

# Teachers' perception of deficiencies of primary five pupils in English language in Ibadan South - West Local Government area, Nigeria

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## Abstract

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*This study, investigated teachers' perception of deficiencies in English Language among primary five Pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State. The mixed methods design (quantitative + qualitative) was adopted. The participants were 20 teachers from 20 public primary schools in the local government area. The instruments used were Teachers' Perceived Deficiencies of Pupils in English Language ( $r = 0.90$ ) and interview guides. Data collected were analysed using the descriptive statistics for the quantitative data, while the qualitative data were content-analysed. The findings revealed that the perceived deficiencies of pupils were in the basic English language skills, vocabulary, grammatical structures and pronunciation, while large class sizes, lack of regular capacity building for teachers and limited access to learning materials were the challenges identified in the teaching of English Language. The study concluded that primary five pupils had deficiencies in vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation, reading and writing and recommended that teachers should adopt effective strategies of teaching English to help address these deficiencies of pupils.*

**Keywords:** Stakeholder, Perception, Deficiencies in English Language, Primary five pupils, Primary School Teachers and Headteachers.

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## Introduction

At the primary education level, English proficiency serves as the foundation for academic success and future opportunities. Adequate mastery of English enables pupils to comprehend instructional materials, participate effectively in classroom activities, and express themselves coherently (Akpan, 2018). Moreover, proficiency in English enhances pupils' readiness for higher education and employment, as it is the medium of instruction in tertiary institutions and the language of international business and diplomacy.

In Oyo State, where educational policies are geared towards producing quality pupils/students, the need to address deficiencies in English among primary school pupils becomes imperative. Despite efforts to improve English language teaching, challenges persist, hindering the attainment of desired proficiency levels among pupils (Oyetunde, 2022). Recognizing these challenges is crucial for implementing targeted interventions that enhance English language learning outcomes

and empower pupils for success in a globalized world. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate and analyze the perceived deficiencies in English language among primary five pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria, with the aim of informing policy decisions and educational practices.

In Oyo State, efforts have been made to address the challenges associated with English language proficiency among primary school pupils. The state government, in collaboration with educational stakeholders, has implemented various initiatives aimed at enhancing the teaching and learning of English in primary schools. For instance, the introduction of curriculum reforms and teacher training programmes focused on language pedagogy has been instrumental in improving instructional quality (Adedeji, 2020). Additionally, the provision of teaching aids and learning materials tailored to the needs of pupils has contributed to creating a conducive learning environment for English language acquisition (Agbanu, 2019).

Observation and experience have

shown that many public primary school pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area lack the ability to communicate effectively in English (Oke, 2023), which fuels the curiosity to find out their areas of deficiencies in English Language. It is evident that addressing deficiencies in English language skills among primary five pupils is paramount for ensuring educational equity and fostering holistic development. Studies have shown that proficiency in English language not only facilitates academic achievement but also enhances social integration and economic opportunities for individuals. The effective teaching and learning of English language skills are crucial for promoting national unity and cultural cohesion (Olatunji, 2020). However, the persistent gaps in English language proficiency among primary five pupils underscore the need for targeted interventions that address the root causes of these deficiencies. Previous studies focused largely on effective methods of teaching English Language, but little attention has been paid to teachers' perception of public school pupils' deficiencies in English Language in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area, Oyo State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Effective mastery of English Language is indispensable for the acquisition of the ability to communicate effectively, especially right from the primary schools being the foundation of education. Despite the indispensability of the mastery of English Language in the inculcation of permanent literacy and ability to communicate effectively at the primary level of education, many pupils exhibit deficiencies in English Language, which partly accounts for their poor communication skills. Most previous studies focused on teaching strategies and various factors influencing pupils' performance in English Language, with little attention paid to teachers' perception of the deficiencies of pupils in English Language. Therefore, this study investigated the perception of teachers of the deficiencies in English Language among public primary five pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Area of Oyo State.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study investigated teachers' perception of the deficiencies of primary five pupils in English Language in Ibadan South-West Local Area of Oyo State. Specifically the study set out to achieve the following objectives:

1. Investigate teachers' perceptions of deficiencies of primary five pupils in English language.
2. Examine the challenges facing effective teaching and learning of English Language in

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the teachers' perception of the pupils' deficiencies in English language among primary five pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State?
2. What are the challenges facing the teaching and learning of English Language in public primary schools in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State?

### **Scope of the Study**

This study investigated teachers' perceptions of English Language deficiencies among public primary five pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area. The study covered twenty (20) teachers from 20 public primary schools in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings from this study will acquaint the parents of public primary school pupils with deficiencies of their children in English Language as perceived by their teachers. Findings from this study will also help teachers to discover pupils' deficiencies and how to help them to remediate them. Finding from this study will inform the ministry of education's policy on education on how to address the challenges facing the teaching and learning of English Language in public primary schools.

### Methodology

The mixed methods design was adopted for the study which combines quantitative and qualitative data collection. By employing the mixed methods approach with rigorous data collection and analysis procedures, this study generated comprehensive and insightful findings related to English language learning for primary five pupils. The population of this study comprised all primary five teachers and head teachers of primary schools in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area. Ibadan South West Local Government area was purposefully selected being the local government that has largest numbers of primary schools. From the local government a total number of twenty (20) public primary schools were randomly selected. Twenty (20) teachers teaching primary five were purposefully selected. The instruments used in the study were Questionnaire on Teachers'

Perceptions of Deficiencies in English Language among Primary Five Pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area ( $r=0.90$ ) and Structured Interview Guide for Teachers. The researcher administered questionnaire to twenty (20) teachers. After the administration of the instruments, an in-depth interviews was conducted with five teachers. The quantitative data collected through administration of questionnaires on perception were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, means and standard deviation, while the qualitative data were content analysed.

### Results

**Research Question1:** What is the teachers' perception of the pupils' deficiencies in English language among primary five pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State?

**Table 1:** Teachers' perception of the pupils' deficiencies in English language among primary five pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

s/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St. D
1	The majority of my primary five pupils come to class with a limited foundation in English language skills.	4 (21.1%)	13 (68.4%)	2 (10.5%)	-	3.10	.57
2	Many of my pupils struggle to understand basic English instructions in class.	4 (20%)	15 (75%)	1 (5%)	-	3.15	.49
3	Many pupils' vocabulary development in English is generally below the expected level for their grade.	6 (31.6%)	13 (68.4%)	-	-	3.32	.48
4	Most of the pupils have difficulty identifying parts of speech.	5 (25%)	15 (75%)	-	-	3.25	.44
5	The pupils have poor knowledge of punctuation marks.	6 (30%)	14 (70%)	-	-	3.30	.47
6	Majority of the pupils have limited understanding of sentence types and their construction.	5 (25%)	13 (65%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	3.10	.72
7	A limited vocabulary restricts pupils' ability to express themselves fluently and correctly.	9 (45%)	11 (55%)	-	-	3.45	.51

8	Most of the pupils find it difficult to construct English language correctly.	8 (40%)	11 (55%)	-	1 (5%)	3.30	.73
9	Poor reading skills hinder pupils comprehension	4 (21.1%)	12 (63.2%)	2 (10.5%)	1 (5.3%)	3.00	.75
10	Incorrect pronunciation makes it difficult for others to understand pupils' spoken English.	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	-	-	3.55	.51
11	Interference from the pupils' native language on their English pronunciation and grammar creates challenges in mastering English language skills.	5 (25%)	15 (75%)	-	-	3.25	.44
12	Poor writing skill contributes to English language deficiency among pupils.	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	-	-	3.55	.51
13	Poor comprehension of reading texts.	7 (36.8%)	10 (52.6%)	2 (10.5%)	-	3.26	.65
14	Inability to compose good sentences hinders pupils from writing good essays.	6 (30%)	14 (70%)	-	-	3.30	.47
15	Poor listening skills hinders pupils from having sound understanding of English language.	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	-	-	3.55	.51
16	Inability to grasp sentence structure hinders pupils understanding.	5 (25%)	15 (75%)	-	-	3.25	.44
17	Poor reading skill contributes to deficiency in understanding.	4 (20%)	16 (80%)	-	-	3.20	.41
18	Inability to make use of verbs effectively contributes to deficiencies in English language.	9 (45%)	11 (55%)	-	-	3.45	.51
19	Poor mastery of word meanings contributes to deficiencies in English language.	4 (20%)	16 (80%)	-	-	3.20	.41
20	Poor knowledge of word formation hinders effective understanding of English language.	8 (40%)	11 (55%)	-	1 (5%)	3.30	.73
Weighted mean = 3.29; Threshold = 2.50							

Table 4.1 shows that the teachers' perception of the pupils' deficiencies in English Language among primary five pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State were in vocabulary, pronunciation, knowledge of tenses, punctuation marks, speaking, reading and writing skill.

#### **Thematic Analysis of the Qualitative Data on Challenges facing the teaching and Learning of English Language in Public Primary Schools**

The thematic analysis conducted on the transcripts of interview sessions with selected teachers yielded the following convergent

themes on the factors responsible for pupils' deficiency in English language:

**On the impact of the environment, the teachers said:**

I think the number one reason is because of the environment in which these pupils are living. Normally, when we come to school, we teach them, we help them to pronounce some words, teach them normally but when they get home, they don't have follow up. **Teacher 3**

...they are not ready, I don't know maybe because of their environment, maybe it contributes to it like when you don't have your colleague or mate that will be going along together, it may contribute to their problem **Teacher 3**

Actually, learners have difficulties in English proficiency based on two categories. The first is the use of mother tongue in the environment. So, an environment that is not conversant with the English language, whose mother tongue has to be the dominant language in which they speak will definitely inhibit their proficiency in English language.

**Head Teacher 1**

Though in my own view and opinion and observation on the reason why the deficiency in English language among the pupils is that the one compared to the environment where the schools are located. For example, a school located in Ibadan South-west, in Ibadan East compared to school in Ibadan North. You know in Ibadan North, most of the pupils there are more educated.

**Teacher 2**

Pupils readiness is being affected by the fact that most people that are non-learners in their environment, they are doing well, they have money, though the money may not be forever, because if you are not

educated, any money you gather is nonsense at the end of the day. **Teacher 3**

**On Poor monitoring:** The teachers interviewed also believed that poor monitoring mainly coming from the angle of the parents is one key reason for pupils' deficiency in English Language. One of the headteachers said that:

Even some of them are absent from school, while some lack parental care because some of them will come to school today and say Grandma said this or that. Most of them did not follow up the protocol in the school, so they are lacking. So, these are the deficiencies we are facing in primary school. **Teacher 2**

**Poor motivation:**

When pupils are not motivated, they are less likely to engage actively with the language, practice regularly, or seek out additional learning opportunities. Consequently, this lack of motivation translates into lower proficiency levels, limiting their ability to excel academically and undermining their future prospects in a globalized world where English proficiency is increasingly crucial. **Teacher 4**

**Inadequate resources and facilities:**

Inadequate resources and facilities are significant barriers to improving Nigerian pupils' proficiency in English, profoundly impacting their learning outcomes. Many schools across Nigeria face severe shortages of essential educational materials such as textbooks, interactive learning tools, and access to technology, which are crucial for effective language acquisition. Additionally, insufficiently equipped classrooms and a lack of modern language labs hinder students' ability to practice and develop their

English skills in dynamic and engaging ways. The scarcity of trained and proficient English teachers further exacerbates the issue, as students may receive inconsistent or substandard instruction. This lack of resources and facilities results in limited exposure to quality English education, impeding students' ability to achieve fluency and proficiency, and ultimately affecting their academic and professional prospects.

#### **Teacher 5**

#### **Parental socio-economic status:**

Parental socio-economic status is a crucial factor affecting Nigerian pupils' proficiency in English, as it directly influences access to educational resources and opportunities. Families with lower socio-economic status often struggle to provide their children with essential materials such as textbooks, computers, or private tutoring, which are vital for developing strong English skills. Additionally, economic constraints can limit parents' ability to support their children's educational needs, either through direct involvement or by creating an environment conducive to learning. This lack of resources and support can result in inadequate exposure to English outside of the classroom and diminished opportunities for practice and reinforcement. Consequently, pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds may face significant challenges in achieving proficiency in English, further perpetuating educational inequalities and affecting their long-term academic and career prospects. Two, poverty is another thing. Some students are not eating from home, they will ask them to come and collect food by 10am, 11am, 12noon.

#### **Teacher 1.**

#### **Non-possession of textbooks:**

The non-possession of textbooks is a significant factor affecting Nigerian

pupils' proficiency in English, as these essential resources are critical for comprehensive language learning. Textbooks provide structured content, practice exercises, and exposure to varied language contexts, all of which are crucial for developing reading, writing, and comprehension skills. Without access to textbooks, students may miss out on foundational knowledge and practice opportunities, resulting in gaps in their language education. The absence of these learning tools can lead to a reliance on inadequate or outdated materials, reducing the quality of instruction and hindering students' ability to engage deeply with the language. Consequently, the lack of textbooks contributes to lower proficiency levels in English, impacting students' overall academic performance and future prospects. **Teacher 3**

#### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **Teachers' perception of deficiencies of primary five pupils in English language**

The teachers of primary five pupils perceived the following deficiencies in English language among the pupils in this study: Limited foundation in English language skills, Difficulty in identification of parts of speech, Difficulty in understanding of spoken English, Poor writing skill in English language, Poor listening skill in English language etc.

These agreed with the report of Oyetunde (2022) that teachers often reported that pupil have limited exposure to English language outside the classroom, hindering language acquisition.

#### **Challenges facing the teaching and learning of English Language in Public Schools**

The interview conducted revealed that poor environment, lack of monitoring and motivation as well as inadequate resources and materials coupled with pupils non-possession of the recommended texts were the major

challenges facing the teaching and learning of English Language in Public Schools. This report corroborates that of Agbanu (2019) that inadequate resources and materials can impede effective teaching and learning.

### Conclusion

The study highlighted vocabulary, pronunciation, knowledge of tenses, punctuation marks, speaking, reading and writing skill as major deficiencies of public primary school pupils in English Language in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area, Oyo State. It also identified poor monitoring, poor motivation, inconducive environment, inadequate teaching resources, poor parental background and non-possessing the recommended texts as the challenges facing the teaching and learning of English Language in public primary schools. All these have underscored critical need for targeted interventions to address the deficiencies in English Language learning among primary five pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to address the deficiencies in English language learning among primary five pupils in Ibadan South-West Local Government Area of Oyo State:

1. Teacher should make classroom environment very attractive using good method of teaching and engaging some student in active learning activities so that they will be interested in coming to school and not be interested in absent in school. Teacher should endeavor to interact with some parent to find the courses of their children being absent from school and intervene by suggesting solution to the problem. Teachers should employ innovative teaching strategies, such as games, role-plays, and multimedia resources, to enhance pupils' motivation

and engagement in learning English.

2. Teachers should align the English language curriculum with the specific needs and developmental stages of primary five pupils to make leaning attractive to them.
3. Teachers should incorporate more communicative and interactive activities into the curriculum to promote language use and engagement.
4. Teachers should ensure a balance between grammar instruction and communicative competence development.
5. Teachers should provide additional support and remedial instruction for pupils who struggle with specific language skills, such as reading, writing, or speaking.

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