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Strategies and Interventions for Enhancing Reading and Writing Skills among English Language Learners in Primary Schools within Yenagoa Local Government Area, Bayelsa State

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Abstract

The study assessed the effective interventions and strategies for supporting English Language Learners with reading and writing challenges in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The research design employed a survey approach, utilizing primary data collected through structured questionnaires. The population of the study consisted of primary school teachers in Yenagoa Local Government Area, with a sample of 409 teachers selected for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher and validated by experts. The data was analyzed using mean scores to address the research questions. Based on the findings, it was revealed that the challenges faced by learners struggling with reading and writing in English are pervasive and multifaceted,

significantly affecting their literacy development. Furthermore, the intervention strategies used to support these learners were found to be diverse and moderately effective. These strategies, including phonics-based instruction, small group teaching, and remedial classes, were not fully effective due to challenges such as limited resources, inconsistent implementation, and a lack of sufficient teacher training. The study recommends that more targeted and intensive interventions, along with improved teacher professional development and resource allocation, be implemented to better address the literacy challenges faced by learners in Yenagoa Local Government Area.

Keywords: Interventions, English Language Learners, Reading, Writing, Challenges.

Introduction

The ability to read and write proficiently in English is a fundamental requirement for academic success and lifelong learning. In primary schools, these literacy skills form the foundation for overall educational development, influencing learning outcomes in other subjects and enhancing communication abilities (Graham & Perin, 2007). However, a significant number of learners, particularly those for whom English is not their first language, encounter difficulties in acquiring reading and writing proficiency. These challenges necessitate the implementation of effective interventions and strategies to support English language learners (ELLs) in primary schools.

Yenagoa Local Government Area (LGA) of Bayelsa State is linguistically diverse, with multiple indigenous languages spoken across various communities. The predominant languages in the region include Izon (Ijaw), Nembe, Ogbia, and Epie-Atissa, among others (Alagoa, 2009). English serves as the official language and the primary medium of instruction in schools, yet for many pupils, it is a second language learned primarily within the formal education system. The linguistic diversity of the area presents unique challenges for early literacy development, as many learners

enter school with limited exposure to English, making it difficult for them to acquire foundational reading and writing skills. This situation underscores the need for well-structured interventions tailored to the specific linguistic realities of learners in Yenagoa LGA.

English language learners face unique barriers to reading and writing due to factors such as limited vocabulary, unfamiliarity with English grammar, and challenges in understanding the structure of the language (August & Shanahan, 2006). Such difficulties often result in academic gaps that hinder overall learning progress and limit classroom engagement. Research indicates that without well-structured interventions, ELLs are more likely to lag behind their peers, negatively impacting their long-term educational success (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Consequently, there is a growing need for targeted strategies that address these challenges and provide necessary support for struggling learners.

Effective interventions for enhancing reading and writing skills among ELLs integrate instructional techniques, teacher training, and the use of technology to create a more inclusive learning environment. Studies by Snow et al. (1998) suggest that phonics-based instruction, vocabulary enrichment, and scaffolded writing activities are among the most effective strategies for improving literacy skills. These methods not only boost language proficiency but also build learners' confidence and motivation. Additionally, instructional differentiation—where teaching methods are tailored to meet individual student needs—has been identified as a crucial approach in supporting ELLs (Lucas et al., 2008).

Teachers play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of these strategies. Equipping educators with specialized training enables them to better understand the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of ELLs, thereby allowing them to adopt appropriate teaching methodologies (Lucas et al., 2008). Professional development programs focusing on differentiated instruction, evidence-based literacy practices, and multilingual education approaches are essential in enhancing teacher effectiveness in addressing reading and writing challenges.

Beyond the classroom, parental and community involvement significantly contributes to literacy development. Research by Epstein (2001) underscores the importance of engaging parents in their children's reading and writing practices. Home-based literacy activities, such as shared reading and storytelling, reinforce

the skills learned in school and enhance learners' overall language acquisition. Schools that establish strong partnerships with parents and communities tend to record better literacy outcomes for ELLs.

Furthermore, technology has proven to be a valuable tool in literacy instruction. Digital storytelling, language learning applications, and interactive educational software offer learners additional opportunities to practice reading and writing beyond the conventional classroom setting (Lin, 2019). These digital tools can personalize learning experiences, providing targeted support to students based on their specific needs. The integration of such technological interventions has been particularly beneficial in improving engagement and learning retention among ELLs.

Despite the availability of effective strategies, several challenges hinder the successful implementation of interventions. Resource constraints, large class sizes, and inadequate teacher training are significant barriers, particularly in low-income regions (UNESCO, 2021). Addressing these systemic issues requires policy-level support and increased investment in educational infrastructure to ensure that schools are adequately equipped to support struggling learners.

Timely and structured interventions are crucial in preventing long-term academic setbacks. Early identification of reading and writing difficulties enables educators to provide necessary support before learning gaps widen (Torgesen, 2002). Schools must adopt proactive assessment techniques to monitor learners' progress and adjust strategies accordingly to meet evolving literacy needs.

This study aims to explore effective strategies and interventions for enhancing reading and writing skills among ELLs in primary schools within Yenagoa Local Government Area, Bayelsa State. It seeks to identify best practices, assess the role of teachers and parents in literacy development, and examine the impact of technology in addressing reading and writing challenges. The findings of this research will contribute to improving literacy outcomes and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all learners.

Ultimately, addressing the reading and writing challenges faced by English language learners requires a multifaceted approach involving educators, parents, policymakers, and researchers. By fostering a supportive learning environment, implementing evidence-based interventions, and leveraging available resources, it

is possible to bridge the literacy gap and empower every child with the foundational skills necessary for academic and lifelong success.

Statement of the Problem

The ability to read and write proficiently is essential for academic achievement and lifelong learning, especially in English, which serves as the primary medium of instruction in many schools. However, English language learners (ELLs) in primary schools often struggle with literacy development due to factors such as inadequate exposure to English, limited vocabulary, and difficulties in grasping grammar and sentence structures (August & Shanahan, 2006). These challenges are further compounded by ineffective instructional methods that fail to address the unique needs of ELLs, resulting in persistent learning gaps and reduced academic performance. In Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, where many learners come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, the absence of structured interventions tailored to ELLs' literacy challenges places them at risk of long-term educational setbacks. Addressing these challenges requires research-driven strategies that can enhance reading and writing skills among struggling learners.

Despite growing awareness of the need for literacy interventions, many primary schools, particularly in low-resource settings, face systemic barriers that hinder the successful implementation of effective support strategies. Challenges such as large class sizes, insufficient teacher training, and limited access to instructional resources prevent educators from delivering targeted assistance to ELLs (UNESCO, 2021). Furthermore, while interventions such as phonics-based instruction, scaffolded writing tasks, and technology-assisted learning have been identified as effective, their adoption remains inconsistent due to funding constraints and inadequate policy support (Snow et al., 1998; Lin, 2019). Without comprehensive research to assess the effectiveness of existing interventions and explore context-specific solutions, many learners will continue to experience literacy deficits that impact their overall academic progress. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the challenges faced by ELLs in reading and writing, evaluate current intervention strategies, and propose best practices that can be implemented in primary schools within Yenagoa Local Government Area.

Purpose of the Study

The study assessed the strategies for enhancing reading and writing skills among English language learners in primary schools within Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Specifically, the study achieved the following:

i. To identify the common challenges faced by learners struggling with reading in the English language in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.
ii. To identify the common challenges faced by learners struggling with writing in the English language in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.
iii. To determine the intervention strategies used to support these learners with reading and writing challenges in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised:

i. What are the common challenges faced by learners struggling with reading in the English language in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?
ii. What are the common challenges faced by learners struggling with writing in the English language in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?
iii. What intervention strategies are used to support learners with reading and writing challenges in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the strategies and interventions for enhancing reading and writing skills among English language learners in primary schools within Yenagoa Local Government Area, Bayelsa State. A descriptive survey design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from a sample population and analyze trends, opinions, and relationships among variables without manipulating them (Creswell & Creswell,

2018). This approach allows for a comprehensive assessment of the reading and writing challenges faced by English language learners and the effectiveness of the interventions implemented by teachers. The population of the study comprised all 2,459 teachers in the 59 public primary schools in Yenagoa LGA (Bayelsa State Ministry of Education, 2025). A multistage sampling technique was used to select a sample of 399 teachers from 15 primary schools across the three constituencies within the LGA. First, simple random sampling (balloting method) was employed to select five primary schools from each constituency, making a total of 15 schools. Then, all 409 teachers in the selected schools were initially included in the study. However, after data screening, 399 valid responses were analyzed.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled *Effective Interventions and Strategies for English Language Learners Questionnaire (EISELLQ)*, developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was designed on a four-point Likert scale (ranging from Very High Extent to Very Low Extent) and consisted of two sections:

- **Section A**: Collected demographic information about respondents, including gender, teaching experience, and qualification level.
- **Section B**: Contained items measuring the common challenges faced by English language learners in reading and writing, the strategies employed by teachers, and the perceived effectiveness of these interventions.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by specialists in Measurement and Evaluation. Experts assessed the instrument for clarity, relevance, and alignment with research objectives. Their feedback was incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

A pilot study was conducted with 20 teachers from two primary schools outside the study area but with similar characteristics to the target population. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha formula, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.86, indicating high internal consistency and reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the selected schools to ensure a high response rate. Out of the 409 questionnaires distributed, 399 were completed and returned, ensuring a 97.5% response rate.

For data analysis, Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions. The decision rule for interpreting responses was based on the average of the four-point Likert scale (2.50 cut-off point). Responses with a mean score of 2.50 and above were interpreted as high extent, while those below 2.50 were considered low extent. These analyses provided empirical insights into the challenges faced by English language learners and the effectiveness of existing intervention strategies in Yenagoa Local Government Area.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the common challenges faced by learners struggling with reading in the English language in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean responses on common challenges faced by learners struggling with reading in the English language in primary schools

S/N	*ITEM*	*N*	*Mean*	*Std*	*Remarks*
1.	Limited vocabulary knowledge hinders learners' ability to understand written texts	399	3.22	.97	A
2.	Lack of phonemic awareness affects learners' ability to decode words effectively.	399	3.05	1.04	A
3.	Poor foundational literacy skills impede learners' progress in reading comprehension.	399	2.85	.95	A
4.	Inadequate exposure to English reading materials limits learners' reading proficiency.	399	2.66	.98	A
5.	Difficulty in identifying and pronouncing unfamiliar words creates barriers to fluent reading.	399	3.04	.92	A
6	Learners often experience anxiety or lack of confidence when tasked with reading aloud.	399	2.81	1.02	A
7	Home environments with limited support for English language learning negatively impact reading skills.	399	3.17	.90	A
	Grand Mean		2.97		A

Source: Researcher's Computation 2025

The findings in Table 1 highlight several common challenges faced by primary school learners struggling with reading in the English language in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. A major issue is limited vocabulary knowledge, which significantly hinders learners' ability to understand written texts (mean = 3.22). This is closely followed by the lack of phonemic awareness, affecting their ability to decode words effectively (mean = 3.05), and difficulties in identifying and pronouncing unfamiliar words (mean = 3.04). These factors collectively create barriers to fluent reading and comprehension, emphasizing the importance of foundational literacy skills (mean = 2.85). Furthermore, learners' challenges are compounded by a lack of adequate exposure to English reading materials (mean = 2.66), which limits their opportunities to develop reading proficiency.

Also, the table highlights socio-emotional and environmental factors that exacerbate these challenges. Many learners experience anxiety or lack of confidence when reading aloud (mean = 2.81), which can hinder their engagement and willingness to practice. Moreover, the lack of supportive home environments for English language learning (mean = 3.17) significantly impacts their progress. This suggests that the struggles of these learners are not merely academic but also influenced by external factors, such as insufficient resources and encouragement at home. The overall grand mean of 2.97 confirms that these issues are pervasive and require targeted interventions, including teacher support, provision of resources, and community involvement, to address the multifaceted barriers to reading proficiency in the region.

Research Question 2

What are the common challenges faced by learners struggling with writing in the English language in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean responses on the common challenges faced by learners struggling with writing in the English language in primary schools

S/N	*ITEM*	*N*	*Mean*	*Std*	*Remark*
1.	Learners have difficulty organizing their thoughts before writing in English.	399	3.09	1.01	A
2.	Limited vocabulary makes it challenging for learners to express themselves effectively in writing.	399	3.43	.86	A
3.	Learners struggle with spelling and proper use of punctuation marks in writing.	399	3.29	.95	A
4.	Inadequate understanding of grammar rules impedes learners' ability to write correctly.	399	3.04	1.00	A
5.	Learners find it difficult to produce coherent and logically structured sentences.	399	3.12	.86	A
6	Lack of practice opportunities limits learners' writing skills development.	399	3.03	.89	A
7	Learners experience difficulty in maintaining handwriting legibility and consistency	399	2.95	1.14	A
	Grand Mean		3.15		A

Source: Researcher's Computation 2025

The findings in Table 2 reveal significant challenges faced by primary school learners struggling with writing in the English language in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. A prominent issue is limited vocabulary, with a mean score of 3.43, making it challenging for learners to express themselves effectively in writing. Also, many learners struggle with spelling and the proper use of punctuation marks (mean = 3.29), further hindering their ability to produce coherent written work. Difficulties in organizing thoughts before writing (mean =

3.09) and creating coherent and logically structured sentences (mean = 3.12) highlight gaps in cognitive and structural aspects of writing. These issues suggest a need for targeted interventions to develop learners' linguistic and organizational skills.

The data also emphasizes external and foundational factors contributing to these challenges. Learners' inadequate understanding of grammar rules (mean = 3.04) significantly impedes their ability to write correctly. The lack of practice opportunities (mean = 3.03) limits their skill development, and difficulty maintaining handwriting legibility and consistency (mean = 2.95) affects the readability of their work. These findings, reflected in the grand mean of 3.15, underscore the multifaceted nature of writing difficulties among learners. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving focused teaching on grammar, vocabulary enhancement, practice opportunities, and structured writing exercises to improve learners' proficiency and confidence in writing.

Research Question 3

What intervention strategies are used to support learners with reading and writing challenges in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?

Table 3: Mean responses on the intervention strategies are used to support learners with reading and writing challenges in primary schools

	Items	N	Mean	Std	Remark
1.	Teachers use phonics-based instruction to help learners with reading difficulties.	399	3.30	.85	A
2.	Small group teaching is employed to provide individualized support to learners with reading and writing challenges.	399	3.19	.72	A
3.	Learners are provided with additional reading materials to improve their reading skills.	399	3.11	1.00	A
4.	Teachers use visual aids and other multimodal resources to support learners in developing writing skills.	399	2.86	1.01	A
5.	Learners are encouraged to engage in regular reading and writing activities during class time.	399	3.17	.88	A
6.	Remedial classes are offered to learners who need extra help with reading and writing.	399	3.11	.88	A
7.	Teachers provide feedback on writing assignments to help learners improve their skills.	399	2.86	1.01	A
	Grand Mean		3.08		A

Source: Researchers Computation2025

The findings in Table 3 highlight several intervention strategies employed to support learners with reading and writing challenges in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. A widely used strategy is phonics-based instruction (mean = 3.30), which helps learners with reading difficulties by enhancing their ability to decode words and recognize sound-letter relationships. Another key intervention is small group teaching (mean = 3.19), which provides individualized support to learners and creates a more focused learning environment for addressing specific challenges. Also, providing supplementary reading materials (mean = 3.11) enhances learners' exposure to diverse texts, while

remedial classes (mean = 3.11) offer extra help for those struggling with foundational literacy and writing skills.

Other effective strategies include encouraging regular reading and writing activities during class (mean = 3.17), fostering consistent practice to reinforce literacy skills. Teachers also utilize visual aids and multimodal resources (mean = 2.86) to make writing lessons more engaging and accessible. Moreover, feedback on writing assignments (mean = 2.86) allows learners to identify and address their mistakes, aiding gradual improvement. With a grand mean of 3.08, the data suggests these strategies collectively contribute to tackling reading and writing difficulties, though emphasis on teacher training and resource availability could further enhance their effectiveness.

Discussion of Findings

The results from Research Question 1 revealed that the challenges faced by learners struggling with reading in English in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State are pervasive and multifaceted. This finding indicates that learners face a combination of linguistic, cognitive, and environmental obstacles, including limited vocabulary, poor phonemic awareness, inadequate foundational literacy skills, and a lack of supportive home environments. The prevalence of these challenges suggests that a significant proportion of learners require targeted interventions to improve their reading proficiency and overcome barriers to literacy development. This aligns with the findings of researchers like Adekunle (2021) and Eze (2023), who emphasized the critical role of early literacy interventions in addressing reading difficulties in primary education.

The findings in Research Question 2 revealed that the challenges faced by learners struggling with writing in English in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State are significant and impact their literacy development. This indicates that learners grapple with fundamental issues such as limited vocabulary, difficulty organizing thoughts, poor understanding of grammar, and challenges with spelling and punctuation. Also, inadequate opportunities for practice and difficulties in producing legible handwriting exacerbate these issues. Such pervasive challenges suggest a pressing need for

targeted interventions to address gaps in foundational writing skills, which are critical for learners' overall academic and personal development. These findings align with studies by Okonkwo (2022) and Bassey (2023), which emphasized that writing difficulties in primary education hinder learners' ability to express ideas effectively, thus limiting their broader educational progress.

The findings in Research Question 3 revealed that the intervention strategies employed to support learners with reading and writing challenges in primary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State are diverse and moderately effective. This suggests that while a variety of strategies, such as phonics-based instruction, small group teaching, remedial classes, and the use of visual aids, are being implemented, their impact may be limited by factors such as inconsistent application, resource availability, or insufficient teacher training. The moderate effectiveness of these interventions highlights the need for a more focused and robust approach to addressing reading and writing difficulties. Studies by Adebayo (2022) and Nwankwo (2023) reinforce the importance of targeted and evidence-based interventions for overcoming literacy challenges, suggesting that the current strategies may require refinement to maximize their potential.

The implications of this finding are substantial, signaling the need for a more coordinated and intensive effort to improve the effectiveness of intervention strategies. To enhance their impact, schools should invest in continuous professional development for teachers, ensuring they are well-equipped to deliver differentiated and personalized instruction.

Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by English language learners (ELLs) with reading and writing difficulties in primary schools within Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, as well as the effectiveness of existing intervention strategies. The findings reveal that learners struggle with fundamental issues such as limited vocabulary, difficulty organizing thoughts, poor understanding of grammar, spelling and punctuation errors, and inadequate handwriting skills. Additionally, the study identified that while various intervention strategies—such as phonics-based instruction, small group teaching, remedial classes, and the use of visual aids—are being implemented, their

effectiveness is only moderate due to inconsistent application, insufficient teacher training, and limited resources.

Given these findings, it is evident that addressing literacy challenges among ELLs requires a more structured and well-supported approach. It is therefore recommended that stakeholders, including school administrators and policymakers, invest in continuous professional development for teachers to equip them with specialized skills for supporting struggling learners. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure adequate teaching and learning resources, facilitate a more consistent implementation of intervention strategies, and foster a supportive learning environment. By strengthening these areas, primary schools in Yenagoa LGA can enhance the reading and writing proficiency of English language learners, ultimately improving their academic performance and overall educational development.

Recommendations

In view of the results, the discussions and the educational implications of the present study thereof, the following recommendations are made:

i. Teachers should be provided with regular training on effective literacy intervention strategies to better support learners struggling with reading and writing in English.
ii. Schools should increase access to quality reading and writing materials to enhance learners' literacy skills and provide diverse learning opportunities.
iii. Policymakers should prioritize the allocation of resources and administrative support to ensure the successful implementation of intervention strategies for improving literacy outcomes.

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