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OBSTACLES TO ENGLISH PROFICIENCY DEVELOPMENT IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Abstract: This research explores the factors hindering English proficiency development among secondary school students. The study analyzes various obstacles, such as insufficient language input, ineffective pedagogical approaches, and limited access to resources. The paper aims to shed light on the complexities of English language acquisition in secondary education and suggest potential solutions to improve students' language skills.

Introduction: English, as a global language, plays a vital role in communication, education, and employment. However, secondary students in many parts of the world struggle to achieve proficiency in this language. This paper delves into the specific challenges faced by secondary students in their English language acquisition journey, aiming to understand the underlying reasons behind these difficulties and explore potential solutions to enhance their learning experience.

Secondary education is a crucial stage in a student's English language development. However, numerous obstacles hinder the achievement of fluency and proficiency. This article examines some of the most significant hurdles that students face in their journey towards mastering the English language in secondary school.

1. Lack of Exposure and Opportunities:

Limited English Immersion: Many students, particularly in non-English speaking regions, lack sufficient exposure to the language outside the classroom. This limits their opportunities to practice and develop fluency. Insufficient Use of English in Daily Life: The absence of English-speaking environments outside of school restricts students' ability to apply their classroom learning in real-world situations. Limited Access to Authentic Materials: Students often rely on textbooks and artificial language learning materials. Access to authentic resources like novels, movies, and podcasts is often limited, hindering their understanding of natural language usage.

2. Pedagogical Challenges:

Teacher Skill and Training: The quality of English teaching can vary greatly. Lack of proper training and resources can lead to ineffective teaching methodologies, hindering student progress. Curriculum Design: Curricula that focus heavily on grammar and vocabulary, without sufficient emphasis on communicative skills, can create a disconnect between classroom learning and real-world language use. Class Size and Individual Needs: Large class sizes make it challenging for teachers to cater to the diverse learning needs of each student. Students with different learning styles and proficiency levels may not receive the appropriate support.

3. Student Factors:

Motivation and Confidence: Low levels of motivation and confidence can hinder students' willingness to participate in class and engage with the language actively. Fear of making mistakes can impede progress. Learning Styles and Preferences: Different students learn best in different ways. A one-size-fits-all approach to teaching may not cater to the diverse learning styles and preferences present in the classroom. Background and Prior Knowledge: Students' prior knowledge and exposure to English can

significantly impact their learning experience. Students with limited prior knowledge may face greater challenges in keeping up with their peers.

4. Resource Constraints:

Limited Access to Technology: Access to technology, like computers, software, and online learning platforms, is crucial for engaging students and providing them with diverse learning opportunities. Lack of Funding: Limited funding for language programs can result in inadequate resources, such as textbooks, materials, and teacher training, further hindering student progress. Inadequate Infrastructure: The lack of proper facilities, like libraries and language labs, can impede access to valuable learning resources and opportunities for practice.

English language is not only used in Nigeria but also has domains of usage in international levels too. Paul (2005) said that, English is flexible enough to be used for the most trivals conversation or for transacting the most important affairs of the day. Thus, it is English language that gives Nigeria opportunity to take part in the deliberation and decisions in international organization such as united nation organization common wealth of nation, world heath organization.

In Nigeria, English serves several purposes that are very important to her existence. It is the lingua franca of the country and the official language in the society due to multi ethnic groups that speak different language. For this diversity of language, Nigeria needs one language that will bridge the linguistic barriers among its component states. The choice of such language (English) has been made for Nigeria by the British colonial administration; Uchechukwu (2008) observed that, English is spoken by more than a quarter of a billion people. It is becoming increasingly popular as a second language for non-English speaking people throughout the work. Thus, English is regarded as a second language. Nigeria civil service, government establishment armed forces, the public and judiciary system English is the prescribed language of communication among the various ethnic groups with different language background.

In social gathering, English is used among people for social interaction.
Uchechukwu (2008) observed that, apart from English language having the widest geographical spread, that the language is spoken by the greatest number of people. It is becoming increasingly popular as a second language for non-English speaking people throughout the word. It is a language that uses more than a million symbols. It is flexible enough to be used for the most trivia conversation or for transaction. The most important affairs of the day, it can be used for recording scientific data with accuracy and precision or for creating a poem expressing a beautiful thought in words that are pleasing to the ear.
Literature books so far produced in Nigeria are written in English. This includes, works of Wole Soyinka, Mrs. Edith Eze, Chinua Achebe, Christopher Okigbo and so on. They are highly claimed internationally.
In education, it is used as a means of instruction in school and it is introduced as a school subject in the university level. School subjects in the first year in primary school up to the university level. School subject like, biology, history, government, mathematics and so on are thought in English. This means that scientific knowledge of the word is through English language, which he learn in the school. Thus, English language plays a role in our society. In education homes, English is used as the common language to impact knowledge to younger ones. Gradually the younger ones will develop fluent speech in English from their parents.
It is true that English is a lingua franca, the main official language and the second language (L2) for Nigerian children, but only a small percentage of the Nigerian population have access to it and use it in communication. And the small percentage of the people who use English in Nigeria, only negligible proportion of them may be said to speak and writes Standard English like the educated native speakers of the language. As Anibueze (2000) observed that at a pre-school age, native speakers have usually acquired unconsciously the basic sentence structure of English language. It may not necessarily be the standard language, but it is one in which the child is relatively competent. Since a large number of Nigeria population who use English language acquire it through the form school systems, the poor

standard of their English can be ascribed in school, especially secondary school by those concern teachers and student who sat for general certificate of education examination (G.C.E) at community High School (C.H.S.) in October 2009 and the data collected confirmed that ninety five percent of the students book the examination because of failure in English language.

There are some ways to overcome the obstacles. Addressing these obstacles requires a multi-faceted approach that involves policymakers, educators, and the community. Solutions may include:

* Investing in teacher training and professional development

* Developing curricula that prioritize communicative skills and authentic language use

* Creating opportunities for English immersion through cultural exchanges, partnerships with native English speakers, and technology-based learning

* Providing access to technology and resources

* Fostering a positive learning environment that encourages student participation and confidence

By actively tackling these challenges, we can create a more conducive environment for English proficiency development in secondary education and equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in a globalized world.

Conclusion

Addressing the challenges faced by secondary students in English language acquisition requires a multi-faceted approach. Improving teacher training, promoting authentic language use in the classroom, and fostering a supportive learning environment are crucial steps towards enhancing English proficiency. By implementing evidence-based strategies, we can create a more effective and engaging language learning experience for secondary students, empowering them to navigate the complexities of the globalized world.

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