Poor English Language Usage among Fresh Undergraduate Students in Nigerian North-East Universities: Causes and Solutions

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Abstract
Poor English language usage in both oral and written communication has been observed among Nigerian fresh university undergraduate students, especially in the North-East. While existing studies on English language usage in Nigeria have largely focused on its teaching and learning in secondary schools, little has been done on how to tackle the problem of poor English language usage among Nigerian fresh university undergraduate students in the North-East. Therefore, this paper examines the causes and problems associated with poor English language usage among fresh undergraduate students of Federal University, Gashua, and selected Universities in the North East. The paper also offers solutions to the identified causes and problems. The study adopted a quantitative research method and employed frequency and simple percentage in the analysis of data. Questionnaires were employed to elicit information from the respondents. 400 Fresh undergraduate students comprising both males and females, studying diverse courses were randomly selected from four North East universities---Federal University, Gashua, Federal University Kukari, Gombe State, Yobe State University and University of Maiduguri, Borno State. One hundred (100) respondents from each of the selected universities were selected. The data were analyzed using frequency and simple percentages. The results of the responses were tabulated, percentages computed and charts were used to show pictorial results. The study found that the majority of the respondents claimed that they were not exposed to items relating to learning of English language and usage of the English language in various communicative settings. While there were also respondents who indicated that they were exposed to such linguistic features. The results of the study showed that a larger percentage of respondents' lack of exposure to important aspects of English language learning and usage in various communicative settings was mainly responsible for poor usage of English language among fresh undergraduate students in the North-East. The study, therefore, recommends that language skills viz speaking, writing, reading, and listening should be given priority right from basic school as they help greatly in improving students' performance in the English language

Keywords: CCommunicative settings, English language usage, Fresh University undergraduate students, Language skills, North-East Universities.

Introduction

As stipulated in Nigerian Education policy, the English language is officially approved as the medium of instruction for students at the secondary school level up to tertiary institutions. In addition, it is an official Nigerian language adopted to be used in all government engagements and activities, in terms of official public communication and documentation. It is also the language used in public and private establishment recruitment processes. As such, Nigerian university students are under obligation to have mastery in their English language usage. However, poor English language usage in both oral and written communication has been observed among fresh university undergraduate students.

With the increase in the status of the English language, it has become an important tool without which many opportunities that are readily available to University undergraduate students can be fully maximized. Over the years, the English language has become a global language. It has become the language for government engagement and activities, job interviews, politics, commerce, mass media and more importantly, education. English language is a global language because of its functions all over the world. Oluwole, (2008:9) opines that "having difficulty in grasping fully the contents and concepts of the various subjects of the curriculum taught in target language seems to be one of the most serious problems that English as a first language students face in their particular course of study". This might be due to their weaknesses in the English language (the medium of instruction) which may have negative consequences on their overall performance. This shows that poor English language usage or lack of mastery of the English language can equally lead to poor performance of students in their various courses of study.

Effective use of the English language is, therefore, non-negotiable for educated classes and students in general. Furthermore, apart from the fact that the English language is an official Nigerian language adopted to be used in all government engagements and activities, it is also the language approved as a medium of instruction for students at the secondary school level up to tertiary institutions in the Nigerian policy on education. As such, University students are under obligation to have a mastery in their English language usage. This is hinged on the fact that it is the language of the medium of instruction at the University level and also the language through which they are expected to communicate, write examinations, and interact with lecturers and other members of the University community. It is also the language through which interviews for job opportunities are conducted.

However, it has been observed that poor English language usage in both oral and written communication is a great problem among fresh University undergraduate students as existing studies have mostly focused on teaching and learning of English language to secondary school students. Hence, much has not been done on how to tackle the problem of poor English language usage among fresh undergraduate students of Universities in the North East. The paper therefore examines causes and problems associated with poor English language usage among fresh undergraduate students of Federal University, Gashua and selected Universities in the North East

Problem Statement

Existing studies on English language usage in Nigeria has largely focused on problems associated with teaching and learning of English language secondary school students and poor performance in English language among secondary school students. For instance, Adedokun (2011), Abdullahi (2003), Fema (2003), Mohammed (2002) and Ya'u (1993) with a focus on inadequate qualified English language teachers, teachers' attitudes towards innovation and use of instructional media, interference with mother tongue, negative attitudes of students towards learning English language and poor teaching method. In all, existing studies have largely explored causes of poor performance in English language as well as problems associated with teaching and learning of English language at the secondary school level. Much attention has not been given to causes of poor English language usage among fresh University undergraduates in North-East, Nigeria. Consequently, this study examines causes of poor English language usage among fresh undergraduate students in Nigerian Northeast Universities.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

(i)   identify likely causes of poor English language usage among fresh undergrade students of Federal University, Gashua and selected Universities in the North East of Nigeria.
(ii)   discuss how the identified causes have affected the students' ability to communicate effectively in English language; and
(iii)   recommend possible solutions to the identified causes and make recommendations.

Significance of the Study

It would help University management in the Northeast to make a well-informed decision on English language policy for the Universities. It would also be useful to education policymakers in Yobe State and other States in the Northeast. In addition, English language scholars who are interested in English language learning in the North-East would equally find the study helpful.

Second Language Acquisition and Language Learning

There are differences between the acquisition of a language and learning a language. Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language (i.e. English) – natural communication - in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding. The best method is to allow the supply of comprehensible and communicative inputs in low anxiety situations, containing messages

that are of interest to the students. Learning, on the other hand, refers to the formal classroom activity where language mediums are learned which involves the teaching of aspects of language drill (sounds and sstructure) and its assessment.

According to Krashen (1983:8), "Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules and does not require tedious drill". He added that, in real-world, conversations with sympathetic native speakers who are willing to help the acquirer understand are very helpful. Stephen Krashen identified five theories that are relevant to second language acquisition. These theories are: (1) the Acquisition-Learning (2) the Monitor (3) the Natural Order (4) the Input (5) the Effective Filter hypothesis.

In the Acquisition-learning hypothesis, Krashen distinguishes between two systems of foreign language performance: "the acquired system' and 'the learned system'. The acquired system or acquisition is the subconscious process very similar to the one child undergoes when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language (i.e natural conversation), in which the speaker concentrates not on the form of their utterances, but, on the communicative processes. The learned system, on the other hand, is the product of formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process that results in conscious knowledge about language, for example, knowledge of grammatical rules. According to Kraashen, the deductive approach in a teacher-centered setting produces 'learning' while an inductive approach in a student-centered setting leads to 'Acquisition'. Krashen believes that 'learning' is less important than 'acquisition'.

The monitor hypothesis according to Krashen, explains the relationship between acquisition and learning and denies the influence of learning over acquisition. The monitoring function is the practical result of the learned grammar. Krashen maintained that the acquisition system is the utterance initiator while the learning system performs the role of monitor or editor. The monitor acts in planning, editing, and correcting functions when some specific conditions are met:

•   The second language learners have sufficient time at their disposal

•   They focus on forms or think about the correctness

•   They know the rules

The role of the monitor is to correct deviations from normal speech and give it a more polished appearance. Krashen added that there are individual differences among language learners with

Literature Review

This section presents some related scholarly perspectives to this study. Some of the related scholarly perspectives are hereby discussed. Usman, (2012) holds that Nigerian students are surrounded by a complex linguistic situation that forces them to learn their first indigenous language and they are required to have a good command of the English language. The Nigerian policy on education stressed the use of the immediate language of the community in instruction at the lower level of primary education and a combination of English and the language of the immediate community at the upper part of primary education. In other words, the policy recommended the use of the mother tongue in teaching at the primary level. This situation contributes immensely to poor learning of the English language right from primary school and it extends to secondary school. Fema, (2003) also opines that the major cause of the errors in English used by Nigerians can be attributed to the interference of the mother tongue with the English language. He adds that students often use their native language or mother tongue in all their interactions and English is only used within the four walls of the classrooms and ends there. According to him, the above situation clearly shows that the dominance of the mother tongue in the Azare metropolis contributed immensely to poor performance in the English language.

According to Adedokun (2011), inadequate qualified English language teachers can also cause poor performance in the English language in secondary schools. Due to the above-mentioned cause, in some schools, other subject teachers are forced to teach the English language, and some who even read it exhibit poor abilities in oral and written expression of it. Therefore, with this kind of situation,

these teachers can never teach effectively and hence poor performances from their products. He is of the view that poorly trained English and untrained teachers (of English) were employed to teach and prepare secondary school students for the school certificate examinations in the English language. This situation contributed immensely to poor performance in the English language among secondary school students.

Roger (1981) regards inadequate infrastructural facilities and instructional media as another cause of poor performance in the English language in our secondary schools. Roger (1981) is of the view that instructional materials and facilities are an important part of the process of learning as they provide practice and feedback in the learning track. In our present-day secondary schools particularly public ones, students are in most cases sitting on the floor and windows during lessons. In some cases, students are living under trees or living in dilapidated classrooms. In addition to that even where there are enough classes, they are overcrowded and language laboratories are lacking. All these cannot allow for proper learning of the English language and other subjects hence leading to poor performance. Sa'ad (2007) was of the view that teaching and learning take place effectively when classes are moderate. However, the present-day Nigerian school classes are overpopulated with students over 120 and this cannot allow for proper teaching and learning. On the other hand, in the area of instructional resources or media, there is a dominance of textbooks, dictionaries, workbooks, and posters in the teaching of the English language in secondary schools in Nigeria. Modern media such as audio, video tapes, language laboratories, programmed texts, flashcards; computers, magazines, and newspapers are rarely used. Mohammed, (1998) observed that the teaching of the English language is bedeviled with many problems such as inadequate period of teaching, method of teaching, and lack of adequate and useful resources.

Abdullahi (2003) opines that another important cause of the poor performance of the English language in Nigerian secondary schools is the teachers' attitude towards innovation and the use of instructional media. Most Nigerian secondary school English language teachers fail to take into account the dynamic nature of the English curriculum but they continue to bore students with definitions and drills in grammar, vocabulary, and speech work. The traditional content or knowledge-oriented teaching is still very much practiced by them. Abdullahi (2003) is of the view that teachers mostly prefer to use traditional ways of teaching that they have been familiar with or as they were taught, which do not necessarily aid proper learning. Ya'u, (1993) categorically states that achievement of stated objectives in teaching and learning is always associated with using the right technique.

For Mohammed (2002), the negative attitude of students toward the learning of the English language is also associated with poor performance in the English language. Students, particularly in secondary and primary schools mostly show negative attitudes towards learning of English language because they consider it foreign or not theirs. He is of the view that most students put a kind of negative attitude toward learning and using of English language as well as making teachers' task difficult one indeed. It is obvious that for any student to be proficient in the English language, mastering skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing is necessary, and it requires hard work, and dedication from the students.

Ya'u (1993) also observes that improper use of methods of teaching also causes poor performance in the English language among secondary school students. Successful teaching and learning take place when the right teaching methods are used by the teachers. He believes that achievement of stated

objectives in teaching and learning is always associated with using the right method. Sometimes, teachers of the English language do not consider the learners' age, the topic, the time, and the background of the learners in choosing the method to be used in teaching and this affects the level of learning of the students.

According to Ayodele (2004), the lack of textbooks has compounded the problem of teaching and learning of use of English in all tertiary institutions. Where the textbooks are available they are outdated. Most students depend on lecture notes only because of a lack of relevant textbooks.   Many of them find it difficult to take lecture notes. Their lecture notes are full of spelling and grammatical errors which are indicative of the poor language background of the students (Ayodele, 2004).

From these scholarly perspectives, it can be seen that existing studies have mostly focused on the problems associated with poor use of the English language without much work on poor English language usage among University students, particularly fresh university undergraduate students. This proposed article fills this gap.

Methodology

Research Design and Instrumentation

A questionnaire-based approach was used in this study to examine the causes of poor English language usage among undergraduate students in Nigerian North-East Universities. A standardized self-reported questionnaire was developed and utilized to collect data. In addition to some basic demographic questions, the instrument included items on English language usage in various communicative settings. Participants who were undergraduate students of the selected universities in the Northeast were asked to answer questions relating to the frequent usage of the English language in certain communicative settings. A 4-point Likert scale was used for items on the questionnaire. They were: 1 (Never), 2 (Occasionally), 3 (Always), and 4 (Rarely).

Participants and Data Collection

Participants for this research contained a sample of four hundred (400) fresh undergraduate students of selected Universities in the North-East, of Nigeria. One hundred (100) participants, involving both males and females, each from selected universities, were randomly chosen. Four hundred (400) questionnaires were randomly distributed out of which three hundred and eighty (380) were completed and returned. This indicated an eighty-eight percent (88%) response rate. Therefore, the sample consisted of randomly selected 380 fresh university undergraduate students. Participants were given informed consent forms, which provided information regarding the study, including the contact information of the principal researcher. Participants were given five days to complete the surveys and return them together with signed informed consent forms to the principal researcher. The data were analyzed using frequency and simple percentages.

Output Hypothesis

This hypothesis, developed by Merrill Swain in 1995, states that Second language learners usually go through a 'silent period' when they listen and respond but do not produce language themselves. However, they develop a knowledge of the language which later serves as a basis for their language

production. The output hypothesis holds that input alone is not sufficient as output also plays a significant role in language acquisition. The need to speak or write makes learners pay attention to some aspects of grammar that they would not need for comprehension purposes alone, thus, it will make them notice gaps in their knowledge. The hypothesis, therefore, allows learners to make a hypothesis about how the grammatical systems work, and (when meanings are negotiated) they get feedback about whether these hypotheses are correct.

Demographic Representation of the Respondents

This focuses on data that relate to gender, age, area of study, and geographical area.

Gender

Out of 100 respondents from Federal University, Gashua, Yobe State, 54, representing 54%, were males while 46, representing 46%, were females. At the University of Maiduguri, Borno State, 64 of 100 respondents representing 64% were males while 36 represented 36% were females Out of 100 respondents from the Adamawa State University, 54 represented 54% were males while 46 representing 46% were females. At Gombe State University, 64 of the 100 respondents representing 64% were males, while 36 representing 36% were females.

In summary, the data shows that 236 of the respondents which stands for 59% were males while 164 of the respondents representing 48.7% were females.

Age Group

The age distribution of respondents shows that the respondents from Federal University, Gashua 78 (78%) respondents that were between ages 18-25; 18 (18%) were between ages 26 and30; while 36-40 years and unspecified have two (2) respondents each. The data from the University of Maiduguri showed that 78 respondents which stood for 78% were between the ages 18 and 25; 20 respondents which stood for 40% were between the ages of 26 and 30 and only two (2) respondents who represented 4% were between 31-35 years of age. At Adamawa State University Mubi, the data showed that 54 (54%) were between the ages of 18 and 25; 32 (32%) were between the ages of 26-30; 10 (10%) respondents were between the ages 31-35 while only two (2) respondents representing (2%) were between the ages of 36 and 40 and only two respondents did not specify the age group. At the Gombe State University, Gombe, the data showed that 66 (84.6%) out of 78 respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25; 10 respondents who represent 12.8% were between the ages of 26-30 while only two (2) respondents representing 2.6% were between 31and 35 years of age.

The age group of the respondents shows that respondents between ages 18-25 have the highest number of responses which is 138 which is 73.0% of the total responses, respondents between the ages of 26-30 are 40 which stand at 21.2%, respondents between the ages of 31-35 are 7 which represent 3.7%, respondents between the ages of 36-40 and those that did not specify their ages are two (2) which represent 1.0% each.
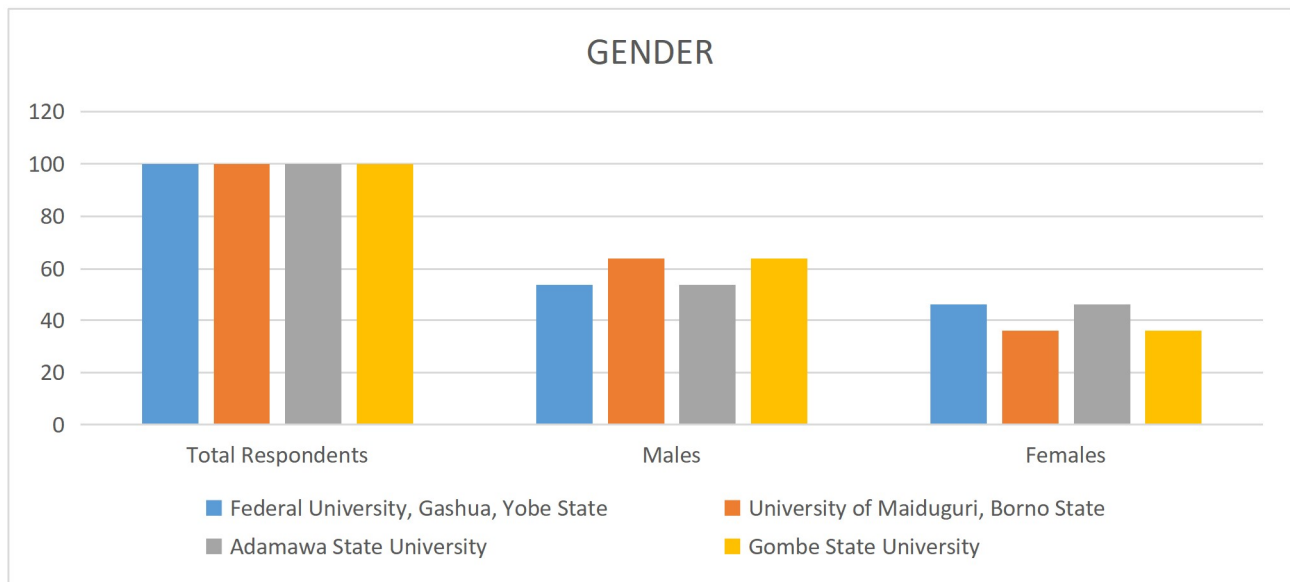
Geographical Area

Based on the geographical area, the data from Federal University, Gashua shows that 70 out of the 100 respondents representing 70% are from the North-Eastern part of the country, 20 of the respondents (20%) are from North West and North Central while the remaining 10 (110%) of the respondents are from the Southern part of the country.

The data from the University of Maiduguri shows that 60 of the respondents are from the North-East, 25 (25%) are from the North West and North Central and 15 (15%0 are from the South. At Adamawa State University, Mubi, 90 (90%) respondents are from the North East, 9 respondents from North-West and North Central while only 1 (1%) is from the South. The data from Gombe State University shows 90 (90%) respondents are from the North-Eastern part of the country, 2 are from the South while the remaining 8 respondents are from the North-West and North-Central.
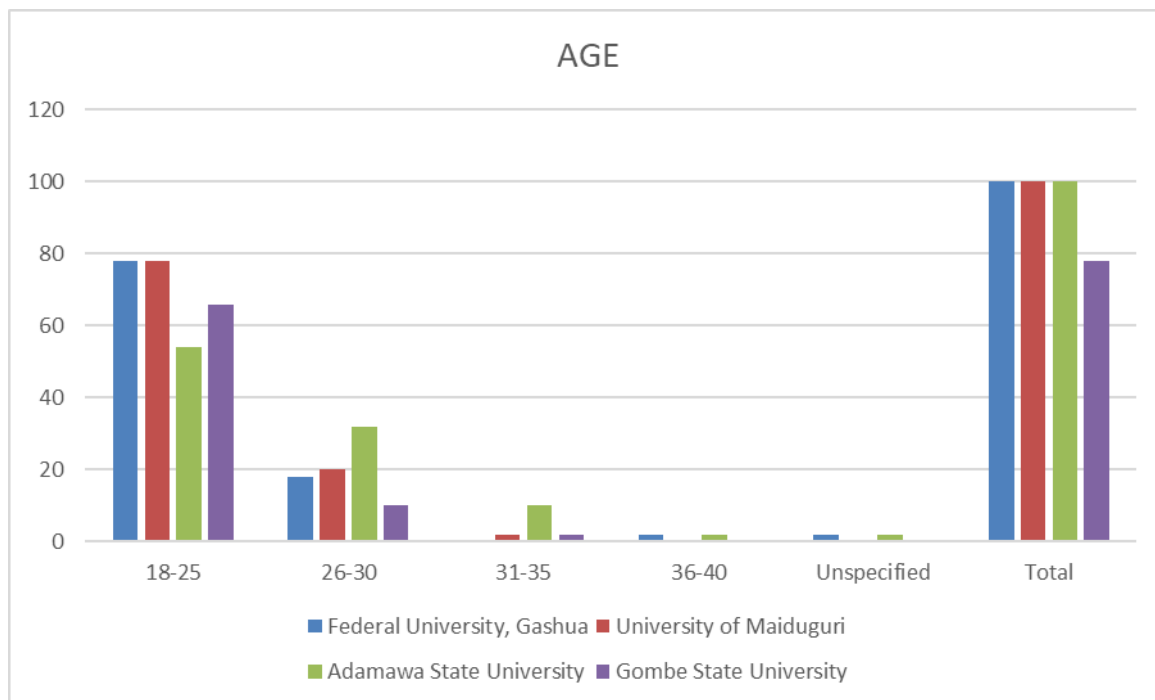
In summary, the Northeast has a total of 310 respondents which represents 78%, North West and North Central have a total of 62 respondents which stands at 16% while there is a total of 28 (7%) respondents from the South.

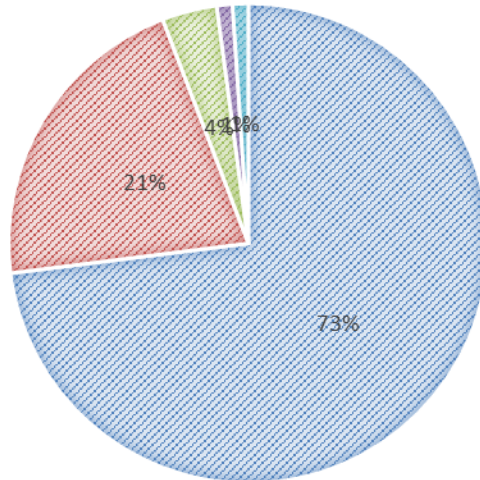**Demographic Representation of the Respondents**
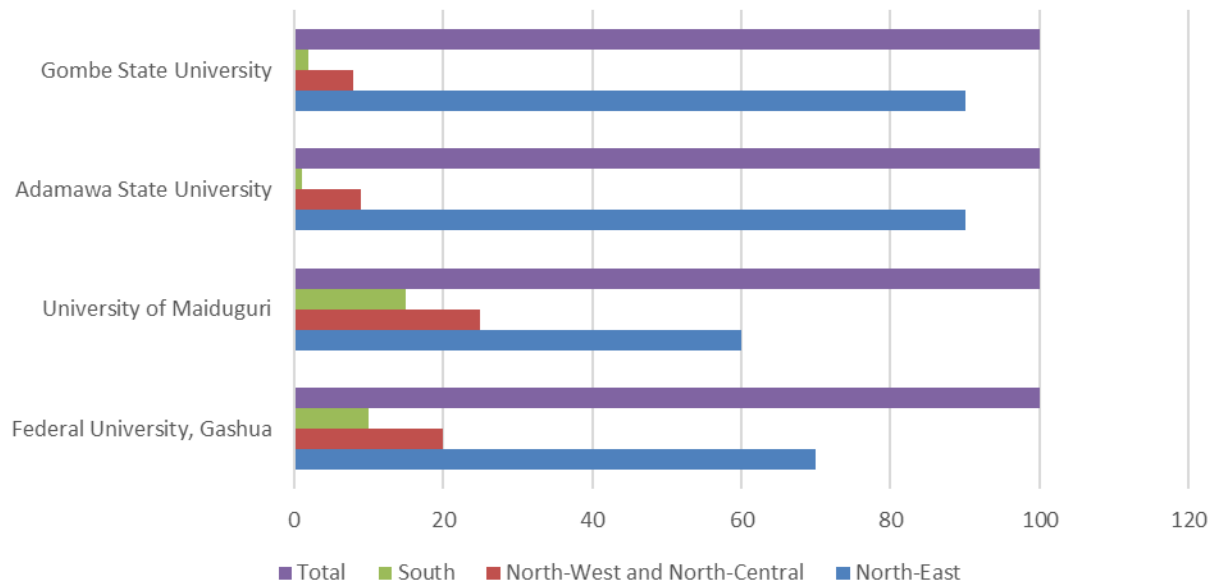
Gender Distribution

Distribution by Age of Respondents

AGE SUMMARY

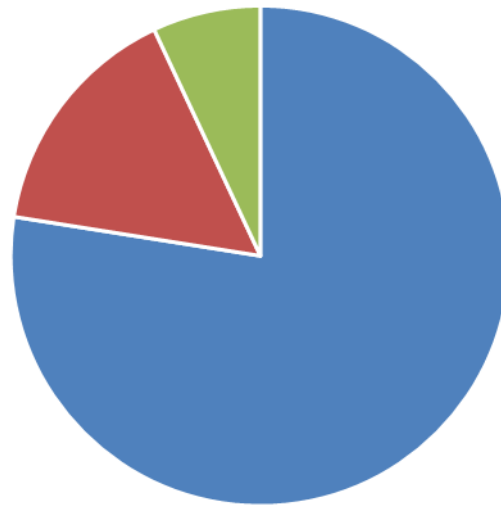■ 18-25 ■ 26-30 ■ 31-35 ■ 36-40 ■ Unspecified

73%
21%
4% 1% 1%

Distribution by Geographical Area of Respondents

Geographical Area

Gombe State University

Adamawa State University

University of Maiduguri

Federal University, Gashua

0   20   40   60   80   100   120

■ Total ■ South ■ North-West and North-Central ■ North-East

GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION SUMMARY

■ North-East   ■ North-West and North-Central   ■ South

Data Presentation and Analysis

The questionnaire is divided into eight (8) parts, with each part focusing on the usage of the English language in different communicative settings. The options out of which a respondent can indicate his or her answer are in the scale of whether or not the item in question is introduced. The options are: Never Introduced (NI), Occasionally Introduced (OI), Always Introduced (AI), and Rarely Introduced (RI)
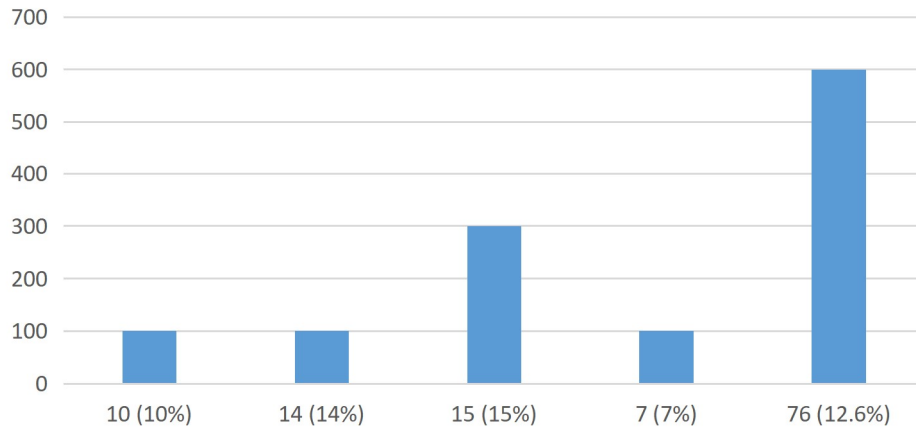
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY, GASHUA, YOBE STATE

Below is the summary of responses of respondents from Federal University, Gashua, Yobe State in the North-East, Nigeria

1. Usage of English language as a mode of communication at home			
Never Used (NU)	Occasionally Used (OU)	Always Used (AU)	Rarely Used (RU)
50 (40%)	10 (10%)	4 (4%)	36 (36%)
2. Usage of English language as the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools			
NU: 41 (41%)	OU: 14 (14%)	AU: 5 (5%)	40 (40%)
3. Usage of English language as a mode of communication among peers in primary and secondary schools			
NU: 40 (40%)	OU: 15 (15%)	AU: 2 (2%)	RU: 43 (43%)
4. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication in religious gatherings			
NU: 50 (50%)	7 (7%)	3 (3%)	RU: 40 (40%)
5. Accessibility to TV or radio programs in the English language			
Never Available (NA) 40 (40%)	Occasionally Available (OA) 15 (15%)	Always Available (AA) 5 (5%)	Rarely Available (RA) 40 (40%)
6. Accessibility to books on English grammar, novels, and newspapers written in the English language while in primary and secondary schools			
NA: 40 (40%)	OA: 15 (15%)	AA: 10 (10%)	RA: 35 (35%)
261 (261/600*100) =43.5%	76 (76/600*100) =12.6%	29 (29/600*100) =4.8%	234 (234/600*100) = 39

Sum of Total by Occasionally Used (OU) / Occasionally Available (OA)
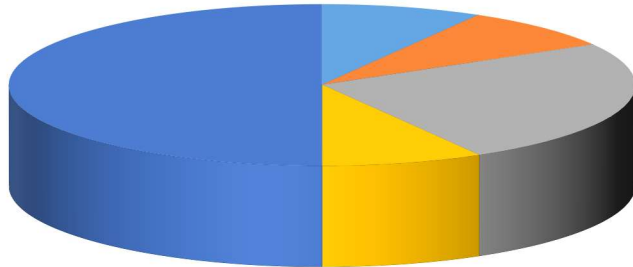
**Sum of Total by Occasionally Used (OU) / Occasionally Available (OA)**

Responses from Federal University, Gashua show 43% percent of the respondents indicated that items in this category were Never Available to them; this was followed by Rarely Available at 39%. Occasionally Available stood at 12% while Always Available was the least at 4.8%. The data here indicated that students in this university are likely to be deficient in the usage of the English language or have difficulty in effectively communicating in the English language. This may be partly due to the dominance of the Hausa language as the lingua franca of the residents. This is not to say there will not be respondents with fair proficiency in the English language as reflected in 12% and 4.8% Occasionally Available and Always Available responses respectively.

UNIVERSITY OF MAIDUGURI, BORNO STATE

Below is the summary of responses of respondents from the University of Maiduguri, Borno State in the North-East, Nigeria

1. Usage of English language as a mode of communication at home			
NU: 54 (54%)	OU: 10 (10%)	AU: 10 (10%)	RU: 26 (26%)

2. Usage of English language as the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools			
NU: 40 (40%)	OU: 15 (15%)	AU: 5 (5%)	RU: 40 (40%)

3. Usage of English language as a mode of communication among peers in primary and secondary			
NU: 35 (35%)	OU: 20 (20%)	AU: 5 (5%)	RU: 40 (40%)

4. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication in religious gatherings				
NU: 45 (45%)	OU: 7 (7%)	AU: 3 (3%)	RU: 40 (40%)	ABS: 5 (5%)

5. Accessibility to TV or radio programs in the English language				
NA: 40 (40%)	OA: 15 (15%)	AA: 5 (5%)	RA: 35 (35%)	ABS: 5 (5%)

6. Accessibility to books on English grammar, novels and newspapers written in English language while in basic and secondary schools				
NA: 35 (35%)	OA: 15 (15%)	AA: 10 (10%)	RA: 40 (40%)	
249 (249/600*100)= 41.5	82 (82/600*100)=13.6%	38(38/600*100)=6.3%	221(221/600*100)=36.8%	10 (10/600*100)=1.6%

Sum of Total by Rarely Used (RU) / Rarely Available (RA)
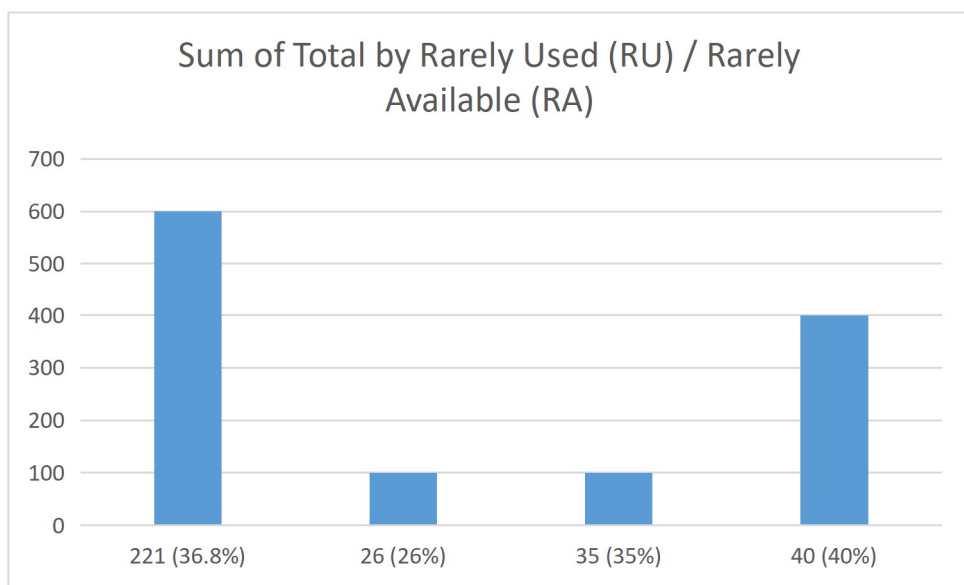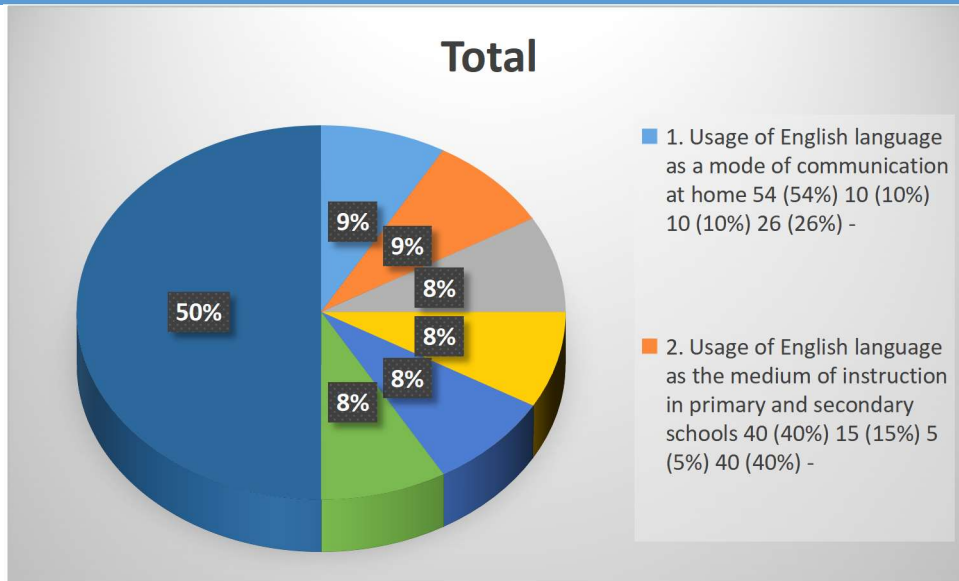
As shown in this table, majority of respondents from the University of Maiduguri indicated that items in question were not available to them. This is demonstrated in 41.5% and 36.8% responses for Never Available and Rarely Available respectively. The implication of the non-availability of the items in question to the majority of the respondents from this university is that the majority of fresh undergraduate students from the University of Maiduguri who were not exposed to the items are likely to be less proficient in the usage of the English language. However, the 13.6% and 6.3% responses for Often Available and Always Available respectively suggest that fresh undergraduate students from the University who indicated that they were exposed to the items in question are likely to possess good or at least fair proficiency in English language usage.

ADAMAWA STATE UNIVERSITY, MUBI, ADAMAWA STATE

Below is the summary of responses of respondents from Adamawa State University, Mubi, Adamawa State in the North-East, Nigeria

1. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication at home			
NU: 51 (51%)	OA: 10 (10%)	AU: 5 (5%)	RA: 34 (34%)
2. Usage of English language as the medium of instruction in basic and secondary schools			
NU: 35 (35%)	OA: 15 (15%)	AU: 10 (10%)	RA: 40 (40%)
3. Usage of English language as a mode of communication among peers in basic and secondary schools			
NU: 40 (40%)	OU: 12 (12%)	AU: 8 (8%)	RA: 40 (40%)
4. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication in religious gatherings			
NU: 55 (55%)	OU: 8 (8%0	AU: 10 (10%)	RA: 27 (27%)
5. Accessibility to TV or radio programs in the English language			

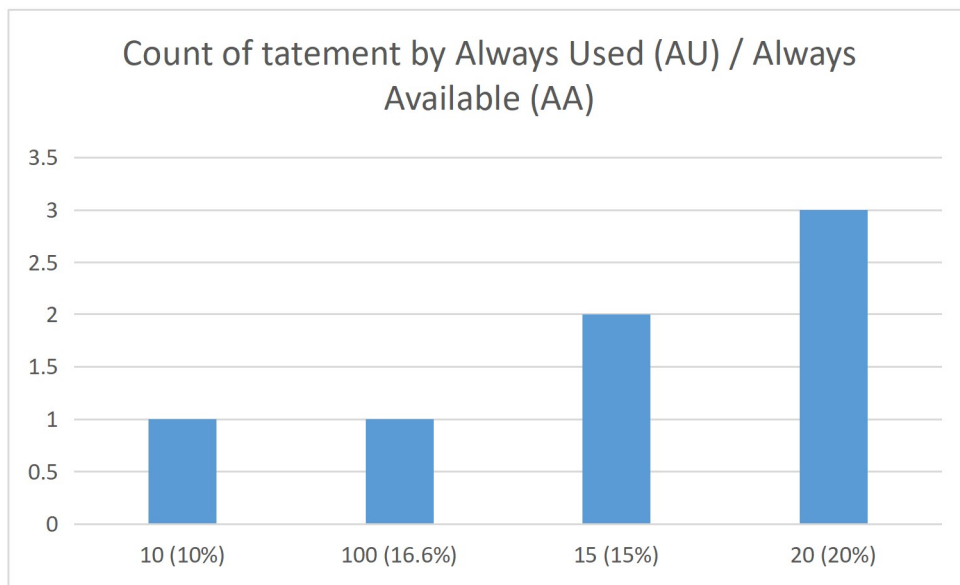| NA: 45 (45%)	OA: 15 (15%)	AA: 5 (5%)	RA: 30 (30%)	ABS: 5 (5%)
6. Accessibility to books on English grammar, novels, and newspapers written in the English language while in basic and secondary schools				
NA: 40 (40%)	OA: 17 (17%)	AA: 8 (8%)	RA: 30 (30%)	ABS: 5 (5%)
266 (266/600*100)=44.3%	77 (77/600*100)=12.3%	46 (46/600*100)=7.6%	201 (201/600*100)=33.5%	10 (10/600*100)=1.6%
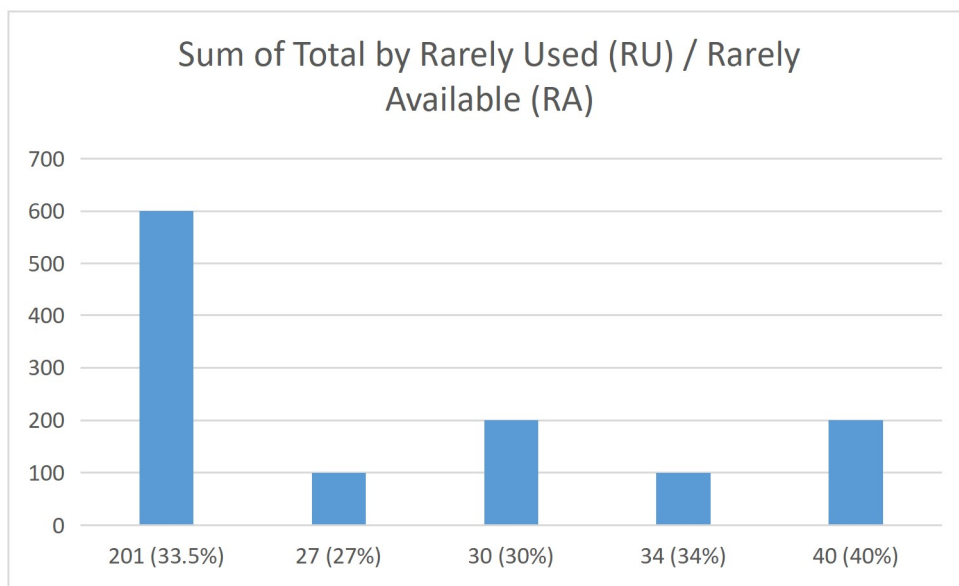
Responses from Adamawa State University, Mubi (as shown in the table) show that there were few respondents who indicated that the items in question were available to them. This is shown in 12.3% and 7.6% responses for Often Available and Always Available respectively. Statistically, this means that there would be fresh undergraduate students from this university who are fairly proficient in the usage of the English language. However, their number is too low to be significant when compared to respondents who indicated that they were not exposed to the items in question. The 44.3% and 33.5% responses for Never Available and Rarely Available respectively show that the majority of fresh undergraduate students from Adamawa State University, Mubi are still likely to possess poor proficiency in the English language.

Gombe State University, Gombe, Gombe State

Below is the summary of responses of respondents from Gombe State University, Gombe, Gombe State in the North-East, Nigeria

1. Usage of English language as a mode of communication at home

NU: 50 (50%)	OU: 10 (10%)	AU: 10 (10%)	RU: 40 (40%)
2. Usage of English language as the medium of instruction in basic and secondary schools			
NU: 30 (30%)	OU: 20 (20%)	AU: 20 (20%)	RU: 30 (30%)
3. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication among peers in basic and secondary schools			
NU: 35 (35%)	OU: 15 (15%)	AU: 15 (15%)	RU: 35 (35%)
4. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication in religious gatherings			
NU: 30 (30%)	OU: 20 (20%)	AU: 20 (20%)	RU: 30 (30%)
5. Accessibility to TV or radio programs in the English language			
NA: 40 (40%)	OA: 15 (15%)	AU: 15 (15%)	RA: 30 (30%)
6. Accessibility to books on English grammar, novels, and newspapers written in the English language while in basic and secondary schools			
NA: 30 (30%)	OA: 20 (20%)	AA: 20 (20%)	RA: 30 (30%)
215 (215/600*100)=35.8%	100 (100/600*100)=16.6%	100 (100/600*100)=16.6%	195 (195/600*100)=32.5%

Count of tatement by Always Used (AU) / Always Available (AA)

Total

- 1. Usage of English language as a mode of communication at home 50 (50%) 10 (10%) 10 (10%) 40 (40%)
- 2. Usage of English language as the medium of instruction in basic and secondary schools 30 (30%) 20 (20%) 20 (20%) 30 (30%)
- 3. Usage of English language as a mode of communication among peers in basic and secondary schools 35 (35%) 15 (15%) 15 (15%) 35 (35%)
- 4. Usage of English language as a mode of communication in religious gatherings 30 (30%) 20 (20%) 20 (20%) 30 (30%)
- 5. Accessibility to TV or radio programmes in English language 40 (40%) 15 (15%) 15 (15%) 30 (30%)
- 6. Accessibility to books on English grammar, novels and newspapers written in English language while in basic and secondary schools 30 (30%) 20 (20%) 20 (20%) 30 (30%)
- Total 215 (35.8%) 100 (16.6%) 100 (16.6%) 195 (32.5%)

As in other universities selected in the North-East for this study, at Gombe State University, respondents who responded that the items in question were not easily accessible to them were in the majority as shown in 35.8% and 32.5% responses for Never Available and Rarely Available respectively. This indicates that larger percentage of fresh undergraduate students from Gombe State University are likely to be less proficient in English language. The interesting part, however, is that the percentage of fresh undergraduate students from this university who claimed that they were exposed to items in question are relatively high. This means that, at Gombe State University, there would be students who have fair proficiency in English language.

Summary of Responses across all the Selected Universities

Never Available (NA)	Often Available (OA)	Always Available (AA)	Rarely Available (AA)	ABS (when no choice is made)
991(991/2054.8* 100)=48.2%	203.2(203.2/2054. 8*100)=9.8%	157.1(157.1/2054. 8*100)=7.6%	683.5(683.5/2054.8 *100)=33.2%	20(20/2054.8*1 00)=0.97%
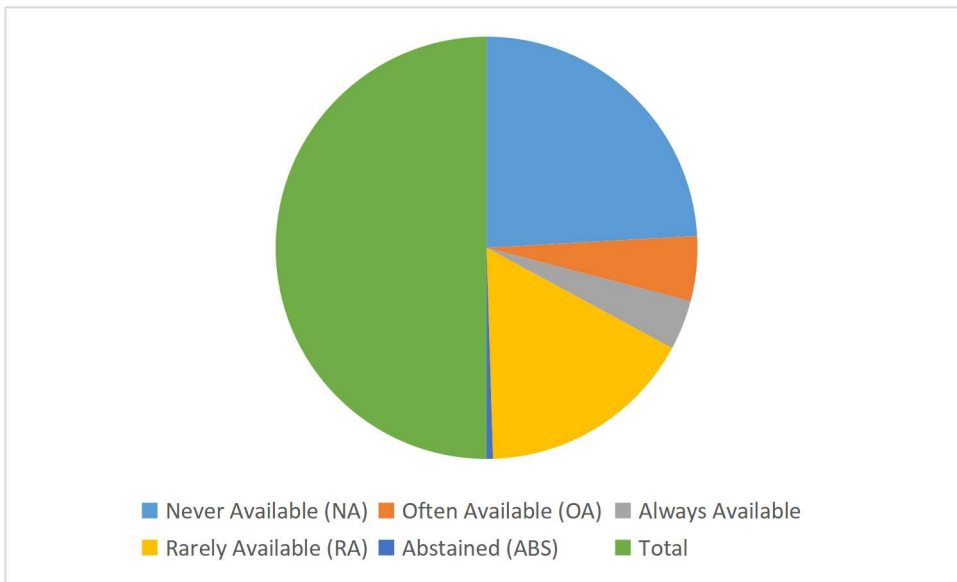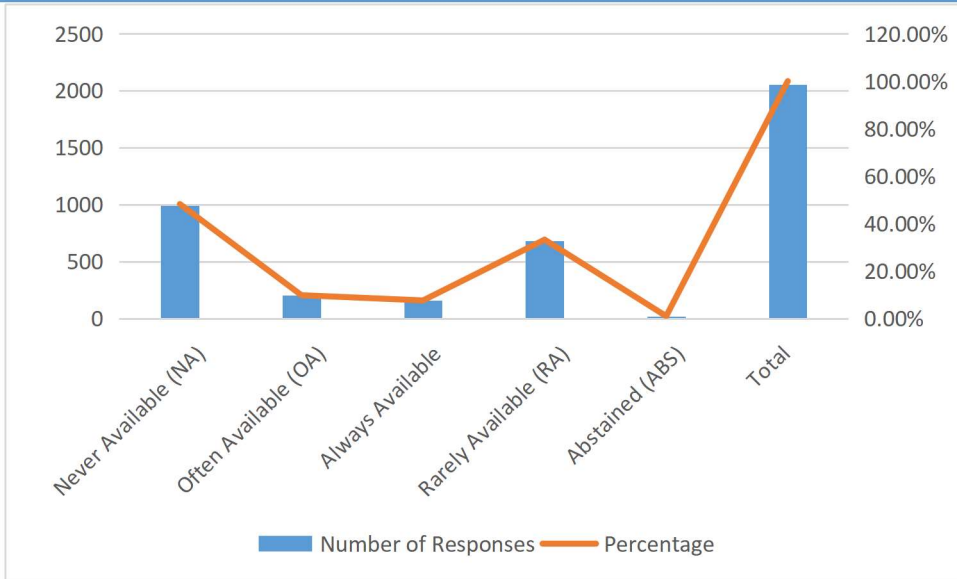
Conclusion

This study has examined the causes and problems of poor usage of English language among fresh undergraduate students in Nigerian universities in the North-East. It investigated problems associated with poor English language proficiency among fresh university undergraduates in North-East, Nigeria. While existing studies on English language usage in Nigeria have largely focused on its teaching and learning in secondary schools, this study explores the causes and problems of poor English language usage among Nigerian fresh university undergraduate students in the northeast and proffers solutions to the issues. The study found that the majority of the respondents claimed that they were not exposed to items relating to learning of English language and usage of the English

language in various communicative settings. While there were also respondents who indicated that they were exposed to these items, the results of the study showed that a larger percentage of respondents' lack of exposure to important aspects of English language learning and usage in various communicative settings was mainly responsible for poor usage of English language among fresh undergraduate students in the North-East.

Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations:

1. That, given that the Hausa language has been so entrenched as the lingua franca in the Northeast, the English language should be made the compulsory medium of instruction starting from higher classes in basic schools.
2. The utmost priority should be given to the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, right from the beginning of basic school.
3. Debates in the English language should be made compulsory across basic and secondary schools in the Northeast and active participation of students should be of utmost importance.
4. At home and in communities, students should be exposed to listening to programs conducted in the English language on Radio and Television.
5. School libraries should be well furnished with books on English language grammar, composition, and comprehension
6. Reading and writing culture should be encouraged through the organization of reading and writing competitions.

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