

**DETERMINANTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF LANGUAGES OF THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT AND THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR LEARNING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS**

By

**GODFREY-KALIO, I. A**

And

**OWUSHI, J.N.**

Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education,  
University of Port Harcourt, Choba P.M.B. 5323,  
Port Harcourt, Nigeria

**ABSTRACT**

*The study was carried out to investigate the relationships between languages of the immediate environment and the acquisition of productive English Language Skills for learning among primary school Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Five research objectives were raised which were translated into research questions and hypotheses. The Correlational Research Design was utilized. A total of 5,947 teachers in 359 public primary schools in the study area constituted the population of the study out of which 576 teachers were sampled. The instruments used for data collection was a researcher designed questionnaire and inventory. The questionnaire was titled: "Questionnaire on Language of the Immediate Environment and Acquisition of Productive Language Skills among Primary School Pupils (QLIEAPLSPSP)". This was used to elicit information on the prevalent languages of the immediate environment while the inventory focused on the English language productive skills. The test-retest method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instruments and an index of 0.76 and 0.68 were obtained. The research questions and the null hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The results of the study indicated a significant relationship between mother tongue and the acquisition of productive English language skills among the pupils. There was also a positive relationship between prevalent indigenous language and the acquisition of productive English language skills among pupils. It was therefore, recommended that teachers incorporate mother tongue into teaching primary school pupils for ease of assimilation as enshrined in the National Policy on Education. Pupils should be allowed to express themselves freely in their indigenous language by allowing them use the language when they could not get the appropriate English words while in school and at home without fear of punishment from parents and teachers. The use of slangs in public primary schools should be discouraged by the teachers and parents as this affects the proficiency of the pupils in English language.*

**Keywords: English Language Skills, Acquisition, Immediate environment and Primary school Pupils.**

---

**INTRODUCTION**

Language is an instrument for communication and human beings use it to convey information among themselves. The ability to use a language is called language skill. When we learn a language, we usually learn four language skills, such as, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Language skills are talents, experiences and knowledge that allow an individual to communicate. Therefore,

when we learn our first language, we usually learn to listen first, speak, read, and finally write (Baba, 2016).

Reading and Listening are called receptive skills because when we listen and read, we receive information, understand it and interpret the meaning. Speaking and writing are called productive skills because through the process of speaking or written texts, humans produce meanings. Speaking is a productive aural/oral skill. It consists of producing systematic verbal utterances, to convey meanings. It is therefore important that, pupils take every opportunity to speak in the classroom when with their peers. This can be done by trying to communicate so that they realize their need for language and by speaking, it will help them to increase their fluency and confidence. This process will involve several scenarios, at first, pupils may be self-conscious and reluctant to speak in front of their peers. However, there are ways of providing a safer, less public environment in which the pupils can begin to practice speaking. This can be accomplished through repetition work and pair work activities (Brown, 2000).

Speaking is more frequently used than writing and the main function of spoken language is to socialize among individuals. On the contrary, writing or spoken language are produced and processed in real time. The speaker and listener have limited time to plan and produce what they want to say and understand what they hear. Speech is generally used in face-to-face conversations. It is temporary, spontaneous and variable. Spoken language is supported by body language such as gestures or facial expressions often called non-verbal communication skills (Brown, 2000).

Speaking skill is the most important skill required to acquire a foreign or second language. Among the four key language skills, speaking is deemed to be the most important skill in learning a foreign or second language. Elements of speaking skills include the ability to speak fluently, audibly and with a good intonation. Speaking is the skill that the learners will be judged upon most in real life situations.

The acquisition of language skills by the pupils requires the use of different methods, as the method used by teachers will determine how active the learners will be involved in the class room. Language teachers are meant to be facilitators and the method employed by the teacher will have effects on the attitude and performance of pupils in acquiring the needed skills. Productive language skills will foster the necessary skills to be successful in formal schooling and to align learners' behaviors with the expectations of schools. Literacy acquisition is deeply rooted in language acquisition and exposure. This exposure and acquisition primarily occur within the home and the immediate environment of the learner. As a result, children enter school every year with varying skills based on the language skill experiences they gained at home and their environment before being enrolled in the primary school.

The importance of language of the immediate environment in the acquisition of education in any

nation has long been stressed by linguists. The use of the appropriate language in the home, environment and school has contributed to the acquisition of productive skill and language skills as a whole. It can also be said to play a role in the level of learning which can culminate into better academic performance and success in school. The easiest way to attain the mastery of writing and speaking English is through language of the immediate environment before any second language.

The immediate environment of the child is a place where children live with their parents or guardian and it is the place where they are groomed. It is a place where they begin to learn the norms and values of the society in which they find themselves (Collins, 2015). The use of the language of the immediate environment as the foundation for knowledge about language will support the acquisition of productive language skills and should be encouraged. No matter how much time children spend in daycare or preschool, the immediate environment exerts influence on their language acquisition. The language of the immediate environment consists of the mother tongue, indigenous language, slangs, jargon, and grammatical short forms among others. These, helps to nurture a culture of reading, it provides the child with elementary language skills such as letter knowledge, word recognition, or word decoding (Kolawole et al., 2000).

The relationship between the language of the immediate environment and the acquisition of English language skills is worth researching because the average primary school pupil is unable to be sufficiently literate in either the language of his/her immediate environment or English language. Therefore, if permanent literacy is to be promoted in primary schools, the effect of the language of the immediate environment as a medium of instruction on the acquisition of productive language skills ought to be studied. It is therefore, important to investigate, if the language of the immediate environment has any influence on the acquisition of productive English language skills among pupils of primary schools in Rivers East Senatorial District.

### **Objectives of the study**

The general objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between the language of the immediate environment and the acquisition of productive English Language skills among primary school Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District. The specific objectives are to:

- i. determine the relationship between mother tongue and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District.
- ii. determine the relationship between indigenous language and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District.
- iii. determine the relationship between slangs and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District.

- iv. determine the relationship between jargons and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study were:

- i. What is the relationship between mother tongue and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District?
- ii. What is the relationship between indigenous language and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District?
- iii. What is the relationship between slangs and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District?
- iv. What is the relationship between jargons and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District?

### **Research hypotheses**

The null hypotheses formulated to guide this study were:

- Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between mother tongue and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District;
- Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between indigenous language and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District;
- Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between slangs and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District;
- Ho<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant relationship between jargons and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District;

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The research employed a correlational research design. This design was chosen because it allowed the Researcher examine the relationship between two or more variables between languages of the immediate environment and the acquisition of Productive English language skills by public primary

school pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

### **Area of the study**

The area of study was the Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. The Rivers East Senatorial District is one of the three (3) Senatorial Districts that makes up Rivers State, consisting of eight (8) Local Government Areas which include, Port Harcourt, Obio/Akpor, Ikwerre, Etche, Omuma, Okrika, Ogu/Bolo and Emohua Local Government Areas respectively. The Senatorial District has a total of 359 public primary schools and 105 secondary schools. The Tertiary institutions in the area includes, University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Port Harcourt, the Rivers State University, the College of Health Science and Technology, Port Harcourt, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, the School of Nursing and Midwifery and the Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Port Harcourt.

The Senatorial District has a projected population of 2,670,903 according to the census data released in 2006. It is bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean; to the North by Imo; to the East by Rivers South East Senatorial District and to the West by Rivers West Senatorial District.

### **Population of the study**

A total of five thousand nine hundred and forty-seven (5,947) primary school teachers found in three hundred and fifty-nine(359) public primary schools in the Rivers East Senatorial District made up the population of this study (RSUBEBPR&S, 2022).

### **Sample and sampling techniques**

Five hundred and seventy-six (576) public primary school teachers which was approximately within 9.7% of the total population formed the sample size for the study. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. The stratified random sampling technique was used to stratify the 359 public primary schools on the basis of urban and rural Local Government Areas, consisting of eight (8) Local Government Area: Port Harcourt, Obio/Akpor, Ikwerre, Etche, Omuma, Okrika, Ogu/Bolo and Emohua Local Government Areas. The number of primary schools in the urban areas was 235 with 3,824 teachers and the number of primary schools in the rural area was 124 with 2,123 teachers. The list of the public primary schools was collected from the Universal Basic Education (UBE) board. The systematic random sampling technique was used to select a school at every 10<sup>th</sup> school. In all, 36 public primary schools in both urban and rural areas were selected for the study.

On arrival at the selected 36 public primary schools, the simple random sampling technique using the ballot-with-replacement approach was adopted to sample 16 teachers in each of the 36 schools to arrive at a total of 576 teachers used for the study.

### **Instrumentation**

The main instrument for the study was a Questionnaire and the productive language skills inventory. The Questionnaire designed was titled "Questionnaire on Language of the Immediate Environment

and Acquisition of Productive Language Skills among Primary School Pupils (QLIEAPLSPSP)". The questionnaire has three sections: Section A, elicited information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age and gender. Section B was made up of seventy (70) question items raised to elicit information on the languages of the Immediate Environment while Section C comprised of 30 question items designed to elicit information on the acquisition of productive language skills of pupils. The questionnaire was structured in such a way that responses to the research questions corresponded to a 4-point modified rating scale of A- Always 4, S-Sometimes 3, R-Rarely 2, N- Never 1 for positively structured items while research questions with negative structured item were rated in order of Strongly A-Always 1, S-Sometimes 2, R- Rarely 3, N- Never 4.

Items 1-10 of the questions were concerned with Mother tongue and acquisition of English Language Skills; items 11-20 were concerned with indigenous language and acquisition of English Language Skills; item 21-30 were concerned with slangs and acquisition of English Language Skills; while items 31-40 were concerned with jargons and acquisition of English Language Skills. Question items 41-70 comprised of a Productive English Language skill inventory.

#### **Validity of the Instrument**

The face and content validity of the instruments were established by giving the research instrument (questionnaire and inventory) to test and measurement experts in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and the University of Port Harcourt respectively. This was done purposely to determine whether the instrument satisfies what it was supposed to measure. The inputs they made on the instrument were used to improve the face and content validity of the instrument.

#### **Reliability of the instrument**

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest technique. The questionnaire and productive English language inventory were administered to 20 randomly selected primary school teachers in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State which was not part of the area of the study within an interval of two weeks. The test items were re-administered to the same set of teachers and the results obtained from the administration were therefore correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The reliability index of 0.76 and 0.68 was obtained which implies that the instrument was fit for the study.

#### **Administration of the instrument**

The administration of the instrument was done with the help of two research assistants. The research assistants were public school teachers from the area of study, they were properly guided on the mode of administration and retrieval of the instruments. The guidance centered on how to fill the

questionnaire properly and what the four-point scale represents (A-Always-Sometimes, R- Rarely, N- Never). Five hundred and seventy-six (576) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the teachers targeted as the sample population/respondents of the study. At the end of this exercise a total of 548 questionnaires were retrieved representing a 95.14% retrieval rate after 2 weeks.

### Method of Data Analysis

The research questions and the null hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

**Research Question1:** What is the relationship between mother tongue and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District?

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between mother tongue and the acquisition of Productive English language skills in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District.

**Table 1:** Summary of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between mother tongue and the acquisition of Productive English language skills among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District

		Mother tongue	Fluency	Intonation	Audibility	Punctuation	Drawing	Handwriting
Mother tongue	Pearson Correlation	1	.051	.059	.104	.038	.081	-.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.238	.165	.015	.370	.057	.305
Fluency	Pearson Correlation	.051	1	-.018	.024	.134**	-.010	-.035
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.238		.681	.570	.002	.807	.413
Intonation	Pearson Correlation	.059	-.018	1	.011	.041	-.034	-.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.165	.681		.796	.343	.425	.290
Audibility	Pearson Correlation	.104*	.024	.011	1	-.069	-.082	.014
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.015	.570	.796		.108	.056	.750
Punctuation	Pearson Correlation	.038	.134**	.041	-.069	1	-.006	-.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.370	.002	.343	.108		.880	.430
Drawing	Pearson Correlation	.081	-.010	-.034	-.082	-.006	1	.027
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.057	.807	.425	.056	.880		.527
Handwriting	Pearson Correlation	-.044	-.035	-.045	.014	-.034	.027	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.305	.413	.290	.750	.430	.527	
N		548	548	548	548	548	548	548

Table 1, presents the results of the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis, which examined

the relationship between mother tongue and the acquisition of productive English language skills (fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing, and handwriting) among pupils in the Rivers East Senatorial District. Result shows that the p-value=0.305 was obtained Overall, the results suggest that, mother tongue has a significant relationship with the acquisition of productive English language skills among pupils. It is worth noting that there is a statistically significant relationship between mother tongue and audibility in English language skills.

**Research questions 2:** What is the relationship between indigenous language and acquisition of Productive English language skill in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District?

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between indigenous language and acquisition of Productive English language skill in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District.

**Table 2:** Summary of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between indigenous language and the acquisition of Productive English language skills among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District

		Indigenous language	Fluency	Intonation	Audibility	Punctuation	Drawing	Handwriting
Indigenous language	Pearson Correlation	1	.153**	.016	.016	-.005	.026	.033
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000	.703	.701	.913	.544	.443
Fluency	Pearson Correlation	.153**	1	-.018	.024	.134**	-.010	-.035
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000		.681	.570	.002	.807	.413
Intonation	Pearson Correlation	.016	-.018	1	.011	.041	-.034	-.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.703	.681		.796	.343	.425	.290
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.701	.570	.796		.108	.056	.750
Punctuation	Pearson Correlation	-.005	.134**	.041	-.069	1	-.006	-.034
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.913	.002	.343	.108		.880	.430
Drawing	Pearson Correlation	.026	-.010	-.034	-.082	-.006	1	.027
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.544	.807	.425	.056	.880		.527
Handwriting	Pearson Correlation	.033	-.035	-.045	.014	-.034	.027	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.443	.413	.290	.750	.430	.527	
N		548	548	548	548	548	548	548

Table 2, presents the results of the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis, which examined the relationship between indigenous language and the acquisition of productive English language skills (fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing, and handwriting) among pupils in the Rivers East Senatorial District. Result shows that the p-value=0.443 was obtained. Overall, the results suggest that there is a significant positive relationship between indigenous language and

English language skills among pupils. The p-value obtained was statistically significant.

**Research questions 3:** What is the relationship between slangs and the acquisition of Productive English language skill in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District?

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between slangs and the acquisition of Productive English language skill in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District.

**Table 3:** Summary of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between slangs and acquisition of Productive English language skills among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District

		Slangs	Fluency	Intonation	Audibility	Punctuation	Drawing	Handwriting
Slangs	Pearson	1	.180°	.082	.037	-.006	-.001	-.052
	Correlation							
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000	.055	.384	.895	.986	.226
Fluency	Pearson	.180**	1	-.018	.024	.134**	-.010	-.035
	Correlation							
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000		.681	.570	.002	.807	.413
Intonation	Pearson	.082	-.018	1	.011	.041	-.034	-.045
	Correlation							
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.055	.681		.796	.343	.425	.290
Audibility	Pearson	.037	.024	.011	1	-.069	-.082	.014
	Correlation							
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.384	.570	.796		.108	.056	.750
Punctuation	Pearson	-.006	.134**	.041	-.069	1	-.006	-.034
	Correlation							
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.895	.002	.343	.108		.880	.430
Drawing	Pearson	-.001	-.010	-.034	-.082	-.006	1	.027
	Correlation							
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.986	.807	.425	.056	.880		.527
Handwriting	Pearson	-.052	-.035	-.045	.014	-.034	.027	1
	Correlation							
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.226	.413	.290	.750	.430	.527	
	N	548	548	548	548	548	548	548

Table 3 presents the results of the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis, which seeks to examine the relationship between slangs and the acquisition of productive English language skills (fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing, and handwriting) among pupils in the Rivers East Senatorial District. Result shows that the p-value=0.226 was obtained. Overall, the results suggest that there is a significant positive relationship between slangs and fluency in English language

skills among pupils in the Rivers East Senatorial District. However, the correlations between slangs and other productive English language skills (intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing, and handwriting) were very weak and not statistically significant. This means that while slangs may have a slight influence on fluency in English, they do not appear to be significantly related to other aspects of English language proficiency.

**Research questions 4:** What is the relationship between jargons and acquisition of Productive English language skill in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District?

**Ho<sub>4</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between jargons and acquisition of Productive English language skill in terms of fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing and handwriting among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District.

**Table 4:** Summary of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between jargons and acquisition of Productive English language skills among Pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District

		Jargons	Fluency	Intonation	Audibility	Punctuation	Drawing	Handwriting
Jargons	Pearson Correlation	1	.046	-.022	.011	.015	.074	.010
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.281	.609	.798	.726	.085	.813
Fluency	Pearson Correlation	.046	1	-.018	.024	.134**	-.010	-.035
	Sig.(2-	.281		.681	.570	.002	.807	.413
Intonation	Pearson Correlation	-.022	-.018	1	.011	.041	-.034	-.045
	Sig.(2-	.609	.681		.796	.343	.425	.290
Audibility	Pearson Correlation	.011	.024	.011	1	-.069	-.082	.014
	Sig.(2-	.798	.570	.796		.108	.056	.750
Punctuation	Pearson Correlation	.015	.134**	.041	-.069	1	-.006	-.034
	Sig.(2-	.726	.002	.343	.108		.880	.430
Drawing	Pearson Correlation	.074	-.010	-.034	-.082	-.006	1	.027
	Sig.(2-	.085	.807	.425	.056	.880		.527
Handwriting	Pearson Correlation	.010	-.035	-.045	.014	-.034	.027	1
	Sig.(2-	.813	.413	.290	.750	.430	.527	
<b>N</b>		<b>548</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>548</b>

Table 4 presents the results of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis, which seeks to examine the relationship between jargons and the acquisition of productive English language skills (fluency, intonation, audibility, punctuation, drawing, and handwriting) among pupils in the Rivers East Senatorial District. There is a very weak positive correlation ( $r= 0.074$ ) between jargons and drawing in English language skills. Overall, the results suggest that there is no significant relationship between jargons and the acquisition of productive English language skills among pupils in the Rivers East Senatorial District. The correlations between jargons and fluency, intonation, audibility,

punctuation, drawing, and handwriting are all very weak and not statistically significant.

### **Discussion of findings**

#### **The relationship between mother tongue and the acquisition of productive English language Skills among the pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District**

Findings from this study revealed that, there is a significant relationship between mother tongue and the acquisition of productive English language skills among pupils. This finding is in agreement with the submission of UNESCO (2005) which posited that, if mother tongue is used in schools, it creates the opportunity for parents to contribute to the successful implementation of the school curriculum because parents seemed not to have hesitations in speaking with their children's teachers because they have the freedom to express themselves in their mother tongue (home language) with the teachers. This underscores the importance of mother tongue as an important contributory factor in the implementation of school programmes. When parents are given the opportunity to participate in decision making about their children's schooling in a language, they are familiar with, they are no longer ashamed of using their mother tongue at meetings, and they no longer see speaking with their children's teachers as an unproductive effort.

This study corroborates the findings of UNESCO (2005) and Pozzi (2001) positing that, mother tongue can influence a person's English skills in various ways including sounds and intonation. For instance, if a person's first language is very different from English, they may find it difficult to produce English sounds and pronounce English words correctly. Hence, in the overall, mother tongue can have a significant impact on a person's Productive English language skills. Similarly, if a person's first language is very different from English, like in some cases among Nigerians, it will be difficult to acquire the productive English language skills. For example, if a person's mother tongue is Hausa, they may find it difficult to pronounce any word that has the letters "P" and "F" correctly. This is because the two letters are not common in their language. Unlike their Igbo and Yoruba counterparts. Therefore, if a person finds it difficult to be fluent in their mother tongue, they may find it difficult to use English audibly and with correct intonation, as it is may mostly applicable in the use of English idioms and expressions.

In the same vein, Iyamu and Ogiegbaen (2008) expressed the views of parents and teachers on the use of mother tongue (home language) as the medium for instruction in Nigerian primary schools. Their findings concluded that the mother tongue helps to bridge the home and school experiences. In other words, when children are taught with a language which they are familiar with from home, it facilitates a smooth transition from the home to school.

Finally, this study revealed that, speaking skill appears as the most difficult skills among the respondents and they agreed that English is indeed crucial especially as the means of communication. In agreement with previous claims, it is crucial to note that mother tongue will be helpful for an

individual in understanding certain concepts in their second language. Therefore, when faced with complex terminologies and rules, mother tongue will help in making the pupils understand certain concepts by comprehending their pre-requisite knowledge in their mother tongue. Thus, embedding native language use in second language (English) learning is seen as an alternative in getting the learners familiar with the second language (Ogbonna, 2007).

### **Relationship between indigenous language and fluency in English language skills among the pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District**

The findings of this study revealed that, there is a significant positive relationship between indigenous language and the acquisition of productive English language skills among pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District. This finding agrees with Mackenzie (2011) who researched on indigenous language and productive English language skills and concluded that a strong base in the indigenous language and productive skills is that it equips a child with productive skills that enables him/her master reading and writing through word decoding and encoding in other languages. This is possible because the child acquires the spoken language organically and can easily relate to the sounds of the spoken language with the written alphabet. Furthermore, Mackenzie (2011) explained that, the use of indigenous language displays creativity in the use of letters, punctuation and numbers and that it increases intonation awareness in children.

It is also emphasized that, the most important factors in the language learning environment are the people, the level of difficulty of the language and the amount of time that the learner has to devote to the language learning process. For instance, if the people around the learner are supportive and interested in helping the learner, then the learner will make progress. If the language is too difficult, the learner will become frustrated and give up. If the learner has a lot of time devoted to the language learning process, he or she will make progress (Ife and Adeyemi, 2016).

### **Relationship between slangs and fluency in English language skills among the pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District**

The study indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between slangs and fluency in English language skills among the pupils. However, while slangs may have a slight influence on fluency in English, they do not appear to be significantly related to other aspects of English language proficiency. This finding corroborates Brown (2000) who posited that slangs has an overwhelming influence in the development of productive language skill among learners in terms of speaking and writing.

In connection with the findings of this study as corroborated with those of Brown (2000), it was explained that, children's first words make reference to objects in their environment and might be monosyllabic to facilitate social interaction. They further explained that, a child's communicative

competence develops according to socially acceptable rules. This implies, that, the language development of the child is influenced by cultural identities which includes slangs used in an environment. This social interaction slang is important and observed as the language used in the primary speech community (in the house from birth to school going age) and are very different from that of the secondary speech community (the school).

### **Relationship between jargons and the acquisition of productive English language skills among pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District**

The findings of this study indicates that, there was no significant relationship between jargons and the acquisition of productive English language skills among pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District. In agreement with this finding, Hymes (2004) submitted that while jargon creates greater efficiency in communication among those aware of it, its side-effect is that it raises some problems for those who do not understand it. Consequently, some academic scientists advocate the use of jargon-free languages, since their audience may have difficulty or be confused by the technical terminologies involved in its use, and thus the persons may lose track of the speaker or writer's broader and more important arguments.

The findings of this study is also in agreement with Doherty and Hughes (2014), who observed that during the stage of language acquisition, children's abilities to understand, to process, and to produce language flourishes in an amazing way through jargons. These authors established that, young children experience language explosions between the ages of 3 and 6. For instance at age 3, their spoken vocabularies consist of roughly 900 words. By age 6, spoken vocabularies expand dramatically to anywhere between 8,000 and 14,000 words. During infancy and toddlerhood, young children are almost always able to understand far many more words than they can speak. However, with this language explosion, their expressive (spoken language) abilities start to catch up with their receptive (ability to comprehend language) skills. As children move beyond using two-word sentences, they start to learn and understand grammar rules. They further explained that, all English-speaking children follow a regular sequence when using these rules. For example, children first begin using simple plurals (cats) and possessive forms of nouns (Daddy's car). Then, they put appropriate endings on verbs (jump becomes jumped), use prepositions ("in the street"), articles ("the", "a", or "an"), various forms of the verb to be ("is", "are", "were", etc.), and so on. In part, the explosion inexpressive skills occur because of the gains in attention and memory described above. Children become increasingly skilled at remembering and practicing the language modeled around them, as well as modifying word use based on other people's reactions (Doherty and Hughes, 2014).

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study revealed significant relationships between the use of mother tongue, indigenous language and slangs on fluency and acquisition of productive English language skills among the pupils in Rivers

East Senatorial District. On the contrary, no significant relationship occurred between the uses of jargons on the acquisition of productive English language skills among the pupils in Rivers East Senatorial District. In view of the conclusion reached by this study, it was recommended that teachers should incorporate mother tongue into teaching primary school pupils for ease of assimilation as enshrined in the National Policy on Education. Similarly, primary school pupils should be allowed to express themselves freely in their indigenous language permitting them to use the language when they could not get the appropriate English words while in school and at home without fear of punishment from parents and teachers. However, in public primary schools slangs should be discouraged by the teachers and parents. This is because, it draws the proficiency of the pupils in English language from good to bad. Hence, slangs should not be allowed as a means of communication among primary school pupils. Furthermore, like slangs, jargon has no significant relationship with productive English language skills. Classroom teachers should ensure that the use of jargons is prohibited in the classroom and parents should avoid using it at home.

**REFERENCES**

- Baba, N. S. (2016). An analysis of teacher willingness to use the language of the immediate environment at lower basic 3 in Jigawa State. In: McIlwraith, H. (Ed), *The Abuja Regional Hornby School: Language Lessons from Africa*: London: British Council
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of Language learning and teaching* (4th ed.). New York: Longman.
- Collins, S.H (2015). The nature and impact of changes in home learning environment on development of language and academic skills in preschool children. *Developmental Psychology*, 46(5), 1103- 1110.
- Doherty, J. & Hughes, M. (2014). *Child Development: Theory and practice 0-11*. Italy: L.E.G.O.S.P.A
- Hymes, D. H. (2004). *Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Ife, A., & Adeyemi, J. A. (2016). English Language Dominance and the Fate of Indigenous Languages in Nigeria. *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies (IJHCS)*, 2(4), 10-17.
- Iyamu, E.O.S & Ogiegbaen, S.E.A. (2008) Parents and teachers' perceptions of mother tongue medium of instruction policy in Nigerian primary schools. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 20(2): 97-108.
- Kolawole C, Adepoju A., & Adelore, O. (2000). Trends in secondary school students' performance in English Language. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 23(2), 34-41.
- Mackenzie, N. M. (2011). From drawing to writing: What happens when you shift teaching priorities in the first six months of school? *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 34(3), 322-340.
- Ogbonna, S.O. (2007). Issues, problems, and prospects of mother tongue education in Nigeria, *Journal of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria*, 10, 223-232.
- Pozzi, C. (2001). New Technologies and Education in Africa: The Case of Kenya. (chiara. Pozzi @unimib.it.)
- (RSUBEBPR&S, 2022) Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board, Planning, Research & Statistics, 2022)
- UNESCO (2005). *Advocacy brief on mother-tongue based teaching and education for girls; Advocacy brief*. UNESCO Office, Bangkok and Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and Pacific.