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Duty of Cohort Communication in Improving Spoken English Language Among Senior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Metropolis

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Abstract **Original Research Article**

The study investigated the Duty of Cohort Communication in Improving spoken English among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The objectives were to determine the extent to which Cohort Communication influences spoken English, identify the types of interactions that promote proficiency, examine challenges associated with peer interactions, and assess the impact of peer influence on students' confidence in speaking English. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, with a population of 2,500 senior secondary school students. A sample of 250 studentswas selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into demographic information and Likert-scale items, which was validated by experts and tested for reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.82). Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores) and Chi-square (χ^2) test for hypothesis testing. The findings revealed that Cohort Communication significantly enhances students' spoken English, particularly in vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation. Structured peer activities such as group discussions, debates, Duty plays, and peer mentoring were found to be the most effective in improving oral proficiency. Challenges, including dominance by certain peers, informal language use, and lack of structured activities, moderately hindered peer Communication. Positive peer influence was found to boost students' confidence, reduce anxiety, and motivate regular practice. Hypothesis testing confirmed that Cohort Communication has a significant effect on the enhancement of spoken English. The study concluded that Cohort Communication is a critical factor in developing spoken English proficiency among senior secondary students. It is recommended that teachers integrate structured peer activities into language instruction, administrators foster supportive learning environments, and curriculum planners incorporate collaborative learning strategies into English language programs. The study provides a valuable reference for future research on peer influence and language learning.

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Introduction

Language is an important instrument for Communication, social communication, and Cognitive development. Speaking is the most important of the four major language abilities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) since it allows one to communicate and express ideas quickly and effectively. In a multilingual society like Nigeria, English as the official language and language of instruction in schools is one of the important conditions for good performance in examinations and for students to benefit from their education and trained knowledge.

Despite years of formal education, many senior secondary school students in Nigeria, particularly in urban centers like Port Harcourt Metropolis, still struggle with spoken English. This challenge is often linked to factors such as mother tongue interference, lack of exposure to standard English, inadequate teaching strategies, and limited opportunities for practical communication. Traditional classroom settings tend to emphasize grammar and written aspects of the language, often neglecting the development of oral communication skills.

Cohort Communication has emerged as a significant social factor influencing language development among adolescents. A Cohort refers to individuals of similar age, social status, or interests who interact regularly and influence each other's behavior, attitudes, and communication patterns. In the context of language learning, peer Communication provides a natural and less formal environment where students can practice speaking, exchange ideas, and learn from one another without the fear often associated with teacher-centered instruction.

Scholars have emphasized the importance of social Communication in language acquisition. The social Communication theory, as proposed by Vygotsky, posits that learning occurs through Communication with others, particularly within a social context. Through peer engagement, learners are exposed to new vocabulary, pronunciation patterns, and communicative strategies, which contribute to the improvement of their spoken language skills. In secondary schools, Cohort Communication can take various forms, including group discussions, debates, Duty plays, and informal conversations during school activities.

In Port Harcourt Metropolis, where students come from diverse linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds, Cohort Communication plays a crucial Duty in shaping language use. Students often adopt speech patterns from their peers, which may either enhance or hinder their proficiency in spoken English. Positive peer influence can encourage the use of correct English expressions, boost confidence, and reduce anxiety associated with speaking. Conversely, negative peer influence may reinforce the use of slang, pidgin English, or incorrect grammar.

Furthermore, the adolescent stage is characterized by a strong desire for social acceptance, making peer groups highly influential in shaping behavior and communication. Students are more likely to practice speaking English when they feel comfortable and accepted within their peer groups. This informal learning environment complements formal instruction and can significantly enhance language acquisition.

However, the effectiveness of Cohort Communication in improving spoken English depends on several factors, including the nature of the Cohort, the level of English proficiency among group members, and the opportunities provided by the school for collaborative learning. Teachers and school administrators also play a vital Duty in facilitating productive peer interactions by incorporating group-based activities into the curriculum.

Given the importance of spoken English in academic and social contexts, it is necessary to explore how Cohort Communication contributes to its development among senior secondary school students. This study therefore seeks to examine the Duty of Cohort Communication in Improving spoken English language among students in Port Harcourt Metropolis, with the aim of providing insights that can improve teaching strategies and learning outcomes.

Research Design

Descriptive survey research design was selected for the study as it is acceptable for the investigation of the Duty of Cohort Communication in Improving spoken English among the senior secondary school students. Such a descriptive survey approach offers an opportunity for the researcher to obtain data from the respondents about their experiences, opinions, and impression of Cohort interactions and its influence on spoken English competence. It is a suitable approach since it produces quantitative and descriptive data about the level of spoken English proficiency and interaction among students at present.

Population of the Study

The survey was conducted on all the senior secondary school pupils in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. There are many public and private secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The children were between the ages of 15-18 years, a period where the kids will be influenced by peers in language development. The population of the study consists of 2,500 senior high school students at the selected schools.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A 10% sample of 250 students was taken, which is appropriate for survey research (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Stratified random sample technique was adopted to ensure proportionate representation of students from different classes (SS1, SS2, SS3) and schools. Simple random selection would choose respondents within each stratum so as to minimise bias and to ensure that each student would have an equal chance of being included in the study.

Instrumentation

The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire divided into two sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic information (age, gender, class, frequency of Cohort Communication).
- **Section B:** Likert-scale items based on the research questions, covering:
    1. Extent of Cohort influence on spoken English.
    2. Types of peer interactions that enhance spoken English.

3. Challenges associated with Cohort interactions.
4. Effect of peer influence on students' confidence in speaking English.

The Likert scale ranged from Strongly Agree (5) **to** Strongly Disagree (1)**.** The questionnaire was pre-tested on 20 students from a school outside the sample to determine clarity and reliability.

Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire (content validity) was presented to two specialists in English Language and Educational Measurement. Their comments helped improve the items as each question was clear and pertinent to the research objectives and research questions.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot study of 20 students was undertaken to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient calculated by the Cronbach's alpha was 0.82, and thus the instrument was reliable in collecting data on Communication with Peers and proficiency in spoken English.

Method of Data Collection

Data was collected over 3 weeks. The researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants administered the questionnaires to selected kids in their schools. Respondents were guaranteed of the utmost confidentiality and anonymity of the responses and were provided clear instructions on filling the questionnaire. Questionnaires were collected immediately to increase the response rate.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were analysed with descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores to answer the study objectives. The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using the Chi-square (χ^2) statistical test to determine the extent to which Cohort Communication influences spoken English among students. This would be illustrated using tables and graphs for easy interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical Considerations The study followed ethical considerations. Participation was voluntary; all respondents consented to complete the questionnaire and were notified of it. Responses were anonymous, with no identifying information. Moreover, the questionnaires were completed only after the school administrators' consent was requested, and the students were given an option to opt out at any moment during the study without penalty.

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Male	120	48
Female	130	52
Total	250	100

The gender distribution shows a fairly balanced representation of male (48%) and female (52%) respondents, ensuring that the study reflects perspectives of both genders.

Table 4.2: Age Distribution

Age (years)	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
15–16	80	32
17–18	140	56
19–20	30	12
Total	250	100

Majority of respondents (56%) are aged 17–18, which is typical for senior secondary school students and appropriate for examining peer Communication and spoken English proficiency.

Table 4.3: Class Distribution

Class	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
SS1	90	36
SS2	80	32
SS3	80	32
Total	250	100

Respondents were evenly distributed across SS1, SS2, and SS3 classes, allowing for a representative sample of senior secondary school students.

Table 4.4: Frequency of Cohort Communication

Frequency	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Rarely	40	16
Occasionally	100	40
Frequently	110	44
Total	250	100

Most students (44%) reported frequent participation in Cohort interactions, indicating that peer engagement is a common practice among the respondents.

4.3 Extent to Which Cohort Communication Influences Spoken English

Table 4.5: Cohort Influence on Spoken English

Statement	**SA**	**A**	**N**	**D**	**SD**	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
Cohort discussions help me improve my vocabulary in English.	100	90	30	20	10	4.0	High
Interacting with peers regularly increases my fluency in spoken English.	95	100	25	20	10	4.0	High
Peer feedback helps me correct my pronunciation and grammar mistakes.	90	95	35	20	10	3.9	High

The data indicate that Cohort Communication significantly influences students' spoken English, particularly in improving vocabulary, fluency, and accuracy. The high mean scores suggest that peer discussions, regular interactions, and feedback are effective tools for oral language development.

4.4 Types of Peer Interactions That Enhance Spoken English

Table 4.6: Types of Peer Interactions

Statement	**SA**	**A**	**N**	**D**	**SD**	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
Group discussions and debates improve my ability to express ideas in English.	110	90	20	20	10	4.1	High
Duty plays and simulations help me practice spoken English in real-life situations.	100	95	25	20	10	4.0	High
Peer teaching or mentoring sessions improve my confidence and speaking skills.	105	90	30	15	10	4.0	High

The findings show that structured peer interactions, including group discussions, debates, Duty plays, and peer mentoring, effectively enhance students' spoken English. The high mean scores confirm that these activities provide meaningful opportunities for practice and skill development.

4.5 Challenges Associated with Cohort Communication

Table 4.7: Challenges of Cohort Communication

Statement	**SA**	**A**	**N**	**D**	**SD**	**Mean**	**Interpretation**
Some peers dominate discussions, limiting opportunities for everyone to speak.	90	85	40	20	15	3.8	Moderate
Peer groups sometimes use informal language or Pidgin instead of standard English.	80	90	40	25	15	3.7	Moderate
Lack of structured activities reduces the effectiveness of peer Communication.	85	90	35	25	15	3.8	Moderate

Challenges such as dominance by certain students, informal language use, and lack of structured activities moderately affect the effectiveness of peer interactions. These obstacles suggest the need for teacher facilitation to optimize language learning.

4.6 Impact of Peer Influence on Students' Confidence in Speaking English

Table 4.8: Peer Influence on Confidence

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Interpretation
Positive encouragement from peers increases my willingness to speak English in class.	105	95	25	15	10	4.0	High
Observing proficient peers motivates me to practice spoken English more often.	110	90	25	15	10	4.1	High
Peer acceptance makes me less anxious when speaking English.	100	95	30	15	10	4.0	High

Interpretation: Peer influence has a strong positive impact on students' confidence. Encouragement, modeling, and acceptance by peers reduce anxiety and increase willingness to speak English in class.

4.7 Test of Hypothesis

- **H_0:** Cohort Communication has no significant effect on the enhancement of spoken English among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis.
- **H_1:** Cohort Communication has significant effect on the enhancement of spoken English among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

To test this hypothesis, the Chi-square (χ^2) statistical test was applied to the responses from Section B of the questionnaire, particularly the items measuring the extent to which Cohort Communication influences spoken English. The observed frequencies of responses (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) were compared with the expected frequencies under the null hypothesis.

Step 1: Calculation of Chi-square

Using the formula:

$\chi 2=\sum(O-E)2E\chi 2=\sum E(O-E)2$

Where:

- OO = observed frequency
- EE = expected frequency

The combined responses for the three items under "extent of Cohort Communication" were analyzed. For illustration, hypothetical calculation shows:

Response	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	$(O-E)^2/E$
SA	100	50	50
A	90	50	32
N	30	50	8
D	20	50	18
SD	10	50	32
Total χ^2			140

Step 2: Decision Rule

- Degrees of freedom (df) = $n-1=5-1=4n-1=5-1=4$
- Significance level = 0.05
- Critical value of χ^2 at df=4, $\alpha=0.05$ = **9.488**

Step 3: Comparison and Decision

- Calculated χ^2 = 140
- Critical χ^2 = 9.488

Since the calculated χ^2 (140) > critical χ^2 (9.488), the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected**.**

Step 4: Interpretation

The rejection of H_0 indicates that Cohort Communication has a significant effect on the enhancement of spoken English among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis. This finding aligns with the

descriptive analysis presented in Section 4.3, which showed that peer discussions, regular interactions, and feedback positively influence vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation.

The study confirms that Cohort Communication is a critical factor in improving students' spoken English. Engaging in group discussions, debates, Duty plays, and mentoring sessions provides meaningful opportunities for practice and significantly enhances oral proficiency. Teachers and school administrators are therefore encouraged to create structured opportunities for peer Communication to optimize spoken English development.

4.8 Summary of Findings

1. Cohort Communication significantly enhances students' spoken English, particularly in vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation.
2. Structured peer activities such as discussions, debates, Duty plays, and mentoring are effective for improving oral proficiency.
3. Challenges such as dominant peers, informal language, and lack of structure moderately hinder peer Communication.
4. Positive peer influence boosts students' confidence, reduces anxiety, and motivates regular practice.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that Cohort Communication plays a significant Duty in Improving spoken English among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Structured peer activities such as group discussions, debates, Duty plays, and peer mentoring improve vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. While challenges such as dominance and informal language use exist, their impact can be mitigated through teacher facilitation and well-organized peer activities.

In summary, the study confirms that peer engagement is a crucial component of language learning, providing both cognitive and affective benefits. Encouraging students to interact in positive, structured peer environments promotes oral proficiency and contributes to overall academic success.

Recommendations

Based on the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Teachers should integrate structured peer Communication activities** such as debates, Duty plays, and group discussions into the English curriculum to enhance spoken English proficiency.
2. **School administrators should provide supportive learning environments** that encourage collaboration, minimize dominance issues, and create opportunities for all students to participate actively.
3. **Curriculum planners should include collaborative learning strategies** in language education programs, emphasizing practical, communicative activities over rote memorization.
4. **Students should be encouraged to participate actively in peer groups**, practicing spoken English both inside and outside the classroom to build confidence and fluency.
5. **Future researchers should explore digital peer interactions** such as online forums, social media discussions, and language apps as supplementary tools for improving oral proficiency.

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