with GSSI having the highest return at 87% followed by TCSS with 80% and CSSN recorded the least return rate with 64.5%.

Schools	No. Of Questionnaire distributed	No/% returned
GSSI	200	174 (87%)
AMSS	200	144 (72%)
ISS	200	131 (65.5%)
ECSS	200	157 (78%)
TCSS	200	160 (80%)
CSSN	200	129 (64.5%)
TOTAL	1200	895 (74.6)

**Key**

**GSSI** = Girls Secondary School, Ikenegbu, Owerri.

**AMSS** = Ahiazu Mbaise Secondary School, Mbaise.

ISS =Ibeafor Secondary School, Ehime Mbano.

ECSS = Ezinachi Community Secondary School, Okigwe.

TCSS = Township Comprehensive Secondary School, Amaifeke.

CSSN = Community Secondary School, Nkwerre.

**Table 2** indicates respondents’ first contact with English. Results showed that a good number of respondents represented by 30% of the population admitted to have encountered English in their

primary school while 21% agreed that their use of the language at home was mere happenstance as it was the first language of communication.

First contact with English	Frequency	Percentage
Nursery	251	28.0
Primary	271	30.3
Secondary	188	21.0
Home	185	20.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3** demonstrates respondents’ level of English proficiency and the results show that the ‘Good’ proficiency level had the highest percentage (28.0%)

while the ‘Excellent’ proficiency level had the least percentage (11.1%).

Level of proficiency in English	Frequency	Percentage
Weak	185	20.6
Fair	231	25.8
Good	250	28.0
Very good	130	14.5
Excellent	99	11.1
Total	895	100
Language of formal learning	Frequency	Percentage
English	895	100
Igbo	0	0.0

Yoruba	0	0.0
Others	0	0.0
Total	895	100

**Table 4** indicates the frequency of respondents' responses on perception of the English language as a teaching medium. Data collected gave insights on the view of English among the secondary school students. Highlights on the responses on language of formal learning indicate that all of the respondents recorded at 100% admitted to the use of English as a language of formal learning in their school. Also, 53.1% of the students are at home with the status of English in Nigeria as against 3.0% who are atypical and so believe it should be eradicated. 44.0% of the respondents on the hand are of the view it should be

used along with the indigenous languages. In addition, 58.4% attest to the fact that their mother tongue does not interfere with the teaching and understanding of lessons in English, while 27.3% affirm to the interference of their mother tongue in the understanding of lessons and 14.3% agree to the occasional interference of mother tongue. Similarly, 68.5% of the respondents accepted to fall back on their mother tongue for clarification of concepts in school while 14.5% have little or no need for mother tongue for clarification. 17.0% have occasional inkling to resort to their mother tongue.

ITEMS	REPONSES	FREQ.	%	RESPONSES	FREQ.	%	RESPONSES	FREQ.	%
What is your language of formal learning?	English	895	100	Igbo	0	0	Others	-	-
How often does your teacher use English as a means of knowledge transfer?	Very often	734	82	Occasionally	92	10.3	Seldom	69	7.71
Do you understand your lessons when being taught in English?	Yes	795	88.8	No	25	2.8	Sometimes	75	8.4
Does your mother tongue influence your understanding of lessons taught in the English language?	Yes	244	27.3	No	523	58.4	Sometimes	128	14.3
Are there times you fall back on your mother tongue for clarification of concept?	Yes	613	68.5	No	130	14.5	Often times	152	17.0
Are there subjects you wish were taught in your native language?	Yes	573	64	No	297	33.2	Not sure	25	2.8
Do you find English fascinating?	Yes	625	69.8	No	153	17.1	Undecided	117	13.1
What is your view about English as a compulsory subject?	It should be eradicated in schools	27	3.0	I am pleased about its status	475	53.1	It should be used alongside other indigenous languages.	393	44.0

How do you rate your teacher's use of English as a medium of knowledge transfer?	Good	533	60	Fair	129	14.4	Excellent	233	26.0
What challenges do you face as a second language learner of English in school?	Inability to communicate effectively in the target language	255	28.5	Mother tongue interference	493	55.1	Total disinterest in the English language	147	16.4
Total		5,294	591.9		2317	258.9		1339	149.71

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of English as an official and educational language cannot be undermined as all the students attested to the use of the language as a pedagogical tool in schools irrespective of the plethora of indigenous languages prevalent in the nation. This assertion was drawn from the data collected for the study where 100% of the respondents confirmed that the language of formal learning in school is English. This is in line with the National Education Policy (1977) which stipulated the use of English for academic instruction from the third year in primary school. This however, authenticates the unflinching stance which the language has attained in Nigeria. Given the appreciative recognition of this foreign language in Nigeria, and the overall need to engage in meaningful communication with near perfection in English and impart positively on their wards, 82% of the teachers are quite sedulous in discharging their duties by constantly relishing their teaching skills in English for the purpose of knowledge transfer as well as enhancing students' speaking and writing skills, 10.3% occasionally use the foreign language for academic instruction and 7.71% rarely make use of the language of educational instruction. The least percentage who owned up to the rarity of the English as medium of teaching was basically from some of the rural areas of the state where English is less used.

Speaking about comprehension of lessons being taught in English in schools, 88% of the respondents concurred to having undiluted understanding of lectures. 2.8% on the other hand, noted their

incomprehensibility of their lectures in school as a result of the poor knowledge of English and 8.4% have a hard time with understanding lessons in school due to their staunch acculturation of their native language. These varied responses are attributed to the multicultural and multilingual nature of the country which have literally exposed and influenced the overall English usage of her citizens for mutual talk exchange and academic pursuit. This result is akin to (Anyanwu, 2016) study which observed that undergraduates' complacent attitude towards English and socio-economic background are instrumental to the poor academic performance of students.

As a multilingual and multicultural nation, the nationals are regrettably exposed to the myriads of indigenous languages where English becomes the second language for all. First language usually has a very strong hold on its speakers thereby hindering comprehension of other spoken languages. The issue of mother tongue interference is a barraged concept which has stirred several debates by renowned scholars as to the possible ways to forestall the ever-growing influence of the local language in the understanding and smooth usage of the foreign language. Bilinguals are known to rely on their mother tongue for ease of expression of inner most thoughts and feelings, students are mostly affected in this rather regrettable trait where 27.3% of the respondents confirmed to the influence of their mother tongue in the understanding of their lessons while 58.4% admitted to non interference. However,



14.3% of the respondents agreed to occasional interference. This undue interference of the mother tongue during lessons understandably corresponds to the responses derived from the question which addressed the possibility of the students to fall back on their mother tongue for clarification of concepts in schools. The results revealed that 68.5% of the students often fall back on their native language for complete elucidation of ideas, while 14.5% found substituting with English for clarification of concepts needless, 17.0% admitted to intermittent recourse to their mother tongue.

Furthermore, in a bid to ascertain respondents' view on the preferred language of education, 64% assented to the native language for easy comprehension of certain subjects, 33.2% were conceited about the use of English as a teaching medium while 2.8% of the respondents were utterly undecided in their response. Some of the respondents further listed a few subjects as: Civic Education, Physics, Geography, Chemistry and Basic Science. This is in line with the National Educational Policy which stipulates that English be used as a teaching instruction from the third year in Primary school and so a wish to have it the other way may result to exercise in futility. Similarly, this policy is akin to the situation in Finland where English studies begin formally at the third grade, (Roope, 2019). Due to the seeming difficulty in learning English and adapting to its usage particularly among students, 17.1% of the population do not find the language fascinating while 69.8% of them demonstrated high regard for the language. 13.1% on the other hand, were indecisive in their response. In addition, result from students' views about English as a compulsory subject showed that 53.1% of the population are pleased with the status of English in national curriculum, 44.0% are of the opinion it should be used alongside other indigenous languages in order to prevent them from going moribund while 3.0% believe it should be eradicated from the school syllabus. This clearly shows the level of disinterest among students which is contributory to the wrong perception of the English language despite the manifold functions it plays in the society. A look at the teachers' use of English as a medium of knowledge transfer reveals that a good number of them have demonstrated 'good' mastery of the language as agreed by 60% of the population, a handful exhibited 'fair' knowledge of the language concurred by 14.4% while 26% of the respondents attested to the 'excellent' proficiency in the language by their teachers. This result supports Reko (2019) study on the attitude of teachers of English as a second language and English as a foreign language which established that positive attribute towards the

English birthed conformity to the norms of the language. As regards the challenges bilinguals face in schools, 28.5% revealed they have a hard time with effective communication in the target language, 55.1% confirmed the influence of mother tongue while 16.4% are totally indifferent in their view. These thorny challenges are what bilinguals are faced with in their bid to integrate in the society and engage in meaningful conversation with their fellows.

In addition, the structured and Key Person Interview which was designed to supplement and validate the findings of the questionnaire survey confirmed that teachers have their fair share when it comes to educating bilinguals in a target language. A good number of them agreed that most pupils understand their lessons in English owing to their early exposure to the language and so derive pleasure listening to the teachers in the classroom. On the contrary, a few interviewees disclosed that considering their rural background, understanding lessons in English is almost an arduous task as the teachers employ the use of vernacular as a remedial strategy. As Thompson (2019) pointed out in his study that teachers' ability to adapt to the socio-cultural practises facilitate literacy and overall cognitive development of children. The teachers' perception of English as a formal language was received with some positivism. Most of them affirmed its acceptance and efficacy in knowledge transfer and overall academic delivery while acknowledging inordinate hitches in its usage particularly for those in the bucolic areas. Majority of the interviewees admitted to the onerous nature of teaching preschoolers due to the gruelling task of nurturing their speaking and writing skills at that grade level. Furthermore, as an educational language and a compulsory subject in schools, teachers strive to synergise their teaching skills in order to accommodate all the pupils irrespective of one's first language. On the issue of the challenges these teachers are faced with in the course of teaching the preschoolers, a good number of the teachers attested to the socio-cultural background of the new pupils as instrumental to the learning profundity which not only inhibits a child's capacity to learn and understand lessons but culminates to unwillingness to participate in school activities. In introspect, most of the interviewees gave compelling insights as regards the challenges faced during teaching, some of which include: choice of words to suit the age and need of the pupils particularly the newbies, difficulty with understanding the phonetic pronunciation usually orchestrated by their backgrounds, lack of concentration, mother tongue interference etc. As a result, most of preceptors employ abecedarian

approach in order to salvage the situation and get the pupils properly indoctrinated in the system.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study has x-rayed the unflinching status of English in Nigeria amidst plethora of undesirable perceptions by its users and the efforts to regenerate the general acceptance in the minds of students and society at large. These negative thoughts are birthed by the plurilingual nature of the country which nevertheless left the masses bilinguals and multilinguals as the case may be and the compulsory need to get acquainted with this global language for both societal integration and literacy. As a formal language, the English language has retained its pride of place in Nigeria, hence, the need for conformity and application of set rules. Data collected revealed the differing views of students as regards the use of English as a language of education ranging from the acceptance of its usage with the indigenous languages for fear of them going moribund although just a handful of the respondents opted for total eradication of the target language in the school curriculum. In conclusion, although English is alien to us considering its imposition by the colonialists, the need to uphold our native languages should not obviate the gap it tends to fill in our communication quest and academic competence. Students on the other hand should strive irrespective of socio-cultural, linguistic or economic backgrounds to swot up on communicative competence and overall academic performance through rigorous practice.

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers make the following recommendations:

- a. The need for regular trainings for public school teachers/ instructors as regards getting equipped with the nitty-gritty of the target language and attractive emoluments remunerated by the government in order to spur them for optimal discharge of their duties.
- b. Parents should be made to know the need to be part and parcel of their ward's academic growth especially from their infantile stage to ease the burden on the teachers.
- c. Conducive learning environment be considered in all the schools to energise and encourage these students for the rigorous academic exercise.
- d. Teachers must be resolute in their quest for knowledge transfer in a most passionate manner so much so that the students may find the need to learn and enjoy the use of this target language particularly in the classrooms.
- e. A hands-on approach should be employed by all the educational bodies in Nigeria as a remedial strategy towards improving the learning system.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Ojilere, Ijeoma C.**, teaches English Language at the Alex-Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. She's a passionate teacher who hopes to make remarkable contribution in the educational sector. She belongs to some national and international professional associations. She has some collaborated publications and her research interests centre on Sociolinguistics, Applied Linguistics, Communication and Pragmatics.

**Chinomso P. Dozie**, PhD, teaches English Language and Communication skills at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria. She has authored and co-authored many publications and has presented numerous times at state and national conferences. Her research interests focus on Applied Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics and Gender Studies.

**Chidozie Mmachi Akudo** also, teaches English Language at the Imo State College of Education Ihitte Uboma, Nigeria. She is a member of some professional bodies in Nigeria. She has some academic publications to her name. Her research interests include: Sociolinguistics, Communication and Gender Studies.

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