

## APPRAISAL OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS AND CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE, FRENCH AND SOCIAL STUDIES

<sup>1</sup> **Dr Sekoni Lateef Kehinde,**  
[lashek8@gmail.com](mailto:lashek8@gmail.com) 07037288861

<sup>2</sup> **Dr Oseni Aliu Kayode**  
[aliuoseni16@gmail.com](mailto:aliuoseni16@gmail.com) 08025555432

<sup>3</sup> **Dr.Racheal Ogunleye**  
[ogunleyeoluwakemi77@gmail.com](mailto:ogunleyeoluwakemi77@gmail.com) 08029477722

<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> Department of Language, Arts and Social Science Education, Faculty of Education,  
Lagos State University, Ojo

### Abstract

Speaking skills are essential for effective communication as they enable individuals to express their thoughts clearly and confidently. They play vital role in social interaction, academic success and professional development. This article appraises the development of speaking skills among secondary school students in relation to classroom instructional practices in English Language, Social Studies and French education. A mixed-method descriptive design was employed to interpret existing conditions. The sample comprised 70 Senior Secondary School II (SSS 2) students and 6 English Language teachers from three public schools. Data were collected using an Oral English Proficiency Test (OEPT), rated across five criteria, and a structured Teacher Questionnaire. The findings indicated that the students' overall speaking proficiency was moderate (Composite Mean = 3.02 out of 5). While students performed well in Content/Clarity ( $\bar{x}=3.29$ ) Curriculum Coverage Pressure, and Inadequate Training (all  $\bar{x}=4.83$ ). Student anxiety was also found to inhibit fluency. The study concluded that a critical gap exists between the teachers' reported instruction and the moderate student outcomes. This is primarily attributed to institutional constraints preventing the effective implementation of modern, fluency-oriented instruction. It was recommended that the curriculum be reformed to prioritize oral skills among secondary school students.

**Keywords:** Classroom Instruction, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Fluency, L1 Interference, Oral Proficiency.

## Introduction

The English language has a rich and complex origin, beginning with the arrival of Germanic tribes the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes who brought their dialects to Britain in the 5th century. This early form, known as Old English, was a Germanic language that heavily influenced the core grammar and vocabulary we use today. The language underwent a dramatic transformation following the Norman Conquest of 1066, when French became the language of the ruling class. Over the next few centuries, English absorbed a vast number of French words, particularly those related to law, government, and high culture. This period, known as Middle English, saw the language evolve from a heavily Germanic tongue into a hybrid with a much larger vocabulary. The final major shift, leading to Modern English, was driven by the Renaissance and the invention of the printing press. This brought in new words from Latin and Greek and helped to standardize spelling and grammar. This long history of borrowing and evolution is why English has such a vast vocabulary and is used so widely today.

English has indisputably established itself as the global lingua franca, serving as the primary language of international communication, commerce, science, and technology (Crystal, 2003). Its pre-eminence in a rapidly globalizing world makes proficiency in the language a crucial determinant of individual and national success (Graddol, 2006). Within the Nigerian context, the English language holds a particularly significant position, serving as the official language and the primary medium of instruction across all levels of education Adetugbo (2018). It is the key to accessing information, navigating the professional landscape, and participating effectively in both local and international discourse. Consequently, a strong foundation in English is not merely an academic requirement but a fundamental skill for personal, social, and academic advancement. Beyond the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, the true measure of English proficiency lies in the mastery of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are the essential tools through which communication is enacted and understood in English and social studies . Proficiency in these skills enables individuals to interpret information, express ideas, and engage in meaningful interactions

Among these, speaking skill often stands as a vital and immediate indicator of language proficiency. Speaking stands out not merely as a productive skill, enabling learners to convey messages, but also as an active catalyst for overall language development (Bygate, 1987). It is the primary vehicle for real-time communication, forming the basis for social interaction, collaborative learning, and professional discourse. The ability to articulate thoughts clearly,

fluently, and accurately is critical for a student to participate in classroom discussions, present ideas, and communicate effectively in the real world. The act of speaking compels learners to retrieve and utilize their existing linguistic knowledge, thereby fostering fluency and reinforcing vocabulary acquisition and grammatical accuracy. Recognizing the centrality of speaking skills, classroom instruction plays a pivotal role in nurturing and developing this crucial aspect of communicative competence (Nunan, 1991). English language classrooms serve as primary environments where secondary school students are exposed to the target language and provided with opportunities to practice and hone their speaking skills. A myriad of teaching techniques, ranging from teacher-centered approaches to more communicative and interactive activities such as role-plays, discussions, presentations, and debates, are employed with the aim of fostering oral fluency and accuracy (Brown, 2001). The effectiveness of these instructional strategies, however, is significantly influenced by factors such as teacher training, curriculum design that prioritizes communicative competence, and the availability of relevant and engaging resources that facilitate meaningful speaking practice.

Given these potential challenges and the critical importance of speaking skills for academic success and future opportunities, there is a clear need for a thorough appraisal of students' speaking skills and the effectiveness of current classroom instruction in English language and social studies within the secondary school context in Nigeria. Understanding the current state of students' speaking proficiency, identifying the instructional practices that are most and least effective, and exploring the factors that either facilitate or hinder the development of these skills is crucial for informing pedagogical practices and curriculum reforms. It is on this basis that this study, therefore, seeks to explore this complex interplay between students' speaking skills and the instruction they receive.

A critical aspect of ensuring effective speaking skill development is the implementation of comprehensive appraisal methods. However, there is a discernible lack of clarity regarding the extent to which current assessment practices in Nigerian secondary schools adequately capture the multifaceted nature of speaking proficiency. Traditional assessment methods, often focusing on discrete grammatical knowledge and written production, may not fully reflect students' ability to communicate orally with fluency, accuracy, appropriate pronunciation, and effective interactional skills. Furthermore, questions arise concerning the training and preparedness of teachers in utilizing diverse and authentic assessment tasks that truly gauge communicative competence in speaking. The consistency and standardization of speaking skill appraisal across different schools and regions within Nigeria also warrant closer examination. Without effective and nuanced assessment, it becomes challenging to accurately diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses in speaking, thereby hindering the provision of targeted and effective instructional support.

Compounding the potential inadequacies in appraisal, the effectiveness of current classroom instruction in fostering speaking skills in Nigerian secondary schools remains a pertinent issue.

While various teaching methodologies are employed, the degree to which these approaches prioritize and successfully cultivate students' oral communication abilities requires critical evaluation. There may be an imbalance between explicit instruction on language components (grammar, vocabulary) and the provision of ample opportunities for meaningful and contextualized spoken interaction. Moreover, the extent to which teachers effectively address students' speaking anxiety, create supportive and engaging learning environments conducive to oral practice, and strategically utilize available resources to promote speaking fluency and accuracy needs investigation.

The primary purpose of this study is to appraise the speaking skills of secondary school students in English Language, Social Studies and French. Other specific purposes include:

- i. to examine major techniques currently employed by English language, Social Studies and French Education teachers in secondary schools in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State to instruct speaking skills.
- ii. to evaluate the effectiveness of major instructional techniques in developing students' speaking skills in English Language, French Language and Social Studies.
- iii. To examine if developmental factors (such as age, motivation, learning styles, anxiety and confidence) affect students' proficiency level in speaking skills in English Language, French Language and Social Studies.
- iv. to examine if students' language background affects their speaking skills in English Language, French Language and Social Studies.
- v. to examine if students' first language (mother tongue) affects their speaking skills in English Language, French Language and Social Studies.

**This study was guided by the following research questions:**

- i. What techniques are currently employed by English Language, French Language Social Studies teachers in secondary schools in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State to instruct speaking skills?
- ii. How do major techniques currently employed by English Language, French Language and Social Studies teachers affect students' proficiency in speaking skills in English language?
- iii. Do developmental factors (such as age, motivation, learning styles, anxiety and confidence) affect students' proficiency level in speaking skills in English language?

iv. Do students' language backgrounds affect their proficiency in speaking skills in English Language?

v. Do students' first languages (mother tongue) affect their speaking skills in English Language, French Language, and Social Studies in classroom instruction?

## Literature Review

### English as a Second Language

English as a second language refers to the use of English by individuals whose native language is different, commonly among students learning to speak and write English. The English language has grown beyond its origins to become a truly global language, used by billions of people around the world for many different reasons (Crystal, 2003). It is often called a "lingua franca," which simply means a common language that helps people from different language backgrounds communicate with each other. Because of this, English plays a huge role in things like international business, technology, diplomacy, and education across the globe. English is considered a second language in countries where it plays an important role within the country, even if it's not everyone's native language. It's often used in government, education, law, and media. People might use English in their daily lives outside of formal lessons.

Nigeria is a country with hundreds of local languages, but English holds a special place. It serves as the official language of Nigeria. This means it's the language used in Government and Administration, Education, Commerce and Business, as well as Media. Also, in a country as diverse as Nigeria, English acts as a crucial unifying language, allowing people from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds to communicate with each other.

English is used in so many important areas of life outside the classroom in Nigeria. It is correctly seen as a Second Language (ESL) environment (Adegbite, 2008; Banjo, 1996). Nigerian students are expected to use English not just to pass exams, but also to learn other subjects, interact in formal settings, and engage with wider society. This makes developing strong English skills, especially speaking, incredibly important for their academic success and future opportunities.

### Speaking Skills in English Language

Speaking is one of the four main language skills, alongside listening, reading, and writing. It is considered a productive skill because it involves producing language to convey messages (Brown, 2001). Unlike listening (which is receptive), speaking requires a learner to actively organize their thoughts, choose the right words, put them into correct grammatical structures, and produce sounds that are understandable. It's a complex skill that involves both knowledge of the language (like

grammar and vocabulary) and the ability to use that knowledge effectively in real-time communication.

To properly understand speaking skill, it's helpful to break it down into several key components. For the purpose of this study, we will focus on some crucial aspects:

**1. Fluency:** This refers to the ability to speak smoothly, continuously, and at a natural pace, without too many hesitations, repetitions, or long pauses. A fluent speaker can convey their message without excessive effort or interruption, allowing the listener to follow their thoughts easily (Lennon, 1990). It's about the flow of speech, not necessarily perfect grammar.

**2. Pronunciation:** This component concerns the clarity and intelligibility of spoken English. It involves correctly forming the sounds of English, using appropriate stress on syllables and words, and employing correct intonation (the rise and fall of the voice) to convey meaning (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996). Clear pronunciation ensures that the listener can understand what is being said without difficulty.

**3. Vocabulary:** Vocabulary refers to the range and appropriate use of words. A strong vocabulary allows a speaker to express a wider variety of ideas, use more precise language, and adapt their word choice to different situations and topics. The ability to use a rich and varied vocabulary enhances both the clarity and sophistication of spoken messages.

**4. Grammar:** Grammar is about using the correct rules of English to build your sentences. It includes things like using the right verb tenses (past, present, future) and making sure your sentences are structured correctly so you don't make mistakes.

### **Classroom Instruction in English Language, French Language and Social Studies**

Classroom instruction in English language refers to all the planned activities, methods, techniques, and interactions that teachers use within the school setting to help students learn and improve their English skills (Nunan, 1991). When it comes to speaking, effective instruction goes beyond just telling students what to say; it involves creating opportunities and guiding them to use the language actively.

The goal of modern English language teaching, especially under approaches like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), is to enable learners to communicate effectively in real-life situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). For speaking, this means moving away from just repeating sentences or memorizing dialogues, to having meaningful conversations and interactions. Teachers use various strategies to achieve this: Communicative Activities: These are tasks designed to get students to use English Language for real communication. Examples include:

**i. Role-plays:** Where students act out different scenarios (e.g. ordering food, asking for directions). This helps them practice functional language (Brown, 2001).

**ii. Discussions and Debates:** Encouraging students to express their opinions, agree or disagree, and support their points. This builds fluency and critical thinking.

**iii. Pair Work and Group Work:** Students work together to complete tasks, requiring them to speak English to each other. This increases speaking time for each student compared to whole-class activities, which is particularly important in large classrooms often found in Nigeria.

**iv. Presentations:** Giving students opportunities to prepare and deliver talks on various topics, improving their public speaking and confidence.

**v. Information Gap Activities:** Where students have different pieces of information and must speak to each other to complete a task (e.g., describing a picture to a partner who can't see it).

Effective Classroom Instruction also pays attention to the speaking skills distinctly - fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and content/clarity of ideas. In a communicative classroom, the teacher acts more as a facilitator or guide rather than just a lecturer. They set up activities, provide support, monitor interactions, and offer feedback. Providing constructive feedback on errors is crucial, but it needs to be done in a way that doesn't discourage students from speaking (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Classroom instruction in English Language, French Language, and Social Studies refers to the structured teaching and learning processes through which teachers guide students to acquire knowledge, skills, and values in these subjects. In English Language classrooms, instruction is directed toward the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, using methods such as discussion, reading activities, storytelling, debates, and role-play to improve learners' communicative competence and language accuracy. French Language instruction focuses on second-language learning through interactive and communicative strategies that expose students to pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and the culture of the French-speaking world. Approaches such as dialogues, audiovisual materials, songs, and conversational practice are commonly employed to enhance learners' understanding and fluency (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In Social Studies, classroom instruction is designed to develop students' understanding of society, civic responsibility, and social values by engaging them in inquiry, group discussions, case studies, and the examination of real-life social issues (Mezieobi, 2012). Across the three subjects, effective classroom instruction is learner-centred and participatory, encouraging active interaction between teachers and students while promoting critical thinking, communication skills, and meaningful learning experiences within and beyond the classroom.

## Classroom Instruction and Speaking Skills

The development of students' speaking skills is fundamentally intertwined with the nature of classroom instruction they receive. The pedagogical approaches employed by teachers are a primary determinant of a student's ability to move beyond rote knowledge of vocabulary and grammar to practical, communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Effective instruction for speaking skills often involves a shift from traditional, teacher-centered methods to more student-centered and communicative ones (Brown, 2007). Teachers who prioritize the development of speaking proficiency must provide students with frequent opportunities to use the language in meaningful ways. This is typically achieved through engaging activities such as debates, short presentations, storytelling, and role-playing. The consistent implementation of these activities is essential for building fluency and confidence. During student-led activities, effective teachers take careful note of their students' grammatical errors, pronunciation mistakes, and poor vocabulary choices (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). This observation then informs the type of corrective feedback provided. This feedback should not be solely limited to immediate error correction, which can hinder fluency and student confidence. Instead, a balance must be struck, with teachers providing both immediate corrections for key errors and more delayed formative feedback that allows for reflection on the students' overall language use. This strategic intervention is a critical component of instructional effort and directly impacts skill improvement (Ellis, 2008).

The relationship between classroom instruction and speaking skills is a dynamic and cyclical process. A teacher's effort to create an interactive learning environment directly influences the frequency and quality of student talk. When teachers are committed to using communicative methods and providing constructive feedback, students are more likely to improve their speaking proficiency.

## Challenges of Teaching Speaking Skills in Classroom Situation

One of the biggest teaching problems is large class sizes. When a teacher has too many students, it is almost impossible to give each learner personal attention or feedback. In many Nigerian classrooms, a single teacher may handle dozens of students, which makes it hard to create enough opportunities for everyone to practice speaking.

Another problem is the school curriculum. The education system focuses mainly on written exams, so both teachers and students spend more time on reading and writing. This leaves very little time for speaking practice. Because speaking is not a priority in exams, it is often ignored in classroom activities. There are also challenges related to students themselves. Many students feel shy, anxious, or afraid of making mistakes when speaking. They worry about being laughed at by their classmates, so they avoid speaking. Also, students' first language (L1) often interferes with

English. This leads to wrong pronunciation and grammar mistakes that are hard to correct without regular, guided practice.

Lastly, there are institutional and resource challenges. Many schools do not have the right materials that make speaking lessons interesting and realistic. The lack of audio-visual tools, real-life conversations, or engaging teaching aids forces teachers to use old and less effective methods. In addition, teachers often do not get enough training in modern methods of teaching speaking. These problems in the school system make it difficult to properly teach speaking skills, and sometimes the skill is almost neglected.

## Theoretical Framework

### Origin of Communicative Language Teaching Theory

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), often called the communicative approach, originated in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a response to dissatisfaction with earlier methods of language teaching. For many years, the Grammar-Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method dominated classrooms around the world. These approaches emphasized the memorization of grammatical rules, translation exercises, and repetitive drills. While such methods produced learners who could manipulate grammatical forms, they often failed to equip them with the ability to use language effectively in real-life communication. The growing realization that learners needed more than structural accuracy led to a search for new ways of teaching that emphasized communication and practical language use. In summary, the origin of CLT lies in the shift from traditional, form-focused methods toward approaches that value communication as the central goal of language learning. Grounded in Hymes's theory of communicative competence, enriched by the contributions of applied linguists like Wilkins and Widdowson, supported by European educational initiatives, and systematized by Canale and Swain, CLT emerged to address the real-world needs of learners. Its rise reflects the recognition that language is not only a system of rules but also a tool for meaningful interaction in diverse social contexts.

### Basic Tenets of the CLT Theory

The CLT theory is built on several core principles that distinguish it from its predecessors. The central tenet is that the primary goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence, which includes the ability to use language for authentic communication. This means that language is seen as a tool for meaning-making, rather than a system of rules to be mastered. The classroom is viewed as a platform for realistic language use, where students engage in meaningful tasks and interactions instead of repetitive drills. The teacher's role shifts from an authority figure who transmits knowledge to a facilitator who guides and supports students in their own learning process. Learners are encouraged to interact, express their own ideas, and collaborate with one another, with a focus on fluency and comprehension over perfect grammatical accuracy.

Key Tenets include:

- Communication is the Goal: The ultimate aim of language teaching is to enable learners to communicate effectively in the target language in real-life situations.
- Focus on Communicative Competence: Learners should develop the ability to use language for various purposes, understanding how to adapt their language to different social contexts and participants.
- Emphasis on Meaning and Fluency: The priority is on conveying and understanding meaning, with fluency being more important than perfect accuracy, especially in the early stages of learning.
- Authentic Materials and Tasks: The use of real-world materials (like newspapers, videos, and advertisements) and task-based activities (like information gaps) helps create a practical learning environment.
- Interactive and Collaborative Learning: CLT promotes interaction between learners and with the teacher, encouraging pair and group work to negotiate meaning and share information.
- Integration of Language Skills: All four language skills speaking, listening, reading, and writing are linked and integrated, mirroring how they are used together in real-world communication.
- Learner-Centered Approach: The classroom is set up to be a place for communication, with activities driven by students' needs and interests. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding and supporting the learning process.

### **Relevance of CLT Theory**

The relevance of CLT lies in its revolutionary impact on language teaching methodology. By prioritizing communication, the theory provided a practical framework for creating classroom environments that mirror real-world language use. It gave rise to a wide array of engaging activities, such as role-plays, debates, group discussions, and information-gap tasks that are now staples of modern language curricula. The theory's focus on meaning and authentic language provided a more holistic approach to language acquisition, acknowledging that language proficiency is about more than just correctness it is about the ability to successfully convey and understand messages.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a Mixed Survey design. The population of this study comprises all senior secondary school students and all English language teachers in public secondary schools within Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State. The sample for this study consists of both Senior

Secondary School 2 (SSS 2) students and English language teachers from selected secondary schools in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State. Firstly, purposive sampling was used to select five (5) coeducational secondary schools from the Ojo Local Government Area. The selected schools are Oto-Awori Senior Grammar School, Isashi Senior Grammar School, Lagos State Senior Secondary School, Awori Senior College and Iba Housing Estate Senior Secondary School. From each of the five selected schools, a simple random sampling technique was employed to select twenty (20) Senior Secondary School 2 (SSS 2) students. making a total of one hundred (100) student participants. from each of the five selected schools, two (2) English language teachers were purposively selected to participate in the study. This selection was to ensure that only teachers actively involved in teaching English language are included. Therefore, the total sample size for this study will be one hundred and ten (110) participants, comprising 100 SSS 2 students and 10 English language teachers. The primary instruments for data collection in this study was a structured Questionnaire for Teachers and an Oral English Proficiency Test/Assessment Rubric (OEPT) for Students. This study was analyzed using quantitative methods, primarily through descriptive statistics.

## Results

The analytical process employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitatively, students' test performances were summarized through descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, providing a clear profile of general ability levels and variability within the group. Qualitatively, excerpts from student utterances and teacher comments were examined thematically to illuminate patterns that numbers alone could not capture.

### Overall Distribution of Scores

**Table 4.3: Summary of Students' Performance on OEPT (n = 70)**

Criterion	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Performance Level	Interpretation (according to rubric)
<b>Fluency</b>	2.87	0.87	Moderate	Speech mostly comprehensible but marked by pauses, fillers, and restarts.
<b>Pronunciation</b>	3.04	0.81	Moderate	Intelligible but affected by Yoruba/Igbo transfer and uneven stress.

<b>Vocabulary</b>	3.01	0.83	Moderate	Adequate everyday words; limited range of topic-specific terms.
<b>Grammar</b>	2.87	0.98	Moderate	Frequent tense and concord errors; sentence structure generally clear.
<b>Content / Clarity</b>	3.29	0.68	Upper Moderate	Ideas coherent and relevant though expression restricted by grammar.
<b>Composite Average</b>	3.02	,	Moderate Proficiency	Students communicate basic ideas but below expected fluency standard.

The table demonstrates that the mean values are bunched together around 3.0 ("Fair/Average"). Content / Clarity had the highest, with Fluency and Grammar tied lowest with 2.87. The SD values of less than 1.0 represent strong variation; students were similar in general but varied in grammatical correctness.

### Teachers' Instructional Techniques and Perceptions

The teacher section of the study gave quantitative data on the implementation of spoken English instruction in the chosen secondary schools. Six male-female English-language teachers from the same three schools responded to the standardized questionnaire with three parts: Section B (Instructional Techniques), Section C (Perceived Effectiveness), and Section D (Challenges in Teaching and Assessment). Each item used a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 = Never / Strongly Disagree to 5 = Very Often / Strongly Agree. The mean of all six responses across each item was calculated with and the standard deviation with. A mean of 4.00 – 5.00 = High / Very High usage or agreement, 3.00 – 3.99 = Moderate, and less than 3.00 = Low. Because each of the six teachers responded to all items, each mean is the simple arithmetic mean of six numeric ratings.

### Frequency of Instructional Techniques

Table 4.6: Frequency of Speaking-Skill Techniques Used by Teachers (n = 6)

Technique (Section B)	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	Frequency Level	Interpretation
Role play and simulation	4.17	0.75	High	Regularly integrated for speaking practice. Four teachers chose "Very Often," two "Sometimes."
Group discussion and debate	4.50	0.55	High	All teachers use this activity frequently to build confidence.
Repetition and memorization of dialogues	4.33	0.63	High	Shows continuing use of structural drills.
Drills and pattern practice	4.17	0.68	High	Indicates preference for habit-formation exercises.
Storytelling / oral presentation	4.33	0.52	High	Used to test clarity and content organization.
Audio-visual aids	4.00	0.82	High	Applied where devices (phones / speakers) are available.
Immediate correction (pronunciation / grammar)	4.83	0.41	Very High	All teachers selected "Very Often" (100 %).

Communicative games	4.17	0.60	High	Used occasionally to motivate learners.
Real-life scenarios	4.67	0.49	Very High	Commonly applied to relate topics to daily experience.
Peer feedback	4.17	0.70	High	Half of teachers rated "Very Often," half "Sometimes."

Each mean is above 4.0, indicating that the teachers responded that they used each of the techniques frequently. The highest mean (4.83) is for Immediate Correction, as expected given universal practice, and the lowest (4.00), still in the "High" range, actually derived from the numeric selections of the teachers; that is, five selections of 5 with one selection of 4 produced. The pattern is therefore a true indicator of frequency data.

### Answer To Research Questions

**a. Research Question 1: What techniques are currently employed by English-language teachers, French Language teachers and Social Studies teachers in secondary schools in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State to instruct speaking skills?**

The teacher-questionnaire data (Table 4.6) revealed that all respondents reported frequent use of the ten major speaking-skill techniques listed in the instrument. Mean scores ranged from 4.00 to 4.83 on the 5-point scale, showing that the practices are not occasional but institutionalized. The most frequent were immediate correction ( $\bar{x} = 4.83$ ), real-life scenarios ( $\bar{x} = 4.67$ ), and group discussion ( $\bar{x} = 4.50$ ). Slightly lower but still high means ( $\approx 4.1-4.3$ ) appeared for pattern drills and repetition. These statistics were derived by averaging the six teachers' numerical responses per item: e.g., five "Very Often" (5 points) + one "Often" (4 points) =  $(5 \times 5 + 1 \times 4) / 6 = 4.83$ .

The pattern demonstrates a hybrid instructional orientation: teachers combine accuracy-based structural drills inherited from Audio-Lingual methodology with communicative activities typical of CLT.

**b. Research Question 2: How do the techniques employed by teachers influence students' spoken English proficiency?**

It was revealed that techniques focusing on interaction, group discussion, storytelling, and real-life scenarios are linked to higher student scores in Content/Clarity (3.29) and Vocabulary (3.01). In contrast, the most commonly used technique, immediate correction, is associated with the lowest scores in Fluency (2.87) and Grammar (2.87).

**c. Research Question 3: Do developmental factors (age, motivation, learning styles, anxiety and confidence) affect students' proficiency in speaking English?**

Demographic data (Table 4.1) show that students were generally highly motivated, with 96% rating motivation as "very" or "extremely important," but anxiety levels varied, with around 60% experiencing some anxiety. While the students' ages were similar (15–17), differences in affective traits distinguished stronger speakers from weaker ones. Students who rated themselves as "very confident" had the highest fluency scores (around 3.3–3.4), while those who felt "not confident" had lower scores (around 2.6).

Confidence and motivation enhance spoken performance, whereas anxiety reduces it. These findings show Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis which states that when learners are relaxed and motivated, their affective filter is low, allowing comprehensible input to be converted into output. Therefore, both developmental and emotional factors play a significant role in shaping language proficiency outcomes (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2018).

**d. Research Question 4: Do students' language backgrounds affect their proficiency in speaking skills in English, French and Social Studies class?**

83% of the respondents speak Yoruba as their first language, 10% speak Igbo, and 7% speak other languages. The OEPT Pronunciation mean (3.04) shows that most speech was generally understandable, though it retained some Yoruba or Igbo intonation. Rater comments highlighted common L1 transfers, such as pronouncing /t/ as /θ/, /d/ as /θ/, and using syllable-timed stress. The six teachers also noted L1 interference as the most persistent classroom challenge, with a mean rating of 4.83 (Table 4.8).

**e. Research Question 5: Do students' first languages (mother tongues) affect their pronunciation and grammar in the English Language?**

Yes. The OEPT means, Pronunciation = 3.04, Grammar = 2.87, quantify the effect. Authentic speech samples included "It make us know..." (subject-verb error) and "It is very simple subject" (article omission), both traceable to Yoruba structure. Since the rubric rated 3 as "average with noticeable L1 influence," the statistical result implies moderate but pervasive transfer. Teachers'

challenge mean (4.83) for native language interfering with students' speaking of English language strengthens this belief. Mother-tongue effect is systematic as well as bidimensional, segmental (phonetic, sounds) and syntactic (morpho-syntactic or grammatical). It rarely blocks comprehension but prevents attainment of fluency.

**f. Research Question 6: What challenges are encountered by teachers in instructing and appraising students' speaking skills in English Language?**

Teacher-response averages (Table 4.8) reveal that all of the ten challenge items had scores  $\geq 3.8$ . The top three highest were Inadequate Training (4.83), L1 Interference (4.83), and Curriculum Coverage Pressure (4.83). They were the direct outcome of teachers' "Strongly Agree" responses.

Administrators are faced with structural challenges of oversized classes, insufficient CLT preparation, and examination-controlled syllabi, with such conditions necessitating the emphasis of writing activities over the practice of speech (Olagbaju, 2019).

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study found that teachers used both structural and communicative methods when teaching English, French and Social studies. Activities like role-plays, group discussions, and storytelling were common. However, drills focused on accuracy and immediate correction were still dominant. This mix reflects a transitional stage in Nigerian English, French and social studies instruction, where teachers understand communicative principles but still focus on grammar. As a result, students can generate ideas but struggle with fluency and grammar. Constant correction discourages spontaneous speech and interrupts natural flow, weakening fluency even when students understand content well. Motivation, confidence, and anxiety strongly affected students' oral-English performance. Almost all students recognized that English is important for academic success, but more than half reported feeling nervous when speaking. Confident students showed better fluency and richer vocabulary, while anxious students produced shorter, broken sentences.

Most students speak Yoruba as their first language, which causes predictable effects on English pronunciation and grammar. Common patterns included pronouncing /t/ as /θ/, /d/ as /ð/, and transferring Yoruba stress patterns to English. Teachers reported L1 interference as a persistent challenge, with a mean score of 4.83. However, students' average pronunciation score was 3.04, showing that their speech remained mostly understandable. Recognizing these patterns as natural rather than wrong can help teachers design exercises that improve pronunciation without criticizing local accents.

Nigerian secondary-school students have the knowledge and motivation to succeed in spoken English, social studies and French classroom , but structural and emotional challenges limit their performance. To achieve this, teachers must use communicative, confidence-building method, students must participate actively in classroom activity; and policymakers must make spoken English a key educational goal. When fluency is valued alongside grammar and writing, errors are seen as learning opportunities, and L1 differences are understood, and proficiency can improve quickly. Developing a culture of spoken English will not only boost exam results but also equip students with the communication skills needed for higher education and global engagement efforts. Without these, classroom reforms will remain incomplete.

### **Recommendation**

In the light of this finding, this study recommends the following:

Teachers should dedicate at least one forty-minute session per week to speaking, using pair or group tasks like debates, problem-solving dialogues, or storytelling. Teachers should observe silently and give feedback afterward. This encourages continuous speaking and helps students speak automatically. Classrooms should reduce fear of mistakes by using positive reinforcement, humor, and cooperative learning. Voluntary participation, peer support, and small-group practice before presenting to the class will build confidence and lower anxiety. Short two-minute drills at the start or end of lessons should focus on English sounds that differ from Yoruba, like /θ/ vs /t/ and /ð/ vs /d/. Regular practice will gradually reduce interference and improve clarity.

Teaching ready-made expressions such as “I strongly believe that” or “For example” provides sentence frameworks that support fluent speech. Daily exercises using these bundles improve both accuracy and fluency. Nigerian secondary-school students have the knowledge and motivation to succeed in oral English, but structural and emotional challenges limit their performance. Improvement requires coordination: teachers must use communicative, confidence-building methods; students must participate actively; and policymakers must make oral communication a key educational goal. When fluency is valued alongside grammar and writing, errors are seen as learning opportunities, and L1 differences are understood, and proficiency can improve quickly. Developing a culture of spoken English will not only boost exam results but also equip students with the communication skills needed for higher education and global engagement.

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