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ASSESSMENT OF THE CHALLENGES OF LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS, RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study assessed the challenges of learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The study was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses. The population of the study comprised sixty-four (64) students with hearing impairment in special and inclusive schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The sample size was 52 students with hearing impairment which was adopted through the use of convenience sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, titled: "Challenges of Learning English Language Questionnaire" (CLELQ)". The reliability of the instrument was determined through test re-test reliability method which yielded a reliability index of r=0.86. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Independent sample t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that to a high extent, lack of individualized instruction, unavailability of sign language interpreters and unavailability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis. That there was no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the

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extent lack of individualized instruction, unavailability of sign language interpreters and unavailability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis. It was recommended among others that; training and retraining programs on Individualized Education Program (IEP) should be spear-headed by the school authority to enhance teachers use of individualized instruction for learning of English language.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental right for every child irrespective of whether the child has disability or not. Ubani (2024) describing the opinion of National Policy on Education noted that every child has the right to equal education irrespective of any real or imagined disability. Education is a process of developing that capacity and potentials of the individual so as to prepare the individual to be successful in life as education; especially quality and functional education is an important means of developing a person. There are different categories of disabilities, one of them with a high rate of prevalence is hearing impairment which is sometimes referred to as deafness. Yuonda (2021) argued that, without education, individuals with hearing impairment and other special needs will never be able to deal with the effect of their disability, improve their daily living skills, acquire a high level of knowledge and lead a normal and decent life that every human being deserves.

Due to the fact that hearing impairment (HI) cannot be seen, unlike physical or visual impairments, which are more obvious, it is considered a hidden disability. Hearing impairment often known as deafness, is a disorder in which a person has trouble receiving linguistic information through hearing. While hearing impairment is defined by Ubani and Sanikpege (2020) as deafness, auditory system malfunction, and hardness of hearing. Agyire-Tettey (2017) noted that hearing impairment can be either temporary or permanent and is defined as the inability to hear noises that are louder than 25 dB. Despite the degree or severity of the hearing loss, students with hearing impairment are expected to be given quality, equal, and timely access to education from pre-primary to tertiary level. However, Tomma (2021) disclosed that for students to be successful in their educational pursuit, they must have mastery of compulsory subjects including Mathematics and English language.

English is one of the main languages used as a standard of communication among people in the world, and therefore it becomes a lingua Franca. So, English becomes one of the subjects in mainstream schools in Indonesia from the junior high school level, including special junior high schools. It means that not only typical children with normal hearing are encouraged to learn English, but also children with special needs such as hearing impaired student. In the case of English language, Sobhi (2018) disclosed that it is vital because it is

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an international language that is used by almost all communities in Nigeria using it as the official language. Oder (2018) added that despite the challenges of learning English language, studying the language is worthwhile because it is used in almost every area of life, including education, technology, science, politics, economics, commerce, and communication. For students in special or regular schools, Thwala (2019) observed that several factors may act as a barrier which hinders the students' academic performance in English Language and other compulsory subject areas.

Supporting Thwala (2019) disclosure, Otoman (2021) evince that lack of individualized instruction is a factor that promotes poor academic performance among students with disabilities. Otoman maintains that when teaching and learning are not tailored towards the learning needs of the students, there is likelihood for the students to experience difficulties in their learning and ultimately experience poor grades in several subject areas.

Aside the challenge of lack of individualized instruction as a factor hindering academic success in English language, Robus (2017) surmise that lack of competent sign language interpreters may also hinder student's performance especially for those with hearing impairment, autism or emotional behavioural disorder. Zakia (2019) supports Robus view when he narrates that some schools have sign language interpreter who are incompetent as they find it difficult using sign language to translate all what is been taught to the learners as this may cause distortions in the learning process for the students.

As though the challenge of lack of competent sign language interpreters was not enough, Getnet (2020) opines that lack of teaching aids is a major factor that affects the learning of students. Getnet observes that the unavailability of teaching aids (instructional materials) such as visual, audio and audio-visual aids negatively affects the level of comprehension of abstract contents among regular and special needs students. Greasmoon (2020) adds that students learn and perform better when they are been taught using teaching aids accompanied with quality teaching styles.

For Macton (2017), quality teaching styles implies teachers competence in adopting the best teaching strategy(ies) that makes lesson captivating and interesting for the students to learn. Macton adds that some teachers lack the necessary teaching strategies which make it difficult for the students to feel motivated to learn. This he describe may be as a result of poor teacher quality, poor teacher training and likely low teacher motivation which negatively affects students learning and performance.

Aside the challenge of mismatch between teaching styles, Yuonda (2021) observes that teacher/student relationship is an important factor that influences instructional success and also affects the success of any learning institution. Oporot (2021) adds that teachers and students must maintain a cordial yet professional relationship for effective teaching and learning to take place as any deviation from this would negatively affects students learning and create a distortion in educational goals and objectives.

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Scholars generally agreed that students with hearing impairment lag behind in academic achievement as compared to their counter parts with normal hearing as the problems they face take a more severe form when these students with hearing impairment join higher classes. Hearing-impaired students as students who learn using sign language as the first language and spoken language as a second language. We have to remember that hearing impaired-students' main problems relate not only to the impossibility or possibility of access to the audio component of a language but also to understanding the meaning of the words and expressions used. Because of this, learning and teaching a foreign vocabulary is of the utmost significance as it breaks the most annoying barrier that is met in education by hearing-impaired students'. It therefore became imperative to assess the challenges of learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria and Rivers State in particular like in many other countries of the world, students with disabilities have consistently trailed behind their normal counterparts in academic performance. The researcher's experience shows that poor academic performance in national examinations like West African Examination Council (WAEC) has continued to be an indicator of poor quality of education for students with disabilities particularly those with hearing impairment. Majority of these learners with hearing impairment rarely make 6-Credits in English Language and a minimum of a credit pass in English language is a prerequisite for admission into Nigerian higher institutions. The researcher indicates that good knowledge of English language may enhance effective learning of all other subjects that are taught within the Nigerian educational system.

The problem in the researchers view which may be responsible for students poor performance in English language may be traced to several challenges such as poor teaching strategies/aids, lack of individualized instruction, lack of competent sign language interpreter, and poor teacher/student relationships among others; may act as a hurdle to successful learning of English language. The researcher further observes that these challenges may cause students with hearing impairment develop weaknesses which include ignorance of parts of speech and ungrammatical expressions in written or oral communication. Keen observation by the researcher indicates that despite the importance of English Language to students' academic advancement and success in other school subjects, students' performance in the subject, especially in promotional and external examinations, has been very poor. It therefore became imperative to assess the challenges of learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to assess the challenges of learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Specifically, the study proposes to investigate if;

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1. Individualized instruction constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State
2. Availability of sign language interpreters constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State
3. Availability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does individualized instruction constitute a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?
2. To what extent does availability of sign language interpreters constitute a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?
3. To what extent does availability of teaching aids constitute a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent individualized instruction constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent availability of sign language interpreters constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent availability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Method

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Port Harcourt Metropolis situated in Rivers State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised sixty-four (64) students with hearing impairment in special and inclusive

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schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The sample size that was used for the study was 52 students with hearing impairment in special and inclusive schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis comprising Ikwerre Local Government Area (KELGA), Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (OBALGA), Port Harcourt City Local Government Area (PHALGA), Oyigbo Local Government Area, and Eleme Local Government Area. The study adopted convenience sampling technique to select 52 students with hearing impairment in the area. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire titled: "Challenges of Learning English Language Questionnaire" (CLELQ). The CLELQ instrument contained four (4) sections. Section A contained Bio-data, Section B; contained item statements on lack of individualized instruction, Section C; contained item statements on lack of availability of sign language interpreters, Section D; contained item statements on lack of availability of teaching aids. In all, the CLELQ had a total of 20 item statements. The CLELQ was structured on a four point modified Likert Scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE) respectively. The reliability of the instrument (CLELQ) was determined using test re-test reliability method which yielded a reliability index of r=0.86. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while Independent sample t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The data collected were analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0.

Research Question One: To what extent does individualized instruction constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing the Extent Individualized Instruction Constitutes a Challenge to Learning English Language among Secondary School Students with Hearing Impairment

S/N	Individualized Instruction	N=52 $\bar{X}$	SD
1	Instructional attention based on specific needs in learning of English language	2.81	0.27
2	Enough time to make use of individualized instruction in teaching and learning of English language	2.85	0.43
3	Adapted curriculum to meet the specific needs of the learner in learning English language	3.00	0.76
4	Adequate individual attention to the learning of English language	2.50	0.35
	Grand Mean/SD	**2.71**	**0.52**

(Survey Data, 2024)

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Table 1 shows the extent individualized instruction constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Specifically the result indicates a grand mean for ($\bar{X} = 2.71; \mathrm{SD} = 0.52$) which is higher than the criterion mean of *(>2.50)*. This further indicates that to a high extent, lack of individualized instruction constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent does availability of sign language interpreters constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing the Extent Availability of Sign Language Interpreters Constitutes a Challenge to Learning English Language among Secondary School Students with Hearing Impairment

S/N	To what extent does the Sign Language Interpreters Constitute a Challenge to your English Language Learning in terms of;	N=52 $\bar{X}$	SD
5	Availability of the sign language interpreters	2.65	0.73
6	Punctuality of the sign language interpreters in classroom	2.71	0.90
7	Effectiveness of the sign language interpreters in signing English words,	3.16	0.97
8	Sign language interpreters who are duly trained in sign language	3.09	0.66
	Grand Mean/SD	**2.96**	**0.95**

(Survey Data, 2024)

Table 2 shows the extent availability of sign language interpreters constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Specifically the result indicates a grand mean for ($\bar{X} = 2.96; \mathrm{SD} = 0.95$) which is higher than the criterion mean of *(>2.50)*. This further indicates that to a high extent, unavailability of sign language interpreters constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Research Question Three: To what extent does availability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing the Extent Availability of Teaching Aids Constitutes a Challenge to Learning English Language among Secondary School Students with Hearing Impairment

S/N	To what extent does the Availability of Teaching Aids Constitute a Challenge to your English Language Learning in terms of;	N=52 $\bar{X}$	SD
9	Provision of free magazines to read	3.00	0.74
10	Provision of English language textbooks	2.74	0.90
11	Availability of e-learning reading materials in English Language	3.11	0.93
12	Availability of graphic and picture reading materials	3.82	0.34
	Grand Mean/SD	**3.03**	**0.47**

(Survey Data, 2024)

Table 3 shows the extent availability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Specifically the result indicates a grand mean for ($\bar{X} = 3.03; \mathrm{SD} = 0.47$) which is higher than the criterion mean of *(>2.50)*. This further indicates that to a high extent, unavailability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent individualized instruction constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Table 4: T-Test Analysis Showing Significant Difference in the Mean Rating of Male and Female Students on the Extent Individualized Instruction Constitutes a Challenge to Learning English Language among Secondary School Students with Hearing Impairment

Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Df	t-test	Sig.	Remark
Male	32	14.13	0.52	50	.078	.090	Ho is Accepted
Female	20	12.62	0.45				

From the results in table 4, it can be observed that at 0.05 level of significance and 50 degrees of freedom, t-value =.078 and p-value = .090 > 0.05. Since the p-value = .090 > 0.05 the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male

and female students on the extent individualized instruction constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis is accepted.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent availability of sign language interpreters constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Table 5: T-Test Analysis Showing Significant Difference in the Mean Rating of Male and Female Students on the Extent Availability of Sign Language Interpreters Constitutes a Challenge to Learning English Language among Secondary School Students with Hearing Impairment

Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Df	t-test	Sig.	Remark
Male	32	11.19	0.14	50	.059	.070	Ho is Accepted
Female	20	13.00	0.46				

From the results in table 5, it can be observed that at 0.05 level of significance and 50 degrees of freedom, t-value =.059 and p-value = .070 > 0.05. Since the p-value = .070 > 0.05 the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent availability of sign language interpreters constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis is accepted.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent availability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Table 6: T-Test Analysis Showing Significant Difference in the Mean Rating of Male and Female Students on the Extent Availability of Teaching Aids Constitutes a Challenge to Learning English Language among Secondary School Students with Hearing Impairment

Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Df	t-test	Sig.	Remark
Male	32	16.00	0.32	50	.083	.080	Ho is Accepted
Female	20	14.01	0.51				

From the results in table 6, it can be observed that at 0.05 level of significance and 50 degrees of freedom, t-value =.083 and p-value = .080 > 0.05. Since the p-value = .080 >

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0.05 the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent availability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis is accepted.

Discussion of the Findings

Extent Individualized Instruction Constitutes a Challenge to Learning English Language among Secondary School Students with Hearing Impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis

The finding of research question one (Table 1) revealed that to a high extent, lack of individualized instruction constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Hypothesis one (Table 4) revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent individualized instruction constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The findings are in tandem with the study of Wester (2021) who found that individualized instruction gives students greater autonomy and control over choices of subject matter, learning methods and pace of the study as every learner has unique experiential background and unique set of talents and personal interest which are not often taken into consideration during learning in class for students with hearing impairment. The finding is not surprising to the researcher as previous experience indicates that when students are taught using individualized instruction, they find it easier to learn and have an improved academic performance but teachers of students with hearing impairment due to work overload find it difficult to execute individualized instruction.

Extent Availability of Sign Language Interpreters Constitutes a Challenge to Learning English Language among Secondary School Students with Hearing Impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis

The finding of research question two (Table 2) revealed that to a high extent, unavailability of sign language interpreters constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Hypothesis two (Table 5) revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent unavailability of sign language interpreters constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The finding concurs with the study of Ubani and Sanikpege (2023) writing on "challenges globally faced by persons with disabilities" revealed that communication was a severe

challenge for students with hearing impairment learning and social interaction. The finding is at variance with the study of Yusufu (2019) who revealed that communication barrier had no significant relationship with students' with disabilities academic performance in school as the presence of sign language interpreters, use of media aids had significant impact on students learning.

Extent Teaching Aids Constitutes a Challenge to Learning English Language among Secondary School Students with Hearing Impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis

The finding of research question three (Table 3) revealed that to a high extent, unavailability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State. Hypothesis three (Table 6) revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent unavailability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The finding is in tandem with the study of Nakhood (2018) who revealed that instructional materials serve as a channel between the teacher and the students either special or regular students in delivering instructions as they also serve as a source of motivation within the teaching-learning process since it is used to get the attention of the students and eliminate boredom and ultimately enhance students learning outcome. In an affirmative study, Oporot (2021) revealed that teaching aids are highly important for teaching for experienced and inexperienced teachers as teachers need material for background information on the subject they are teaching of which the utilization of such materials improves the learning outcome of students in special and regular schools; as its absence constitutes a challenge to the students.

Conclusion

The study's results led the researcher to the conclusion that to a high extent, lack of individualized instruction, unavailability of sign language interpreters and unavailability of teaching aids, constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis. That there was no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent lack of individualized instruction, unavailability of sign language interpreters and unavailability of teaching aids constitutes a challenge to learning English Language among secondary school students with hearing impairment in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. Provision of teaching aids will require increase in funding of special schools which is bound to pose a major challenge with worsening economic situation in the

country. Parents, teachers and students should be encouraged to make improvised instructional aids;

2. Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) should provide scholarship to special education pre-service teachers in order to aid in the completion of their program and avert the current shortage of lack of sign language interpreters in special schools;
3. In order to ensure that teachers makes use of individualized instruction in the schools, training and retraining programs on Individualized Education Program (IEP) should be spear-headed by the school authority to enhance teachers use of individualized instruction for learning of English language;

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