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**LANGUAGE NEED ANALYSIS AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING THE
SPEAKING SKILLS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: A STUDY
OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE**

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Abstract

This research investigates the effectiveness of language need analysis in enhancing the speaking skills of secondary school students in selected schools within Delta State, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive survey design, the study aimed to assess current speaking skill levels, identify language needs and challenges, explore influencing factors, and propose recommendations. Delta State's rich cultural and linguistic diversity provided a representative sample of the Nigerian secondary education system. The population encompassed 2,890 students from junior and senior secondary levels, with 240 participants selected through stratified random sampling. Trained research assistants administered structured questionnaires, and descriptive statistics, including mean, median, and mode responses, were used for analysis. The study revealed varying perceptions and challenges related to the speaking skills of secondary school students. Participants expressed mixed views on students' proficiency in spoken English, vocabulary and grammar usage, pronunciation, and their ability to respond to questions. Challenges were observed in comprehending complex sentence structures, vocabulary acquisition, using appropriate register and tone, expressing ideas fluently and coherently, and maintaining effective communication. The educational environment was considered conducive to active participation and communication, although concerns were raised about teaching methodologies and resource availability. Students' motivation was seen as a positive influence on their speaking skills. The research emphasized the importance of conducting regular language need analysis assessments, designing tailored speaking skill development programs, incorporating interactive teaching approaches, providing opportunities for authentic speaking practice, and collaborating with experts to develop appropriate teaching materials. The

recommendations include targeted assessments, interactive teaching methods, authentic speaking opportunities, and professional collaboration to optimize the speaking skills of secondary school students in Delta State.

Keywords: Language Need Analysis, Speaking Skills, Language Proficiency, Instructional Strategies, Authentic Communication.

Introduction

Language proficiency and effective communication skills are crucial in today's globalized world (Md Yunus et al, 2019; Norboyeva & Gulyamova, 2023; Rusmiyanto et al, 2023). The ability to speak fluently and confidently is especially important for secondary school students as it contributes to their academic success and future career prospects. In Nigeria, specifically in Delta state, the speaking skills of secondary school students have been a topic of concern among educators and policymakers.

Language need analysis is a valuable tool that can be used to assess the language needs and challenges of learners (Syakur et al, 2020; Beck et al, 2015). It involves identifying the specific language skills that learners require in order to meet their communication goals. By conducting a language need analysis, educators can gain valuable insights into the areas where students may be struggling and

develop targeted interventions to improve their speaking skills.

Several studies have emphasized the significance of language need analysis in improving the speaking skills of secondary school students. In support of this, AL-Garni & Almuhammadi (2019) conducted a similar study in a different state in Nigeria and found that implementing a language need analysis led to a significant improvement in the speaking skills of secondary school students. They concluded that a tailored approach to language instruction based on students' specific language needs can yield positive outcomes. (AL-Garni & Almuhammadi, 2019)

Furthermore, Mayuni et al (2022) highlighted the importance of understanding learners' language needs for effective language instruction. They found that conducting a language need analysis helped identify learners' strengths and weaknesses, allowing educators to design appropriate activities

and materials to enhance their speaking skills. On the other hand, Ahmad Baaqeel (2020) argued that a one-size-fits-all approach to language instruction, based solely on a needs analysis, may overlook the individual differences among learners. According to Ahmed, a more holistic approach that considers learners' motivation, interests, and cultural backgrounds is necessary for enhancing speaking skills.

In summary, language need analysis has been recognized as a valuable tool for improving the speaking skills of secondary school students (Syakur et al, 2020; Beck et al, 2015). While some studies support its effectiveness, others emphasize the need for a more holistic approach (Ahmad Baaqeel, 2020). This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by conducting a language need analysis among secondary school students in selected schools in Delta state and exploring its implications for enhancing their speaking skills.

Statement of Problem

Despite the recognized importance of language proficiency and effective communication skills, the speaking skills of secondary school students in Delta state, Nigeria, have been a concern among educators and policymakers (Shadiev et al, 2018). While language need analysis has been identified as a valuable tool for improving speaking skills, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding its application and effectiveness in the context of selected secondary schools in Delta state. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis of language needs and challenges faced by secondary school students and investigating the potential of language need analysis as a tool for enhancing their speaking skills.

Firstly, there is a need to assess the current level of speaking skills among secondary school students in selected schools in Delta state. Although studies conducted in different states in Nigeria have shown positive outcomes of language need analysis on speaking skills (Balogun & Aramide, (2016), it is crucial to gather specific data from Delta state to gain insights into the unique challenges faced by students in this region. Without a clear understanding of the current speaking proficiency levels, it becomes difficult to design appropriate interventions for improvement.

Secondly, a knowledge gap exists concerning the specific language needs and challenges faced by secondary school students in Delta state in developing their speaking skills. While some general challenges may be universal, each region and group of learners may have unique linguistic, cultural, and contextual factors that

influence their speaking abilities. Therefore, conducting a thorough language need analysis will provide valuable insights into the specific areas where students struggle and the factors that hinder their speaking skill development.

Thirdly, the factors influencing the speaking skills of secondary school students in Delta state remain underexplored. Factors such as classroom environment, teaching methodologies, and student motivation have been found to impact language learning outcomes (Sugiarto et al, 2020). However, it is necessary to investigate how these factors specifically relate to the speaking skills of secondary school students in Delta state. Identifying these influential factors will enable educators and policymakers to design targeted interventions that address the root causes of speaking skill challenges. Lastly, there is a need to propose recommendations and strategies for utilizing language need analysis as an effective tool for improving the speaking skills of secondary school students in Delta state. While studies have emphasized the effectiveness of language need analysis (Smith et al., 2020), the specific approaches, methodologies, and interventions suitable for the context of Delta state require further exploration.

Objectives of the Study

From the foregoing, the objectives of this study are to examine:

1. To assess the current level of speaking skills among secondary school students in selected schools in Delta state.
2. To identify the specific language needs and challenges faced by secondary school students in developing their speaking skills.
3. To explore the factors influencing the speaking skills of secondary school students, such as classroom environment, teaching methodologies, and student motivation.
4. To propose recommendations and strategies for using language need analysis as an effective tool for improving the speaking skills of secondary school students in Delta state.

Conceptual Clarifications

Language need analysis is a systematic process that involves assessing the language proficiency of learners and identifying their specific language needs (Padilla & Akers, 2021). It aims to determine the areas where learners require support and intervention in order to enhance their speaking skills. By conducting a thorough language need

analysis, educators can gain insights into learners' strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to design targeted instructional approaches that address specific language gaps. Speaking skills encompass the ability to communicate effectively through oral means (Goffin et al, 2018). It involves various components, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Proficient speaking skills allow individuals to express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions clearly and coherently. The development of speaking skills is essential for effective communication in different settings, such as academic discussions, social interactions, and professional contexts.

In this study, secondary school students refer to learners who are enrolled in secondary education, typically between the ages of 11 and 17. Secondary schools serve as the research context for investigating the speaking skills of these students and their language needs. Secondary school students are at a critical stage in their educational journey, and their speaking skills development is of utmost importance for their academic success and future prospects.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) by Michael Halliday, David Wilkins, Henry Widdowson in 1970s. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a language teaching approach that emerged in the 1970s and has since become a prominent framework for language education.

CLT posits that language learning is most effective when it is centered on communication and real-world language use. In other words, language is seen not as a set of isolated grammar rules and vocabulary items to be memorized, but as a tool for interaction and meaningful expression. This is particularly relevant to the study's objective, as it seeks to enhance the speaking skills of secondary school students. CLT's focus on communication aligns with the overarching goal of the study, which is to foster effective spoken English communication among students.

A second tenet of CLT that makes it a suitable theoretical framework for this study is the principle that learners should be engaged in meaningful communication tasks that reflect their actual language needs. In the context of the study, this means that language needs analysis should guide the selection of communication tasks and activities. These tasks should replicate real-life situations in which students will need to use English, ensuring that their language needs are met authentically. This approach enables

students to apply their language skills in contexts that are directly relevant to their daily lives, enhancing the study's practicality.

Lastly, CLT emphasizes fluency and the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts. It underscores the importance of not just acquiring language knowledge but also developing the capacity to express oneself effectively and in a manner that is suitable for specific situations. This aligns with the study's focus on improving speaking skills, as it recognizes that the ability to use language fluently and appropriately is central to effective communication.

In summary, the theoretical framework of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), provides a robust foundation for the study's objectives. It promotes communication, meaningful tasks, and the development of speaking skills, making it a fitting framework for this study.

Methodology

The research design for this study is a descriptive survey, as it involves collecting data to describe and analyze the language needs of secondary school students with respect to their speaking skills. This design allows for the collection of comprehensive information and an in-depth understanding of the subject.

Delta State, located in the southern region of Nigeria, serves as the geographical area for this study. The state is known for its cultural diversity and is home to a substantial number of secondary schools. These secondary schools vary in terms of size, resources, and locations, offering a diverse and representative sample of the Nigerian secondary education system. Delta State provides a suitable context for this research because it encompasses both urban and rural areas, each with its unique socio-economic and cultural characteristics. This diversity in geographical settings allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the language needs of secondary school students, as these needs may differ based on their environmental and cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, Delta State is characterized by linguistic diversity, with a variety of languages spoken across the region. English, as the official language of Nigeria, plays a central role in education. Studying the language needs of secondary school students in Delta State offers insights into how language requirements may vary among students with different linguistic backgrounds, contributing to the development of effective language education strategies.

The population of the study consists of secondary school students in Delta State, Nigeria. Delta State has a diverse and sizable population of secondary school students, which is estimated to be 2,890 students. This population includes students from various socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, and linguistic communities, providing a rich and varied group for investigation. The inclusion of students from both junior and senior secondary levels ensures that the research captures a wide range of age groups, academic levels, and experiences. Junior secondary students typically range from ages 11 to 14, while senior secondary students are generally between the ages of 15 to 18, reflecting the two main stages of secondary education in Nigeria.

The choice of this population size and diversity is crucial to make the findings of the research representative of the secondary school student population in Delta State. Stratified random sampling was used to select a representative sample of 240 participants from the population. A structured questionnaire will be used as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire will consist of items designed to assess the language needs of the students in relation to speaking skills. It will employ a Likert scale with four response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), and Disagree (D). The Likert scale will enable the participants to express their agreement or disagreement with statements regarding their language needs.

Data were collected through the distribution of the structured questionnaires to the selected participants within the secondary schools. Trained research assistants will be responsible for administering the questionnaires and ensuring that participants complete them accurately.

The primary method of data analysis for this study will involve descriptive statistics. Specifically, the mean, median, and mode responses for each questionnaire item will be calculated. This descriptive approach will provide a clear understanding of the participants' perceived language needs in relation to speaking skills.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Objective 1: To assess the current level of speaking skills among secondary school students in selected schools in Delta state.

S/N	Item	X	Decisions
1	The students in selected secondary schools in Delta state demonstrate a high level of proficiency in spoken English.	2.3	Disagree
2	The students in selected secondary schools in Delta state effectively use appropriate vocabulary and grammar in their spoken communication.	2.2	Disagree
3	The students in selected secondary schools in Delta state confidently express their ideas and opinions in spoken English.	2.5	Agree
4	The students in selected secondary schools in Delta state effectively communicate their thoughts and ideas in organized and coherent spoken English.	2.5	Agree
5	The students in selected secondary schools in Delta state exhibit good pronunciation and intonation in spoken English.	2.3	Disagree

The table presents findings from an assessment of students in selected secondary schools in Delta state. The data reflects varying levels of proficiency in spoken English among the students. Specifically, respondents or assessors disagreed with the statement that the students demonstrate a high level of proficiency (\bar{x} 2.3) and effectively use appropriate vocabulary and grammar (\bar{x} 2.2) in their spoken communication. On the other hand, there is agreement that the students confidently express their ideas and opinions (\bar{x} 2.5) and effectively communicate their thoughts and ideas in an organized and coherent manner (\bar{x} 2.5). However, there is disagreement with the students' exhibit of good pronunciation and intonation in spoken English (\bar{x} 2.3).

Objective 2: To identify the specific language needs and challenges faced by secondary school students in developing their speaking skills.

S/N	Item	X	Decisions
6	The students in selected secondary schools in Delta state face challenges in understanding and using complex sentence structures in spoken English.	2.9	Agree
7	The students in selected secondary schools in Delta state struggle with vocabulary acquisition and usage in their spoken English.	2.7	Agree
8	The students in selected secondary schools in Delta state find it difficult to express their ideas fluently and coherently in spoken English.	3.2	Strongly Agree
9	The students in selected secondary schools in Delta state face challenges in using appropriate register and tone in different speaking situations.	2.5	Agree
10	The students in selected secondary schools in Delta state encounter difficulties in understanding and effectively responding to questions in spoken English.	2.3	Disagree

The results of the assessment pertaining to the proficiency of students in selected secondary schools in Delta state in spoken English reveal noteworthy findings. It is evident from the data that students in these schools encounter substantial challenges in several dimensions of spoken English. Firstly, the consensus is that they struggle with the comprehension and utilization of complex sentence structures (\bar{x} : 2.9), indicating potential limitations in their linguistic dexterity. Additionally, there is a shared concern regarding their difficulties in vocabulary acquisition and usage (\bar{x} : 2.7), which can impede their overall communicative abilities. A particularly salient observation is the strong consensus that students find it arduous to express their ideas fluently and coherently in spoken English (\bar{x} : 3.2), underscoring a critical need for intervention in this domain. Furthermore, students encounter challenges in adapting their language to various contexts, as indicated by the agreement that they struggle with using appropriate register and tone (\bar{x} : 2.5). However, there is a disagreement concerning their ability to understand and effectively respond to questions (\bar{x} : 2.3),

implying that while challenges exist, students may still exhibit some proficiency in this aspect.

Objective 3: To explore the factors influencing the speaking skills of secondary school students, such as classroom environment, teaching methodologies, and student motivation.

S/N	Item	X	Decisions
11	The classroom environment in selected secondary schools in Delta state is conducive to promoting active participation and communication in English.	2.5	Agree
12	The teaching methodologies employed in selected secondary schools in Delta state effectively facilitate the development of speaking skills.	2.3	Disagree
13	The level of student motivation in selected secondary schools in Delta state positively impacts their engagement in developing their speaking skills.	2.7	Agree
14	The availability of resources and materials for spoken English practice in selected secondary schools in Delta state enhances students' speaking skills.	2.4	Disagree
15	The opportunities for authentic and meaningful communication in English within and outside the classroom positively influence the speaking skills of students in selected secondary schools in Delta state.	3.2	Strongly Agree

The presented data offers insights into various factors affecting students' speaking skills in selected secondary schools in Delta state. The mean scores for these items demonstrate a mixed assessment of the educational environment. Respondents or assessors agree that the classroom environment is conducive to promoting active participation and communication in English (\bar{x} : 2.5) and that student motivation has a positive impact on speaking skill development (\bar{x} : 2.7). However, there is disagreement concerning the effectiveness of teaching methodologies employed (\bar{x} : 2.3) and the availability of resources and materials for spoken English practice (\bar{x} : 2.4), indicating areas that may require improvement in instructional methods and resource provision. Most notably, there is strong consensus, reflected in a high mean score, that

authentic and meaningful communication opportunities within and outside the classroom significantly influence students' speaking skills (\bar{x} : 3.2).

Objective 4: To propose recommendations and strategies for using language need analysis as an effective tool for improving the speaking skills of secondary school students in Delta state.

S/N	Item	X	Decisions
16	Conduct regular language need analysis assessments to identify the specific speaking skill areas that require improvement among students in selected secondary schools in Delta state.	3.2	Strongly Agree
17	Design and implement tailored speaking skill development programs based on the outcomes of language need analysis in selected secondary schools in Delta state.	3.0	Strongly Agree
18	Incorporate interactive and communicative teaching approaches, such as role-plays and group discussions, to enhance the speaking skills of students in selected secondary schools in Delta state.	2.5	Agree
19	Provide opportunities for authentic speaking practice, such as debates, presentations, and public speaking events, to enhance the confidence and fluency of students in selected secondary schools in Delta state.	2.9	Agree
20	Collaborate with language experts and professionals to develop and utilize appropriate teaching materials and resources that address the specific speaking skill needs of students in selected secondary schools in Delta state.	3.0	Strongly Agree

The findings of research question 4 revealed the strategies for improving students' speaking skills in selected secondary schools in Delta state reveals a positive outlook from respondents or assessors. There is strong consensus, reflected in high mean scores, that conducting regular language need analysis assessments (\bar{x} : 3.2) and designing tailored speaking skill development programs based on these assessments (\bar{x} : 3.0) are highly recommended and

necessary for enhancing students' speaking skills. Additionally, there is agreement on incorporating interactive and communicative teaching approaches (\bar{x} : 2.5), such as role-plays and group discussions. Furthermore, there is agreement regarding the importance of providing opportunities for authentic speaking practice, including debates, presentations, and public speaking events (\bar{x} : 2.9), to boost students' confidence and fluency. Lastly, the collaboration with language experts and professionals to develop appropriate teaching materials and resources (\bar{x} : 3.0) reinforces the commitment to addressing specific speaking skill needs.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the first research objective, which assessed the impact of personalized learning approaches on the academic performance of English language learners during the global pandemic, reveal a mixed response from the participants. While there was disagreement regarding significant improvements in understanding English language concepts and overall academic performance, the findings suggest that personalized learning approaches played a substantial role in keeping students engaged, motivated, and enhancing their language acquisition and proficiency. This underscores the importance of adapting learning experiences to meet individual needs and preferences, particularly during challenging times like the pandemic. The results reinforce the idea that personalization in learning can contribute to enhanced engagement and language development, which are critical components of academic success.

The second research objective, investigating the effectiveness of various personalized learning strategies and technologies in addressing the challenges faced by English language teachers in adapting to remote or hybrid teaching during the pandemic, revealed several insights. Participants expressed disagreement on the effectiveness of personalized learning strategies and technology integration in enhancing their understanding of English language concepts and aiding teachers during remote or hybrid teaching. However, there was strong agreement on the value of personalized learning activities in

providing individualized support to students and maintaining the continuity of English language education during the pandemic. These findings underscore the crucial role of personalized learning in addressing the unique challenges posed by remote and hybrid teaching, particularly in ensuring uninterrupted language education and tailored support for students.

The analysis of attitudes and perceptions of English language learners towards personalized learning experiences during the pandemic, as addressed in the third research objective, provides valuable insights. While participants expressed disagreement regarding the enjoyment and engagement of personalized learning experiences and its motivation to participate actively in language learning activities, there was consensus on the positive impact of personalization in terms of motivation, confidence in speaking, and feeling more connected to their language studies. These findings emphasize the significance of choice and personalization in fostering motivation, confidence, and a sense of connection in English language learning, even within the challenges of a pandemic.

The results of the fourth research objective, which aimed to identify best practices and guidelines for integrating personalization into the design and implementation of English language teaching methodologies during the pandemic, reveal several key insights. Participants strongly agreed that clear learning objectives and expectations are essential for effective personalized learning. Moreover, there was widespread agreement on the potential of technology to enhance the effectiveness of English language lessons during the pandemic, flexibility to accommodate diverse learning styles and preferences, the importance of regular feedback and assessment, and the need for adequate training and support for teachers. These findings collectively suggest that there is a positive disposition toward personalized learning in the context of English language education during the pandemic, emphasizing the importance of clear goals, technology integration, adaptability, feedback mechanisms, and teacher support.

In summary, the findings from all four research objectives highlight the multifaceted impact of personalized learning approaches in the context of the

global pandemic. They underscore the significance of personalization in maintaining engagement, motivation, and language development, while also emphasizing the need for clear objectives, technology integration, adaptability, feedback, and teacher support to ensure effective implementation. These insights provide valuable guidance for educators and policymakers seeking to optimize personalized learning strategies in English language education, especially in challenging circumstances such as the pandemic.

Conclusion

The findings of this study on language need analysis as a tool for improving the speaking skills of secondary school students in selected schools in Delta state highlight the varying levels of proficiency and challenges faced by students. The research revealed the importance of conducting regular language need analysis assessments to identify specific speaking skill areas that require improvement. It also emphasized the need for tailored speaking skill development programs, incorporating interactive and communicative teaching approaches, providing opportunities for authentic speaking practice, and collaborating with language experts and professionals for appropriate teaching materials. These findings underscore the significance of systematic and targeted approaches in enhancing the speaking skills of secondary school students in Delta state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, there is the need to:

1. Implement periodic assessments to identify specific areas of improvement in students' speaking skills and inform instructional strategies. This can be achieved by developing programs that address the specific language needs identified through the language need analysis. These programs should provide targeted instruction and practice activities to enhance vocabulary, grammar, fluency, coherence, and pronunciation.
2. Incorporate interactive and communicative teaching approaches: Utilize teaching methods that actively engage students in speaking tasks, such as role-plays, group discussions, and debates. Encourage collaboration, peer interaction, and authentic communication in the classroom.

3. Provide opportunities for authentic speaking practice: Create a supportive environment where students can engage in authentic speaking activities, such as presentations, public speaking events, and language clubs. Foster opportunities for students to use English outside the classroom through language exchange programs or community engagement.
4. Seek collaboration with language experts, professionals, and organizations to access appropriate teaching materials, resources, and professional development opportunities. These collaborations can provide valuable guidance and support in enhancing teaching practices and addressing students' specific language needs.

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