



**Impact of the Use of English Language on Communication Skills of Students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigates the impact of the use of English and Communication Skills among Students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State. Three objectives, research questions, and hypotheses each were formulated to guide the study. In term of theoretical framework, the study uses Interaction Hypothesis, a theory of second language which glorifies learners' commitments, use of appropriate communication strategies to communicate effectively. The theory is users oriented, it grants them freedom to correct and resolve communication difficulties which may arise as a result of external interferences (L1). The theory suits this study by giving teachers, language experts, parents, and peers a freedom to help language users produce better discourses. The study employs a survey design with the total sample size of 500 students drawn from different faculties and departments in the Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State. In soliciting the students' responses, a questionnaire with 15 items was designed; for describing the data collected, means and standard deviations were used. For the analysis of the data, however, Chi-square and Kruscal-willis's non-parametric statistics were uses to make inferences. The findings aver that, contrary to the perceptions of many, the Use of English and Communication Skills has direct bearing on students' academic pursuit as it improves performance and helps students communicate freely within and outside the campus. The study concludes that the Use of English and Communication Skills plays roles in students' academic voyage; it makes them master conventions of the English language and improves communication skills. Based on this, the study recommended that teaching the course (Use of English and Communication Skills) should be intensified using relevant and authentic teaching materials.*



**Key words:** Use of English, Communication in English, Strategies, and Teaching

## **Introduction**

Despite the countless gifts that the Almighty God has given to humans, language supersedes all. Interactions and developments are possible through the medium of language; it unites people of different communities and races to achieve common goals. It is used for various purposes ranging from persuasion, cultural and ideological transmission, advertisement, legislation, propagation of political interests to entertainment. Substantiating the above point, Sirbu (2015) underscores that language as a tool of communication, language maximises and strengthens human understanding for betterment; it defines, extends, or even ends human relationships. To Davis (1993) language is a power that allows people to do things to each other, or to get people to do things.

Due to influx of awareness in all ramifications of human endeavours, choosing a code to communicate effectively masters a lot, considering the fact that effective communication eases understanding. In today's society, English plays important roles in legislating people's lives ranging from a means of communication for global communities to getting access to myriad opportunities in global markets. It holds unassailable position among the world major languages not in terms of the number of speakers but in terms of domain of use and international recognition (Joachim, 2013). It is a lubricant that facilitates participation in global activities. For this, nations, universities, groups, and individuals need to possess minimum mastery of the language in order to participate in the dynamic world of today. Ugwuanyi (2013); Crystal (1997); and Adetugbo (2000) buttress that English as an international language; it is widely used in all the countries of the world for different purposes. Ugwuanyi adds that to achieve best of globalisation, one has to be able to speak English in order to communicate optimally with different races. In the same vein, Yen (2008) upholds that proficiency in English bring job opportunities as it is major language of science and technology. The language, however, connects races of the world to negotiate business and job opportunities (Graddol, 2000).

## **The Place of English Language in Nigeria**

English is an international medium of communication to many societies around the globe. It belongs to all cultures, since no society or individuals have the ownership of it. Morrison (2002) states that English language is a neutral language since no cultural requirements are tied to its learning. In Nigeria, English serves dual purposes; it is official and second language at the same time. As an official language, it is used as language of commerce, law, mass media, administration, and medium of instruction in schools etc. This function makes the language a necessary tool not only for administrative purpose, but for the citizens to acquire education in all levels of education (primary, post primary, and tertiary institutions).



As a medium of instruction, English language is taught as course of study in the Faculty of Arts in many of the conventional universities in Nigeria. Apart from being a course of study on its own right, it is also taught in the Directorate of General Studies as a core course for all level one students and some level two students whose got a direct admission. Communication in English, or Use of English and Communication Skills, as it is being called, aims at grooming students to become more aware of the rules and regulations of the English language. Knowing the conventions, in fact, allows students abreast themselves of the dos and don'ts of the language; it is a compulsory medium of teaching and learning all the courses in Nigerian universities, but with the exemption of language courses (indigenous or foreign). It eases communication barriers that may arise as a result of cultural and linguistic differences in Nigerian universities. In school, especially university, it is a common practice for students to spend significant parts of their times speaking and writing tests, assignments, and reports to fulfill necessary requirements of graduation. The rationale behind introducing students to the Use of English and Communication Skills is to make them sound in the art of communication.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Communication in English to Second Language Learners**

Communication is a key to any setting, be it education, business, politics, and military; it unites people of different origin achieve common goals. In classroom setting, communication is pivotal, it allows students and lecturers interact freely to mediate issues of different magnitudes. For second language users of English to have a hitch-free interaction/communication like their counterpart native speakers, there is need for the possession of certain skills and exposures. These exposures in most situations, owing to certain factors, take a long period of time to mature. Schmitt (2002) supports that second language learners come to L2 atmosphere with completely new experiences from their culture which sometimes does not match that English. This imbalance of exposure harms communication to a great extent and calls for creating strategies for effective communication. Schmitt (2002) posits that for second language learners to learn to communicate effectively, they should be allowed to brainstorm on topics of their choices, while negotiating issues teachers or peers, should offer corrections where poor constructions are made. For this, Alzoubi (2018) establishes that L2 learners' exposure can be developed within few years of interactions in the target language. Alzoubi, further explains that teachers assign different tasks in different contexts to learners to achieve proficiency.

The above position justifies that for L2 of English to attain certain level of exposure, they should be compelled to think, listen, read, write, and converse in the language. One reason that needs learners must develop expose is, the twenty-first century has brought about many changes in life styles of man, and also the rise of English language as a global language changes the educational system of the world.



In L2 context, there are number of factors that may affect communication strategies, Tarone (1977); Bialystok (1983b); Ting and Lau (2008); Aliakbari (2009) establish that learners' proficiency and situation of use make communication so smooth or mars it completely. Here, for L2 learners to communicate effectively, teachers of communication should expose the learners to dialogues, essay writings competitions, and expose them to new trends of writing. These exercises would add values to their communications, as teaching communication strategies become necessary in L2 setting (Lam, 2006; Ya-ni, 2007; Tiwaporn, 2009; and Maleki, 2007, 2010; Sukirlan, 2014). Strategies of communication ease difficulties that affect negative the understandings of the interlocutors, Sofyan, Dian, Rizald. (2015) state that communication strategies help learners process information that improve comprehension and solve language problems.

## **Statement of the Problem**

In many universities, the Department of English and Literary Studies plays a dual role of teaching and servicing other departments. With the heap of work awaits immediate attention is, The Use of English and Communication Skills. The course demands a lot from a lecturer, as it comprises large number of students from different departments and faculties. Basically, lectures for this course are group-base, with 500-600 hundred students per group. In Federal University Dutsin-Ma, students were grouped into ten to twelve groups, as the case may be. The lectures for the course (Use of English and Communication Skills) hold ones in a week, often in the early hour of the day (7:00 – 9:00 am).

The implication of this is that there are often large numbers of students who miss this lecture for one reason or the other. The present study observes that for years some students in Federal University Dutsin-Ma refused to attend GST lectures, Use of English and Communication Skills inclusive, for variety of reasons. For some, the time clashes with their departmental class hours, others complained of the course is not a course from their departments that it is a total waste of time for them to attend such classes. These issues led some students developed phobia of different natures (disowned the class in total, failing the course even if they frequented the class, and fear of scoring ordinary passing marks). This paper aims at investigating the impact of the use of English on Communication Skills among students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Generally, the paper aims at examining the impacts of the Use of English and Communication Skills among students of the Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State. The study formulates the following objectives:



1. Determine the usefulness of the Use of English and Communication Skills among students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State;
2. Ascertain the degree to which proficiency in English language helps students perform in other courses;
3. Establish the extent to which students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State developed competence in English based on faculties.

## **Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State do perceive the usefulness of the Use of English and Communication Skills?
2. To what extent proficiency in English language helps students perform in other courses?
3. What is the extent to which the Use of English and Communication Skills helps students develop competence?

## **Null Hypotheses**

The study advances the following hypotheses:

**Null hypothesis 1 :** There is no significant difference on the usefulness of the Use of English and Communication Skills among the students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State;

**Null hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the extent to which the Use of English and Communication Skills helps students develop proficiency.

**Null hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in the extent to which the Use of English and Communication Skills developed students' competence based on faculties.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts Interaction Hypothesis; a theory which glorifies the relevance of association among language users. It suggests that learners learn better when they work in group than individually, the theory recognizes the importance of teacher-students relationship. It also grants teachers and other experts (native speakers, parents, care-givers, peers, etc) a chance to offer corrections to learners' poor constructions. Long (1996) & Bitchener and Ferris (2012) aver that through teachers or peers' corrections resolve communication difficulties, including those that may have arisen as a result of learners' L1 interference. The theory, however, emphasizes that user's communication problems could best be addressed when they engage in interactions with another individuals (native speakers, teachers, peers).

## **Methodology and Data Presentations**



The data for the study were collected from the students of English and Communication Skills of Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, using questionnaire. The questionnaire contains fifteen items all of which asked different questions pertaining students' perception about the course, English and Communication Skills. Five hundred (500) students were randomly selected from the existing faculties and departments of the university; the study was carried out to assess the impact of the Use English and Communication Skills among students. In analysing the data, a t-test was used to test the research hypotheses with a view to identifying the degree to which the course in question impacts on the students. All the statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS version 20.

### Presentation of Results

Research question one: How do students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State perceive the usefulness of the use of English and Communication Skills?

To respond to this question, items no 1-5 were used; and mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the responses as presented in table 1.

**Table 1:** Students' Responses on the usefulness of Use of English and Communication Skills

Variables	N	Min	Max	X	SD
English Language	500	1	4	3.16	0.95
Communication Skills	500	1	4	3.16	0.95

Table 1 contains the analysis of students' responses; it presents the minimum and maximum responses of students. The mean score was 3.16, which is higher than the bench mark mean of 2.5. This implies that students' response was positively inclined.

Research question two: What is the extent to which the Use of English and Communication

**Table 2:** Students' Response on proficiency in English language

Variables	N	Min	Max	X	SD
English Language	500	1	4	3.16	0.95
Communication Skills	500	1	4	3.16	0.95

Table 2 above, shows the minimum and maximum responses of students in proficiency, the mean responses was 3.16, which is higher than the bench mark mean 2.5. This implies that students' response was positively inclined.

**Table 3:** Students' response on competency in English language

Variables	N	Min	Max	X	SD
English Language	500	1	4	2.85	4.85





Communication Skills	500	1	4	2.85	4.85
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Table 3 presents students’ response on competency in English language as a result of attending classes/lectures of the Use of English and Communication Skills. The statistical analysis substantiates that the mean responses 2.85 is higher than the bench mark mean 2.5, for this, it implies that students’ responses was positively inclined.

### Hypothesis Testing

**Null Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference on the perceived usefulness of the course, English and Communication Skills among students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma katsina State.

To test this hypothesis Chi Square Statistics was used. The computation is presented in the table four below.

**Table 4:** Computation of Chi Square Statistics on how to students perceive the usefulness of English Communication Skills

N	X	SD	X <sup>2</sup> cal	df	X <sup>2</sup> crit.	p-value	Decision
500	3.16	0.95	1.77	3	7.82	0.000	sig.

As the Table 4 contains, the calculate  $x = 1.77$  at  $Df = (3)$  and Alpha value = 0.05. The P-value = 0.000. Thus, the hypothesis here is rejected, meaning that there was significant difference on the perceived usefulness of the use of English and Communication Skills among male and female students in Federal university Dutsin-Ma.

**Null Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the extent to which the use of English and Communication Skills develops students’ spoken skills.

To test this hypothesis, Chi Square Statistics was used. The Computation is presented in table five below.

**Table 5:** Computation of Chi Square Statistics on proficiency brought by the Use of English and Communication Skills

N	X	SD	X <sup>2</sup> cal	df	X <sup>2</sup> crit.	p-value	Decision
500	3.16	0.95	1.77	3	7.82	0.000	sig.

As the Table above contains the calculated  $X = 1.77$  at  $Df (3)$  and Alpha value = 0.05, the p-value = 0.000. It presents that the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the extent to which the Use of English and Communication Skills develops students’ spoken skills is hereby rejected, meaning that there was significant difference in the spoken skills of the students.



**Null Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in the extent to which English and Communication Skills developed students' competence based on faculty differences.

To test the hypothesis above, Chi-Square Statistics was used; and the computation is presented in table six below.

**Table 6:** Computation of Chi- Square on students' competence based on faculty differences in the Federal University Dutsin-Ma Katsina State.

N	X	SD	X <sup>2</sup> cal	Df	X <sup>2</sup> crit.	P.val	Decision
500	2.85	4.83	89.07	3	7.82	0.000	Rejection

As the table six presents, the calculated  $X = 89.07$  at Df (3) and alpha at 0.05, the p-value =0.000, the statistical data substantiates the hypothesis which states there is no significant difference in the extent to which English and Communication Skills developed students' competence based on faculties is hereby rejected.

### Summary of the Findings

The findings are presented as follows:

1. The course, the Use of English and Communication Skills impacted significantly on students' academic pursuit, as it improved performance and helped them communicate effectively.
2. It also developed efficiency in students spoken English.
3. Attending the lectures/classes do not impacted on effective communication alone, but developed students' competency.

### Discussion of Findings

For the analysis of the impact of English and Communication Skills, students' responses to **Null hypothesis 1** show that there was significant difference in the extent to which students perceive the usefulness of the course English and Communication Skills. This indicates that lecturers of the course present appropriate materials in the course of teaching. Students' responses to **Null hypothesis 2** show that there was significant difference in the extent to which the use of English and Communication Skills help students develops good communication skills. This establishes that students that have frequented the classes gained a lot of experience which brought about positive transformation in language use. Responses to **Null hypothesis 3** falsifies the proposition which says there is no significant difference in the extent to which English and Communication Skills developed students' competence based on faculty differences. The stance of the proposition is in tandem with the outcome of other researches done earlier Adeyoju &





Otesile (2003); Olatoye (2005); Westby (2006) in which students from other faculties and departments outperformed their peers from other faculties and departments in English and Communication Skills in different universities and other tertiary institutions. The better performance could be attributed to nothing other than the interest in the course or positive self-concept with respect to English and Communication Skills. This situation is very apparent in any educational setting that students with positive attitude to a subject are likely to be motivated to learn and consequently develop other personal factors that enhance performance in the course in question.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that teachers of language need to do a lot to inculcate into their student's conventional ways of communication, as communication requires sticking onto the rules and regulations of language. English, like any natural language, has established conventions which users are expected to internalize for proper interactions. In addition to above, teachers should be motivated to appreciate the extra effort they are being asked to make by giving them remunerations for extra-large classes (English and Communication Skills) they teach. Taking a large class like that has severe consequences on teachers' state of health; it may cause physical mental and psychological problems, such as hypertension, stroke and other cardio-vascular related issues, etc. The study concludes that the course, English and Communication Skills is very important for students' academic progress.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the foregoing conclusion, it recommends that:

1. Teaching and learning of the Use of English and Communication Skills should be intensified and accorded more prominence in our tertiary institutions in order to grant students chance to masters conventions of the English language.
2. Students should be encouraged to use English language as a medium of communication even outside the campus. This would no doubt grant them opportunities to benefit from good models and avoid mistakes of lexical selections.
3. Teachers need to use authentic materials that would expose students to contemporary issues in communications.
4. Teachers should be remunerated for the extra-large classes they teach, as in most universities, teachers of English and Communication Skills are drawn from the Departments of English and Literary studies. This indicates that teachers of English have more courses to teach, they often be faced with other academic issues (pursuing postgraduate studies, writing conference papers, secretary of one or two committees), or administrative roles (Dean, Director, HoD, Exam Officer, and Registration Officer).



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