# Causes and Effects of the Mass Failure of the English Language in Secondary Schools in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the causes and effects of the mass failure of English Language in secondary schools in Nigeria. Despite English being the official language of instruction, secondary school students across the country continue to experience high rates of failure in this subject. The research aims to identify the underlying factors contributing to this pervasive issue and explore its implications for students, educators, and the education system as a whole. Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature and empirical data, the study seeks to provide insights into the root causes of English Language failure and propose strategies to address the challenges faced by students in mastering this critical subject.

**Keywords**: Mass Failure, English Language, Secondary Schools, Nigeria, Education System

## INTRODUCTION

The English Language holds significant importance in Nigeria as the medium of instruction in schools and a prerequisite for academic and professional success [1, 2]. However, the persistent mass failure of students in English Language examinations at the secondary school level poses a critical challenge to the education system [3]. Despite efforts to improve educational standards, the high rates of failure indicate systemic issues that require urgent attention. This study aims to determine the causes and effects of mass failure in English Language among secondary school students in Nigeria. By examining the socio-economic, educational, and linguistic factors influencing student performance, the research seeks to provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in addressing this pressing issue. The mass failure of English Language in Nigerian secondary schools is a multifaceted issue with far-reaching implications [4, 5]. Despite the importance of English proficiency for academic advancement and future opportunities, a significant proportion of students consistently perform poorly in this subject. The problem manifests in various forms, including low examination scores. Many students struggle to achieve passing grades in English Language examinations, hindering their overall academic performance. Poor performance in English Language may restrict students' access to higher education institutions and scholarship opportunities [6, 7]. Also, inadequate English language skills may impede students' prospects for future employment in a competitive job market. The failure of a large segment of the population to attain proficiency in the English Language can hinder socio-economic development and global competitiveness [8]. The objectives of this study are therefore to investigate the underlying factors contributing to the mass failure of English Language in Nigerian secondary schools, including linguistic, socio-economic, and educational factors. The study will assess the consequences of English Language failure on students' academic, professional, and socio-economic outcomes, as well as its broader implications for national development [9]. It will also explore existing interventions and strategies aimed at addressing English Language failure in Nigerian secondary schools, analyzing their effectiveness and potential for scalability, and propose evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to improve English Language teaching and learning outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools [10].

### Factors Contributing to the Mass Failure of English Language

Investigating the underlying factors contributing to the mass failure of English Language in Nigerian secondary schools involves examining a combination of educational, socio-economic, and linguistic factors [11, 12]. While specific research on this topic may vary, various studies and reports provide insights into the challenges faced by students in mastering the English Language. Accordingly, the lack of qualified English teachers in many secondary schools is one of such factors. Nigeria faces shortages of qualified English language teachers, leading to substandard instruction and ineffective teaching methodologies [13]. Similarly, some English teachers may lack pedagogical

training and proficiency in modern teaching methods, hindering their ability to effectively engage students and impart language skills [14]. Economic disparities and lack of access to quality education also disproportionately affect students from low-income families, who may lack the resources and support to succeed academically [15]. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face additional challenges, such as inadequate parental support, limited access to educational materials, and competing responsibilities [16]. Additionally, the influence of indigenous languages and dialects may pose challenges for students in mastering English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation [17]. Regular switching between English and native languages in informal settings may affect students' proficiency in English, leading to confusion and errors according to [16]. Likewise, traditional teaching methods in Nigerian schools often prioritize rote memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary over practical language skills and communicative competence [13]. Examination formats and assessment criteria may not effectively measure students' language proficiency or provide meaningful feedback for improvement [14]. Moreover, large class sizes in Nigerian schools make it challenging for teachers to provide individualized attention and support to students, affecting learning outcomes [15]. Lastly, insufficient access to textbooks, reference materials, and technology hampers students' ability to practice English language skills and engage in independent learning [16]. Consequently, the mass failure of English Language in Nigerian secondary schools is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including inadequate teacher training, socio-economic challenges, linguistic influences, curriculum issues, and resource constraints. Addressing these underlying factors requires holistic interventions that encompass teacher professional development, socio-economic support for students, curriculum reform, and improvements in infrastructure and resources [18].

## Consequences of English Language Failure on Students' Academic Outcomes, and its Implications for National Development

Assessing the consequences of English Language failure on students' academic, and socio-economic outcomes, and its broader implications for national development involves understanding the multifaceted impacts of language proficiency on individual opportunities and societal progress [19]. Accordingly, English Language proficiency is often a prerequisite for admission to higher education institutions, and poor performance in English exams may restrict students' access to further academic opportunities [20]. Secondly, difficulty in understanding English instructional materials can impede students' comprehension and performance in other subjects taught in English, leading to overall academic underachievement [21]. Regarding the socio-economic consequences, proficiency in English is often essential for securing employment in various sectors, including government, business, and international organizations. English Language failure may limit students' job prospects and earning potential [15]. Also, in a globalized world, English proficiency is associated with socio-economic mobility and access to opportunities. Students who lack proficiency in English may face barriers to upward social mobility and economic advancement [15].

### Broader Implications for National Development

English Language failure undermines efforts to develop a skilled workforce and human capital essential for national development. A lack of proficiency in English limits individuals' ability to contribute effectively to economic growth and innovation [21]. In an increasingly interconnected world, proficiency in English is crucial for global competitiveness and participation in international markets. English Language failure may weaken Nigeria's position in the global economy and hinder its ability to attract foreign investment and partnerships [15]. Equally, English is the language of governance, diplomacy, and international communication. Poor English Language proficiency among citizens may impede effective communication with international partners, affecting diplomatic relations and governance processes [20]. As a result, the consequences of English Language failure on students' academic, and socio-economic outcomes, and broader implications for national development are significant and far-reaching. Poor English proficiency limits individuals' educational opportunities, job prospects, and socio-economic mobility, ultimately hindering national efforts to build human capital, compete globally, and achieve sustainable development goals. Addressing English Language failure requires comprehensive interventions in education policy, curriculum design, teacher training, and socio-economic support to ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop proficiency in this critical language

### Existing Interventions Aimed at Addressing English Language Failure in Nigeria

Exploring existing interventions and strategies aimed at addressing English Language failure in Nigerian secondary schools involves examining various initiatives implemented by educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to improve language proficiency among students. While specific research on interventions in Nigeria may vary, insights from broader educational contexts can inform the effectiveness of different strategies. Thus, providing regular professional development workshops for English language teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills, language proficiency, and knowledge of modern teaching methodologies [22]. Offering in-service training programs and certification courses for practicing teachers to update their knowledge and skills in English language instruction is equally critical [22]. In the same vein, revising the English language curriculum to incorporate communicative language teaching (CLT) strategies that emphasize practical language use, interaction, and real-life communication

tasks is essential [23]. Equally implementing task-based learning activities that engage students in meaningful language tasks and projects to promote active learning and language proficiency is necessary [23]. Furthermore, establishing English language laboratories equipped with multimedia resources, language software, and interactive materials to provide students with additional opportunities for language practice and skill development is vital [20], in the same way, as organizing language immersion programs or language camps where students can engage in intensive English language learning activities in immersive environments [20]. Socio-economic support should consist of offering scholarships and financial assistance to students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enable access to quality education, including English language instruction [20]. Also, providing students with textbooks, workbooks, and other learning materials to support English language learning outside the classroom and facilitate independent study [22] is essential. Integrating technology into English language instruction through the use of multimedia resources, online platforms, educational software, and interactive learning tools [24]; as well as utilizing online learning platforms and distance education programs to provide students with access to English language courses, tutorials, and resources are essential [24]. It must be pointed out that professional development initiatives have shown promise in improving teacher effectiveness and pedagogical practices, but ongoing support and sustainability remain challenges [22]. Also, while curriculum reforms aim to promote communicative language teaching and task-based learning, effective implementation and alignment with assessment practices are crucial for success [24]. Consequently, existing interventions and strategies aimed at addressing English Language failure in Nigerian secondary schools encompass a range of approaches, including teacher training, curriculum reform, language support programs, socio-economic support, and technology integration. While these interventions show promise in improving language proficiency among students, challenges such as sustainability, resource constraints, and effective implementation remain key considerations. By combining targeted interventions with ongoing monitoring and evaluation, Nigeria can work towards improving English language outcomes and fostering greater educational equity and opportunity for all students [24].

## Policy Recommendations

Proposing evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and educators to improve English Language teaching and learning outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools involves addressing key challenges while leveraging effective strategies supported by research [25]. These include:

### Enhance Teacher Training and Professional Development

**Continuous Training:** Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for English language teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills, language proficiency, and knowledge of modern teaching methodologies [24].

**Focus on Communicative Approaches:** Emphasize training in communicative language teaching (CLT) strategies that promote interactive, student-centered learning and practical language use [22].

### Curriculum Reform and Implementation

**Align Curriculum with Communicative Competence:** Revise the English language curriculum to align with communicative language teaching principles, emphasizing the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in authentic contexts [24].

**Integration of Technology**: Incorporate technology-enhanced learning resources and digital tools into the curriculum to enhance engagement, interactivity, and accessibility for students [24].

### Supportive Learning Environment

**Classroom Resources:** Ensure adequate provision of textbooks, workbooks, language laboratories, and multimedia resources to support English language learning both inside and outside the classroom [22].

**Small Class Sizes:** Advocate for smaller class sizes to facilitate personalized attention, active participation, and individualized support for students [22].

### Encourage Language Immersion and Exposure

**English Language Camps:** Organize language immersion programs, camps, or workshops where students can engage in intensive English language learning activities in immersive environments [20].

**Cultural Exchanges:** Facilitate cultural exchange programs, study tours, and partnerships with English-speaking countries to provide students with exposure to authentic language use and cultural contexts [20].

### Strengthen Assessment Practices

**Formative Assessment:** Implement formative assessment strategies that provide ongoing feedback, opportunities for self-assessment, and identification of areas for improvement in English language proficiency [24].

**Authentic Assessment Tasks:** Design assessment tasks that simulate real-life language use, such as presentations, debates, projects, and portfolio assessments, to measure communicative competence [24].

### Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement

**Partnerships with Communities:** Collaborate with community organizations, libraries, and cultural institutions to promote English language learning outside of the classroom through community events, language clubs, and reading programs [22].

**Engagement with Parents:** Involve parents and caregivers in supporting students' English language learning at home through reading activities, language games, and communication in English [22].

## CONCLUSION

By implementing these evidence-based recommendations, policymakers and educators can work together to improve English Language teaching and learning outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools. These recommendations emphasize the importance of teacher training, curriculum reform, supportive learning environments, language immersion, assessment practices, and collaboration with stakeholders. By addressing these key areas, Nigeria can enhance language proficiency among students, promote educational equity, and foster greater opportunities for academic and socio-economic success.

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