

FACTORS INFLUENCING VERBAL COMMUNICATION AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IBADAN NORTH EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OYO STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the factors affecting verbal communication among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government Area, Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design. The participants were 500 senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East, drawn through a simple random sampling technique from 10 schools (50 per school). The instrument used was Factors Influencing Verbal Communication Among Students' Questionnaire ($r=0.81$). The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that factors influencing verbal communication among senior secondary school students were communication apprehension ($\bar{x}=2.99$), English Language Anxiety ($\bar{x}=2.78$). Based on the findings, the study recommends that schools should enhance the use of communicative activities and provide continuous positive reinforcement to improve learners' oral proficiency.

Keywords. Anxiety, English Students, Verbal Communication, Fear, Shyness

Introduction

The importance of communication in schools cannot be overstated, as it is through communication that every teaching and learning activity in the school system is carried out. Only through effective communication can teachers and students be aware of information within the school and the subject content. It is through communication that messages, information, tasks and assignments are shared in the school system among teachers and students. However, the form of communication to be used for all these actions is also essential to the mode or method of transmission.

Sikiti (2018) defined communication as the deliberate exchange of information, emotions,

ideas, and needs between human beings using shared symbols. Communication encompasses how humans connect with their social and environmental surroundings. Effective communication is crucial for both official and social connections, as it may be difficult to express thoughts, ideas, and emotions without it. Communication is essential to all aspects of life, and without it, life may lack meaning. One of the methods of communication which is prevalent in the conventional schools' organisation is verbal communication. Students' verbal proficiency refers to their capacity to communicate ideas and information through speech.

Okoro (2017) argued that communication does not only involve talking or writing to other individuals.

It refers to transmitting a message with the intention of eliciting and identifying a reaction. Listening is an important aspect of communication alongside speaking. Surprisingly, many people do not see listening as a vital aspect of communication. From the foregoing, it could be inferred that communication in the educational system is highly crucial to people, as it deals with contact between one individual and another.

According to Alonge (2020), one major area where the importance of the English language cannot be overlooked is its provision of access to education. It is the medium of instruction through which learners acquire knowledge and skills. To the average Nigerian, proficiency in English language is the key to the world's proof of knowledge and universal culture. It is a gateway to success in the global economy. In an increasingly demanding world of literacy, the importance of ensuring students' proficiency and performance in English cannot be underrated.

The procedure of teaching and learning revolves around communication. For knowledge to be absorbed, teachers need to organise and communicate information properly. Students must communicate about their comprehension of the material and identify issues that require more explanation. Instructional communication is simply the exchange of information within a learning context (Ibrahim, 2017). As a result of this, if communication breaks down in the classroom, neither teaching nor learning can take place between the teacher and the students.

According to Schreminer (2014), communication skills are the talents an individual demonstrates in continuously displaying the capabilities to successfully interact with clients, colleagues, subordinates, patrons and

supervisors in a professional way. Singh (2014) also described communication skills as the instruments that we employ to reduce the impediments to successful communication. Lee (2011) also noted that communication skills have been acknowledged as crucial to school leadership. Communication skills help individuals acquire, process, and distribute information effectively.

Verbal communication is one variety of communication which involves the use of spoken words for one-to-one discussion or group discussion, telephone conversation, audio, video, and audio-visual engagements. Unlike other methods of communication, such as non-verbal communication and written communication, verbal communication provides immediate feedback- in the classroom engagement where instruction and learning activities are the order and it is used during the extra-curricular activities.

Toro (2021) concluded that students are triggered to improve interpersonal communication skills; nonetheless, factors such as lack of confidence, experience, vocabulary, and grammar conjoined with the lack of interest do not allow students to use the language in interpersonal communication. Students' verbal communication is one key thing in the acquisition of language. It is the verbal communication that allows the students to have a free flow of participation in the classroom and also give them chances to practice the words and structures they have been exposed to in the classroom environment in the real-life situation. It helps students to bridge the gap between what they are familiar with in the English language, their thoughts about what they know and how they can express their thoughts. Verbal communication helps the students to develop their language

system through exchanges of thoughts with their peers from which feedback is often received so that they can produce appropriate language while speaking and build their English skills (Hanouma, 2013).

These factors can be situational and make the learning affected especially when the students involved have some forms of different learning capacities. The behavioural and academic norms, new social customs, and different cultural values are only a view of the obstacles. Despite the importance of verbal communication in the teaching and learning among teachers and students in secondary schools, there are still a series of factors that can be influencing the verbal communication of secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government. These can vary from fear, social status, background, lack of qualified teachers, inaccessibility to relevant resources among others. Equally, for students to be proficient in verbal communication, they must not only learn rapidly in order to get by in their everyday lives, but they must also adapt to life in a school setting where their native language is not spoken. These efforts can be truncated in the following ways which are identified as factors; fear of making mistakes, negative teachers' remarks, students' self-efficacy, laxity in the preparation for classes, inadequate learning facilities, inadequacy in the number of relevant teaching personnel, insufficient learning aids, mother tongue, economic status of the parents, educational background of the parents, societal stigmatisation, occupation of the parents among others. In this context, this study intends to explore the factors influencing verbal communication among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government, Ibadan.

Statement of the Problem

Effective verbal communication is invaluable for academic performance and learning. However, many senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government are deficient in verbal communication, as evident in their poor performance and poor oral communication. Reviewed studies on verbal communication among Nigerian students have focused largely on interventions to improve verbal communication among students, with little attention paid to factors affecting the verbal communication of senior secondary school students in Ibadan North Local Government Area. This study, therefore, addressed the knowledge gap by investigating factors affecting verbal communication among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North Local Government.

Objectives of the Study

The study investigated the factors influencing verbal communication among senior secondary schools in Ibadan North East Local Government Area, Ibadan. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. identify the factors that influence verbal communication among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government.
2. examine strategies employed by English teachers to develop verbal communication skills among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government.

Research Questions

For this study, the following research questions were answered;

1. What are the factors that influence verbal communication among senior secondary school students

- in Ibadan North East Local Government?
2. What are the strategies employed by English teachers to develop verbal communication skills among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government?

Scope of the Study

This study investigated the factors influencing verbal communication, aspects of verbal communication such as pronunciation, stress and intonation among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government, Ibadan. It covered SS2 students from 10 senior secondary schools in Ibadan North East Local Government, Ibadan.

Significance of the Study

The study examined the factors that influence the verbal communication of students across senior secondary schools in Ibadan North East Local Government, and how they can contribute to the development of the students' verbal communication proficiency through some mechanics. In addition, it will help teachers improve their teaching methodology with a view of bringing up students who can use good verbal communication skills. This can be achieved through involving them in tasks like debates, discussions and project works or assignments. Moreover, the findings will help students to appreciate the importance of good verbal communication beyond acquiring proficiency in English with dexterity in the applicable English language skills. Besides, students will recognise that speaking and writing skills can aid their initiative skills, which will improve them on a different level.

Parents can also leverage on the findings of this study as it will enable them to invest in speaking and writing

skills by providing teachers and students with enough and varied instructional resources to ensure that acquisition takes place effectively.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. This allowed the use of quantitative. The population of the study involved all the senior secondary school students in the senior secondary schools in Ibadan North East Local Government, Ibadan, Oyo State. Ibadan North East Local Government Area, Ibadan, was purposely selected as one of the local governments with a higher number of schools in Ibadan. Ten senior secondary schools were randomly selected from the Ibadan North East Local Government Area, and from each of the schools selected, 50 SSII students were purposely selected as respondents. In all, a total of 500 students were allowed to participate in the study. The instrument used was Factors Influencing Verbal Communication among Students' Questionnaire ($r=0.81$). The data were collected from students in the selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan North East Local Government Area, Ibadan. The teachers, upon the directives of the principals, accompanied the researcher to assist in the administration of the questionnaire. Data collected for this study were analysed using descriptive statistics of simple percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation.

Results

This chapter presents the study, findings and analysis of the data gathered through the administered questionnaire and interviews to investigate the factors influencing verbal communication among students in Ibadan North East Local Government Area. The data analysed

are presented in the order of the research questions answered.

communication among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government?

Research question one: What are the factors that influence verbal

Table 1: Factors (fear) that influence verbal communication among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government

S/N	Fear	SD	D	A	SA	\bar{x}	S.D.
1.	Fear of making mistakes prevents me from participating in class discussions	48 9.6%	109 21.8%	137 27.4%	206 41.2%	3.00	1.008
2.	I do not engage with verbal communication with unfamiliar people	91 18.2%	98 19.6%	110 22.0%	201 40.2%	2.84	1.142
3.	Negative remarks from teachers discourage me from speaking in class	32 6.4%	126 25.2%	99 19.8%	243 48.6%	3.11	0.992
4.	My previous experiences with verbal communication affect my current confidence in speaking	62 12.4%	88 17.6%	132 26.4%	218 43.6%	3.01	1.054
Weighted Mean =2.99		Threshold=2.50					

Table 1 showed the fear-related factors influencing verbal communication among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government. The study revealed a relatively high level of fear-based inhibition, with a weighted mean of 2.99. The majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that fear of making mistakes (Mean=3.00) and past negative experiences (Mean=3.01) significantly impact their willingness to engage in verbal communication. The highest mean score was recorded for the item stating that negative remarks from teachers discourage classroom participation (Mean=3.11), revealing that teacher behaviour plays a critical role in students' verbal expressiveness. This revealed that students are highly

sensitive to both internal fears and external feedback when it comes to speaking in class. Additionally, the item "I do not engage in verbal communication with unfamiliar people" received a slightly lower mean score (2.84), though still indicative of a moderate level of agreement. This revealed that social anxiety and unfamiliar settings also contributed to communication barriers. Overall, the findings emphasised that both psychological fears (e.g., fear of error or judgment) and environmental influences (e.g., teacher feedback and past experiences) significantly shaped students' verbal communication. With the weighted mean of 2.99 against the threshold of 2.50, it can be concluded that fear has a strong influence on verbal communication.

Table 2: Factors of Anxiety that influence verbal communication among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government

S/N	Anxiety	SD	D	A	SA	\bar{x}	S.D.
1.	I feel anxiety in me when speaking English in front of my classmates	80 16.0%	85 17.0%	127 25.4%	208 41.6%	2.93	1.106
2.	I often do not have adequate words in English to express myself	72 14.4%	99 19.8%	167 33.4%	162 32.4%	2.84	1.036
3.	Anxiety of Poor vocabulary knowledge limits my ability to communicate verbally in English	136 27.2%	94 18.8%	81 16.2%	189 37.8%	2.65	1.238

4.	Anxiety of people paying attention to me affects my communication.	111 22.2%	114 22.8%	91 18.2%	184 36.8%	2.70	1.181
Weighted Mean =2.78		Threshold=2.50					

Table 2 showed the measure of anxiety-related factors that influence verbal communication among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government Area, with a weighted mean of 2.78, revealing a high level of anxiety impact. The highest level of agreement was seen in the statement “*I feel anxiety in me when speaking English in front of my classmates*” with a mean of 2.93, indicating that performance anxiety is a significant barrier for many students. Similarly, a large number of students expressed difficulty in articulating their thoughts due to a lack of adequate English vocabulary, with a mean score of 2.84, pointing to linguistic

limitations that further contributed to communication anxiety. Additionally, responses to items on *poor vocabulary knowledge* (Mean = 2.65) and *inadequate learning facilities* (Mean = 2.70) highlighted the structural and educational challenges faced by the students. With the weighted mean of 2.78 against the threshold of 2.50, anxiety has a high influence on verbal communication.

Research question two: What are the strategies employed by English teachers to develop verbal communication skills among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government?

Table 3: Strategies employed by English teachers to develop verbal communication skills among senior secondary school students

S/N	Social and environmental support	SD	D	A	SA	\bar{x}	S.D.
1.	Access to English language media (e.g. TV, radio, internet) improves my verbal communication	45 9.0%	21 4.2%	155 31.0%	279 55.8%	3.34	0.921
2.	My parent engage me in verbal communication at home	27 5.4%	85 17.0%	108 21.6%	280 56.0%	3.28	0.932
3.	Positive feedback from teachers motivates me to speak more in class	55 11.0%	28 5.6%	125 25.0%	292 58.4%	3.31	0.994
4.	I receive enough encouragement from my parents to practice speaking English at home	27 5.4%	62 12.4%	146 29.2%	265 53.0%	3.30	0.885
5.	Peer support encourages me to participates in verbal activities	19 3.8%	44 8.8%	168 33.6%	269 53.8%	3.37	0.800
6.	Participation in debates and discussions helps me improve my verbal communication skills	36 7.2%	33 6.6%	146 29.2%	285 57.0%	3.36	0.892
7.	I find it easier to communicate in my mother tongue than in English	34 6.8%	58 11.6%	165 33.0%	243 48.6%	3.23	0.906
8.	I get enough opportunities to practice speaking English in school	31 6.2%	46 9.2%	150 30.0%	273 54.6%	3.33	0.882
Weighted Mean =3.32		Threshold=2.50					

Table 3 showed a range of social and environmental strategies effectively employed by English teachers to support the development of verbal communication skills among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government Area. With a weighted mean of 3.32, the responses showed a high level of agreement among students regarding the effectiveness of these strategies. Key among them is access to English language media, which recorded a high mean score of 3.34, followed closely by peer support (Mean=3.37) and participation in debates and discussions (Mean=3.36). These strategies exposed students to consistent, real-life use of English and created interactive platforms for practising speaking skills in both formal and informal settings. Similarly, teacher feedback and encouragement from parents (means of 3.31 and 3.30, respectively) are also pivotal in motivating students and building their confidence to use English verbally.

Furthermore, students acknowledged the influence of parental engagement at home (Mean=3.28) and ample school opportunities for spoken English practice (Mean=3.33) as instrumental to their communication development. Despite some students finding it easier to speak in their mother tongue (mean = 3.23), the overall results affirm that the learning environment, both in school and at home, plays a vital role in enhancing verbal communication skills. With the weighted mean of 3.32 against the threshold of 2.50, it can be concluded that the strategies employed by English teachers to develop verbal communication skills among senior secondary school students has a high impact on verbal communication.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study clearly illustrate that fear-related factors significantly influence the verbal communication of senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government. Communication as a verbal activity is contingent on level of confidence, comfortableness of the speaker, this is because when students exhibit their apprehension, they end up fidgeting and stammering which eventually would affect the overall quality of the communication. The findings of this study also found that social anxiety, particularly in unfamiliar settings, contributes to students' hesitation to engage in verbal communication. Consistent with prior literature, the students expressed a strong reluctance to participate in verbal activities due to fear of making mistakes and previous negative experiences. This aligns with the assertions of Tsui (in Nunan, 1999), Yi Htwe (2007), and Robby (2010), who noted that fear of errors is one of the leading causes of students' hesitance to speak in English classrooms. The study affirms Aftat's (2008) view that this fear is closely linked to concerns about negative evaluation and correction. The finding that negative remarks from teachers discourage classroom participation supports this claim and underscores the role of teacher behavior as a significant external factor influencing students' willingness to speak. Hieu (2011) also highlighted how fear of ridicule by peers and being chastised by teachers can cause students to avoid speaking altogether, which is echoed in the participants' responses in this study.

Additionally, the tendency of students to avoid verbal interaction with unfamiliar individuals reflects social

anxiety, another barrier identified by scholars like Zang (2006) and He and Chen (2010). This apprehension about being perceived as incoherent or inarticulate often leads to silence, particularly in public or unfamiliar settings. The findings also support the propositions of Zua (2008), who advocated for the establishment of emotional connections between students and teachers, enhancement of student attentiveness, and the creation of a peaceful and supportive classroom environment. These recommendations align with the implication of this study's results that a psychologically safe and encouraging environment is essential for fostering verbal engagement among students.

Moreover, this study complements the observations made by Urrutia and Vega (2010), who noted that learners' confidence, vocabulary, and classroom atmosphere are central to enhancing oral performance. Similarly, the emphasis placed on teacher communication practices by Anyaeche and Okoye (2021) reinforces the finding that teacher-student interactions greatly impact students' participation in verbal communication. Their assertion that clear and supportive communication methods reduce misunderstandings resonates with the current study's emphasis on the role of constructive teacher feedback in mitigating fear.

The findings from Table 2 highlight that anxiety-related factors significantly hinder verbal communication among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government Area. A notable number of students reported feeling anxious when speaking English in front of their classmates, underscoring the prevalence of performance anxiety in classroom communication. This reflects

the emotional tension students feel when placed in communicative situations that require proficiency in English, especially in front of peers. This confirms the position of Horwitz and Cope (1986, in Zhao Na, 2007), who identified communication apprehension as one of the major sources of student anxiety, particularly when students are expected to speak in their target language. When students are uncertain of their linguistic abilities, they often experience heightened nervousness, which deters active verbal participation.

The finding that students struggle to articulate their thoughts due to limited vocabulary mirrors the results of Urrutia and Vega (2010), who reported that low vocabulary knowledge and a lack of confidence are major barriers to learners' oral performance. Students' anxiety is intensified by the fear of using incorrect or inadequate expressions, which often leads to silence or avoidance in communication settings. Nunan (1999) also supports this, stating that students lacking confidence in their English skills are more prone to communication fear. The role of structural challenges, such as inadequate learning facilities, further compounds the problem. Poor access to resources such as books, audio-visual materials, and supportive language tools reduces the opportunities for students to practice and refine their speaking skills. This is consistent with the findings of Eissa, Misbah, and Najat (1988), who observed that low English proficiency and limited instructional resources impede verbal communication.

Moreover, the fear of peer and teacher judgment continues to emerge as a key source of anxiety. According to Liu (2007) and Zhou et al. (2004), students often worry about being negatively evaluated, especially when their language use is imperfect. This fear of unfavorable

assessment, whether from teachers or classmates, discourages open expression and reinforces verbal reticence in the classroom. To address these challenges, several scholars propose actionable strategies. Koichi Sato (2003) and Keramida (2009) advocate for creating a supportive and anxiety-reducing classroom environment, where students feel safe to participate without fear of ridicule. Positive reinforcement, motivational teaching, and student-centered learning approaches can greatly boost learners' confidence. Harmer (2007) also emphasizes the need for teachers to recognise individual student strengths and weaknesses and tailor teaching strategies accordingly.

The result showing the highest level of agreement with the statement that large class sizes hinder verbal participation underscores the role of environmental conditions in reinforcing shyness. Overcrowded classrooms may intensify students' fear of making mistakes in front of their peers, as noted by Bowen (2005) and Robby (2010), who linked shyness to a natural reluctance to speak and a lack of confidence. The respondents' reported unwillingness to communicate in English reflects the findings of Saurik (2011), who observed that fear of errors and ridicule from classmates discourages many learners from speaking. The study also aligns with Pesce's (2011) recommendation that creating an open and supportive classroom environment can help alleviate students' anxiety and reduce the effects of shyness. When students feel safe to make mistakes, they are more likely to engage actively in verbal communication. Chinmoy (2007) further emphasised the need for students to view communication challenges not as threats, but as opportunities to build confidence an approach that may be

necessary for reducing the reluctance reported in this study.

Empirical support for these observations comes from Urrutia and Vega (2010), who linked poor oral performance to low vocabulary and confidence, both of which are often symptoms of shyness. Their study emphasised the importance of classroom atmosphere and learner self-confidence in improving speaking abilities. Similarly, Prieto (2007) found that interactive and cooperative learning activities that align with learners' interests can reduce communication barriers and enhance verbal expression. Moreover, the findings correlate with those of Anyaeche and Okoye (2021), who emphasised that communication efficiency in schools depends not just on the method but also on the climate of interaction. Their evidence that non-verbal cues and appropriate language use improved communication outcomes aligns with the view that supportive environments can help students overcome communicative hesitations rooted in shyness

The findings from Table 3 revealed that the social and environmental strategies employed by English teachers in Ibadan North East Local Government Area are perceived by students as highly effective in enhancing their verbal communication skills. The data show that strategies such as peer support, access to English language media, and participation in debates and discussions are especially influential. These interactive and immersive methods appear to provide students with regular opportunities to use English in both academic and informal contexts, thus strengthening their speaking abilities.

The quantitative outcome resonates strongly with students'

responses from earlier interviews. For instance, *“Watching news and listening to radio programs or entertaining videos online teaches me how people speak confidently.”* Similarly, *“I believe watching English movies and news can improve how I speak.”* These responses affirm the significance of media exposure in improving verbal communication, as reflected in the high agreement with access to English language media in the quantitative results.

Peer support also emerged as a key strategy, which is evident in students' remarks on interactive activities. This finding aligns with Amusa (2020) who emphasised the importance of verbal ability in achieving academic success, particularly in subjects perceived to be abstract like physics. Amusa's study highlights that verbal proficiency not only supports comprehension but also aids in the internalization of complex subject matter. Therefore, strategies that enhance students' speaking and communication abilities such as those identified in this study serve as essential tools in bridging learning gaps and boosting overall academic performance. The importance of motivational and environmental factors is further underscored by Dincer and Yesilyurt (2013), who noted that students often feel inadequate in their oral communication skills and that their motivation significantly influences their self-perception and willingness to engage in speaking activities.

The current findings reinforce this, showing that when students are supported by encouraging teachers, engaged parents, and collaborative peers, their confidence and willingness to speak in English improves significantly. Moreover, teacher feedback and parental encouragement were recognised as pivotal to building students' confidence

in verbal expression. This reflects Dincer and Yesilyurt's emphasis on the psychological barriers to verbal communication and how supportive learning environments can mitigate such challenges. Even though some students expressed a preference for speaking in their mother tongue, the high level of agreement across responses indicates that the presence of supportive social structures can significantly shift learners' language use toward English.

Conclusion

The study investigated the factors influencing verbal communication among senior secondary school students in Ibadan North East Local Government Area, Ibadan. It can therefore be concluded from the study that effective verbal communication is a function of certain factors such as fear of imperfection and making mistakes, anxiety of engaging in public speaking and shyness. The strategies used by teachers to promote verbal communication among senior secondary school students are access to English language media, peer support and participation in debates and discussions

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Schools should implement structured speaking activities, such as weekly debates and oral presentations to reduce students' fear of verbal participation.
2. Teachers should be exposed to seminars and workshops where they will be familiarised with various strategies that are used in helping students overcome fears in verbal communication
3. Debates, quizzes, drama presentations, and discussion

forums should be integrated more consistently into English lessons to build students' fluency and confidence.

4. Teachers should be trained on how to provide constructive verbal feedback and create inclusive classrooms that encourage every student to speak and participate.
5. Parents should be sensitised on the importance of using English at home and providing encouragement when their children attempt to speak the language.

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