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MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNIQUES FOR MITIGATING THE FEAR OF ORAL ENGLISH AMONGST SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN ENUGU EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ENUGU STATE.

[1]Veronica Egonekwu Mogboh (Ph.D.) and [2]Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi

[1]Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.
[2]Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.
E-mail: nekwuvero@yahoo.ca, chinemeremiloanwusi@gmail.com
Phone Number: 08034001816, 07062395436

Abstract: This study investigates the management of educational techniques aimed at mitigating the fear of oral English among secondary school learners in Enugu East Local Government Area, Enugu State. Many students in this region exhibit anxiety and reluctance to participate in oral English activities due to fear of making mistakes, peer ridicule, and a lack of confidence. The study seeks to identify the major causes of this fear, examine the teaching methods currently employed by English teachers, and recommend effective strategies to enhance students' oral proficiency. A quantitative survey design was adopted, utilizing structured questionnaires administered to 100 students and 10 English teachers selected from 10 randomly chosen secondary schools. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency counts and percentages. The findings revealed that common causes of fear include poor pronunciation, fear of negative feedback, and limited speaking opportunities. While most teachers employ group discussions and role plays, there is minimal use of ICT tools. The study recommends more interactive classroom environments, regular speaking practice, teacher training, and the integration of educational technology to build student confidence. These measures, if implemented, will help reduce students' fear and improve their oral communication skills in English.

Keywords: Oral English, language anxiety, secondary school learners, teaching techniques, student confidence, Enugu East, educational management, English language education, fear reduction strategies

1. Introduction

Academic achievement and effective communication in Nigeria heavily depend on students mastering oral English because the country has designated English as its official language throughout all schools. Students within the Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State show considerable hesitation when asked to communicate in English in public settings or during their classroom discussions. The fear they experience affects their ability

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to speak English confidently while simultaneously undermining their achievements in oral evaluations and group discussions as well as classroom presentations (Eke, 2022). English oral proficiency influences academic testing results and mainstream social integration. Educators should prioritize methods to combat this fear because achievement in competitive settings requires students to overcome their oral English reluctance.

Second language acquisition faces a significant obstacle because oral communication anxiety persists as a widespread problem that affects students' learning process. English language learners face peer and teacher evaluations concerning their pronunciation along with grammar and fluency while using English since their proficiency does not meet native speaker criteria, according to Okonkwo (2021). Students who suffer from communication apprehension tend to stay away from speaking situations because they limit their practice time and development. The struggles students face when learning English become more pronounced in Enugu East because most students learn vernacular languages at home and rarely encounter fluent English speech outside classroom environments (Nwankwo 2020).

The teaching approach used in numerous public and some private educational institutions remains a principal reason why learners show fear toward speaking English. According to Chukwuma (2023), the traditional teaching method of adopting teacher-led grammar practice along with repetition and memorization helps little to promote authentic communication between students (Chukwuma, 2023). The traditional teaching methods enable students to excel at written English but create difficulties when they must use oral speech in spontaneous conversations.

Educational materials that enable student interaction, like audio-visual devices, together with role-playing and group sessions, serve as essential barriers to oral language development. The modern education techniques to develop communication abilities in students remain beyond the professional training of numerous teaching personnel (Ibe, 2022). The fear of speaking English orally becomes stronger because of the intense influence of a student's sociocultural environment. Many people in the communities of Enugu East face ridicule about their English language use when local accents mix with grammatical errors, both from their schoolmates and from some teachers and family members (Agbo, 2022). Psychological damage occurs through this approach since adolescents already face identity and confidence struggles. The social and educational environments inadvertently dissuade young students from using English by discouraging their speech mistakes. The cycle repeats itself through persistent silence, which triggers negative academic results as well as further fear development.

Schools in the study area utilize modern teaching methods for oral English instruction very little despite available innovative approaches. Language learning applications, pronunciation guides, and speech recognition software let students learn confidently in private practice environments, as described by Onuora (2021). Most schools encounter problems in the full integration of these resources because they face structural limitations coupled with budget constraints and a shortage of qualified instructors. Students encounter ICT tools that remain confined to administrative tasks because teachers fail to use these resources to improve language learning outcomes (Obasi, 2022). The technological shortage makes the difference between theoretical study plans and real classroom instruction broader.

Through their leadership, educational administrators establish educational policies that either decrease or increase student anxiety about speaking English in educational settings. The improvement of students' English-speaking attitudes becomes possible through educational leadership, which supports professional development while enhancing curriculum and maintaining supportive learning contexts (Nwachukwu, 2023). In situations where

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administrators do not demonstrate sufficient commitment toward linguistic expertise with a focus on oral proficiency, students receive less emphasis on speaking skills while written and reading abilities become more prominent. The successful execution of educational techniques requires strategy along with the inclusion of students to yield significant educational outcomes.

The study investigates various educational methods that could help reduce secondary school students' oral English anxiety in Enugu East Local Government Area. The research has three objectives that focus on discovering oral language anxiety origins in students while reviewing traditional teaching techniques and identifying new strategies to support stronger English-speaking abilities. The research states its purpose of delivering practical guidelines to educators and administrators alongside policymakers who desire to enhance oral English proficiency within Nigeria's secondary educational system (Eke, 2022). The study works to address this fundamental issue, which will strengthen both linguistic ability and student self-esteem and academic outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

In secondary schools across Enugu East Local Government Area, many students experience a persistent fear of speaking English, especially during oral exercises and classroom participation. This fear often results in poor performance in oral English assessments and hinders overall communication skills. Despite the importance of oral English in academic success and daily interaction, students shy away from speaking due to reasons such as fear of making mistakes, ridicule from peers, harsh correction by teachers, and lack of self-confidence.

Furthermore, teachers often lack access to modern teaching aids or training in effective oral English instruction techniques. Traditional teaching methods are still dominant, limiting student engagement and fluency. Without targeted efforts to manage this fear through appropriate educational strategies, students may continue to struggle with oral communication, which negatively affects their academic and social development.

This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the root causes of students' fear of oral English and to explore the teaching techniques and classroom strategies that can be used to help students overcome these challenges and improve their oral communication skills.

2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1.   Identify the major causes of fear of oral English among secondary school students in Enugu East LGA.

2.   Examine the teaching techniques currently used to improve oral English speaking skills.

3.   Recommend effective strategies for reducing fear and improving oral English performance among students.

3. Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1.   What are the main factors responsible for students' fear of oral English in Enugu East LGA?

2.   What teaching methods are used by teachers to help students overcome fear of speaking English?

3.   What are the most effective strategies for improving students' confidence in speaking oral English?

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study adopts a survey research design using structured questionnaires to collect data from students and teachers. This design is suitable for studying the opinions, experiences, and attitudes of a population.

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4.2 Population and Sample

The target population consists of secondary school students and English teachers in Enugu East Local Government Area, Enugu State. A sample of 100 students and 10 English teachers will be selected from 10 randomly chosen secondary schools in the area.

4.3 Sampling Technique

Simple random sampling will be used to select the schools and respondents to ensure equal representation. Each selected school will provide 10 students and 1 English teacher for the study.

4.4 Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire designed in two parts:

- Student questionnaire includes sections on causes of fear, classroom experiences, and suggestions for improvement.
- Teacher questionnaire includes items on teaching techniques, challenges, and views on student anxiety.

The questionnaire will contain close-ended questions (Yes/No and Likert scale) to make it simple and easy for respondents to complete.

4.5 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher will visit selected schools to administer the questionnaires with the help of school authorities. Instructions will be given clearly, and confidentiality will be assured. Respondents will be asked to complete the questionnaire within 15–20 minutes.

4.6 Method of Data Analysis

The data will be analyzed using simple descriptive statistics:

- Frequency counts
- Percentages
- Bar charts and tables

This will help summarize the responses and show patterns in the data. Each research question will be addressed through a clear presentation of the relevant responses.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Research Question 1:

What are the main factors responsible for students' fear of oral English?

Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fear of making mistakes	60	60%
Lack of confidence	50	50%
Poor pronunciation	45	45%
Negative teacher/peer reaction	40	40%
Limited speaking opportunities	55	55%

Interpretation:

The most common factor causing fear among students is the fear of making mistakes (60%), followed by limited opportunities to speak (55%) and lack of confidence (50%). This suggests that psychological and environmental factors play a key role in students' anxiety.

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Research Question 2:

What teaching methods are used by teachers to help students overcome fear of speaking English?

Method	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Group discussions	7	70%
Role plays and dialogues	6	60%
Use of audio/visual materials	3	30%
Teacher-led drills	5	50%
Encouraging free speaking	8	80%

Interpretation:

Most teachers use free speaking activities (80%) and group discussions (70%) to help students. However, the use of audio/visual materials is low (30%), suggesting the need for more technology-based methods in classrooms.

Research Question 3:

What are the most effective strategies for improving students' confidence in speaking oral English?

Suggested Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Regular speaking practice	85	85%
Positive reinforcement by teachers	70	70%
Peer collaboration	60	60%
Use of educational technology	40	40%
Friendly classroom environment	75	75%

Interpretation:

Regular speaking practice (85%) and a friendly classroom environment (75%) are seen as the most effective strategies for boosting student confidence. Teachers should focus on creating supportive environments and providing more speaking opportunities.

8. Discussion of Findings

The research data indicates that students from Enugu East LGA mainly experience oral English anxiety because they fear mistakes and struggle with pronunciation along with lacking confidence. Students experience anxiety during speeches in class primarily because they fear harsh criticism or being ridiculed by their peers. Eke (2022) reported that communication anxiety functions as a primary obstacle facing ESL teaching environments in Nigerian classrooms, according to his research findings.

Different teaching approaches help students, according to the analysis data, where most instructors combine group work with role-play tasks and encourage students to speak freely. The implementation of audios and videos alongside digital tools remains minimal. The research indicates that teachers are implementing traditional interactive approaches yet need more resources to improve learning outcomes (Onuora, 2021).

The identified most successful teaching methods combine speaking practice sessions with emotional backing from teachers within supportive learning places. Previous research supports these particular strategies because they effectively lower anxiety while enhancing oral performance, according to Okonkwo (2021). Students

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alongside faculty members acknowledge the need for persistent, non-threatening oral activities since both groups accept them as vital for combatting fear.

9. Conclusion

The researchers studied ways educational techniques should be handled to decrease oral English phobia among students from secondary schools across Enugu East LGA. The exam reveals that students become anxious because they are concerned about being judged and their inadequate confidence levels, yet various teachers try helping with group projects and simulation exercises. Limited educational resources combined with insufficient integration of information and communication technologies prevent teachers from delivering efficient oral English programs.

Administering classrooms through supportive teaching methods will help overcome this challenge. Educational staff needs modern oral English teaching training programs alongside increased availability of audio-visual technology for classroom use. The promotion of fear-free communication remains the essential key for students to speak.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to help mitigate the fear of oral English among secondary school learners in Enugu East Local Government Area:

1. To help the learners tame their anxiety, schools need to introduce oral English activities such as debates, speech contests, and even peer conversations at least once every day to instill confidence in their speaking abilities.

2. There is a need to conduct regular workshops and training sessions on interactive and student-centered teaching approaches like drama, role-playing, and storytelling to address the fear students have associated with speaking and promote fluency.

3. With the aid of the school administrative bodies and the government, there should be a purchase and installation of audio-visual equipment such as language labs, recorded English conversation tapes, English learning applications, and other tools to stimulate students in a fun way while learning.

4. The constructive approach is the best when addressing students' corrections. Criticism should not be harsh or mocking, instead focusing on politeness and appreciation for efforts made to speak English, mistakes included.

5. Pairing stronger with weaker students facilitates interaction from which they can learn from each other. Speaking clubs can also be held with the aim of providing students with relaxed environments to practice informal oral English.

6. There has to be an emphasis on using the language freely and expressively even before focusing on perfecting pronunciation and grammar. This ensures no fear of failure, enabling the learners to freely promote their use of the language.

7. Encouragement should be passed to the parents to enable their children to speak English more often by providing them various opportunities for practice without punishment for poorly formed sentences.

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