

Interaction of Bilingualism on Mechanical Accuracy in Essay Writing Among Igbo Learners of English Language in Senior Secondary Schools in Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigated the interaction of bilingualism on mechanical accuracy in essay writing among Igbo learners of English in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. One research question and one null hypothesis were raised to guide the study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the research and the population of the study comprised all the SS3 students of the 17 local government areas in Abia State. The sample of the study consisted of 240 students selected through multistage t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that Engligbo had interaction on mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in private and public schools in Abia State; and Engligbo had more interaction on mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in private schools than public schools in Abia State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Teachers of English Language should be keen in identifying spelling errors of students in their essay writing. These errors should be corrected contextually in order to sustain the ideas of the essay. They should also endeavour to use the corrected words in sentence patterning in order expose students to multiple patterns in sentence construction.*

Keywords: bilingualism, essay writing, mechanical accuracy, Igbo learners of English.

INTRODUCTION

There is a tendency for two languages to coexist simultaneously in a modern society. This is somewhat inevitable due to the growing proximity between technology and innovation in modern society. At the beginning of the 21st century, scholars estimated that at least half of the world's population was bilingual (Saville-Troike, 2006). The percentage varies because it depends on how researchers define the concept of bilingualism and the diverse complexities

and relationship between a language and a dialect. Bilingualism exists in almost all countries in the world; in all different classes of society and in all age groups (Grosjean, 1982). There is no simple definition of bilingualism. Often the term includes both trilingualism and multilingualism (Byram and Brumfit, 2000).

Using English as a second language in Nigeria has remained one of the most exceptional legacies of colonial interaction that has manifested in almost all aspects of our nationhood. However, the language has flourished because of the multi-lingual structure of Nigeria. English, therefore, enables Nigerians from different climes and cultures to communicate mutually for peaceful co-existence and meaningful development. Onuigbo and Eyisi (2008) confirm that the English language accommodates people of various cultures in a multilingual society like Nigeria and also link them with the international communities. Therefore, it becomes obvious that without the adoption of English as the nation's second language, there would have been difficulty in communication and language crisis. Since then, the English language has continued to be functional in matters of Government, Business, Education, Media, Judiciary, Literature and Education (Joakin, Agbo & Zubeiru 2021).

Language enthusiasts and linguists have attributed the dominance of English in Nigeria as a direct manifestation of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism. These two concepts have indirect implication in almost all aspects of our country's corporate existence. Particularly, since its adoption as the medium of instruction in Nigerian schools as the National Policy on Education (FGN -NPE2010 as amended) stipulates, then it is not belittling to state that the teaching of English as a second language in Nigeria needs to be taken very seriously for the sake of international and cross-cultural intelligibility (Joakin, Agbo & Zubeiru 2021). The multi-ethnic structure of the Nigerian society has placed English language at the centre of Education, classroom instruction and national development. It has inevitably become an indispensable vehicle for instructional transaction and curriculum development. Scholars in the fields of linguistics like Obi-Okoye (1996), Olaoye (2002), Ifejirika (2002), Jowitt (2005), Ayodabo (2006), Medubi (2007), Udeozo (2009), Iyiola (2010), Adeniyi (2012), Nwana (2014), Ereke and Agwu (2015), Abdulmalik (2022) have all acceded to the fact that English language came into Nigerian through colonization and the establishment of mission schools in Nigeria. In fact, they all concur that English language is one of the greatest legacies left by the colonial masters. It becomes evident that the role and status of English language have been amplified in the Nigerian situation because of the multi-ethnic nature of Nigerian society. English language therefore, has become a language of integration, association and communal harmony (Adeniyi, 2012). It has become so because language is a dominant means of communication. Language acquisition and usage are some of the basic characteristics of human learning (Onuoha, 2014a). Language is highly valued in every society as it serves as a medium of communication. It is important to the human society as it reflects every facet of our attitude and activities. It is a symbol of group identity and solidarity (Okoro, 2018).

Adedimeji (2006) and Macwhinney (2003) proclaimed that language is by far the most complex skill a human being can have. It is through language that we understand the deepest secrets and inner feelings of other people as we appreciate the extent to which we share

common humanity by its means. The affinity between man and language, in many ramifications, has informed the neologism of ‘manguage’ because man and language (verbal and nonverbal) are literally inseparable. To imagine a world without language is to imagine a world without meaning and thus, imagine the unimaginable (Adedimeji, 2006). Language exists in so many forms as communication can take place through several means.

English language is being studied at all levels of education in Nigeria. Adeniyi (2012) observed that this is so because of the need for national integration and development. In language education, goals are usually determined by the role which a particular language is expected to play in and outside the school curriculum (Olaoye, 2002). He observed that the vital function of English language must be noted so that the objectives of the National Policy on Education and the language policy in particular will be realized. English language like many other languages of the world is viewed, assessed and evaluated from four component: listening, reading, speaking and writing. These language components are also referred to language skills because they can be learnt, transferred and acquired as both learning skills and language skills. Writing is however viewed has highest level of language mastery and literacy.

Hence, good teaching of English language more especially in the ESL environment requires the effective teaching of the complex interrelated skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing skills is important in the whole language development and learning (Okotie, 2022). According to him, it is expensive, last longer than speaking, and often less understood by learners. Writing is the ultimate of language skills and determines to a great extent, the success of students in both internal and external examination. Good writing skills in required of students to pass at credit level at the West African School Certificate Examinations (WAEC) . This is why it has been categorically imperative for student to gain a solid mastery in the four language skills especially writing skill in order to stay balanced during demanding times.

English language plays a lot of roles in Nigeria. From colonial inception to date, English language has served as the language of government and administration. Official documents, government records, administrative instructions, judicial proceedings, legislative processes, executive minutes, are all written in English. It is our *lingua franca*. At all the levels of education in Nigeria, it is used as the language of instructional transaction. This means that the Nigerian learners’ access to the cultural and scientific knowledge of the world is largely through English language (Olaoye, 2002). No doubt, it is also the language of commerce, industry and business transactions. Receipts, invoices, memoranda of understanding, consignment notes, freight bills, etc., are all written in English language. This is why it is important to attain some appreciable level of mastery in the knowledge and usage of English language so as to excel in both local and international businesses.

Palmer (1974) observed that the intellectual understanding of how a language works is one thing and the development of skills in using the language is another. The skills in using English language revolve around the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Onuoha, 2010). Young Nigerians now prefer the use of the English language in formal and

informal situations; they read much of foreign texts, watch or listen to movies, music and sports that are not indigenous (Opeoluwa, 2014).

In a multi-lingual Nigerian setting, bilingualism is almost inevitable (Onuoha, 2021). English is used alongside indigenous languages. This has increased the number of people that can use two languages at least, at an intelligible degree. Nowadays the numbers of people that are able to speak more than one language have been increased in so many parts of the world. According to Trask (1999) about 70 percent of the people in the world are bilingual. However, defining bilingualism is complex and is influenced by multiple factors such as the age of acquisition of the second language, continued exposure to the first language (L1), relative skill in each language and the circumstances under which each language is learned. Bilingualism as a complex psychological and socio-cultural linguistic behavior can be observed everywhere in the world. Being such a widespread issue, it has attracted increasing research interest in its effects on education, especially learning additional languages. In addition, bilingualism and its effects are a controversial issue and there are contradictory views in this regard. Some studies have evidence on its positive effects while some others have provided counter-evidence (Zarghami & Bagheri, 2014).

Popular definitions of bilingualism conceptualize language knowledge as being a binary category—whether one is classified as having acquired two languages or not (Brutt-Griffler & Varghese, 2004). However, bilingualism should be thought of as being on a continuum, where one can have varying levels of proficiency in two languages, regardless of how and when they were acquired. In addition, language and literacy skills are comprised of multiple sub skills. In any given language, bilinguals might be highly proficient in one domain of skills but not the other.

Statement of the Problem

The concept of bilingualism between English and Igbo language has revealed the potency of language (Akujiobi, 2016). It has been observed that while English language has the capacity to create and recreate words within itself, some languages do not have sufficient lexical potency to do the same, making it seem that African states suffer grossly a state of inequality of languages. This has made the English language to occupy the prestigious position of a national language or official language meant for indigenous languages while indigenous languages are relegated to the background. Imperialist language policies were formulated to impede the growth of indigenous African languages (Akujiobi, 2016). The use of indigenous languages was discouraged, which inadvertently led to the extinction of most indigenous languages. English Language in Nigeria became the language of communication, business, law, employment and instruction in schools.

Over the years, the introduction of English in Igboland has resulted to mutual interferences or negative transfer between the two languages (Ugwu, 2013). At the early stage, English and Igbo had existed side by side in the same community for so many reasons. However, with many Igbo native speakers getting educated and nurturing young learners are faced with the challenge of bilingualism even in the rural areas where learners are being exposed to English language

outside the classroom, a new hybrid language, “Engligbo” developed. “Engligbo” is seen as disruptive of the earnest pursuit of Igbo learners of English to attain perfection in English language (Ugwu, 2013).

The yearly outcomes of students’ results in both organized internal and external examination are not rewarding and encouraging! Findings of studies by Osalusi (2010), Aina (2014), and Musa et. al (2023) had attributed it to so many variables which include traceably, the effect of bilingualism. Hence, their findings have shown revealing illumination on the effect of bilingualism as one among many causes that affect the effective learning of English among language students in some selected school in Abia State. One of the major sources of learning difficulty that a second language learner experiences, is cross-linguistic influence (Sabe 2012).

Many researchers and linguists have carried out varying studies that surround bilingualism and mother-tongue interference. In spite of the growing interest in the use of mother-tongue or language of immediate community as the language of instructional transaction, English language until date still functions both as a subject and medium of instruction in most schools at all levels of education. In a partial contradiction, the mandate of the policy guiding the use of language in Nigeria Education, it is anticipated that the mother-tongue of constituent community should be used in the first phase of the basic education of every child. There is massive change in work arrangement of African countries as the world globalizes, and this has been instrumental to the language endangerment of their dialects. In Nigeria, language shift which accounts for the concept of mother-tongue influence can be located in a change of the language of work of the ethnicities from the vernacular to English. However, most Nigerian children and youth are unknowledgeable about their linguistic backgrounds (even when they unconsciously use them in their daily language activities) and feel inferior and inadequate about them. The youth prefer to speak to each other in English or pidgin and do not see the danger of losing their mother tongue (MT).

Hence, the harsh juxtaposition of English Language with Igbo language is a problem that has not just produced a variant language (*Engligbo*) but has interacted heavily in the communicative competence of Senior Secondary School Students in Abia State. Not only their communicative competence, all language skills are equally affected. This problem to a great extent accounts for the poor performance of students in both internal and external examination in Abia State. It will not be an over statement to stress that the quality of students’ writings in both internal and external examination reveals the extent to which engligbo has formed a remarkable basis in their thought articulation and other faculties of writing. The researcher who is an English teacher observed that students of English with Igbo background are not immune from the interaction of bilingualism on their writing competence. The study of Chukwu and Motanya (2023) revealed that engligbo has somewhat created confusion in the expression of thought of actors on stage who find it difficult to complete utterances without infusing Igbo words.

In lieu of the myriads of problems associated with SS3 students' writing competence, there is a need to investigate the interaction of bilingualism on mechanical accuracy in essay writing among Igbo learners of L2 in senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the objective of this study were to:

1. investigate the interaction of '*engligbo*' on the mechanical accuracy of essay writing among SS3 students in private and public schools in Abia State;

Research Questions:

The following research question was answered in this study:

1. Does '*engligbo*' have any interaction on the mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in private and public schools in Abia State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance

HO1 There is no significant difference in the interaction of *engligbo* on the mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in public and private schools in Abia State

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Bilingualism

It seems that the definition of bilingualism is complex, complicated with varying levels of variable to be considered and is also greatly influenced by multiple factors such as the relative age of acquisition of the second language; especially the level of acquisition, relative cum continued exposure to the first language (L1), relative skill in each language and the revealing circumstance each language is learned. However, bilingualism should be thought of as being on a continuum, where one can have varying levels of proficiency in two languages, regardless of how and when they were acquired. In addition, language and literacy skills are comprised of multiple sub skills. In any given language, bilinguals might be highly proficient in one domain of skills but not the other. For example, a person might show high oral language skills and limited reading skills (Brutt-Griffler & Varghese, 2004).

An additional consideration in the definition of bilingualism includes the concept of language dominance. Most bilinguals have stronger skills in one language, their dominant language. However, their dominant language need not be their L1. In addition, it is possible to show language dominance in one language for one domain (e.g. L1 for home) and dominance in the other language for another domain (e.g. L2 for work) Bialystok, (2001) found that bilingual students were more fluent in judging the grammaticality of sentences than monolingual. They could perform the switching task more rapidly than monolinguals.

Some linguists argue that bilinguals' knowledge and competence in their first language contribute to effective second language learning (Abolaji 2012). Citing Thomas and Collier (1997), Abolaji (2012) opines that there are a number of studies have thrown their weight behind the latter claim. For example, Thomas and Collier (1997) stress that both cognitive and affective development in the L1 have been found to have positive effects on second language learning and that students with little or no academic and cognitive development in their first language fail to maintain positive gain. Therefore maximum educational benefit from bilingualism is possible only when children are trained to a level where they are stable bilinguals, that is threshold level where competence and performance (in oral and written communication; casual and formal communication) in the first language is comparable to that in the second language.

What this means is that if their competence and performance in the first language are inadequate or deficient, there will be no advantage when the second language is introduced. Kembo and Webb (2000) note that cognitive and development occurs more effectively in language learners know very well. This means that learning a second language occurs more effectively if the required cognitive development has already occurred through the use of a first language as a language of learning.

Although, there are empirical facts to support this claim, however, other researchers still believes that bilingualism remains an impediment to mastery and proficiency in first language. De Houwer (2005) believes that one factor to consider in defining types of bilingualism is *when* the two languages are acquired in relation to each other. He supports that simultaneous bilingualism is considered to occur when two languages are acquired from birth or prior to one year of age. Flege (1992) submits that cases of pure and simultaneous bilingualism with neither language being dominant are also rare. For sequential bilingualism, when one language is acquired following another and the age of L2 acquisition is important (Flege, 1992).

There is an ongoing discovery which supports that sensitive periods for coherent native-like L2 acquisition occur at younger ages than previously believed. For example, brain organization varies for L2 acquisition after 5 years of age in contrast to before age 5, when native-like organization for language is possible (De Houwer, 2005). Then, it can be posited that children who acquire the L2 at school would not be considered native speakers, even if they have high levels of L2 proficiency and mastery. In older language learners (preadolescents and older), age of acquisition is related to the learner's ability to perceive and produce speech sounds in their second language (Flege, 1992). Another factor related to L2 pronunciation is the frequency and continued use of the L1. Then, it becomes significant that learning generally may be affected at different levels.

There are both social and environmental factor that contribute to the interaction of bilingualism among learners. Most sequential bilinguals learn their first language in the home and their second language in the school and/or community. By entailment, the family presents a social platform for first language acquisition. In order to maintain the arrangement of bilingualism, proficiency in L2 must be acquired and L1 proficiency must be maintained. Pearson (2007)

describes social and environmental factors that can have an interaction on whether children become bilingual, or adopt and speak only the majority language. For instance, maintaining the first language is relatively significant to the amount of continual exposure to the first language. Here, functional use of L1 in every social context is categorically imperative in order to maintain L1.

In families where parents only speak the L1 and where children are exposed to the minority language early and often, a greater chance of true bilingualism exists. For example, to acquire some types of grammatical structures exposure to the language is required for correct use (e.g. when to use “much” versus “many”) (Gathercole, 2002). The attitudes of parents, siblings and peers toward the minority language can add value to, or subtract value from, the language. In fact, any way of increasing the attractiveness of the minority language (i.e., through books or mass media) is likely to help maintain that language. In most cases, learner are naturally attracted to the majority language.

Since scholars hold the view that students working in an additive bilingual environment succeed to a greater extent than those whose first language and culture are devalued by their schools and by the wider society stakeholders in bilingual education communities must strike the balance. Thus second language teachers are urged to do all they can to demonstrate to non-native English students that their cultures and languages are equally as valid and valued as the English language. As it has been noted Abolaji (2012) reiterates that L2 teachers should explore every possibility to incorporate the different cultural background of the students into their daily teaching and curricula. Since "proficiency in the L1 does not only aids better performances in the L2 but also helps in the continuing development of the L1 which has a positive influence on cognitive development, has practical advantages, and promotes a healthy sense of biculturalism," all the stakeholders in the learning of second language – English Language should put in place mechanism that will promote the learning and use of bilinguals' first language before formal school age and during the years of learning and in the larger society. From his study, Abolaji (2012) affirms that bilinguals' first language does not hamper but help the learning of the second language, consequently, it should be valued, promoted and used as a supportive factor in a healthy additive bilingual situation.

Concept of Engligbo

The term Engligbo is coined from “English” and “Igbo”. It is a coinage from the first four alphabets of the English and Igbo. Engligbo is employed by speakers for various purposes in different domains in the country. Engligbo is a medium of communication which is a hybrid of the English and Igbo languages. The mixture (Engligbo) is a conscious display of the knowledge of a prestigious language, English, by educated Igbos Unfortunately, it is mostly regarded as a, “low form” of language which have no much value and should not be taken seriously (Chukwu & Motanya 2023).

Engligbo is a linguistics phenomenon often expressed in code-mixing. When a speaker has to (sic) languages in his repertoire, it is perfectly normal to switch from one language to another when speaking with other speakers who are also bilingual in those languages. This does not in

any way detract from the quality of either language or the speaker's linguistic competence. The switching from one language to the other is not a random linguistic act (Ohuzo 2008). According to Chukwu and Motanya (2023) Enligbo was used by Nigerian artistes to express strong emotions such as anger, frustration or anxiety. Artistes also used Enligbo as a cover to avoid some words which may seem offensive, obscene or disturbing to their audience. The artistes expressed the above functions using a marked code (Enligbo) thereby altering the existing norm, context of language use. This change of Rights and Obligations set (using the marked code) was necessary for the artistes to achieve their desired need for language use. They opined that Enligbo was used to fill lexical gaps in Igbo language. In situations where the artistes (entertainers) wanted to reduce the number of lexical items to be used to communicate an idea, Enligbo was readily available (word economy).

Uduma (2010) believes that Enligbo is product of bilingual situation resulting from code mixing and switching of Igbo and English with the aim to abridge the missing links in Igbo world view to the English world view. According to him, Enligbo performs this function through lexical borrowing from English language. Some English words have no Igbo equivalence while some are too long and others are pronounced the same as the words in English. The educated Igbo bilinguals mix English pronunciation with Igbo letters which have similar phonemes. Enligbo thus replaces English phonemes while the pronunciations remain the same. For example:

Certificate	-	Safiritikate
Field	-	Fildi
Window	-	Windo
Motor car	-	Moto kaa
Computer	-	Komputa

Enligbo maintains the subject, verb, object (SVO) structure of the simple sentence. The complex sentence is realized through the transformational process of relativization. Umezi & Ibe (2024) believe that enligbo which has become common in the eastern part of the country may likely hasten the existence of actual Igbo language. They perceive the emergence and usage of enligbo by younger generation as a threat to the continuous existence of Igbo language.

Similarly, Duru (2024) suspects that the emergence of enligbo typifies the constant struggle of two language for dominance. She believes that so far two languages coexist in a speech community, there is a constant battle for prevalence that can cause the weaker language to be loose structural significance. It became obvious that enligbo is gradually eroding the structure of Igbo language. It is perceived that there is a linguistic battle between English and Igbo that seems to promote the conscious cum unconscious use of enligbo.

Writing Competence in Senior Secondary School

Secondary school students especially those in SS3 are rigorously engaged in one form of writing of the other in preparation to SSCE examination. Writing is an essential means of

communication. In today's world that is technology-driven, learners who command both spoken and written skills have advantage to excel in both internal and external examination. WAEC and NECO are two major examination bodies that conduct examination for senior secondary school students in Nigeria (Jekayinfa & Aburime 2021). Tribble (1996) believes that those who have mastery of writing and speaking occupy a superior social position in comparison to those who handle only the form of speech. For students in academic institutions, the ability to write is necessary not only for academic success, but also for better preparation into the modern workforce – one which places a heavy emphasis on proficient literacy skills (Chase, 2011). Writing is a complex task which requires the coordination of fine motor skills and cognitive skills; it also reflects the social and cultural patterns of the writer's ability to simultaneously harness diverse skills (Fisher, 2010; Myhill & Fisher, 2012, Aika 2019). It is perhaps the most difficult language skill as it builds on the other three skills – listening, speaking and reading. Therefore, it is not surprising that many students find writing a difficult task (Aika 2019). Grabe and Kaplan (1996) estimate that half of the world's population does not know how to write adequately and effectively. Likewise, Negari (2011) concurs with Aika (2029) to assert that writing in a second or foreign language seems to be the most difficult skill for language learners to acquire in academic contexts. The same difficulty arises in teaching writing. Writing is difficult for teachers to teach and assess since teachers and teacher educators would probably agree that teaching writing maybe the most complex activity of all (Sitko, 1998, Hout, 2002, Negari, 2011 and Aika, 2019).

In the Abia secondary school curriculum as approved by NERDC, the teaching of writing as a language skill is done by teachers of English Language. English Language is a compulsory subject at all levels of education. Senior secondary students in Abia must sit and pass English Language as subject with a minimum of credit in order to gain entrance in university. It also serves as the medium of instruction for other content areas. In addition, in order to gain admission into any tertiary institution in Nigeria, students must obtain at least a credit pass in English Language at the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSCE). The SSCE is conducted by examining bodies such as The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and The National Examinations Council (NECO). Students who lack good writing skill will be unable to obtain the minimum pass required as the section (Paper 1) testing the writing skill carries the most marks (60%) of the examination. Students' ability to write the following types of essay genres are tested: narrative, expository, descriptive, debate/argumentative, speech, article, and formal and informal letters (Aika, 2019).

The essay writing section is using referred to as Continuous writing, comprising of two major parts: Letter writing and Essay writing. Students are expected to choose one questions from both sections. Whatever section the student chooses, they are expected to write in not less than 450 words. The essay writing section carries the bulk marks in WASSCE. The scheme for essay is done in such a way the following are assessed:

1. Ability to development appreciate content for the essay
2. Ability to organize contents of the essay aptly
3. Ability to express the content of essay when properly developed and organized

4. Ability to ensure that there is no error (mechanical accuracy)

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This research type is considered suitable for this work because the study is aimed at obtaining data from Igbo Learners of English language in senior secondary schools in Abia State. Descriptive research design is a type of research methodology that aims to describe or document the characteristics, behaviors, attitudes, opinions, or perceptions of a group or population being studied (Hassan, 2024). This research design allows the study of real-life situations as they occur naturally.

The population of this study comprised all the Igbo learners of English Language in SS3 in the 17 Local Government Area of Abia State; in both public and private schools. As at 7th May 2024, Abia state has a total of 250 Public or Government Secondary Schools across 17 Local Government Areas and 680 private school in Abia State. (Research Page NG 2024 & Nigeria Education Data Summary, 2021 - 2024).

The sample consisted of 240 students selected through a multistage sampling method from 6 private and 6 public schools from the 3 senatorial districts in Abia State. Through a stratified sampling method, 2 private schools and 2 public schools were selected from each of the 3 senatorial districts in Abia State on the basis of 20 students per school. A total of 12 schools were sampled for this study. The use of a stratified sampling method was considered appropriate in order to capture at least 2 private schools and two public schools from each of the senatorial zone.

A 2019 standardized WAEC essay question was used to analyze the interaction of Igbo/English Bilingualism. The essay test was administered to SS3 students in the 12 schools. The students were given 50 minutes to write the essay. The essay was marked by 8 English Language WAEC examiners who also assist in analyzing errors that caused by Igbo/English Bilingualism. The essay was scored over 50 marks with the marking scheme.

The instrument was subjected to content and face validation. The researcher consulted three experts: one from the department of Arts Education, Faculty of education, University of Ilorin, second expert was a season English language teacher who also doubled as the HOD of languages from Britarch Schools (Private School) Umuahia and also a WAEC English language examiner, and third expert was a chief education officer from the Federal Ministry of Education who also doubled as an experienced teacher of English language from Federal Government boys College, Garki Abuja.

The experts carefully examined the instrument based on the scope of coverage, precision of instruction and aptness of questions to the students' level of engagement and understanding in order to eschew ambiguity and vagueness so as to achieve the objectives of the study. The experts indicated that the instruments were adequate and satisfactory after making some valuable suggestions. All suggestions and observations made by the experts were taken in

cognizance in the selection of the essay question, adopting WAEC marking scheme, marking of essay and administering of the questionnaires. To achieve reliability, the essay instrument was re-evaluated by two different assessors from Federal Ministry of Education who were also language specialists. The reliability index of 0.25 was computed using Cohen's Kappa Statistic to measure the level of agreement among the respondents. This was done to ensure consistency of score in alignment with the principle of inter-rater reliability. The research question raised for the study was answered using simple percentage and mean difference, while t-test was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Research Question One

Table 1: Showing the Mean Difference in the Interaction of 'engligbo' on the mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in private and public schools

Variable	School Type	N	Mean	Mean Difference
Mechanical Accuracy	Public School	120	3.2833	1.4334
	Private School	120	4.7167	

As showed in table 1, private school students had a mean of 4.7167 which is higher than the mean 3.2833 of the students in public schools and mean difference between the public and private school students is 1.4. This result indicated that "engligbo" had interaction on the mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in private and public schools in Abia State. This also showed that "engligbo" had more interaction on the mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in private schools than public schools in Abia State. There were many instances of spelling errors that were indicative of the interaction of engligbo, which is provided in the table below:

Table 2: Spelling Error and explanation of possible Reasons

WRONG SPELLING	CORRECT SPELLING	EXPLANATION OF POSSIBLE REASON
Exajuration	Exaggeration	The voiced velar plosive sound "g" is represented by "j" in igbo alphabet. So, students tended to spell it as it sounded.
Regurjitate	Regurgitate	The voiced velar plosive sound "g" is represented by "j" in igbo alphabet. So, students tended to spell it as it sounded.
Resent (current)	Recent	The 'c' is not in Igbo alphabet as 's'. So, students tended to spell it as it sounded.
Evidense	Evidence	The 'c' is not in Igbo alphabet as 's'. So, students tended to spell it as it sounded.
Substance	Substance	The 'c' is not in Igbo alphabet as 's'. So, students tended to spell it as it sounded.
Seazin	Season	The 'z' is not in Igbo alphabet as 's'. So, students tended to spell it as it sounded.
Reazin	Reason	The 'z' is not in Igbo alphabet as 's'. So, students tended to spell it as it sounded.
Bazin	Basin	The 'z' is not in Igbo alphabet as 's'. So, students tended to spell it as it sounded.

The wrong spellings were indicative of the interaction of englignbo on the mechanical accuracy of essay writing among SS3 students in Abia State, Nigeria. It became obvious that students spelt words they sounded without adequate knowledge of their English sound group.

Hypotheses Testing

HO1: There is no significant difference in the interaction of englignbo on the mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in public and private schools in Abia State.

Table 3: t-test showing the difference in the interaction of englignbo on the mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in public and private schools

Variable	School Type	N	Mean	SD	df	Calculated t-value	Sig. of t-value	Remark
Mechanical Accuracy	Public	120	12.1083	3.2833	238	-7.962	0.000	Rejected
	Private	120	15.6917	4.7167				

Table 3 shows that, the calculated t-value of -7.962 which is significant at 0.05 alpha level ($t = -7.962$; $df = 238$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that there is significant difference in the interaction of englignbo on the mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in public and private schools in Abia State. This result indicated that “Englignbo” had more interaction on the mechanical accuracy among SS3 students in private schools than public schools in Abia State. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION

The result also revealed that students' spelling errors were due to the interaction of englignbo. In English alphabet system, the sounds 'g' and 'dʒ' are represented a 'j' in Igbo alphabet system. Hence, many spelling errors in the students' essays were due to this confusion. Words like regurgitate and exaggeration were wrongly spelt. Similarly, English sound system allows the sounds 's' and 'z' to be pronounced alike which are not permitted in Igbo sound system. Hence words like 'season', 'reason', 'prison', 'basin' etc were all wrongly spelt. Finally, the alphabet 'c' can be pronounced as 's' in English pronunciation system but that is not accommodated in Igbo pronunciation system. Therefore, students mechanical inaccuracies were expressed in wrong spelling of words like, 'recent', 'decent', 'essence', etc. This finding also corroborated with the finding of Anyagwa (2016) who believed that bilingualism is manifested as a hybrid accent in pronunciation, resulting to wrong spellings words that contained fricative sounds. Similarly, this finding also shared a close affinity with the finding of Uduma (2010) who presented that most spelling errors among Igbo learners of English were caused by the inability of Igbo words to accommodate some sounds of English language. In additional, this finding shared a close correlation with the finding of Igboanusi (2008) who also

posited that mother-tongue interference expressed through code-mixing and code-switching had contributed to spelling error among young Igbo learners or English language.

CONCLUSION

The study found that there is significant difference in the interaction of Engligbo on the mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in public and private schools in Abia State. This result indicated that “Engligbo” had more interaction on the mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in private schools than public schools in Abia State. In conclusion, the study established that “Engligbo” had interaction on the mechanical accuracy in essay writing among SS3 students in public and private schools in Abia State.

Recommendations

In the light of the finding of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The teaching of Igbo language should be intensified and given premium attention as English language in secondary schools in Abia state so as to aid student understand the import of each language and their significance in writing essay. This is because a rich mastery of Igbo language among students will facilitate a seamless transition to mastery of the L2 which is English.
2. Teachers of English Language in Abia state should undergo comprehensive training in Igbo language, learn the applicability of Igbo phonemes so as to be able to dictate and correct perceived interaction of engligbo in essay writing among SS3 students.
3. Teachers of English Language should be keen in identifying spelling errors of students in their essay writing. These errors should be corrected contextually in order to sustain the ideas of the essay. They should also endeavour to use the corrected words in sentence patterning in order expose students to multiple patterns in sentence construction.

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