

INFLUENCE OF SPELLING BEE COMPETITIONS ON PUPILS' EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi, Chijioke Edward (Ph. D) and Ugwu Sabina Ogechukwu

Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, Godfrey Okoye University, Thinkers Corner, Emene, Enugu State.

Email: chinemeremilloanwusi@gmail.com/ giftedd2013@gmail.com/ sabinaeneh6@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16846179>

Keywords: Spelling Bee, emotional well-being, English language, pronunciation, mother tongue interference, motivation, trauma, primary education, language learning, Nigeria.

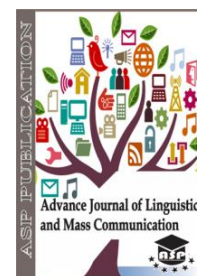
Abstract: This study investigated the influence of Spelling Bee competitions on the emotional well-being of Primary 5 pupils in English language learning across selected schools in Ebonyi and Enugu States, Nigeria. Using a survey design, the study sampled 120 pupils from five primary schools. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires distributed with the assistance of teachers and analyzed using mean and standard deviation, with a 2.50 cut-off mark. Findings revealed that while Spelling Bees promote English orthography, they often trigger anxiety, fear of public failure, and reduced motivation—particularly among pupils affected by mother tongue interference. The study also found that emotional distress after losing competitions negatively influenced pupils' willingness to participate in future English tasks. Pupils suggested emotionally supportive strategies such as encouragement, pronunciation training, and game-based learning. The study recommends trauma-aware, inclusive instructional strategies for English teachers preparing pupils for language competitions.

Introduction

Spelling Bee competitions have become a widely embraced pedagogical tool in many Nigerian primary schools, particularly for promoting excellence in English language learning.

Designed to enhance vocabulary acquisition, correct spelling, and public speaking, these contests are often seen as celebrations of academic intelligence and linguistic skill (Odey & Anyaele, 2022). However, while their

Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi, Chijioke Edward (Ph.D) and Ugwu Sabina Ogechukwu



educational value is widely recognized, there is a growing concern about their emotional cost—especially for young learners in high-pressure environments. Children are frequently trained rigorously and placed on public platforms to compete in events that demand not just academic ability, but emotional resilience. This reality is often overlooked in the euphoria surrounding academic achievement.

Emotional well-being refers to the ability of pupils to manage stress, build confidence, and develop a healthy sense of self-worth during academic engagement. In the context of language learning, emotional safety is critical, particularly during public performance or assessment (Chukwuma & Bello, 2023). Research shows that competitions like the Spelling Bee may unintentionally trigger anxiety, fear of failure, and diminished confidence—especially among pupils with language limitations (Eze, 2022). These psychological effects can result in academic disengagement or reluctance to participate in future contests. Therefore, what is designed as a literacy-enhancing activity may paradoxically discourage long-term language development.

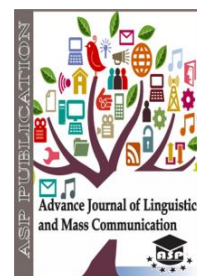
One major contributor to emotional stress during Spelling Bees is the issue of mispronunciation, often caused by mother tongue interference. Nigerian children come from over 500 language backgrounds, and their

native phonology often influences how they pronounce English words (Ajani & Odoh, 2021). This phonetic influence can lead to disqualification or poor performance—not because pupils lack knowledge, but because they mishear or mispronounce spelling prompts. This has led to feelings of injustice and helplessness among pupils, particularly when they feel excluded based on pronunciation rather than spelling competence. Such experiences, if unaddressed, can foster spelling anxiety and emotional trauma.

In addition, Spelling Bee formats in Nigeria often mirror Western models that assume a uniform linguistic background, ignoring the multilingual complexities of African classrooms (Ugwu, 2021). Children trained in contexts where English is not the dominant home language may be disadvantaged in oral competitions. The challenge is compounded when pupils are eliminated publicly after a single mistake, often without the chance for clarification or supportive feedback. This all-or-nothing structure places undue emotional pressure on young minds who are still developing their linguistic and social confidence. In such cases, pupils may equate language learning with humiliation rather than growth.

Furthermore, the high expectations placed on children by parents, schools, and sponsors increase emotional stress. Some children are

Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi, Chijioke Edward (Ph.D) and Ugwu Sabina Ogechukwu



coached for weeks only to be eliminated in the early rounds due to factors beyond their control. A study by Nwankwo and Eze (2023) indicated that many pupils who failed in early rounds of competitions began to show reduced enthusiasm in class participation. The emotional aftermath of public failure includes crying, withdrawal, and refusal to participate in subsequent events. Rather than enhancing motivation, the competition becomes a traumatic episode etched in the child's academic journey.

English language learning in early years education should be grounded in encouragement, not anxiety. Experts emphasize that language development thrives in environments that promote risk-taking, curiosity, and constructive feedback (Benson & Aro, 2022). Spelling Bees, if poorly structured, may contradict these principles by emphasizing error over effort. When a child's first experience with English public speaking is tied to failure or ridicule, the emotional consequence can overshadow the academic goal. Therefore, the structure and delivery of Spelling Bee competitions must be revisited.

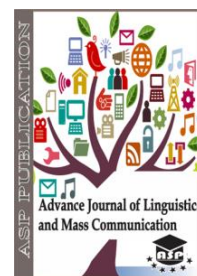
More inclusive strategies such as audio-visual pronunciation aids, age-appropriate word selection, and scaffolding can reduce emotional pressure (Ogundele, 2024). Additionally, incorporating phonics-based instruction and feedback systems during competitions has been

shown to improve confidence in English learners. For instance, a 2023 intervention in Osun State used classroom-based spelling games before competitions and reported increased pupil excitement and reduced anxiety. These alternatives suggest that Spelling Bees can be enjoyable and educational if framed around pupil-centered practices. Emotional safety and academic rigor are not mutually exclusive but can co-exist through intentional design.

Internationally, reforms are also underway. The African Spelling Bee (2025) recently revised its rules to allow for multiple pronunciations and word context clues, especially for learners from multilingual backgrounds. These modifications acknowledge that English, though a common academic language, is not uniformly spoken across the continent. By adopting similar reforms at grassroots school levels, Nigeria can improve both participation and equity in such contests. Aligning Spelling Bee practices with emotional and linguistic realities is a necessary evolution in English language education.

In summary, Spelling Bee competitions hold undeniable value for improving English vocabulary and speech. However, they must not be blind to the emotional vulnerabilities of young learners. If these competitions continue to operate without emotional safeguards, they risk doing more harm than good. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how Spelling Bee

Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi, Chijioke Edward (Ph.D) and Ugwu Sabina Ogechukwu



competitions influence the emotional well-being of pupils learning English in Nigerian primary schools. It aims to contribute to the conversation on trauma-aware education by identifying ways to make competitive learning both academically effective and emotionally sustainable.

Statement of the Problem

In many Nigerian primary schools, Spelling Bee competitions are intended to promote excellence in English language learning. However, these contests often ignore the emotional and psychological toll they impose on pupils, particularly those who experience mother tongue interference in pronunciation. For a large number of children, the pressure to perform in front of peers and adults, combined with high expectations, often results in stress, embarrassment, and long-term disengagement from academic activities. Public elimination, misheard prompts, and fear of failure all contribute to emotional distress that undermines the learning process.

Rather than encouraging fluency and confidence in English, poorly managed competitions may create trauma, discourage participation, and hinder pupils' language development. When a child is humiliated or dismissed due to phonological barriers or emotional unpreparedness, the effect may linger far beyond the event itself. Therefore, there is a critical need to investigate how Spelling Bee competitions

influence the emotional well-being of learners and to propose supportive strategies that ensure the contests contribute positively to English language acquisition.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the influence of Spelling Bee competitions on the emotional well-being of Primary 5 pupils learning English in Nigerian schools.
2. To identify the emotional responses of pupils who have experienced loss or elimination during Spelling Bee competitions.
3. To explore ways of improving Spelling Bee practices to support emotional resilience and positive language learning experiences.

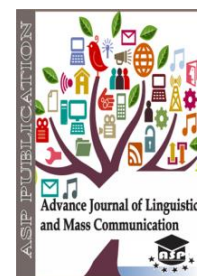
Research Questions

1. How do Spelling Bee competitions influence the emotional well-being of Primary 5 pupils in English language learning?
2. What emotional responses do pupils exhibit after losing in a Spelling Bee competition?
3. What strategies can be adopted to make Spelling Bee competitions more emotionally supportive and effective for English language learners?

Literature Review

Emotional Well-being

Emotional well-being refers to a child's ability to regulate emotions, manage anxiety, and feel supported and confident within learning environments. It is a vital part of effective



education, especially in language learning contexts that demand both verbal performance and peer visibility. According to Chukwuma and Bello (2023), emotional well-being shapes not only a child's classroom behavior but also their willingness to participate in academic risk-taking, such as public speaking and competitions. In Spelling Bee contexts, children are exposed to significant pressure due to the presence of audiences, high expectations, and the immediacy of elimination. These factors, without the cushion of emotional preparation or post-competition reflection, often result in emotional withdrawal.

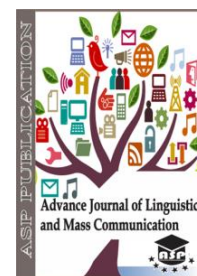
The negative impact of high-pressure competitions on young children has been well-documented in Nigeria and other multilingual environments. Eze (2022) explains that children who experience failure during public academic events may internalize the experience as a reflection of their overall ability, rather than viewing it as a momentary challenge. Consequently, their self-esteem is lowered, and future willingness to participate declines. Benson and Aro (2022) affirm that children need emotionally secure environments where making mistakes is normalized, especially when learning language structures. In classrooms where only performance is valued, emotional growth and psychological safety are often neglected, despite their proven contribution to academic resilience.

Pupils who feel emotionally secure and supported are more likely to speak with confidence, even in the face of uncertainty or correction.

Studies have shown that when teachers intentionally incorporate emotional readiness activities, peer support, and post-event debriefing, learners become more motivated to engage in spelling tasks. Nwankwo and Eze (2023) observed that emotional recovery from failure often depends on the responses of caregivers and educators. Where empathy and encouragement follow a loss, children are more likely to perceive competitions as part of a growth process rather than a definitive judgment of their capabilities. Emotional well-being is thus not merely a psychological consideration, but an educational necessity when promoting oral language proficiency in high-stakes contexts like Spelling Bees.

Mother Tongue Interference

Mother tongue interference is a linguistic phenomenon where features of a child's first language influence the way they learn and use a second language, such as English. In Nigeria, where children speak over 500 indigenous languages, this interference is especially pronounced in oral English activities. As noted by Ajani and Odoh (2021), phonological structures in local languages—such as the absence of consonant clusters or certain vowel



sounds—lead to predictable pronunciation errors when pupils attempt English words. For instance, the absence of the /θ/ and /ð/ sounds in most Nigerian languages means that words like “think” or “this” are often rendered inaccurately, even when the pupil knows the correct spelling.

These errors become particularly problematic in oral spelling competitions, where clarity and pronunciation are as crucial as orthographic knowledge. Osedumme et al. (2022) argue that mother tongue interference is a leading cause of disqualification in Spelling Bees, yet it rarely receives pedagogical attention in competition preparation. Pupils from Igbo or Yoruba backgrounds may find it difficult to distinguish or reproduce certain English phonemes, leading to miscommunication with judges. Ugwu (2021) stresses that such difficulties should not be mistaken for ignorance but recognized as structural linguistic constraints. Unfortunately, these distinctions are not always made, resulting in children feeling punished for their language background.

Schools that address this problem through targeted pronunciation practice, audio-assisted learning, and phonics interventions have seen improved outcomes. Phonemic awareness programs, where pupils are trained to hear, differentiate, and reproduce English sounds, help reduce the barriers imposed by native

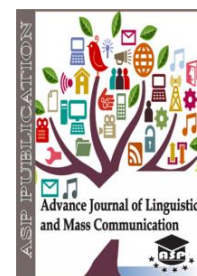
language structures (Ugwu, 2021). Without these interventions, children often develop self-doubt and associate English language speaking with difficulty or ridicule. This leads not only to performance anxiety but also to decreased classroom participation and general disinterest in language learning. Therefore, addressing mother tongue interference is central to making English language learning fair and inclusive in multilingual classrooms.

Educational Strategies

Educational strategies refer to structured, intentional approaches employed by teachers to improve learning outcomes and manage classroom activities effectively. In spelling instruction and competition preparation, these strategies range from phonics and syllable training to games, drills, and peer collaboration. The goal is to develop both linguistic competence and emotional resilience. Ogundele (2024) highlights that traditional methods like rote memorization, though still common, do little to engage pupils emotionally or develop critical language awareness. Modern strategies emphasize multi-sensory engagement, playful learning, and inclusivity—particularly for children from non-dominant linguistic backgrounds.

For example, gamified learning tools have been proven to reduce test anxiety and improve retention. In a 2023 Bayelsa State study,

Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi, Chijioke Edward (Ph.D) and Ugwu Sabina Ogechukwu



children who prepared using classroom spelling games and visual pronunciation aids outperformed those trained solely through spelling lists and dictation. The reason, as Agusiobo and Iloanwusi (2023) note, is that children respond better to interactive tasks that allow practice without the fear of failure. These methods also allow repetition in low-stress contexts, improving recall and confidence. By contrast, high-pressure drills can promote perfectionism, making children more anxious and risk-averse in competitive settings.

Schools that implement differentiated instruction also see positive effects. When pupils are grouped by skill level, receive immediate feedback, and are given opportunities for self-correction, they grow linguistically and emotionally. This is especially important for children affected by mother tongue interference, who benefit from patient, individualized pronunciation correction. Teacher training is equally essential; educators who understand how to recognize anxiety and trauma in classroom settings are more equipped to support children during preparation and post-competition recovery. Thus, educational strategies are most effective when they integrate both emotional and academic objectives in Spelling Bee planning.

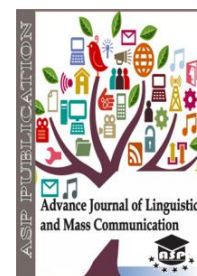
Pupil Motivation

Pupil motivation encompasses the internal and external factors that encourage children to

participate in learning tasks, persist through challenges, and strive for improvement. In the context of Spelling Bees, motivation is often shaped by previous experiences—both successful and traumatic. According to Odey and Anyaele (2022), when children win or are positively affirmed during competitions, they become more confident and enthusiastic about language learning. However, when children lose without support, are laughed at for mistakes, or feel unfairly treated, motivation declines sharply. In many Nigerian schools, this decline is compounded by a lack of emotional aftercare or encouragement.

Nwankwo and Eze (2023) found that many pupils who experienced failure in Spelling Bee competitions refused to participate in subsequent years, even when their language skills improved. This indicates that negative emotional experiences can overshadow cognitive progress. Moreover, when the cause of the failure is linked to factors like mispronunciation due to mother tongue interference, pupils may develop a sense of hopelessness regarding their ability to speak English publicly. Motivation thus becomes tightly linked with emotional safety and perceived fairness. If children believe they will be punished or humiliated for failure, they are less likely to engage meaningfully in learning.

To address this, schools must make competitions inclusive, age-appropriate, and emotionally



sensitive. Participation certificates, peer recognition, and feedback that celebrates effort rather than just correctness have been shown to improve motivation (Bayelsa pilot, 2023). Some schools now use non-elimination formats in earlier stages to build interest and reduce shame. Group-based learning and collaborative practice also encourage hesitant pupils to take part without fear of standing out. Educators must understand that motivation is not fixed; it is shaped by the culture and structure of the learning environment. The more positive the experience, the more motivated the pupil will be to grow in language ability and confidence.

Theoretical Framework

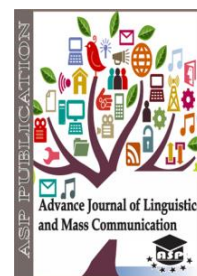
Communicative Competence Theory

Developed by Dell Hymes in response to Chomsky's theory of linguistic competence, the Communicative Competence Theory argues that knowing a language goes beyond the ability to form grammatically correct sentences—it involves knowing how, when, and why to use language appropriately in social contexts. In English language education, particularly in Nigeria's multilingual classrooms, this theory provides a strong lens for understanding both pupils' spoken performance and their emotional response to language tasks.

Communicative competence has four main components: grammatical competence (knowledge of syntax and vocabulary),

sociolinguistic competence (contextual and cultural appropriateness), discourse competence (cohesion and coherence in longer speech or writing), and strategic competence (using strategies to overcome communication breakdowns). Spelling Bees primarily test grammatical competence, but the public and performative nature of the competition also demands sociolinguistic and strategic competence. For instance, pupils must be able to manage anxiety, interpret the judge's pronunciation correctly, and respond clearly within time constraints.

Applying this theory reveals that many failures observed in Spelling Bee contests are not due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge but a lack of strategic and sociolinguistic competence—areas where pupils are rarely trained. Children who are emotionally overwhelmed, affected by mother tongue interference, or unused to performance settings may struggle, even if they know the spelling of the words. According to Adeyemi and Okonkwo (2021), communicative competence in Nigerian schools is unevenly developed due to the heavy emphasis on writing and grammatical accuracy over spoken performance. This imbalance becomes glaring during oral events like Spelling Bees, where pupils are expected to “perform language” rather than merely know it. Furthermore, Hymes' framework emphasizes that language learning is not isolated from the



learner's background or culture. This aligns with Ajani and Odoh's (2021) findings that pupils' native languages significantly influence their ability to pronounce and comprehend English words accurately. A child who has not been exposed to certain phonetic sounds or whose classroom lacks oral English drills may be linguistically competent but communicatively challenged. This gap creates space for trauma when such children are judged publicly for perceived "incompetence." Integrating Communicative Competence Theory into language teaching calls for a broader, more supportive approach to spoken language instruction and assessment.

Finally, this theory supports the idea that competitions like Spelling Bees should be reframed not just as displays of correct spelling, but as holistic language experiences. Teachers and organizers should prepare learners by developing all four areas of communicative competence—especially emotional regulation, pronunciation practice, and context-based language use. When this is done, the competition becomes a more accurate reflection of English proficiency and a less traumatic experience for participants. Communicative Competence Theory thus provides both the justification and framework for designing more inclusive, emotionally supportive English language competitions in Nigerian schools

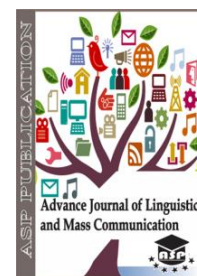
Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design, which is suitable for gathering data on attitudes, perceptions, and emotional experiences of pupils in natural school settings. The design allowed the researcher to explore how Spelling Bee competitions influence the emotional well-being of Primary 5 pupils learning English in Nigerian schools. Using structured questionnaires, data were collected directly from pupils with the assistance of their teachers, ensuring clarity and understanding in the process.

The population of the study consisted of Primary 5 pupils from five selected schools across Ebonyi and Enugu States. The schools were purposefully selected based on their active participation in spelling-related activities and accessibility to researchers. These schools include: Ambassadors Nursery and Primary School, Abakaliki; Fountain of Knowledge International Academy, Abakaliki; Redeemers International School, Abakaliki; Godfrey Okoye University Crèche, Enugu; and Enugu Preparatory College, Enugu. All pupils in Primary 5 in the selected schools were involved in the study.

A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed across the five schools, with the help of the class teachers who assisted the pupils in understanding the questions. The questionnaire contained structured, close-ended

Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi, Chijioke Edward (Ph.D) and Ugwu Sabina Ogechukwu



items designed on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. These items focused on pupils' experiences in Spelling Bee competitions, their emotional responses to failure or elimination, and their willingness to participate in future competitions.

The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. A cut-off point of 2.50 was adopted to determine the acceptance or rejection of each item. Any mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted as a positive response, while a score below 2.50 indicated a negative response.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question 1

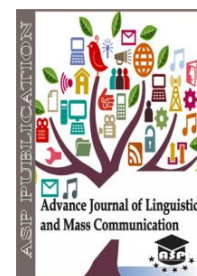
How do Spelling Bee competitions influence the emotional well-being of Primary 5 pupils in English language learning?

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Decision
1	I feel scared when I hear I will join a Spelling Bee.	40	55	15	10	3.04	Accepted
2	I enjoy spelling more after participating in a Spelling Bee.	22	38	40	20	2.35	Rejected
3	I get very nervous when I stand to spell in front of people.	49	51	10	10	3.16	Accepted
4	I worry that I may make mistakes in front of others during the Bee.	60	42	10	8	3.28	Accepted
5	Spelling Bees help me feel proud of my English skills.	30	33	35	22	2.42	Rejected

Interpretation:

Items 1, 3, and 4 suggest that Spelling Bee competitions often cause **fear and nervousness**, showing a negative impact on emotional well-being. Items 2 and 5 were rejected, suggesting fewer pupils enjoy or feel proud of their English skills afterward.

Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi, Chijioke Edward (Ph.D) and Ugwu Sabina Ogechukwu



Research Question 2

What emotional responses do pupils exhibit after losing in a Spelling Bee competition?

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Decision
6	I cried or felt very sad after losing a Spelling Bee.	50	45	15	10	3.13	Accepted
7	I was laughed at or mocked by friends when I lost.	30	48	30	12	2.78	Accepted
8	I did not want to try spelling again after I lost.	35	37	30	18	2.57	Accepted
9	I felt like I was not good enough in English after losing.	42	40	20	18	2.73	Accepted
10	Losing made me try harder to win next time.	20	34	41	25	2.24	Rejected

Interpretation:

Items 6–9 show a negative emotional response after losing, including sadness, shame, and withdrawal from learning. Item 10 suggests that few children view loss as a motivation to improve.

Research Question 3

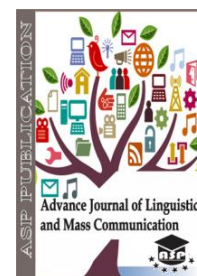
What strategies can be adopted to make Spelling Bee competitions more emotionally supportive and effective for English language learners?

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Decision
11	I would feel better if teachers encouraged us more before and after the Bee.	60	50	7	3	3.39	Accepted
12	I want teachers to help me pronounce words better before competitions.	55	42	13	10	3.18	Accepted
13	I want spelling games instead of too many spelling drills.	40	48	20	12	2.98	Accepted
14	Teachers should talk to us kindly even when we fail.	58	45	10	7	3.28	Accepted
15	I like it when all pupils get a prize, not only the winners.	36	38	32	14	2.63	Accepted

Interpretation:

All items were accepted, showing that encouragement, better pronunciation training, game-based learning, kind feedback, and inclusive rewards are preferred strategies that can reduce trauma and increase motivation.

Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi, Chijioke Edward (Ph.D) and Ugwu Sabina Ogechukwu



Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that Spelling Bee competitions have a mixed impact on the emotional well-being of Primary 5 pupils learning English. A large number of pupils reported fear, nervousness, and worry associated with participation, especially when spelling words aloud before a crowd. This aligns with the Communicative Competence Theory, which emphasizes the need for linguistic performance to be supported by social and emotional readiness. While Spelling Bees are designed to promote spelling accuracy and vocabulary acquisition, this study suggests that the emotional cost of performance pressure may outweigh the cognitive benefits if not well-managed.

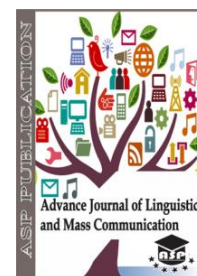
One of the key findings is the intense emotional distress experienced by pupils after losing a Spelling Bee. Many admitted to feeling ashamed, mocked, and unmotivated to continue spelling or public speaking in English. This outcome highlights the danger of using competitive methods in language instruction without adequate emotional scaffolding. It also emphasizes the need for language teachers to be trained in trauma-sensitive instruction, particularly in multilingual settings where pronunciation errors due to mother tongue interference can easily be misjudged as incompetence.

Interestingly, pupils offered insight into what might improve their experience: encouragement, pronunciation guidance, spelling games, and positive reinforcement even in failure. These strategies, which fall under inclusive English pedagogy, point to the importance of transforming competitive spelling tasks into learning-centered events. When English learning is framed as a collaborative journey rather than a public test of ability, pupils are more likely to engage actively and grow both linguistically and emotionally.

Educational Implications

- 1. Emotional Preparation is Essential in Language Teaching:**
Teachers must recognize that emotional readiness is a prerequisite for successful oral English performance. Spelling Bees and similar competitions should be preceded by confidence-building exercises and speech training.
- 2. Pronunciation Instruction Should Be Central:**
English teachers in Nigerian primary schools must incorporate **explicit pronunciation drills**, especially focusing on common areas of mother tongue interference. This can prevent public embarrassment and boost confidence in spoken English.

Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi, Chijioke Edward (Ph.D) and Ugwu Sabina Ogechukwu



3. Assessment Practices Need Emotional Sensitivity:

Rather than only celebrating winners, schools should adopt **inclusive feedback** methods that reward participation and effort. This reinforces the message that every child can improve in English, regardless of early mistakes.

4. Teachers Need Training in Trauma-Aware English Instruction:

Educators must be equipped to identify emotional distress in language learners and provide post-competition support. This training is particularly important in environments where English is not the first language.

Recommendations

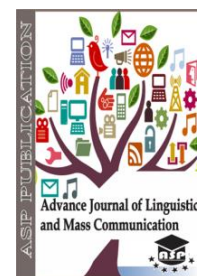
- 1. English teachers should introduce Spelling Bees as class activities** before public events to reduce stage anxiety and allow gradual exposure to oral spelling.
- 2. Spelling Bee preparation should include structured pronunciation training** focusing on problematic sounds influenced by mother tongue interference.
- 3. Spelling activities should be gamified**—including group competitions, team spelling, and fun drills—to reduce pressure and promote joyful learning.
- 4. Schools should provide encouragement notes or certificates to**

all participants to build self-esteem and reinforce positive English learning experiences.

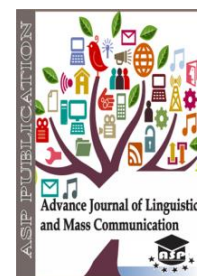
- 5. Teachers should debrief pupils after competitions**, helping them reflect on their experience positively, express their emotions, and feel supported regardless of the outcome.
- 6. Policy makers and curriculum planners should integrate oral English support programs** into the primary English curriculum, ensuring that performance tasks like Spelling Bees are developmentally appropriate and culturally inclusive.

References

- Adeyemi, R., & Okonkwo, S. (2021). Oral English performance and communicative competence in Nigerian schools. *Nigerian Journal of Language Studies*, 18(2), 72–88.
- Agusiobo, H. C., & Iloanwusi, V. C. (2025). Educational management strategies for combating mother tongue interference in multilingual classrooms. *Irish Journal of Educational Practice*, 8(3), 119–128. ISSN 2383–6345.
- Ajani, T., & Odoh, B. (2021). Mother tongue interference in English language pronunciation: Implications for Nigerian



- primary schools. *Journal of Linguistic and Language Studies*, 17(3), 145–158.
- Ajani, T., & Odoh, B. (2021). Phonological interference and oral English challenges among Nigerian primary school pupils. *Journal of Applied Linguistics in Africa*, 15(1), 58–73.
- Benson, R., & Aro, T. (2022). Emotional safety in early English language learning: Strategies for inclusive classrooms. *International Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 28(1), 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/xxxxxxx>
- Benson, R., & Aro, T. (2022). Emotionally secure learning environments and early language acquisition. *International Journal of Early Childhood Language Education*, 29(4), 203–217.
- Chukwuma, J., & Bello, A. (2023). Emotional resilience and academic performance: Evaluating Spelling Bee impact in Nigerian schools. *Nigerian Journal of Language and Communication Studies*, 31(2), 119–135.
- Chukwuma, J., & Bello, A. (2023). Emotional well-being and academic risk-taking in primary education: A Nigerian perspective. *African Review of Educational Psychology*, 8(1), 45–60.
- Eze, N. (2022). Anxiety in oral spelling performance: The overlooked cost of competition. *African Journal of Educational Psychology*, 30(1), 48–60.
- Eze, N. (2022). Psychological effects of public academic performance on Nigerian children. *Journal of Educational Psychology in Africa*, 21(2), 91–106.
- Nwankwo, C., & Eze, P. (2023). Emotional aftercare and pupils' academic motivation post-Spelling Bee. *Journal of Childhood Learning and Development*, 6(3), 134–150.
- Nwankwo, C., & Eze, P. (2023). Public failure and classroom withdrawal among primary school pupils: A post-competition study. *Journal of Educational Trauma and Recovery*, 4(2), 79–95.
- Odey, I., & Anyaele, S. (2022). Motivation and English spelling performance: A comparative study of public and private primary schools. *Language and Education Quarterly*, 39(4), 213–229.



- Odey, I., & Anyaele, S. (2022). Motivation and reinforcement in early language competitions: Case study of Nigerian primary schools. *Language and Literacy Studies*, 33(2), 188–202.
- Ogundele, B. (2024). Multisensory strategies for inclusive spelling instruction in multilingual classrooms. *Journal of English Language Pedagogy in Africa*, 20(1), 67–84.
- Ogundele, B. (2024). Phonics-based instruction and learner-centered Spelling Bees: Reducing trauma in multilingual classrooms. *Journal of English Language Pedagogy in Africa*, 19(1), 101–118.
- Osedumme, R., Ajulo, M., & Kure, I. (2022). Mother tongue interference and Spelling Bee disqualifications: Rethinking pedagogical priorities. *Multilingual Education and Literacy Studies*, 9(2), 101–118.
- Ugwu, M. (2021). Addressing phonological disadvantage in oral spelling competitions: A sociolinguistic analysis. *International Journal of Multilingual Education*, 27(1), 55–69.
- Ugwu, M. (2021). Language disadvantage in English-based contests: Rethinking Spelling Bee structures for African learners. *International Journal of Multilingual Education*, 26(3), 93–107.