



An Investigation Of Failure Rate Of Students In English Language Test In Polytechnics In Rivers State

Nelson Ekeuwei Ebiumene Rachael & Kiani Aaron Tamuno

**Department of Languages & Communication
School Of General Studies
Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny, Rivers State, Nigeria**

ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the prevalence of student failures in English language tests in Polytechnics in Rivers State, Nigeria, considering English as the official language of education. It employs a descriptive survey research design with a sample population of 55 language instructors from various polytechnics in Rivers State. The research employs an instrument called "Investigation of Failure Rate of Students in English Language Test" (IFRSELT), which exhibits good reliability (0.76) based on Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The instrument is also validated by an expert in English and literary studies. Data analysis includes simple mean, charts, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The findings reveal several challenges, including a lack of student motivation in studying English, insufficient supervision of students' performance by lecturers in English language tests, and inadequate interaction between lecturers and students in English language classes. Additionally, the study suggests that focusing on weaker students, increasing interaction and communication between lecturers and students, and promoting teamwork among students can enhance academic performance. Furthermore, the study supports the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no significant correlation between the causes of students' failure in English language tests and potential remedies to restore academic achievement. As a recommendation, the study suggests organizing in-service training in classroom management techniques for lecturers in tertiary institutions, among other strategies.

Keywords: Investigation, Failure Rate, Students, English Language Test

INTRODUCTION

English language happens to be the official and widely spoken language in Nigeria. Nigerian educational system has adopted the use of English language as a mean of delivering instructions in educational systems. Some scholars have given credent to the notion that English language is very crucial to the Nigeria education system since it is not only the medium of instruction especially at the upper primary, secondary and tertiary level of education but also the language of text-books (Aina and Olanipekun, 2014). However, it is by means of English language that student accesses knowledge in other subject areas. This potential has opined that there is a great appeal of the mastering of the English language to enhance better academic performance (Attarn, 2014). Yet, being assimilated into the English culture is not synonymous with the mastering of the language.

The effective understanding of English language can create a smooth communication pathway between lecturers and students alike to cooperate in classroom. The huge deter experience in knowledge gap is attributed to the fact that students cannot effectively express themselves. Though the hegemony of English language in the academic world of knowledge has attracted researchers to publish their valuable findings in English international databases (Flowerdew, 1999), yet, it has been shown that there is indeed a lot wrong with the performance in English even among the University students and graduates for that

matter (Adesanoye, 1994). Another scholar confirmed that even among the Arab, students performed poorly in General English which compounded their reading comprehension difficulties (Djihed, 2013). Parents and guidance in the Nigeria's system had expressed their displeasure about students' academic performance in relation to academic standard. This is as a result of the notion that academic performance is a virile instrument to the national development of any nation but it is pathetic to know that students' academic performance in Nigeria is not encouraging and most especially in English Language. This shameful failure is axiomatically noted in the public's unhappiness which becomes more prominent following the annual release of the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination results, since the student outcomes do not match the government and parental investments both at the senior secondary schools and tertiary institutions (Babatunde, 2002).

Nevertheless, it is obvious that students' academic performance in English Language is abysmally low. It is pathetic therefore to infer at this juncture that with political and social upsurge, economic instability and the implication of government inability to adequately supply needed funds, qualified teachers and infrastructures to cope with the increase of students' enrolments in schools, the qualitative standard of learning outcome by both undergraduates and graduates and their counter-parts in various Colleges of Education in the country today based on English language have created a vortex of "sicky" national concern. Worsening great cases of examination malpractice, indiscipline, cultism, and high failure rates of the students' populace have led to the loss of public confidence in the school. The general verdict is that there is growing loss of confidence in the system with appalling academic performance of students.

However over the years, student's performance in English Language had been problematic thus causing a huge concern to academic scholars. There is the need to ascertain the cause of the failure rate experienced by students in polytechnics in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated failure rate of students in English language test in Polytechnic in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the possible causes of students' failure in English language test.
2. Find out the possible remedy lecturers can adopt to restore students' academic achievement in English language.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used in this study:

1. What are the possible causes of students' failure in English language test?
2. What are the possible remedy lecturers can adopt to restore students' academic achievement in English language?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance and 5 degree of freedom.

There is no significant correlation cause of students' failure in English language test and possible remedy lecturers can adopt to restore students' academic achievement in English language.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to investigation of failure rate of students in English language test in polytechnics in Rivers State.

Significance of the Study

The study is of great benefit to the lecturers, students and educational institutions. For the lecturers, the exposure of students' poor performance in English language test will enable them spur the need for in-house training to enhance their skills in the subject.

For the students there will be room for provision of possible solution to the difficulty experienced by students in studying English language. This will give the students a sign of relieve in improving on the subject matter.

The educational institutions will benefit from the study as the deficiency experienced by students will be captured and hence the need to create a quality assurance unit for the monitoring and standardization of English language classes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

The Use of English Language

The world is a global community. For one to efficiently communicate in English language he needs to develop the rudiments and culture of expression. English is thus becoming the world's lingua franca, despite spirited fight by other international languages and efforts being made to preserve local languages, and there are local languages that impede the mastery of English language. The most pressing issue in our education system is to correct the falling standard of the language by teaching it adequately in schools. This is mainly due to the low – level English proficiency in Nigeria is depriving us access to knowledge in hard and digital forms. Even as globalization poses challenges for the teaching of use of English there is the need for students to adapt and grow in that perspective.

English proficiency is essential in a knowledge based world because English is the major language of science and technology, which drive development (Yen, 2008). According to Graddol (2000), English is the language of trade and computer and is increasingly a necessity for job placements. For some nations like Nigeria, English is their first and native language while some have it as their second and official language. And as an official language it is used as language of commerce, law, mass media, administration, medium of instruction in schools etc. The application of English programme has been established in our tertiary institutions so as to improve the status of the language in the country.

English and the Concept of the Global Language

The world comprises of different languages. Most of these languages are attributed to their basic means of communication. Some of widely spoken language in the globe consists of French, Spanish, Dutch, English, Arab, Chinese and so on. One of the most domineering languages used for communication around the globe is the English Language. English now assume the position of the global language. Globalization is the opening up of various part of the world to external influence. It is the breaking down of natural boundaries to influence commerce, technology, culture, finance and language.

The concept has to do with interdependence and increasing interaction among people of diverse background and languages. Globalization entails connection and linking up with the outside world. Globalization exposes one to new ideas and products and new ways of doing things in the international scene. Globalization may also mean the transformation of the relationship among states and institutions, the universalization of certain practices, the global restructuring of the recent decade since the dissolution of the Soviet Union or indeed the structure of the liberal capitalist relations (Adetugbo, 2006). He further asserts that while one might be justified in claiming that the term “globalization” started with the establishment of the League of Nations and subsequently the United Nation Organization, the word was late in coming to the English language.

English is now the world's most key language and it is estimated to be spoken by one in five of the world's population. It is the language of international commerce, popular culture, and the internet and holds an unassailable position among the world's major languages not in terms of the number of speakers but in terms of domain of use and international spread. English is spoken not only as a first language in the United Kingdom's, the United State of America, Australia and New Zealand, Canada, but also by over one million people in Trinidad and Tobago, over three million in the Irish Republic, over two million in Jamaica etc (Crystal, 1997; Adetugbo, 2000:4). Though English is seen as a global language, the fact remains that some factors are responsible for this growth and spread of English.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey design in this case developed questionnaires which were administered to the respondents. The questionnaire items were used to obtain data for the study.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of 55 language instructors in various tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The figure was obtained through the aid of heads of units in General Studies from the various Polytechnics in Rivers State.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The entire population of 55 language instructors was used as sample for the study. This is mainly due to the small population size used in the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

The study developed an instrument titled “Investigation of Failure Rate of Students in English Language Test” (IFRSELT). The instrument is a three point likert scale consisting of Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) and Disagree (3). The response options were weighed as 3, 2 and 1. The instrument consists of a total item of six (6).

Reliability of Instrument

Reliability here refers to the consistency through which the instrument can measure what it ought to measure. The test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. Pilot study was conducted with 10 language experts in various polytechnics in Bayelsa State. Two weeks interval was used to collect response from the same set of respondents. The data obtained from the r-value was calculated to be 0.76 using Pearson Products Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Validation of Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face validation by an expert in the department of English and literary studies in Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State. The expert checked the content of the research questions, topics and instrument for data collection.

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained from the research question was analyzed using simple mean and chart. The hypothesis was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 level of significance.

Note: Based on the decision rule, accept null hypothesis if r-calculated value is less than r-critical value. Also, reject null hypothesis if r-calculated value is greater than r-critical value.

DATA ANALYSIS & PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Research question 1: *What are the possible causes of students’ failure in English language test?*

Table 1: Possible causes of students’ failure in English language test

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Students are not motivation in the study of English language?	2.43	Agree
2	Lecturers do not supervise students’ performance in English language test.	2.32	Agree
3	There is poor interaction between Lecturers and students in English language classes	2.42	Agree

Findings obtained from table 1 research question 1 revealed that items 1, 2 and 3 agreed to the fact that students are not motivation in the study of English language, lecturers do not supervise students’ performance in English language test and there is poor interaction between lecturers and students in English language classes.

Research question 2: *What are the possible remedy lecturers can adopt to restore students' academic achievement in English language?*

Table 2: Possible remedy lecturers can adopt to restore students' academic achievement in English language

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
4	Teachers focusing on weak students can enhance their academic achievement in English language exams.	2.43	Agree
5	The increment of teachers' interaction and communication with students can enhance their academic performance.	2.32	Agree
6	Teachers can establish efficient team work among students to share and gain knowledge to improve students' performance.	2.42	Agree

Findings obtained from table 2, research question 2 revealed that items 4, 5, and 6 all agreed to the fact that lecturers focusing on weak students can enhance their academic achievement in English language exams, the increment of lecturers' interaction and communication with students can enhance their academic performance and lecturers can establish efficient team work among students to share and gain knowledge to improve students' performance.

Figure 2: Chart of possible remedy lecturers can adopt to restore students' academic achievement in English language

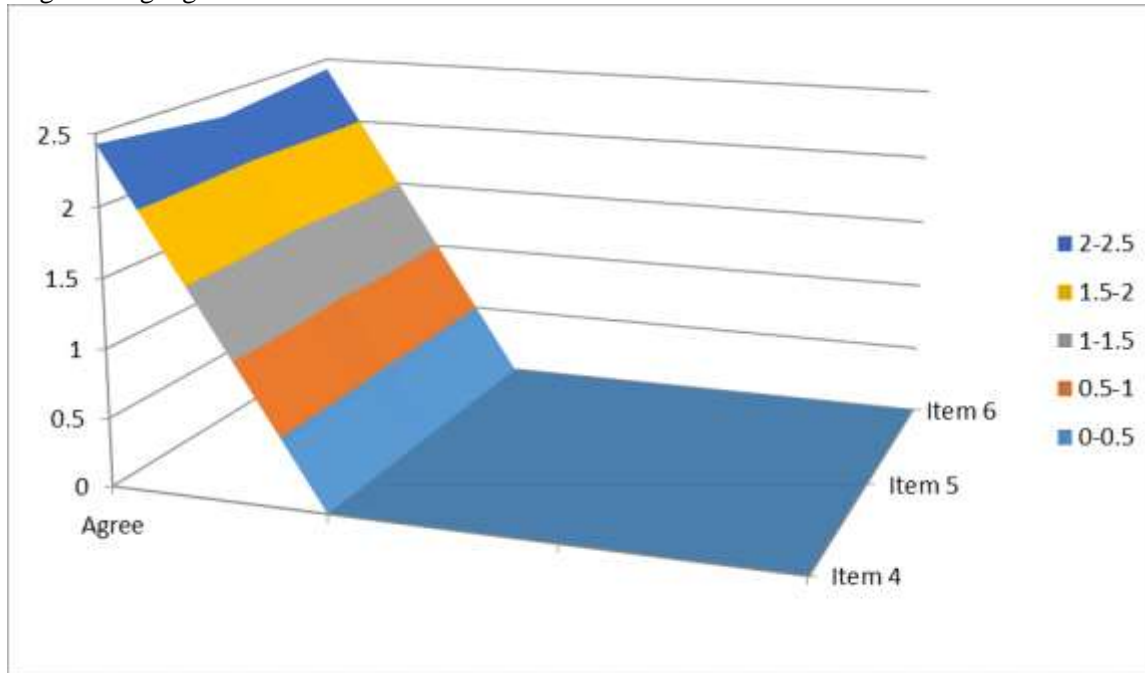


Figure 1 revealed that item 4 had a mean value of 2.43, item 5 had a mean value of 2.32 and item 6 had a mean value of 2.42. This are all above average showing the possible remedy lecturers can adopt to restore students' academic achievement in English language.

Hypothesis

There is no significant correlation cause of students’ failure in English language test and possible remedy lecturers can adopt to restore students’ academic achievement in English language

Table 3: Correlation of students’ failure in English language test and possible remedy lecturers can adopt to restore students’ academic achievement in English language

S/N	X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
1	2.32	2.43	5.3824	5.9049	5.6376
2	2.43	2.32	5.9049	5.3824	5.6376
3	2.35	2.42	5.5225	5.8564	5.687
	7.1	7.17	16.8098	17.1437	16.9622

$$\begin{aligned}
 r &= \frac{n\sum xy - \sum x \sum y}{\sqrt{(n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2)(n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}} \\
 &= \frac{3 \times 16.9622 - 7.1 \times 7.17}{\sqrt{[3 \times 16.8098 - (7.1)^2][3 \times 17.1437 - (7.17)^2]}} \\
 &= \frac{50.8866 - 50.907}{\sqrt{[50.4294 - 50.41][51.4311 - 51.408]}} \\
 &= \frac{-0.0204}{\sqrt{[0.0194][0.0222]}} \\
 &= \frac{-0.0204}{\sqrt{0.00043068}} \\
 &= \frac{-0.0204}{0.020753} \\
 r &= -0.982990
 \end{aligned}$$

Findings obtained from the null hypothesis showed there is no significant correlation between the causes of students' failure in English language tests and the potential remedies that lecturers can adopt to restore students' academic achievement in English language. The calculated correlation coefficient (r) is approximately -0.983, indicating a strong negative correlation, meaning that as one variable increases, and the other decreases significantly.

Comparing this calculated correlation value to the critical value, it significantly exceeds the critical value, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. In simpler terms, the study did not find a significant relationship between the causes of students' failure and the remedies proposed by lecturers.

The implication of accepting the null hypothesis is that the study does not provide statistical evidence for the effectiveness of the proposed remedies in improving students' English language performance. This suggests the need for further research to explore other factors or interventions to address the issue of student failure in English language tests.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from the study shed light on several important aspects of students' performance in English language and the potential remedies that can be implemented. Let's delve deeper into these findings:

1. Lack of Student Motivation and Poor Interaction:

The study revealed that students lack motivation in the study of English language and that there is poor interaction between lecturers and students in English language classes. This is a significant issue as motivation plays a crucial role in student performance. The findings are consistent with the assertion made by Adetugbo (2003) that students' performance in English language is negatively affected by poor motivation and a lack of engagement in the classroom. To improve student outcomes, it is essential to address these motivational and interaction deficiencies.

2. Lecturer's Role in Enhancing Student Achievement:

The study also indicated that when lecturers focus on weaker students, it can lead to improved academic achievement in English language exams. Additionally, increased interaction and communication between lecturers and students were found to enhance academic performance. These findings align with the perspective of Aina and Olanipekun (2014) that when lecturers make efforts to support students, it can result in better performance. This emphasizes the crucial role of lecturers in shaping students' success in English language courses.

3. Absence of Significant Correlation:

The most intriguing finding is the lack of a significant correlation between the causes of students' failure in English language tests and the proposed remedies suggested by lecturers. This means that the study did not find statistical evidence to support the effectiveness of the proposed remedies in restoring students' academic achievement. While this result may be surprising, it highlights the complexity of the issue and suggests that other factors might be at play.

In summary, the findings underscore the importance of addressing motivational and interaction challenges in English language classrooms. They also emphasize the positive impact lecturers can have on student achievement when they provide support to weaker students and engage more actively with their students. However, the absence of a significant correlation between the causes of failure and proposed remedies raises questions about the effectiveness of these specific solutions, indicating a need for further investigation and potentially alternative approaches to improving student performance in English language tests.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated high student failure rates in English language tests in Rivers State polytechnics. It revealed that students lack motivation and interaction in English language classes. Lecturers play a vital role in enhancing student achievement, particularly by focusing on weaker students and increasing interaction.

Interestingly, no significant correlation was found between the causes of failure and proposed remedies, raising questions about the effectiveness of these solutions.

In summary, this study highlights issues in English language education and the importance of lecturer support. Further research is needed to address these challenges and develop more effective solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made from the study:

1. In-service training should be organized by most tertiary institutions to train and develop lecturers on classroom management techniques.
2. Tertiary institutions should set up quality assurance teams to monitor lecturers' participation in English language classes.

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