

ESL Oral Proficiency Inapt in Senior Secondary School Learners

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Abstract

This study aims at determining sociolinguistic strategies that effectively correct ESL oral proficiency inapt in senior secondary school learners. The objectives are: ascertaining speaker's L1 background and L2 proficiency level connection and how sociocultural sensitivity affects L2 learning. A random sampling technique was used to ensure that the sample is representative of the overall population of the respondents which is a systematic random sampling in a mixed research method to select respondents with questionnaires and interviews used to collect data from 100 students. The data were analyzed and presented in percentages and tables as against the study variables. Results showed that over 70% students during speaking exercises made conspicuous errors in pronouncing English words. However, the findings validated how the use of traditional teaching methods (grammar translation and rote learning) contributed to the decline in English Language fluency and proficiency among learners. Conclusively, students in cities relatively performed better than the interiors, denoting students do not employ good English sentences (spellings, pronunciations, subject verb agreements and similar ailments) when speaking or writing is alarming. These methods prioritized the teacher over students and largely relied on textbooks to transfer knowledge. Teachers involving ESL learners in classroom participation, interactions, and public speaking activities are recommended.

Keywords

Oral Competency, Public Speaking, Sociolinguistic Factors

1. Introduction

Attempts to improve oral English ability in L2 English learners seem to be having little impact. Evidently, unidentified impact flaws, disparate compatibilities, and instructional approaches could be one or many causes of the teaching/learning

objectives not being reached. However, thinking about the issue and generating speculative assumptions may never lead to the intended outcomes. The objective of the current study is to carry out a thoughtful investigation into the situation. By including sociolinguistic components, it seeks to improve senior secondary school-level second language learners' oral English competence. ESL instruction in schools is a growingly significant area of applied linguistics and has long been a contentious issue, particularly in European and Asian nations (Jackson & Chen, 2014; Afuiwa, 2013; Coyle, 2010). Invariable, the aim of the study is to ascertain best sociolinguistics practices that foster learners' oral proficiency in English Language as a second or foreign Language. The study objectives are: ascertaining speaker's L1 background and L2 proficiency level connection and how sociocultural sensitivity affects L2 learning. Thus, the research questions are: Are there similarities between your L1 and the English Language; and does your society encourage you to speak English openly?

In many countries, including Sierra Leone, there is an urgent need to improve communicative abilities in English as a foreign or second language. A skilled speaker of the English language must carefully combine sociolinguistic components in oral communication. These components support the learning processes by assisting speakers in processing and producing speech proficiency while also overcoming sociocultural and self-anxieties. To do this, we can plainly witness a sharp increase in the desire among the world's population to learn English as a Second or Foreign Language during the past 10 years in order to be able to compete in the global market and computer industry. For instance, the population of Sierra Leone has grown rapidly during the previous ten years in order to do this (Kabellow, Omulando, & Barasa, 2022; Afuiwa, 2013; Brown, 2000).

According to Brown (2011), having good English proficiency is a skill that is needed in today's market, social interactions and science and technology. According to many researchers, the influence and use of English by people who do not share the same mother tongue as an unbiased language that operates worldwide irrespective of sociocultural and linguistic diversity cannot be over emphasized as one on the list of advantages it enjoys as the ability to speak English provides many benefits to life in the present, so it is the reason why oral English proficiency is needed in the current era (Christian, McCarty, & Brown, 2020; Putri & Hamuddin, 2018; Chan et al., 2016; Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi, 2015; Cholakova, 2015; Demir, 2013; Dutro & Moore, 2011; Brown, 2011; Chang, 2011; Chan, 2011; Mantz, 2007; Graddol, 2006; Brown, 2003). With all business meetings and conferences currently using English as a means for simple and effective communication regardless of your country of origin, English has a significant impact on the world's political, socioeconomic growth, and institutional development. Thus, using English as a second or third language lowers the prevalence of ethnocentrism, linguistic conflict, and the occurrence of misunderstandings.

Even though Sierra Leone introduced free and quality education in schools three years ago, achieving quality seems slow (Thulla, Moriba, Adom, & Mensah-

Gborie, 2021). The Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2017) also revealed that 84% of children in Sierra Leone could not read a simple story. This situation is alarming and depicts Sierra Leone's dire oral English language needs.

The majority of Sierra Leonean teachers don't emphasize English speaking abilities when instructing students as writing reveals a strong command of how to employ spoken language in typical communicative exchanges. Research suggests that there is a better association between English aural skills and written form (Alam & Uddin, 2013; Khan & Khattak, 2011; Mak, 2011; Graddol, 2006; Hodson, 2006; Bashiruddin, 2003; Brown, 2003).

In this vein, numerous researchers have emphasized the requirement for language learning practices to engulf and scrutinize the learning and teaching of speaking abilities since many researchers have pointed out that a deficiency in good English speaking skills has caused learners to perform worse in both national and international examinations because they lack the skills that will foster their effective and efficient oral communication skills and expression.

Researchers have recently looked at the considerable impact that societal responsibilities have on spoken English learners' performance. In addition to looking for family support, students look for beneficial resources like text/course books, dictionaries, other helpful materials, or any technological support to supply essential information for their growth of second language competence and competency. Bearing in mind this fact, Khan (2011) revealed, "in the context of modern teaching, strategies based on novel and sophisticated software or conceptual strategies are always needed to deal with the day-to-day teaching/learning situations in which the learners face difficulties, and without some strategies they perhaps cannot achieve the target" (Khan, 2011: p. 1252).

In reality, the relationship between language and culture has drawn the attention of numerous academics. According to Brown, "A language is part of a culture, and a culture is part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate them without losing the significance of either language or culture." Brown's nearly universal view that language and culture are intertwined and that language both reflects and is shaped by culture is shared by many other social scientists. Thus teaching a language automatically involves implicitly teaching culture.

A learner's access to various cultural goods like the Internet, computers, pictures, paintings, books, and dictionaries (cultural capital) and a learner's relationships with teachers, parents, siblings, and peers (social capital) may have a reflective influence on what and how any individual learns a language. For this reason, the impact of a learner's background and environment context on learning a second language is significant. When it comes to speaking and conquering fears, shyness, mood, speech accuracy, and other issues, parents are the first point of contact as socialization agents, and their interactions are crucial. Lack of necessary assistance will diminish their speaking abilities, and excessive anxiety makes people less inclined to communicate, both of which have a negative impact on learners'

success in oral English learning as a second language in the long term (Wu & Lin, 2014; Meng & Wang, 2006; Williams & Burden, 1997). Arikan (2011) observed that the value system development is significantly influenced by social class, housing, and resource access, almost as much as by academic success. As opposed to Marks (2013) who argued that cognitive capacity has a direct impact on educational results while socioeconomic background has an indirect influence. This is because cognitive ability directly affects language learning, whereas socioeconomic background has an indirect effect. The study arrived to the conclusion that, despite the fight being solely about supremacy, its effects from both points of view cannot be disregarded. The decreasing effects of socioeconomic background and the prominence of cognitive ability corroborate some of the statements stated by modernization theory.

In Sierra Leone, oral English proficiency is only assessed in public exams like the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) or the International English Language Testing Skill (IELTS-for overseas students). Because our educational system is solely exam-focused, learners are less likely to focus on learning the fundamentals of English for all-around development. Another issue is that speaking and listening skills are not prioritized by teachers or students, particularly in our exam-focused system, where advancement, success, and growth are all solely determined by how well students perform in exams. The linguistics implication of such lapses is that learners do not internalize the language but only memorize it for examination purposes and when it comes to speaking in front of others, they experience fear and reluctance due to issues such as low self-esteem, a limited vocabulary, and bad pronunciation, among others (Jacob, 2022; Knapp, 2021; Fatima, Ismail, Pathan, & Memon, 2020; Spencer & Peterson, 2018; Tridinanti, 2018; Afuiwa, 2016; Tan, 2016; Al-Hosni, 2014; Zhang, 2014).

It is ridiculous to know that majority of the senior secondary school pupils in Sierra Leone can't communicate in simple and clear English hence prefer the use of lingua franca (Krio) and their native languages to that of English language. This tendency is a common oral English language learning disorder characterized by students' lack of English communication skills, self-confidence as they refrain from English speaking and self-efficacy.

There are several reasons secondary school pupils in Sierra Leone have difficulty learning how to speak English and do well on tests, including but not limited to: the failure of modern language instruction methods to foster performance, proficiency, and competency; Less importance should be given to students' English-speaking abilities outside of the classroom and more focus should be paid to students' ability and willingness to successfully use the taught or target language, linguistic environment diversity (multilingualism and its effects), in addition to other language problems, strategies and practices for using textbooks, television, websites, and other things in the classroom to use language, and these factors.

1.1. The Knowledge Gap

The relevant literature in this work, revealed the knowledge gap that exists in ex-

tant literature. However, a few works have been done on Oral English Fluency in the country but these are based on public institutions such as those of Thulla et al. (2021) and Afuiwa (2016). These gaps in oral English fluency praxis in the country's academic institutions need to be investigated for effective oral English fluency and proficiency. Thus, the aim of this ESL Oral Proficiency Inapt in Senior Secondary School Learners is to assess best practices that will help combat these lapses.

This study also addresses a comprehensive gap in understanding the dual impact of lack of English fluency on both academic performance and social integration, particularly in senior school settings. It provides insights into teacher perspectives, highlights the need for effective support systems, and offers practical implications for improving educational outcomes and peer relationships for pupils with limited English fluency. By offering an empirical and multifaceted approach, this research contributes valuable new insights to the field of education and language proficiency.

1.2. Research Method

The mixed-method methodology of the study produced precise information about people, events, and conditions as well as correlation between variables. Data collection methods include surveying the sample population, using questionnaires, and watching classes. The students' abilities for free communication with peers and monitored communication with teachers and researchers were assessed using a speaking evaluation approach. The similarities and differences between their native languages and the English language were also taught to them. While the researcher focused solely on the proper pronunciation to assess the learners' oral fluency skills and competency, they also recited short stories, portions of text, or open conversations as clearly and accurately as possible. A random sampling technique was used to ensure that the sample is representative of the overall population of senior school pupils. Using a sample size interval of 4, a systematic random sample of 100 senior secondary school students in the south were chosen

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. Results

The results are categorized into two subsections: ascertaining if speaker's L1 background correlates with speaker's L2 proficiency level and determine the extent to which cultural and societal sensitivity affect L2 learning at senior secondary school level. This is done to determine the research effectiveness in improving the oral fluency inapt among the students in the study area.

Objective 1: Ascertaining if speaker's L1 background correlates with speaker's L2 proficiency level.

Table 1 investigates the correlation between speakers' L1 and English Language background. According to the investigation, majority of participants in the Bo District agreed that the English language and their native tongues have various

pronunciations, spellings, and sound systems differences. The district’s percentage of 85% shows that spoken English language acquisition and vocabulary expansion have been more significantly impacted. It should be handled cautiously if not carefully developed with an emphasis on the principles of spoken English; it could result in a number of problems, including pronunciation errors. This is supported by data from the Bonthe districts with 69%, Moyamba with 61%, and Pujehun, with 60%. On the other hand, some disagreed that there is no alarming difference between the sound systems of their native languages and that of the English language. The data shows that Pujehun area had more respondents who disagreed and said that pronunciation has little or no impact on learners’ oral fluency, with a percentage of 40%. Moyamba district with 39% follows suit in the same order as the other three (3) districts, while Bonthe district in third place with 21% and lastly Bo district with a percentage of 15%. From the table, it is concluded that the differences that exist between these two languages pose a serious problem for learners from multilingual backgrounds, this is in line with the studies of Chan et al. (2016); Troute (2016); Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi (2015); Tuan & Mai (2015); Vasu & Dhanavel (2015); Waniek-Klimczak, Rojczyk and Andrzej (2015); Wa-Mbaleka (2014); Uddin and Alam (2013); Wong (2010); Shu (2007) who stated that multilingualism poses a problem for ESL learners. They focused on sociolinguistic factors, such as L1 influence and cultural restrictions, which provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by learners in this study.

Table 1. Correlation between speaker’s L1 background and speaker’s L2 proficiency level.

District	Students	Responses			
		Agree	(%)	Disagree	(%)
Bo	40	35	85	05	15
Bonthe	15	12	69	03	21
Moyamba	25	22	61	03	39
Pujehun	20	12	60	08	40

Source; John P Stevens, 2023.

Table 2 shows the respondents who were certain that these disparities do, in fact, affect their fluency, proficiency, and competency in oral English and those in the disagree Column who say the disparity has nothing to do with their oral English fluency. They table indicates that these differences generally impede their ability to learn, speak, teach, and use the English language. As a result, the sound systems of their mother tongues and the English language differ more from one another, and these variances have a stronger impact on how they pronounce words and spell words, as well as how their vocabulary grows.

The analysis shows that the Moyamba District had more respondents who agreed that these changes have a significant impact on learners’ spoken English fluency, knowledge growth, pronunciations, and English language learning, with

a proportion of 92%. When compared to the other three (3) districts (Bo, Bonthe, and Pujehun) in the southern province of Sierra Leone, Bonthe District follows closely behind with 86%. Pujehun district placed third with 70%, and Bo district with 37.5%, received the fewest responses. From the above data it is evident that, there were slight percentage gap between two (2) of the four (4) districts in the study area (Moyamba and Bonthe). That is, Bonthe district and Moyamba district have a percentage difference of (6%) percent from the district with the second largest responses on the matter which is Bonthe with (86%) percent. The majority of respondents believe that there are differences between the sound systems of their mother tongues and that of the English language, and since there are significant differences between their native languages and that of the English language, they accept that these differences have an impact on learning, pronunciation, speaking, teaching, and general English language usage.

Table 2. Effect of these differences on learners' oral English competence.

District	Students	Responses		Ratio	
		Agree	Disagree	(%)	(%)
Bo	40	15	25	37.5	62.5
Bonthe	15	13	02	86	16
Moyamba	25	23	02	92	08
Pujehun	20	14	06	70	30

Source: John P Stevens 2023.

On the other hand, **Table 2** also identifies respondents who disagreed and said that there are little or no distinct differences between the sound systems of their native languages and that of the English language from all the different Districts under review (Bo, Bonthe, Moyamba and Pujehun). Thus the sound systems of their mother tongues and that of the English language are in fact more similar to them than most of the other languages spoken as bi or multi-linguals. From the analysis, it is demonstrated that, Bo District with a percentage of (62.5%) percent had more respondents who confirmed that these differences if ever they exist have no severe influence on them. This is seconded by Pujehun District in the same sequence with a percentage of 30% as compared to the other three (3) districts (Bo, Bonthe and Moyamba), followed by Bonthe District with a percentage of 16%, and lastly by Moyamba District with a percentage of 0.8% percent.

In conclusion, this show the total number of students from Senior Secondary Schools (S.S.S.) who, based on the responses analyzed, determined that these differences, if they exist, have no bearing on their vocabulary knowledge development, pronunciation, oral fluency, learning of oral English, and general use of English in their natural communication exercises because there are few or no differences but more similarities in the sound systems. This suggests that they are proficient in other linguistic areas of the English language and the development

of fundamental abilities, such as pronunciation, and that these do not in any way provide a problem to them as learners. As a result, their goal is to become as proficient in English as a native speaker. This is supported by the studies of the [Asia-Pacific Education Researcher \(2021\)](#); [Yow-Jyy, Lee, & Yeu-Ting \(2021\)](#); [Yu & Liu \(2018\)](#); [Zein \(2017\)](#) and [Yusof & Halim \(2014\)](#).

Table 3. Effect of these differences on learners’ oral English fluency.

District	Students	Responses		Ratio	
		Agree	Disagree	(%)	(%)
Bo	40	16	24	40	60
Bonthe	15	14	01	93	07
Moyamba	25	23	02	92	08
Pujehun	20	12	08	60	40

Source: John P Stevens 2023.

Table 3 investigates respondents who agreed with certainty that their L1 and English language proficiency levels were in correlation. From the table, it is indicated that more respondents in the Bonthe District with 93% confirmed their oral English competences are equal to that of their native language competences and enjoy speaking English. This is followed by 92% Moyamba Districts, 60% Pujehun District and 40% Bo District. On the contrary, 60% of Bo District respondents disagreed and expressed that their fluency and proficiency in their L1 do not correlate with their fluency and proficiency levels in the English language, followed by 40% Pujehun District, 8% Moyamba District and 7% Bonthe District respectively.

From the above, there were close percentage between two (2) of the four (4) districts in the study area at both the upper and lower tiers. That is, Bonthe District and Moyamba District have a percentage difference of (1%) from the district with the second largest responses on the subject matter at the upper tier whilst Bo and Pujehun Districts at the lower tier have a percentage difference of 20% in agreeing that the sound differences between their native languages and that of the English Language pose a major problem in their Oral English Fluency enhancement. The result shows that there is a clear indication that native language interference has a major effect on learners’ Oral English fluency and proficiency development. This is in line with [Thulla, Moriba, Adom, & Mensah-Gborie \(2021\)](#); [Yaseen \(2018\)](#); [Zheng \(2008\)](#) who noted that Speaking plays a crucial role in influencing learners’ vocabulary knowledge development, pronunciation, and oral English learning despite conflicting opinions that there are differences between the sound systems of their mother tongues, as shown by the analysis above.

Objective 2: To determine the extent to which cultural and societal sensitivity affect L2 learning at senior secondary school level.

Table 4 represents the respondents who never or occasionally practice oral Eng-

lish speaking skills in their daily conversations and learning processes based on societal and cultural restrictions. This identifies the respondents who confidently declared that indeed they occasionally practice English speaking outside their classroom situations (societies and with friends, parents etc.). From the table, it is demonstrated that, Bo District with a percentage of 70% had more respondents who clearly established that they occasionally practice oral English speaking skills outside their classroom situations. This is followed by Bonthe District in the same classification with a percentage of 16%, Pujehun District with a percentage of 15% and lastly Moyamba District with a percentage of 0.8% percent. On the other hand, some of the respondents in the region also indicated that they never used their oral English speaking abilities outside of the classroom, not even in their casual chats. According to the data above, Moyamba District with a percentage of 92% had the highest number of respondents who firmly stated that they never practiced oral English speaking skills outside of class. This was seconded by Bonthe District with a percentage of 86%, Pujehun District with 85% and Bo District with 30%. Conclusively, there was a close percentage gap among three (3) out of the four (4) districts in the study area (Moyamba, Bonthe, and Pujehun). That is, Bonthe district and Moyamba district have a percentage difference of (6%) percent at the upper tier from the district with the second highest responses on the subject under review which is Moyamba with (92%) percent while Pujehun and Bonthe Districts at the media tier have a percentage difference of (1%) percent. This is in similar connection with the studies of [Spencer & Peterson \(2018\)](#); [Tridianti \(2018\)](#); [Afuiwa \(2016\)](#); [Tan \(2016\)](#); [Al-Hosni \(2014\)](#) and [Zhang \(2014\)](#) who noted that the lack of motivation by societal and cultural stakeholders in encouraging ESL learners impedes the growth of its oral fluency and competency. They also argued that society and cultural background have a lot to play in the oral fluency achievement of ESL/EFL learners.

Table 4. English speaking outside classroom situation.

District	Students	Responses		Ratio	
		Occasionally	Never	(%)	(%)
Bo	40	28	12	70	30
Bonthe	15	02	13	16	86
Moyamba	25	02	23	08	92
Pujehun	20	03	17	15	85

Source: John P Stevens 2023.

Generally, this study results (questionnaire and interviews) established that these respondents who asserted with confidence that they have never practiced oral English speaking outside of the classroom were as a result of religious and societal restrictions. Since these districts are Muslim dominated are pledge allegiance to the Arabic language, speaking the English language is seen as a deviant

from their cultural and societal norms. These views are supported by the studies conducted by [Alam & Uddin \(2013\)](#); [Khan & Khattak \(2011\)](#); [Mak \(2011\)](#); [Graddol \(2006\)](#); [Hodson \(2006\)](#); [Bashiruddin \(2003\)](#); [Brown \(2003\)](#).

Table 5. Confusion in simultaneously practicing native and English cultures.

District	Students	Responses		Ratio	
		Agree	Disagree	(%)	(%)
Bo	40	16	24	40	60
Bonthe	15	14	01	93	07
Moyamba	25	23	02	92	08
Pujehun	20	12	08	60	40

Source: John P Stevens 2023.

Table 5 shows the students who answered “yes”, in agreement to indicate they find it confusing to practice both their native and English cultures side by side at home and in their societies/communities because most of these societies are populated by uneducated individuals who support and encourage people to only practice their indigenous language cultures (Language Loyalists). It is evident from the study that more respondents in the Bonthe District, with a proportion of 93%, stated they did not practice the two cultures side by side because it always create confusion within them and even society members. This is followed in same trend by Moyamba Districts with 92%, Pujehun, with 60%, and Bo, which has a percentage of 40%. From the analysis, it was revealed that most people who fall within this category were respondents who have either not left their communities for the cities or are living with relatives who have never got an English Education. Most of the people in these communities are either Islamic Scholars who wants their children to continue with the Arabic language and become clerics like they are or do not want their children or wards to be influenced by the English cultures since they consider English culture an opposing one. This is supported by the studies of researchers like [Jacob \(2022\)](#); [Knapp \(2021\)](#); [Fatima, Ismail, Pathan, & Memon \(2020\)](#); [Spencer & Peterson \(2018\)](#); [Tridinanti \(2018\)](#); [Zhou \(2017\)](#); [Zhang \(2016\)](#); [Zhan \(2015\)](#); [Zhang & Liu \(2014\)](#); [Zhang \(2014\)](#); [Afuiwa \(2016\)](#); [Tan \(2016\)](#); [Al-Hosni \(2014\)](#) and [Zhang \(2014\)](#).

However, **Table 5** also presents data to show the students who said they do not find it confusing practicing both their native and English cultures simultaneously. The data confirms that Bo District had more respondents who were engrained in not finding the practice strange since they were exposed to English at a young age, with a rate of 60%. This is followed in the same order by Pujehun district, which has a percentage of 40%, Moyamba District with 8% and Bonthe district, with 7%. This is in line with the studies of researchers like [Crystal \(2020\)](#); [Christian, McCarty, & Brown \(2020\)](#); [Putri & Hamuddin \(2018\)](#); [Chan et al. \(2016\)](#); [Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi \(2015\)](#); [Cholakova \(2015\)](#); [Demir \(2013\)](#); [Dutro & Moore \(2011\)](#);

Brown (2011); Chang (2011); Chan (2011); Mantz (2007); Crystal (2006); Graddol (2006) and Brown (2003); Crystal (2001) they opined that a comprehensible input from the society (parents, mates, friends, teachers etc.) goes a long way in enhancing learners' oral abilities, language learning and acquisition.

2.2. Discussion

According to the study's findings, many of the students in the study area struggle to construct a proper English sentence fluently, which is why they consistently perform poorly on oral English tests as well as other national and international exams? When compared to the district headquarters towns, oral English fluency is even worse among students in the interior regions of southern Sierra Leone. The findings support numerous unsupported viewpoints, reports from the external examiner, and the work of numerous researchers, including Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi (2015); Dansieh (2018); Zhou & Guo (2016); Zhao (2012); Zhu & Zhou (2012); Zhang & Yin (2009).

In their study, August & Shanahan (2006) found that just 10% of pupils who speak English as their first language graduate from high school, compared to 31% of non-English learners who do. Sadly, for some immigrant groups, this inequality trend has been observed to last through the second and even third generation. The West African Examination Council Chief Examiner has indicated that students' English language skills need to be improved in his reports (2017-2021). The English Language Performance Score Range A1-C6 in 2018 records 46.79 percent compared to 54.06 percent in 2017, a 7.27 percent decrease, according to the Council. The Daily Guides, 2018-2021 Editions, state that this downward tendency has been ongoing for the past few years. According to Brown (2011), oral English speaking still presents a significant obstacle to students learning English as a second language, even when linguistic elements like clustering, redundancy, colloquial language, and intonation of English are within students' grasp. Brown's claim is closely related to the oral English situation in Sierra Leone, where students are able to understand some language elements but still struggle to speak fluently in English and improve their performance at the WASSCE.

In the interviews, the respondents were able to point out most of the lapses in the teachers' attitude, teaching methodology and interaction with their pupils. They were also able to proffer some solutions to these inept. Their society and the multilingual background of the pupils were also revealed to be a negative player to some extent in the learners' acquisition and learning Oral English Fluency. These respondents were found to be lagging back in accessing the web for teaching and learning purposes because of many reasons that were expressed during the interview sessions. This research revealed the knowledge gap that existed in extant. However, a few works and relevant information garnered by respondents on Oral English Fluency in the country if properly utilized is of a help in fostering the intended improvements. This work's findings will lend support in closing the existing knowledge gap in oral English fluency in the country as ESL Oral Pro-

iciency Inapt in Senior Secondary School Learners assessed the best sociolinguistics practices that will help combat these lapses.

3. Conclusion

The study's findings showed that majority of the pupils struggled to speak English fluently. This is because there are religious and sociocultural restrictions on most of the students especially those in the Muslim dominated areas and the late exposition of these learners to the English language is also a contributing factor. It is advised that English language teachers offer regular public speaking activities to help students develop their social skills, interactions, presentations, and capacity for thought and leadership. This will help students become more proficient oral English learners. Giving children the flexibility to articulate well-reasoned, impassioned ideas, thoughts, and impressions that are worth hearing and presenting to others will improve their oral English fluency. As an illustration, having students create and read poetry, stories, or books out loud can make learning entertaining for both students and teachers.

4. Summary

The article investigates the sociolinguistic factors affecting oral English proficiency among senior secondary school students in Sierra Leone. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, using questionnaires and interviews with 100 students. Findings reveal that a significant percentage of students struggle with pronunciation, and traditional teaching methods like grammar translation and rote learning contribute to the decline in fluency. The study also highlights the influence of students' L1 background, sociocultural sensitivity, and societal restrictions on their L2 learning. The study addresses a significant issue in Sierra Leone's education system: the lack of oral English proficiency among secondary school students. While the importance of English proficiency is acknowledged, and written exams exist, the study focuses specifically on the neglected area of oral communication. The focus on sociolinguistic factors, such as L1 influence and cultural restrictions, provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by learners. The study's novelty lies in its investigation of these sociolinguistic factors in the specific context of Sierra Leonean secondary schools, where the dominance of Krio and other native languages presents a unique linguistic landscape.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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