Research Article

Investigating the Causes of Poor Speaking Ability in the English Language among University Students in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract: This research was done to find the causes of poor speaking ability in the English Language among university students in Northern Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative method where questionnaires were used containing two variables: (1) *Oral Activities Involving Students in Basic Schools & (2) Speaking English at Home, in Religious Places, and Market Places*. 200 students comprising of both gender and studying diverse courses were randomly chosen across four universities, that is 50 students each from Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State; University of Ilorin, Kwara State; North-West University Kano and Nasarawa State University Keffi, Nasarawa State. The results of the responses were tabulated, percentages computed and charts used to show pictorial results. The main findings show that while there are a lot of respondents who testify that oral activities do take place in their basic school and they also speak English at home and other places, there is a greater percentage of respondents also who indicated that they either seldom or never had those opportunities. This explains why there are many students today who find it difficult to communicate effectively in the English language even though they are doing well in their various courses of study. 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: Speaking ability, language skills, oral activities & performance.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, there has been a show of concern on the students' inability to express themselves coherently in a manner that is expected of university students [1, 2]. This situation is worrisome especially among education stakeholders and employers of labour. The problem, from the researchers' observation, could be due to many factors, which range from neglect of some language skills (e.g speaking, especially debates, dialogues, and self-expressions, etc.), over dominance of language teachers while in the classrooms, and poor reading culture among others. According to Danladi [3]. English language normally has four basic skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Fema [4] was of the view that "a person is functionally literate when he acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enables him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed".

Research of this nature is necessary considering the roles and functions of the English language in our daily lives. The need for students to be able to express themselves in English Language, regardless of which course they study, is paramount. This is because the English Language is the language of instruction in Nigeria, and their mastery of it, especially the communicative aspect, boosts their chances of employment in the labour market after graduation. Every person desirous to reap the full benefits of modern education, library use, research knowledge, science, commerce, and trade, etc. must have a sound knowledge of the English language and good communication skills. Waandja [5] also added that ability to speak English fluently opens up wider opportunities to achieve success in life and it is difficult to survive nowadays without good speaking abilities in English. The person who does not have good communication skills will suffer badly in this era of competition in comparison to the person who has good communication skills. Likewise, persons with good speaking ability in English can be

recognized among his peers due to his/her power to use language to his advantage.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Speech is the prime means of communication and the structure of the society itself would be substantially different if it had failed to develop communication through speech [6]. Nalsco and Arthur [7] also stipulate that learners of English are unwilling to communicate in the language in countries where it is a second language and is used as a medium of instruction. Nigeria is not an exception as learners only communicate in English when they are in class. This poses a problem since it is through the regular use of English that learners would be able to learn the language. However, students' courses of study notwithstanding, the English language remains the language of instruction, with which all the academic activities, administrative duties, media, and other diplomatic and international relations are carried out.

The roles English play in the life of students from the beginning to the end of their students' life and also in the labor market cannot be overemphasized. However, to the researchers' dismay, students in our universities nowadays (especially in the North which is the research area) perform poorly especially in terms of their ability to express themselves coherently in public or to portray communicative competence. The problem is worrisome because these students' survival in the heterogonous and complex labour environment depends largely on their ability to communicate effectively, most especially in the spoken aspect. Peter Okebukola of Daily Champion on 25th May 2004 asserted that "Stakeholders have expressed worry over students' poor communication competencies in the use of English Language. Most young graduates, critics also allege, are barely able to express themselves either in written or oral communication." As a result of this problem, many employers of labor and international communities believe that universities nowadays produce half-baked or even educated illiterates due to their inability to communicate effectively most especially in the oral aspect. The number of graduates and undergraduates with such problems of poor communication skills/speaking ability in English is on the rise, which means there is a cause for concern among enlightened Nigerians. The research, therefore, sets to identify the causes behind this worrisome trend and highlight some grey areas where corrections need to be adapted to proffering lasting solution to it. The outcome is expected to serve as a guide to language teachers, curriculum developers, policymakers, and students in general for the reversal of the ugly trend.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main interest of this work is to find out the causes of rising poor speaking ability in English among university students in Northern Nigeria. The specific objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To identify the cause(s) and or reasons behind this poor speaking ability or communicative incompetence among university students in Northern Nigeria;
2. To examine the role play by the students' background to their good speaking ability in English or otherwise;
3. To show how students' engagement in oral activities whether at home, in religious places, or school helps boost their communicative abilities.
4. To recommend efforts to be adopted by the teachers, policymakers, administrators, and students to arrest this ugly trend.

Review of Related Literature

General Overview of Language as a Medium of Communication/Self-expression

Language is used for self-expression, verbal thinking, problem-solving, and creative writing, which means, it is used essentially for communication. What makes it difficult to grasp the language user's systems of representation for communication with others is the fact that the capability as individuals to interact with others through language is a unique quality and at the same time a universal human quality. Urrutia and Vega [8] are of the view that speaking is a skill that is mostly affected by shyness and fear of being humiliated. However, Nawsin 2009 maintains that speaking difficulties in English, such as shyness indicated above, can be reduced by allocating enough time for learners to speak as much as they can to develop their level of accuracy, fluency, and confidence. According to him, creating a comfortable atmosphere where learners can speak without stress and pressure will make a lot of impacts. Ferrari and Palladina [9] are of the view that excessive use of mother tongue during lessons and lack of interaction among learners inside and outside the classroom in the target language (English in this case) may impede the ability to speak the second language. Fema [4] shares that view when he stated that the major cause of poor use of the English language by Nigerians can be attributed to the interference of the mother tongue with the English language. He added 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. Hatrakul [10] asserts that an environment that does not support the learner to speak English frequently may lead to speaking difficulties. Brown [11] adds

that learners speaking ability will only improve if the teacher encourages learners to speak in the classroom and plan speaking activities that are good enough, easy, and at the learner's level. He, therefore, indicated activities like class discussion, debate, and problem-solving tasks which can help learners greatly.

Yano [12] believes that successful language use for communication presupposes the development of communicative competence in the users of that language and that the use of language is constrained by the socio-cultural norms of the society where the language is used. Udumah, [13] was of the view that teachers should devise ways through which they can help the students to improve their learning, speech, and their listening skills. He categorically stated that:

i. Students should be taught correct pronunciation in the English language to minimize the effect of the first language on the second (English language).

ii. Instructional materials and facilities should be provided for effective teaching and learning of the English language.

iii. More qualified teachers of the English language should be provided and they should be encouraged to undergo professional teaching courses, workshops, and seminars to update them.

iv. Students should be encouraged to communicate in the English language in and outside the classroom.

v. Facilities like language laboratory should be provided to assists in proper teaching and learning of English language.

Carnagie [14] also believes that the chief cause of fear to speak in public simply is that one is not accustomed to speaking in public. Khan & Ali [15] assert that one of the causes of poor speaking ability is that English is taught as a subject, not as a language. As a result, limited time is allotted to it while fewer activities/exercises are conducted for the improvement of students' ability.

Second Language Acquisition and Language Learning

There are differences between the acquisition of 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 structure) and its assessment.

According to Krashen "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 in 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 undergo when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language (i.e natural conversation), in which the speaker concentrated not in the form of their utterances, but, in 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

regards to monitor use. He then distinguishes the over-users- those who use monitor all the time. Examples in this category are introverts and perfectionist; under-users- who have not learned or who prefer not to use their conscious knowledge. Extroverts belong to this category; and optimal-users- those learners that use the monitor appropriately. Lack of self-confidence is frequently related to over-use of the monitor.

The *input hypothesis* is Krashen's attempt to explain how the learner acquires a second language. This hypothesis deals only with the 'acquisition' not 'learning'. According to this hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses along with the 'natural order' when he/she receives second language input that is beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence. For example, if a learner is at a stage 'a', then acquisition takes place when he/she is exposed to *'Comprehensible Input*' that belongs to level 'a + 1'. Since not all learners will be at the same linguistic level at the same time, Krashen suggests that *natural communicative input* is crucial to designing a syllabus, ensuring in this way that each learner will receive some 'i + 1' input that is appropriate for his/her current stage of linguistic competence. When that happens, acquisition takes place effortlessly and involuntarily.

The *affective filter hypothesis* embodies Krashen's view that a number of effective variables play a facilitative but non-causal role in second language acquisition. These variables include: motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, and personality traits. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, a low level of anxiety, and extroversion are better equipped to achieve success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, anxiety, introversion, and inhibition can raise the effective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is 'up' it impedes language acquisition.

The *natural order hypothesis* is based on research findings of some scholars [16, 17] which suggest that the acquisition of grammatical structures follow a 'natural order' which is predictable. For a given language, some grammatical structures tend to be acquired early while others late. This order seems to be independent of the learner's L1 background or condition of exposure. Although the agreement between individual acquirers was not always 100% in these studies, however, there were statistically significant similarities that reinforced the existence of a natural order of language acquisition. This natural order sequencing can be seen in the acquisition of 'ing' participle and 's' third-person singular present tense. It is believed that the '-ing' form (present continuous) will be acquired early on and almost certainly before the **-s** inflection in the third person present simple (*she likes, he eats*, etc.).

However, speech is the most important means of communication, Venkateswaren [18] believes that to develop the oral communication, information gap activities are suggested. Information gap activities have the scope of integrating all the four language skills. If all the language production of the student is controlled from outside, he will hardly be able to transfer his knowledge from a language learning situation to a language using situation.

The teacher can facilitate language acquisition through problem-solving activities and tasks which ensure learner participation and interaction naturally [19]. But for this purpose, the knowledge of Phonetics is necessary for a teacher of English to correct students' mistakes and to help them in the differentiation of English sounds and the sounds in the speaker's mother tongue language.

The interaction Hypothesis by Michael Long is a development from the 'input hypothesis'. The hypothesis was credited to him after his paper 'the role of the linguistics environment in second language acquisition' in 1996. He maintains that the pre-requisite for learning is still seen as comprehensive input, however, this hypothesis argued that the comprehensive input is more likely to occur under social interaction. As a result, it is more likely that the *input* will be tuned to the current level of competence of the individual learner and thus become 'intake' which is available for learning. Researchers believed that increased opportunities for negotiation are likely to lead to increased comprehension. Likewise, they also studied a kind of classroom interaction task that is most likely to lead to the negotiation of meaning.

Output Hypothesis
This hypothesis was developed by Merrill Swain in 1995 [20], it states that Second language learners usually go through a 'silent period' when they listen and respond but do not produce language themselves. Nonetheless, they develop the knowledge of the language which later serves as a basis for their language production. The output hypothesis argued that input alone is not sufficient; output also plays a significant role in language acquisition [20]. The need to speak or write makes learners pay attention to some aspects of grammar which 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.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research design shall be adopted in this study. The target population for this research will constitute of undergraduate students studying in some four universities across the North West and North central parts of the country. The population will consist of 200 students, 50 each from the University of Ilorin, Kwara State; Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nasarawa State; North-West University Kano (known as Yusuf Maitama Sule University), Kano State and Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State. The spread of the research area will help the researchers to have different responses and make a comparison of the possible cause of the problem. However, based on the expected nature of the population, the main sampling technique to be employed to determine the sample size will be the stratified random sampling method. This would be used to ensure an equitable representation of the sample population. These 50 students to be chosen from each university will consist of both genders (male and female). For this research, questionnaires will be administered to the selected students where questions related to his exposure to the language as well as the frequency of using the language would be asked.

The data collected will be correlated to determine the cause for the poor or otherwise of performance in terms of speaking ability. The data will then be tabulated based on the number and percentages of the different responses.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Two hundred questionnaires were shared among four universities which cut across Northwest and North Central. The universities are: Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State (FUGUS); North-West University Kano, Kano State (NWUKano); the University of Ilorin, Kwara State (Unilorin) and Nasarawa State University Keffi; Nasarawa State (NSUKeffi). Fifty (50) questionnaires were shared in each of the four universities. All the questionnaires were returned intact except Nasarawa State University Keffi where only 39 questionnaires were returned. So out of 200 questionnaires, about 189 were returned.

Demographical Data of the Respondents

By demographic data, I mean data that relates to gender, area of study, age group, and geographical area.

Gender

Out of 50 respondents from the Federal University Gusau, 27 representing 54% were males while 23 representing 46% were females. At the University of Ilorin, 32 of the 50 respondents which represent 64% were males, while 18 which represent 36% were females. At the Northwest University Kano, there were 22 male respondents who stood for 44% while the number of female respondents was 28 representing 56%. Moreover, at the Nasarawa State University, Keffi out of 39 respondents 16 representing 41% are males while 23 representing 59% were females.

In summary, the data shows that 97 of the respondents which stand for 51.3% are males while 92 of the respondents which represent 48.7% were females.
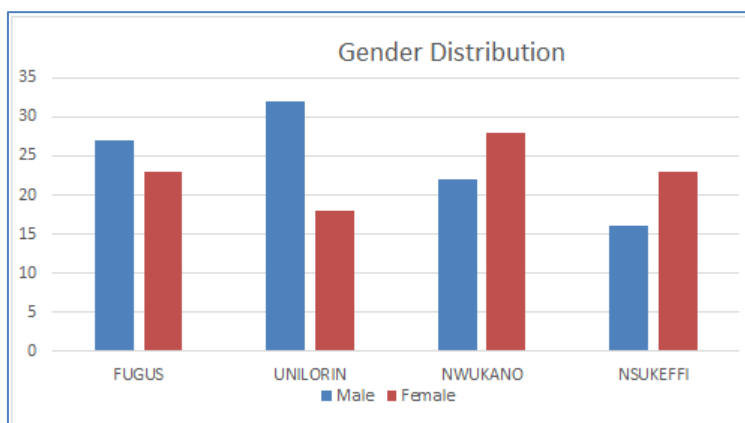

This data shows that equal opportunity is given to both genders to participate in the research.

Field of Study

At the *Federal University Gusau (FUGUS)* 27 (54%) out 50 respondents are in various Sciences courses, 10 (20%) are in the fields of Social and Management Sciences, 11 (22%) are in the various fields of Arts and 2 (4%) study other course examples education. The distribution of respondents from *the University of Ilorin* shows that 14 (28%) out of the 50% respondents are in various fields of sciences, 8 (16%) are in the areas of Social and Management Sciences, 7 (14%) are in the field of Engineering, 1 (2%) studies Medical and Allied courses, those in the fields of Arts are 19 which stood for 38% while 1 (2%). At *the Northwest University Kano* 22 (44%) out of 50 respondents are in the field of Arts, Sciences and Social and Management Sciences have 8 (16%) number of respondents each, 12 respondents, which accounts

for 24% are in other unspecified fields of study (e.g Education). The data from *Nasarawa State University Keffi* shows that out of 39 number of respondents 38 which accounts for 97.4% are in various fields of Arts which only one respondent which stands for 2.6% is in the field of Engineering.

The summary of all data collected shows that Arts have 90 respondents which represent 47.6% of the total data. Sciences have 49 respondents which represent 25.9% of the data; Social and Mgt Sciences have 26 number of the total respondents which stand at 13.8%, Engineering has 8 total respondents which stand at 4.23%, medical & Allied Course have only one (1) respondent which stands at 0.53% while other unspecified courses have 15 number of responses which represents 7.9% of the total responses.
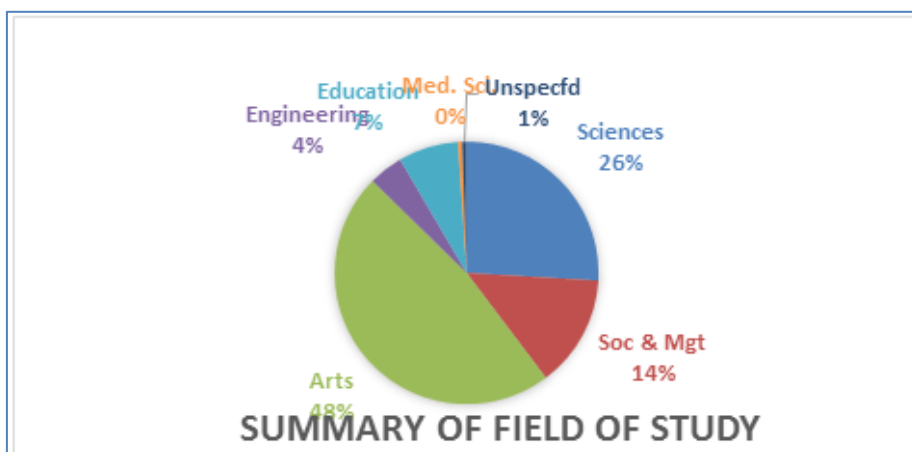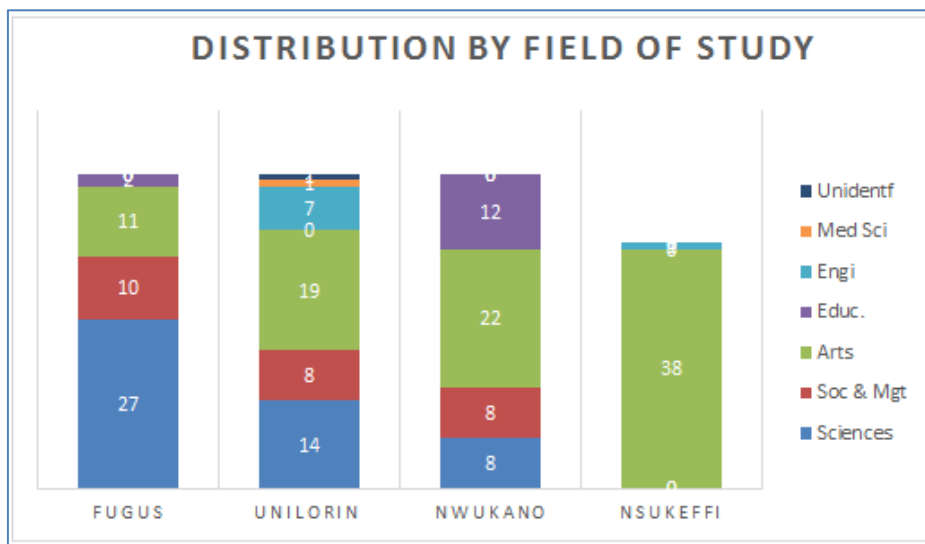
Likewise, students from different fields of study were also allowed to participate. This is necessary so that the research is not skewed in favour of only one direction.
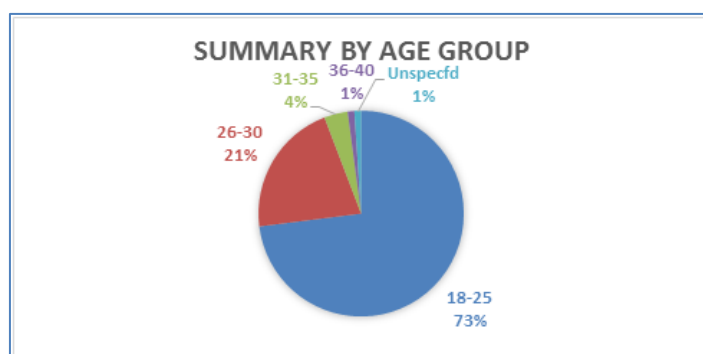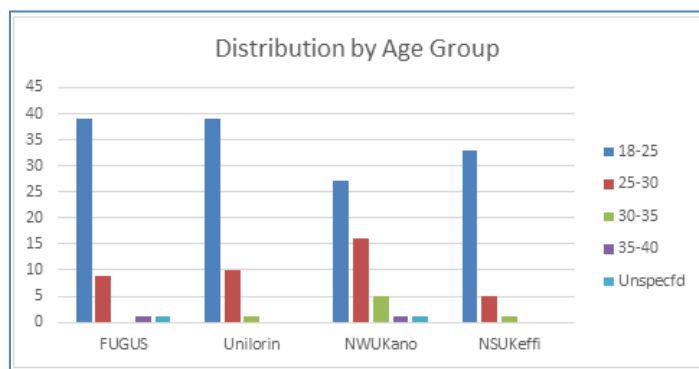
Age Group

The age distribution of respondents shows that the respondents from *FUGUS* have 39 (78%) respondents that are between the ages of 18-25; 9 (18%) are between the ages of 26-30; while 36-40

years and unspecified have one (1) respondent each. The data from the *University of Ilorin* shows that 39 respondents which stood for 78% are between the ages of 18-25 years; 10 respondents which stood for 20% are between the ages of 26-30 years and only 1 respondent who stands for 2% is between 31-35 years of age. At the *North-West University Kano*, the data shows that 27 (54%) are between the ages of 18-25 years; 16 (32%) are between the ages of 26-30; 5 (10%) respondents are between the ages 31-35 years while only one (1) respondent which stands for (2%) is between the age of 36-40 years and only one respondent did not specify the age group. At the *Nasarawa State University Keffi*, the data shows that 33 (84.6%) out of 39 respondents

are between the ages of 18-25 years; 5 respondents which stood for 12.8% are between the ages of 26-30 years while only one (1) respondents which represent 2.6% is between the age of 31-35 years of age.

The summary in this category shows that respondents between the ages 18-25 years 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.


Respondents with the age group 18-25 formed the majority of the research, this is understandable considering the fact that the research focuses on the undergraduate not postgraduate. Other age groups were also represented.

Geographical Area

With regards to the geographical area, the data from FUGUS shows that 42 out of the 50 respondent which stand for 84% are from the North Western (NW) part of the country, while the remaining 8 (16%) of the respondents are from the North Central (NC), none of the respondents is from the North East (NE). at the University of Ilorin, the data shows that all the 50 respondents, representing 100% are from the North Central. At the Northwest

University Kano, the data shows that 40 respondents, which stand for 80%; 4 (8%) and 2 (4%) of the respondents are from North Central and North East respectively while 4 (8%) of the respondents refuse to disclose their geographical locations. The Nasarawa State University Keffi respondents' data shows that North Central has 31 respondents which stand for 79.5%; North West and North East have 3 numbers of respondents each of which stands at 7.7% while 2 respondents refuse to disclose their geographical location.

In summary, North West have a total of 85 respondents which represent 45%, North Central has a total of 93 respondents which stand at 49.2%, North East has five (5) responses which represent 2.6% while six (6) respondents which represent 3.2% did not specify their geographical location.

Distribution by Geographical Area

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA
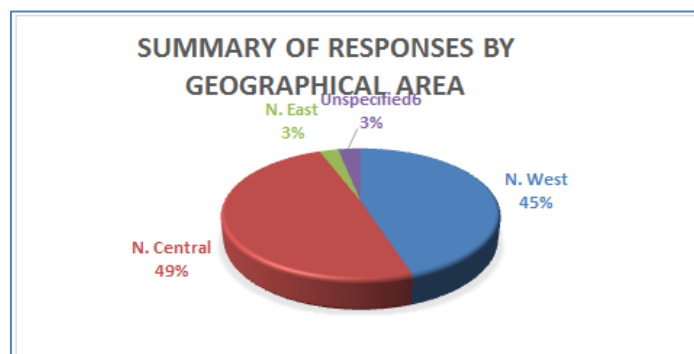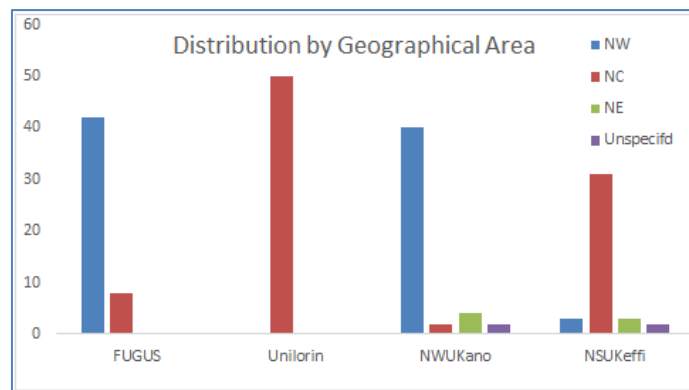
There is a fair representation of response from each geographical zone of the North- North West, North Central, and North East. Due to insecurity in the North East, no University is chosen from there making representation from that side the lowest.

DATA PRESENTATION

The questionnaire is divided into four (2) parts, with each part containing six (6) questions, making a total of twenty-four (12) questions. The options out of which a respondent can indicate his answers are in the scale of whether or not the item of the question is introduced. The options are: Never Introduced (NI); Seldom Introduced (SI); Often Introduced (OI) and Always Introduced (AI). The

different parts of the questionnaire which the research sought to digest involve (1) *knowing whether or not students are given opportunities to participate in oral exercises during the learning process*, (2) *speaking English at home, religious places, or markets with friends and family members*

Part One: Oral Activities Involving Students in Basic Schools

Federal University Gusau (FUGUS)

Below is the summary of all the responses to the six questions under this part from the Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State, North-West Nigeria.

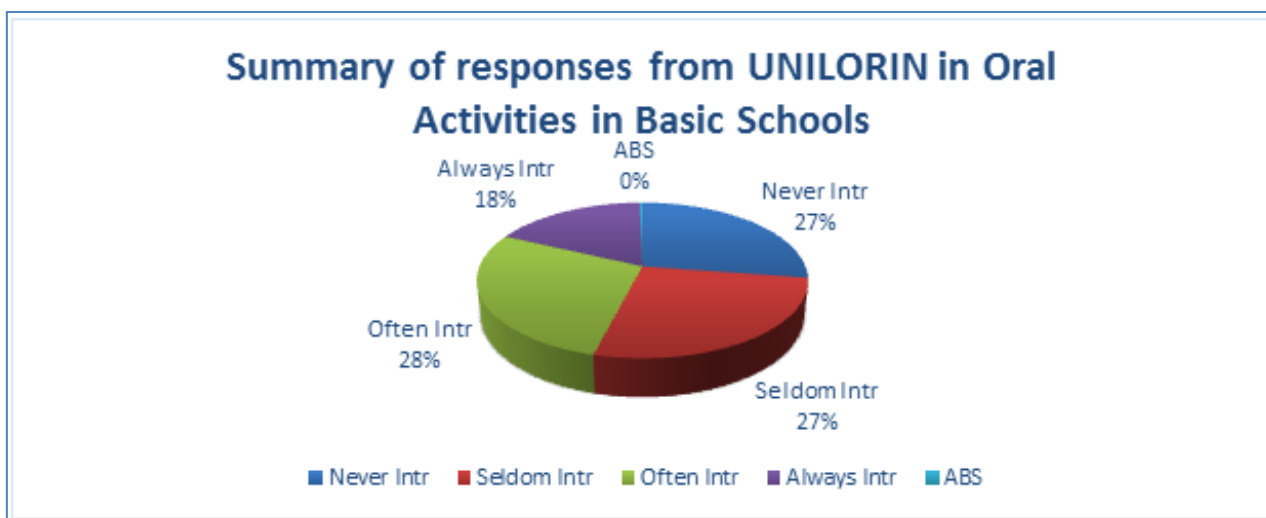| 1. Oral discussion in the English Language on topical issues discussed in the class.				
NI: 9 (18%)	SI: 12 (24%)	OI: 15 (30%)	AI: 14 (28%)	
2. Oral presentations either individually or in a group by students on selected topics in the classrooms.				
NI: 7 (14%)	SI: 13 (26%)	OI: 14 (28%)	AI: 16 (32%)	
3. Organization of debates on selected topics amongst students and opportunities are given for every student to participate.				
NI: 14 (28%)	SI: 04 (8%)	OI: 13 (26%)	AI: 19 (38%)	
4. Organization of quizzes amongst students, either between classes of the same school or inter-school.				
NI: 13 (26%)	SI: 05 (10%)	OI: 11 (22%)	AI: 21 (42%)	
5. Organization of English drama or any stage-managed activities amongst students.				
NI: 17 (34%)	SI: 03 (6%)	OI: 12 (24%)	AI: 16(32%)	ABS: 2 (4%)
6. Any activity in the English language that can boost students speaking prowess.				
NI: 08 (16%)	SI: 08 (16%)	OI: 11 (22%)	AI: 22 (44%)	ABS: 01 (2%)
68 (68/300*100) = 22.66%	45 (45/300* 100) =15%	76 (76/300*100) =25.33%	108 (108/300*100) =36%	03 (3/300*100) %
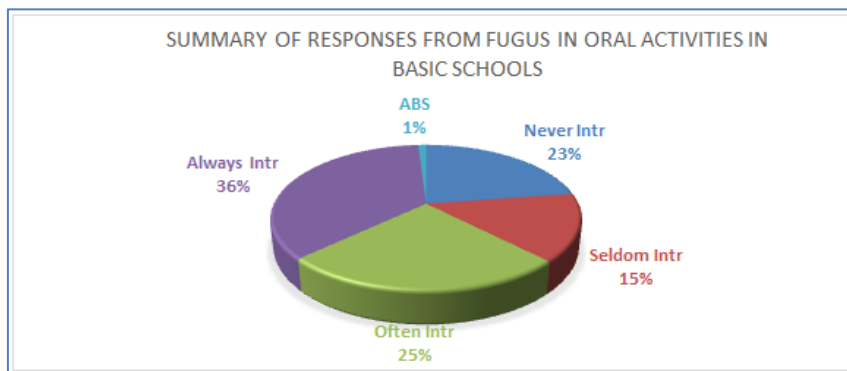
The analysis shows that respondents from Federal University Gusau have indicated that items in these parts are always introduced to them in basic school and they were equally given opportunity to participate with 36% of respondents, it was followed by respondents who showed that the items were often introduced and then those that showed that the items were Never Introduced. This shows that students from this part are expected to demonstrate high speaking skills based on the items, otherwise, even if introduced, students were not given equal opportunity to participate.

University of Ilorin (UNILORIN)

Below is a summary of all responses in part one (all six questions under it) from the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, and North Central Nigeria.

| 1. Oral discussion in the English Language on topical issues discussed in the class.				
NI: 27 (54%)	SI: 06 (12%)	OI: 10 (20%)	AI: 07 (14%)	
2. Oral presentations either individually or in a group by students on selected topics in the classrooms.				
NI: 7 (14%)	SI: 21 (42%)	OI: 14 (28%)	AI: 08 (16%)	
3. Organization of debates on selected topics amongst students and opportunities are given for every student to participate.				
NI: 15 (30%)	SI: 12 (24%)	OI: 14 (28%)	AI: 09 (18%)	
4. Organization of quizzes amongst students, either between classes of the same school or inter-school.				
NI: 07 (14%)	SI: 15 (30%)	OI: 17 (34%)	AI: 10 (20%)	ABS: 01 (2%)
5. Organization of English drama or any stage-managed activities amongst students.				
NI: 13 (26%)	SI: 13 (26%)	OI: 15(30%)	AI: 09 (18%)	ABS:
6. Any activity in the English language that can boost students speaking prowess.				
NI: 13 (26%)	SI: 13 (26%)	OI: 14 (28%)	AI: 10 (20%)	ABS:
82 (82/300*100) =27.33%	80 (80/300*100) = 26.66%	84 (84/300*100) = 28%	53 (53/300*100) = 17.66%	1 (1/300*100) =0.33%

1. Oral discussion in the English Language on topical issues discussed in the class.				
NI: 29 (58%)	SI: 09 (18%)	OI: 02 (4%)	AI: 09 (18%)	ABS: 01 (2%)
2. Oral presentations either individually or in a group by students on selected topics in the classrooms.				
NI: 7 (14%)	SI: 25 (50%)	OI: 13 (26%)	AI: 03 (6%)	ABS: 02 (4%)
3. Organization of debates on selected topics amongst students and opportunities are given for every student to participate.				
NI: 13 (26%)	SI: 16 (32%)	OI: 13 (26%)	AI: 05 (10%)	ABS: 03 (6%)
4. Organization of quizzes amongst students, either between classes of the same school or inter-school.				
NI: 12 (24%)	SI: 08 (16%)	OI: 20 (40%)	AI: 7 (14%)	ABS: 03 (6%)
5. Organization of English drama or any stage-managed activities amongst students.				
NI: 12 (24%)	SI: 10 (20%)	OI: 15 (30%)	AI: 11 (22%)	ABS: 2 (4%)
6. Any activity in the English language that can boost students speaking prowess.				
NI: 09 (18%)	SI: 16 (32%)	OI: 13 (26%)	AI: 11 (22%)	ABS: 01 (2%)
82 (82/300*100) = 27.33%	84 (84/300*100) = 28%	76 (76/300*100) = 25.33%	46 (46/300*100) = 15.33%	12 (12/300*100) = 4%

Response from the University of Ilorin shows 28 percent indicated that items in this category were often introduced, Never Introduced, and Seldom Introduced have an equal number of responses while Always introduced is the least indicated. These responses demonstrate that students in this part may have the fair speaking ability since students were often introduced to oral skills in basic schools and they were given equal opportunity to participate.

### North-West University Kano (NWUKano)
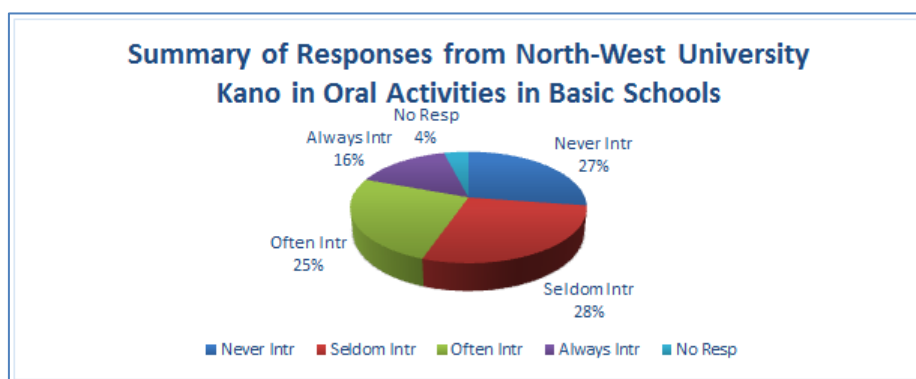
Response from North-West University showed 28% of the respondents indicated that items under this category were seldom introduced to them in basic schools, this is followed by those that showed that it is never introduced (27.33%) and always introduced was rated least with only 15.33%. this response showed the reason why students from this axis may have little proficiency in the spoken aspect of the English language.

Nasarawa State University Keffi (NSUKeffi)

| 1. Oral discussion in the English Language on topical issues discussed in the class.				
NI: 08 (20.5%)	SI: 08 (20.5%)	OI: 12 (30.8%)	AI: 11 (28.21%)	
2. Oral presentations either individually or in a group by students on selected topics in the classrooms.				
NI: 6 (15.4%)	SI: 09 (23.1%)	OI: 14 (35.9%)	AI: 10 (25.6%)	
3. Organization of debates on selected topics amongst students and opportunities are given for every student to participate.				
NI: 06 (15.4%)	SI: 06 (15.4%)	OI: 11 (28.2%)	AI: 16 (41.02%)	
4. Organization of quizzes amongst students, either between classes of the same school or inter-school.				
NI: 07 (17.9%)	SI: 06 (15.4%)	OI: 09 (23.2%)	AI: 16 (41.02%)	ABS: 01 (2.6%)
5. Organization of English drama or any stage-managed activities amongst students.				
NI: 11 (28.2%)	SI: 05 (12.8%)	OI: 12 (30.8%)	AI: 08 (20.5%)	ABS: 03 (7.7%)
6. Any activity in the English language that can boost students speaking prowess.				
NI: 08 (20.5%)	SI: 06 (15.4%)	OI: 15 (38.5%)	AI: 09 (23.1%)	ABS: 01 (2.6%)
46 (46/234*100) =19.66%	40 (40/234*100) = 17.09%	73 (73/234*100) = 31.2%	70 (70/234*100) = 29.91%	05 (5/234*100) =2.14%
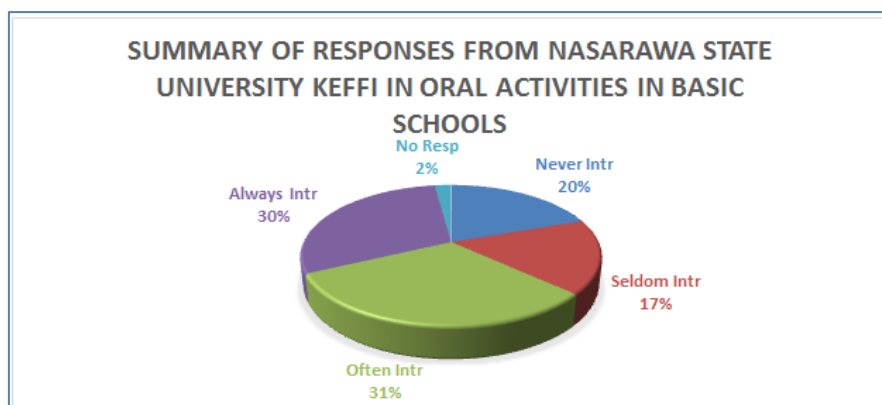
The majority of the respondents from Nasarawa State University Keffi showed that the items under this category are often introduced (31%), then closely followed by those that indicated that the items are always introduced (30%) while only 17% indicated that the items are seldom introduced. This response shows that students from this axis may have relatively high proficiency in the spoken aspect of language based on the data available to this research.

Summary of Part one (1)

Never Introduced (NI)	Seldom Introduced (SI)	Often Introduced (OI)	Always Introduced (AI)	ABS: when no choice is made
278/1,134*100 = 24.51%	249/1,134*100 = 21.96%	309/1,134*100 = 27.24%	277/1,134*100 = 24.43%	21/1,134*100 = 1.86%
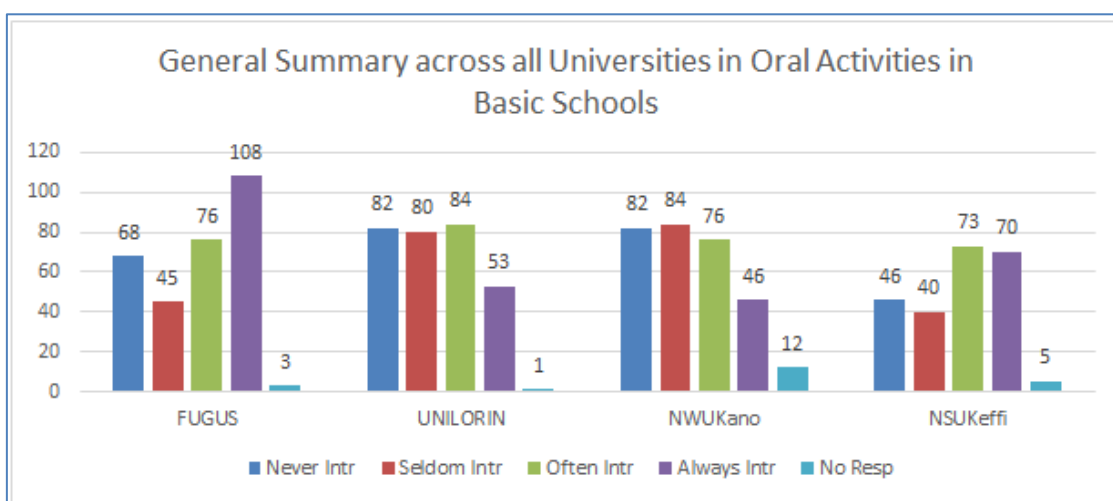
The general summary of the data indicated that respondents who showed that the items under this category are often introduced were the majority with about 27.24% of the total responses. This demonstrates that, barring any other factor, students from the North will possess a fair level of proficiency in terms of the spoken aspect of the English Language. The response also indicated a relatively high percentage for those that indicated that the items are never introduced and always introduced (24.51 and 24.43 respectively). This fluctuating number indicated that we may witness a variation in the level of proficiency between the different parts of the North or even within the different parts. This helps to confirm the hypothesis of the research that respondents with adequate training in oral presentation in basic school will have a fair level of proficiency in the spoken aspect of the language.

Part Two (2): Speaking English at Home, Religious or Market Places with Family Members, Friends or other Acquaintances

Federal University Gusau

Below is the summary of all the responses to the six questions under this part from the Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State, and Northwest Nigeria.

1. Discussion in the English Language with family members on domestic issues and other family affairs				
NI: 13 (26%)	SI: 05 (10%)	OI: 12 (24%)	AI: 20 (40%)	ABS:
2. Discussion in the English Language with family members on current affairs and any other issue especially when watching TV				
NI: 12 (24%)	SI: 11 (22%)	OI: 08 (16%)	AI: 19 (38%)	ABS:
3. Discussion in the English Language in religious centres (churches, mosques, shrines, etc) in issues that relate to religious functions				
NI: 20 (40%)	SI: 07 (14%)	OI: 14 (28%)	AI: 09 (18%)	ABS:
4. Discussion in the English Language with other people in market places on transactional issues				
NI: 05 (10%)	SI: 10 (20%)	OI: 13 (26%)	AI: 21 (42%)	ABS: 01 (2%)
5. Discussion or any informal chats on any issue with friends and peers either at home, in school, or religious places				
NI: 06 (12%)	SI: 06 (12%)	OI: 11 (22%)	AI: 27 (54%)	ABS:
6. Any other issue that could warrant informal discussion among family members or friends				
NI: 12 (24%)	SI: 09 (18%)	OI: 11 (22%)	AI: 18 (36%)	ABS:
68 (22.66%)	48 (16%)	69 (23%)	114 (38%)	1 (0.333)

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM FUGUS ON SPEAKING ENGLISH AT HOME, RELIGIOUS OR MARKET PLACES
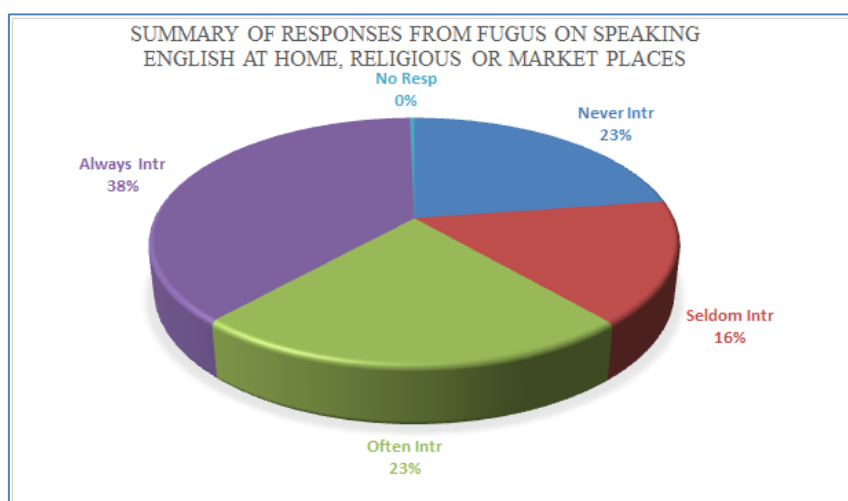
The response in FUGUS under this category also indicated that respondents that testified that they engaged in various items of this category rated high with Always Introduced having 38%, distantly followed by often introduced and then Never introduced with 23% an 22.66% respectively. The data indicated that students in this part are expected to possess a fair level of proficiency in terms of spoken skills as language is learned through constant communication. Otherwise, the response does not reflect the reality on the ground.

UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN

Below is the summary of responses in part two (2) from the University of Ilorin Kwara State, North Central Nigeria.

1. Discussion in the English Language with family members on domestic issues and other family affairs				
NI: 23 (46%)	SI: 08 (16%)	OI: 12 (24%)	AI: 07 (14%)	ABS:
2. Discussion in the English Language with family members on current affairs and any other issue especially when watching TV				
NI: 10 (20%)	SI: 15 (30%)	OI: 17 (34%)	AI: 08 (16%)	ABS:
3. Discussion in the English Language in religious centres (churches, mosques, shrines, etc) in issues that relate to religious functions				
NI: 13 (26%)	SI: 09 (18%)	OI: 19 (38%)	AI: 09 (18%)	ABS:
4. Discussion in the English Language with other people in market places on transactional issues				
NI: 11 (22%)	SI: 19 (38%)	OI: 11 (22%)	AI: 09 (18%)	ABS:
5. Discussion or any informal chats on any issue with friends and peers either at home, in school, or religious places				
NI: 10 (20%)	SI: 14 (28%)	OI: 14 (28%)	AI: 12 (24%)	ABS:
6. Any other issue that could warrant informal discussion among family members or friends				
NI: 08 (16%)	SI: 13 (26%)	OI: 19 (38%)	AI: 10 (20%)	ABS:
75 (25%)	78 (26%)	92 (30.66%)	55 (18.33%)	
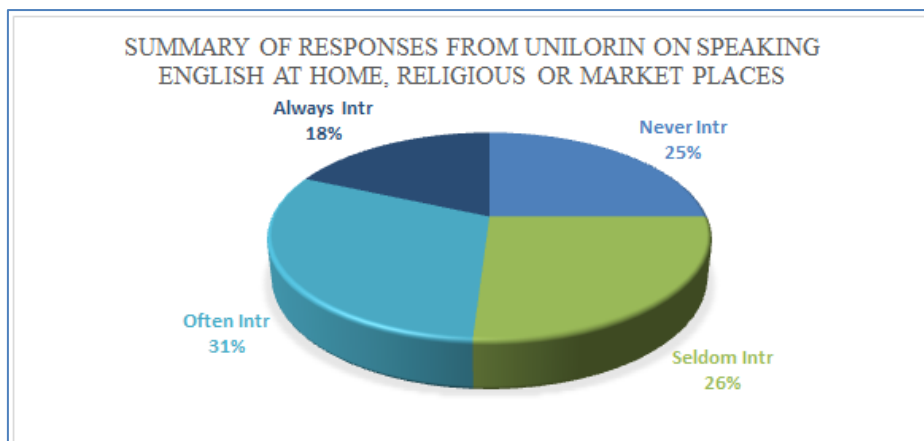
The majority of respondents from the University of Ilorin indicated that the items on this category were often introduced with about 31%, it was closely followed by respondents who testified that the items are seldom introduced and never introduced with 26% 25% respectively. The data indicated that many students from this part may have a fair level of proficiency in the spoken aspect of language. At the same time, some students may have a poor level of proficiency due to the high percentage of respondents who indicated that items in this category were never introduced.

NORTHWEST UNIVERSITY KANO

1. Discussion in the English Language with family members on domestic issues and other family affairs				
NI: 24 (48%)	SI: 12 (24%)	OI: 09 (18%)	AI: 04 (8%)	ABS: 01 (2%)
2. Discussion in the English Language with family members on current affairs and any other issue especially when watching TV				
NI: 09 (18%)	SI: 29 (58%)	OI: 08 (16%)	AI: 02 (4%)	ABS: 02 (4%)
3. Discussion in the English Language in religious centres (churches, mosques, shrines, etc) in issues that relate to religious functions				
NI: 12 (24%)	SI: 14 (28%)	OI: 18 (36%)	AI: 03 (6%)	ABS: 03 (6%)
4. Discussion in the English Language with other people in market places on transactional issues				
NI: 10 (20%)	SI: 14 (28%)	OI: 18 (36%)	AI: 07 (14%)	ABS: 01 (2%)
5. Discussion or any informal chats on any issue with friends and peers either at home, in school, or religious places				
NI: 09 (18%)	SI: 12 (24%)	OI: 22 (44%)	AI: 06 (12%)	ABS: 01 (2%)
6. Any other issue that could warrant informal discussion among family members or friends				
NI: 08 (16%)	SI: 12 (24%)	OI: 12 (24%)	AI: 17 (34%)	ABS: 01 (2%)
72 (24%)	93 (31%)	87 (29%)	39 (13%)	09 (3%)
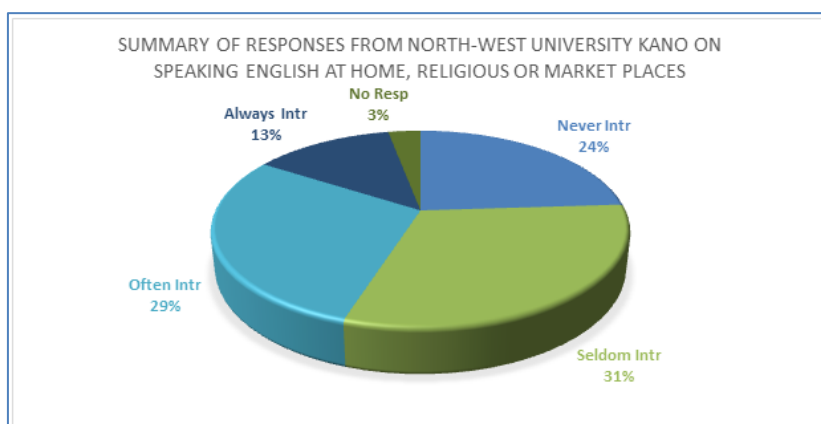
The majority of respondents from North-West University indicated that items under this category were seldom introduced (31%), the response was closely followed by those who indicated that it was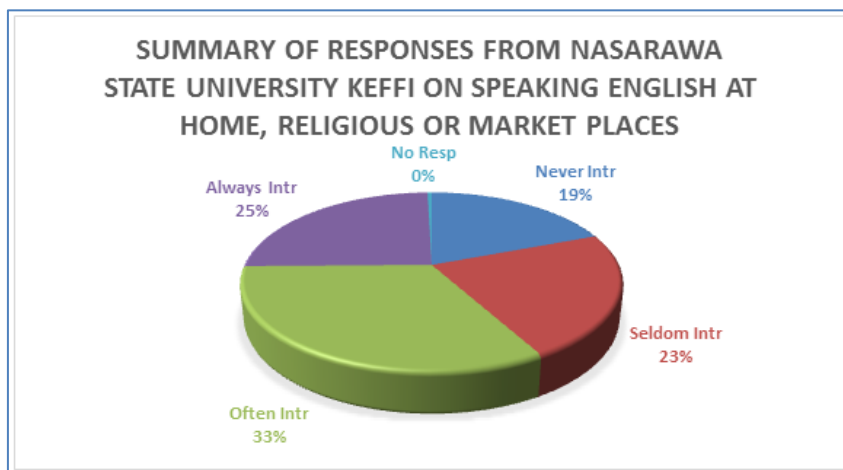 often introduced (29%). Always introduced as indicated least which demonstrated that in this part, probably due to dominance of Hausa Language as the Lingua Franca of people here, students use English least in their day-to-day communication. This data indicates that there will

be little proficiency in the spoken aspect of the language since they limited its use to a formal classroom setting. Also, there will be some cross-section of students who will have a fair level of

proficiency within the same part. This can be witnessed from the relative middle level of response which indicated that it is often introduced.

NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY KEFFI

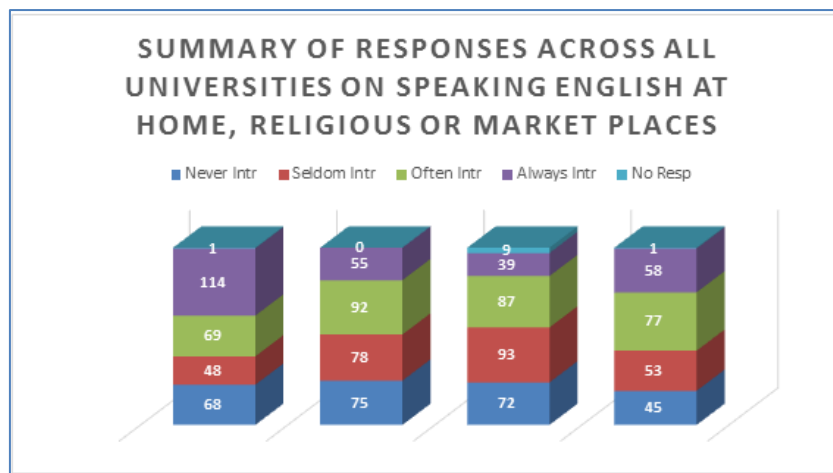| 1. Discussion in the English Language with family members on domestic issues and other family affairs				
NI: 10 (25.6%)	SI: 08 (20.5%)	OI: 14 (35.9%)	AI: 07 (17.94%)	ABS:
2. Discussion in the English Language with family members on current affairs and any other issue especially when watching TV				
NI: 03 (7.7%)	SI: 12 (30.8%)	OI: 15 (38.5%)	AI: 09 (23.1%)	ABS:
3. Discussion in the English Language in religious centres (churches, mosques, shrines, etc) in issues that relate to religious functions				
NI: 07 (17.94%)	SI: 05 (12.82%)	OI: 13 (33.33%)	AI: 13 (33.33%)	ABS: 01 (2.6)
4. Discussion in the English Language with other people in market places on transactional issues				
NI: 08 (20.5%)	SI: 12 (30.8%)	OI: 11 (28.2%)	AI: 08 (20.5%)	ABS:
5. Discussion or any informal chats on any issue with friends and peers either at home, in school, or religious places				
NI: 08 (20.5%)	SI: 07 (17.94%)	OI: 13 (33.33%)	AI: 11 (28.2%)	ABS:
6. Any other issue that could warrant informal discussion among family members or friends				
NI: 09 (23.1%)	SI: 09 (23.1%)	OI: 11 (28.2%)	AI: 10 (25.6%)	ABS:
45 (19.23%)	53 (22.64%)	77 (32.90%)	58 (24.8%)	01 (0.43%)

Response from Nasarawa State University Keffi shows respondents who indicated that items in this category are often introduced are the majority with 33%, distantly followed by respondents who indicated that items are always introduced. This response shows that there may be some level of proficiency that can be found with students from this part. Never introduced is rated low with only 19%, this is an indicator that even though some students with a low level of proficiency will be found, but their number will not constitute a significant percentage compared with those with high and middle-level proficiency.

Summary of Part Two (2)

Never Introduced (NI)	Seldom Introduced	Often Introduced	Always Introduced	ABS: when no choice is made
260/1,134*100 = 22.93%	272/1,134*100 = 23.99%	325/1,134*100 = 28.66%	266/1,134*100 = 23.45%	11/1,134*100 = 0.97%

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES ACROSS ALL UNIVERSITIES ON SPEAKING ENGLISH AT HOME, RELIGIOUS OR MARKET PLACES

As in the first category, respondents which indicated that items in this category are ***often introduced*** also constitute the majority with ***28%.*** They are followed by those who indicated that items were ***seldom introduced*** (**23.93%)** and always introduced (23.45%) while never introduced is rated low with only 22.93%. What this means is that, while we may have students with a fair-high level of proficiency, there will also be some with a low level of proficiency in all the three parts studied. This also underscores the importance of day-to-day communication in language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

English is a medium of instruction in our schools and a compulsory school subject that must be passed at all levels of education in Nigeria. One of the vital points this study has established is that proficiency in spoken language can be achieved through conscious efforts, but exposure to the language by engaging in its communication is a key. This study has proved that second language learning can be enhanced if the learners are adequately exposed to the language being learned right from basic schools. Michael Long's in his Interactive Hypothesis states that the development of Language Proficiency is promoted by face-to-face interaction and communication.

Krashen [21] also in his *Affective filter theory* of second-language acquisition applauded the learners' motivation, self-confidence, and good image. He believes these three qualities are a catalyst for successful spoken language proficiency while the absence of such qualities translates to poor speaking ability.

RECOMMENDATION

the study makes the following recommendations:
1. That more priority should be given to language skills (viz: speaking, writing, reading, and listening) as they are very important in language learning.

2. Oral communication always increases proficiency in language learning, learners are encouraged to as much as possible find a means of engaging in communication as it will enhance their speaking ability.
3. Good reading culture is also a very good method of enriching learners' vocabulary, hence increased proficiency in spoken language.

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Appendix 1 (Demographic data Distribution)

Gender Distribution of Respondents

FUGUS	Male	27 (54%)	Female	23 (46%)
University of Ilorin	Male	32 (64%)	Female	18 (36%)
Northwest University Kano	Male	22 (44%)	Female	28 (56%)
Nasarawa State University Keffi	Male	16 (41%)	Female	23 (59%)

Distribution by Field of Study

FUGUS
Sciences: 27 (54%); Social & Mgt Sci.: 10 (20%);   Arts: 11 (22%); Others (Education): 2 (4%)
University of Ilorin
Sciences: 14 (28%); Social & Mgt Sci 8 (16%);   Arts 19 (38%);   Engineering. 7 (14%);   Medical & Allied Sciences 1 (2%);   UNIDENTIFIED 1 (1%)
Northwest University Kano
Sciences: 8 (16%); Social & Mgt Sci. 8 (16%);   Arts 22 (44%);   Others (Education) 12 (24%)
Nasarawa State University Keffi
Sciences: 0;   Social & Mgt Sci.: 0;   Arts: 38 (97.4%);   Engineering: 1 (2.6%)
Summary of responses across all the Universities
Sciences: 49 (25.9); Social & Mgt Sci.: 26 (13.8%);   Arts: 90 (47.6);   Engineering: 8 (4.23%);   Medical and Allied Courses: 1 (0.53%); others (Educ.) 12 (7.4%) Unspecified responses: 1 (0.53%)

Distribution by Geographical Area

FUGUS: NW: 42 (84%); NE: 0 (0%); NC: 8 (16%)
University of Ilorin: NW: 0; NE: 0; NC: 50 (100%)
Northwest University Kano: NW: 40 (80%); NE: 2 (4%); NC: 4 (8%); Unsppecified GA: 2 (4%)
Nasarawa State University Keffi: NW: 3 (7.7%); NE: 3 (7.7%); NC: 31 (79.5%); Unspecified GA: 2 (5.12%)
Summary of all responses across all the four (4) universities
NW: 85 (45%); NE: 5 (2.6%) & NC: 93 (49.2%); Unspecified responses: 6 (3.2%)

Distribution by Age Group

FUGUS	18-25: 39 (78%); 25-30: 9 (18%); 35-40: 1 (2%); Unspecified age: 1 (2%)
University of Ilorin	18-25: 39 (78%); 25-30: 10 (20%); 30-35: 1 (2%)
NorthWest University Kano	18-25: 27 (54%); 25-30: 16 (32%); 30-35: 5 (10); 35-40: 1 (2%); Unspecified age group: 1 (2%)
Nasarawa State University Keffi	18-25: 33 (84%); 25-30: 5 (12.8%); 30-35: 1 (2.6%)
Summary of all responses of age group across all Universities	18-25yrs: 138 (73%); 25-30yrs: 40 (21.2%); 30-35yrs: 7 (3.7%); 35-40yrs: 2 (1.1%); Unspecified age group: 2 (1.1%)

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

(1) Please indicate on the scale below (√) whether, during your primary and Secondary days, your teachers can introduce topics that enable you engaged in oral presentation activities that could boost your speaking ability (e.g group discussions, debates, quizzes, etc).

S/N	Oral Activity Involving Students in Basic Schools	1 NI	2 SI	3 OI	4 AI
1	Oral discussions in the English Language on topical issues discussed in the class (e.g current affairs and other community issues)				
2	Oral Presentation either individually or in group by students on select topics in the class rooms				
3	Organization of debates on selected topics amongst students in classes and opportunities are given for everybody to participate.				
4	Organization of quizzes amongst students in a class, between classes or inter-schools.				
5	Organization of English drama or any stage-managed activities amongst students (or acting a particular play)				
6	Any activity in English language that can boost students' speaking ability in the Language				

Keywords:
1. Never Introduced (**NI**) **2.** Seldom introduced (**SI**) **4.** Often Introduced (**OI**) **3.** Always Introduced (**AI**)
(2) Please indicate on the scale below (√) whether at home with your parents, sibling, or friends, or at the religious worships (e.g churches, mosques, or shrines) you have the opportunity of speaking in the English language without being snubbed.

S/N	Speaking English Language at home with family members, friends or at religious places or markets places	1 NI	2 SI	3 OI	4 AI
1	Discussions in English Language with family members on domestic issues and other family Affairs				
2	Discussions in English Language with family members on current affairs and any other issues especially when watching TV				
3	Discussions in English Language in religious centres (churches, mosques and shrines) on issues that relates to religious functions etc.				
4	Discussions in English Language with other people in market places on transactional issues				
5	Discussion or informal chats on any issue with friends and peers either at home, in schools or religious places				
6	Any other issue that could warrant informal discussions among family members and other friends				

Keywords:
1. Never Introduced (**NI**) **2.** Seldom introduced (**SI**) **4.** Often Introduced (**OI**) **3.** Always Introduced (**AI**)