Gender Difference in Students' Perception of the Use of English Lecturers in the Polytechnic, Ibadan

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Abstract

This study examined the gender difference in the perceptions of Higher National Diploma students at The Polytechnic, Ibadan, of their Use of English lecturers. The design adopted was the survey research design. The participants were 600 HND I and HND II students (300 each) enrolled in GNS 301 and GNS 401 at The Polytechnic, Ibadan. Data were collected through a self-designed instrument, the Students' Perception of Use of English Lecturers Questionnaire (r=0.77). Data were collected through the help of the trained research assistants, the instrument were administered to Polytechnics students, which lasted for five weeks. Data were analysed using samples t-test at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that there was a significant gender difference in the perception of students ($t_{(580)} = -2.44, p = 0.015$), with female students having higher perception scores than their male counterparts. Based on the findings, the study recommended that A gender inclusive strategy should be adopted by the lecturers to cater for both male and female students without prejudice to ensure equal engagement and perception.

Keywords: Students' Perception, Use of English, Lecturers, Ibadan Polytechnic, Gender

Introduction

Use of English lecturers play a central and crucial role in the development of language competence in students at Nigerian tertiary institutions. As facilitators of the Use of English course, the lecturers are responsible for teaching fundamental skills of language such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and effective academic communication. Their teaching methodologies, mastery of subject matter, classroom management, interaction with students, and their overall professionalism significantly influence how the objectives of the courses are achieved. The lecturer is not merely a transmitter of knowledge in language education but a major determinant of students' motivation, engagement, and attitude toward the subject.

English serves as Nigeria's official language and primary medium of instruction from upper primary through tertiary education, functioning as the essential unifying lingua franca across its linguistically diverse population of over 500 ethnic groups (Ewulo, 2020). As enshrined in the 1999 Constitution and National Policy on Education, English facilitates communication among speakers of Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and numerous minority languages, preventing fragmentation in Nigeria's multilingual federation while serving as the legal framework for governance, commerce, and administration . The importance of the language extends beyond academics to economic competitiveness and social mobility.

Research confirms English proficiency as a direct predictor of academic performance across disciplines, with stronger skills correlating to superior outcomes even in non-language technical areas like engineering and cataloguing. Economically, competence in English language drives sustainable development by enabling international trade, technology adoption, and global business participation, while employers consistently prioritize it for roles requiring precise technical reports, presentations, and professional correspondence (Ewulo, 2020). Socially, English confers prestige and upward mobility, bridging ethnic divides and positioning Nigeria within the global knowledge, making Use of English lecturers strategically vital for producing work-ready graduates (Obuasi, 2006; Bamgbose, 2006; Onuoha, 2016)

In Nigerian polytechnics, the Use of English course is designed as a compulsory general course aimed at addressing students' deficiencies in the usage of English language. Many students admitted into tertiary institutions come from diverse linguistic backgrounds and often possess varying levels of proficiency in English. These lecturers in Nigerian polytechnics are the foundational instructors responsible for delivering and teaching compulsory General Nigerian Studies (GNS) courses, particularly GNS 101 (Use of English I), GNS 201 (Use of English II), GNS 301 (Use of English III) and GNS 401 (Use of English IV) which are mandated from the National Diploma (ND) to the Higher National Diploma (HND) programs to build essential communication competencies leading to distinct communicative performance in the respective fields of study of the students.

These lecturers within the constituted General Studies departments are saddled with the responsibilities of equipping the students with proficiency in the four skills of language (listening, speaking, reading and writing); the inevitable core skills for success in technical and vocational disciplines, where precise articulation performance is essential for laboratory reports, engineering blueprints, technical presentations, and professional

correspondence in multilingual work environments. Use of English, one of the important course structures at the General Studies faculty make up 10–15% of all contact hours across all departments, as stated clearly in the NBTE curriculum specifications for ND and HND programmes. This highlights their critical role in promoting holistic skill development within Nigeria's technical education framework, where English serves as the unifying medium bridging diverse linguistic backgrounds and vocational exigencies (NBTE, 2023, Ojo et.al 2025).

These lecturers occupy a distinct strategic position and impact in Nigerian polytechnics because they function as the sole agents through whom the compulsory Use of English curriculum is translated and implemented into day-to-day learning experiences of the students, attitudes, and outcomes, particularly in high-enrollment institutions such as The Polytechnic, Ibadan, one of the nation's oldest and largest polytechnics established in 1970 (Aremo, 2015; Yusuf, 2016). GNS 101, 201, 301, and 401 comprise the "Use of English" sequence in Nigerian polytechnics under NBTE guidelines, progressively building language proficiency for ND and HND students. GNS 101 introduces foundational skills like listening comprehension, basic grammar, oral English, vocabulary, reading, note-taking, and essay outlines. GNS 201 advances to passage comprehension, summaries, phonetics, idioms, and oral skills such as oral presentation skills and techniques. GNS 301 covers precise writing, lectures, clause analysis, punctuation, and reports, while GNS 401 emphasizes advanced essays, speech sounds, synthesis, and literary appreciation. In many polytechnics, Use of English lecturers routinely handle this structured sequence for large, multi-disciplinary classes drawn from various departments across all the faculties in the school (NBTE 2023, Ojo et.al 2022).

The importance of Use of English lecturers becomes more apparent when placed within the wider context of English's role in Nigerian education. The official language and primary medium of instruction from upper primary school to higher education is English, which means that students' ability to comprehend lectures, read course content, and respond to examination questions is predominantly facilitated through English (Bamgbose, 2011; Adegbija,2004). The researches conducted in Nigeria and other locations indicates that proficiency in the English language is a significant predictor of academic success, with greater proficiency linked to improved grades and enhanced performance in subject-specific areas (Fakeye, 2014; Onuoha, 2016; Ali, 2022). In library schools affiliated with polytechnics, for instance, students who had higher English proficiency scores excelled notably in cataloguing and classification classes despite the fact that these subjects are technical rather than language-based (Onuoha, 2016). In this context, the teaching effectiveness of Use of English instructors in GNS 101 and GNS 201 directly affects students' capacity to learn the academic English required for success throughout the curriculum (Aremo, 2015, **Achazie, 2021).**

Despite the strategic purpose behind Use of English, researchers note that many tertiary students in Nigeria still struggle with grammar, vocabulary, coherence, extended writing, and often display negative attitudes towards English as a subject (Aremo, 2015; Nnamani, 2018). Analyses of Nigerian English highlight recurrent syntactic and lexico-semantic deviations in student writing, and these have been linked both to the influence of local varieties and to weaknesses in instruction at earlier stages (Bamgbose, 2011; Odebunmi, 2019). In polytechnic settings, large classes, limited contact hours, inadequate instructional materials and heavy reliance on traditional lecture methods further constrain the ability of lecturers to provide interactive practice and individualised feedback (Achazie, 2021; Yusuf, 2016). Under such conditions, the students' perceptions of their Use of English lecturers whether they see them as supportive and competent or distant and unapproachable become a key determinant of whether they will engage seriously with the course or treat it as peripheral to their real technical training (Sanni et al. 2023; Latip, 2020).

Global and local research on teaching quality underscores that students' perceptions of lecturers represent not trivial opinions but an important predictors of motivation, satisfaction, and learning behaviour, exerting measurable influence on engagement and academic persistence (Ramsden, 2003; Brown and Atkins, 2009). Latip's (2020) empirical study on students' perceptions of lecturers' competency in technical institutions revealed that perceived lecturer knowledge, industrial experience, and motivation exhibited statistically significant positive relationships with student satisfaction, while lecturer motivation uniquely predicted programme loyalty, highlighting how competence signals translate into affective commitment.

In language education specifically, teacher behaviour encompassing clarity, enthusiasm, and empathy, classroom climate (supportive vs. Authoritarian), and feedback style (formative vs. Summative) directly correlate with learners' willingness to communicate , reduced foreign

language anxiety, and heightened persistence, which constitute critical mediators in second-language acquisition and retention. Applying this to Nigeria's polytechnic context, this framework posits that Use of English lecturers perceived as knowledgeable in ESP methodologies, approachable in rapport-building, fair in assessments, and genuinely invested in remedial progress can cultivate positive course attitudes, elevate attendance from 65% to 85%, boost participation rates, and amplify GNS learning outcomes by 20-30% through enhanced self-efficacy (Dörnyei, 2001; **Achazie 2021**).

Multiple interrelated elements influence students' perception of Use of English instructors in Nigerian polytechnics. These elements function at individual, instructional, and contextual levels to affect learning attitudes, engagement, and overall results in mandatory General Nigerian Studies (GNS) classes (Ramsden, 2003; Brown and Atkins, 2009). At the personal level, lecturer characteristics serve as primary drivers of student impressions, forming the foundation of how students evaluate teaching quality from the outset. Students consistently perceive lecturers positively when they demonstrate clear subject expertise, genuine enthusiasm for the material, consistent punctuality in class attendance, and an approachable demeanor that encourages questions and interaction (Usman and Inuwa, 2021). For instance, in a study conducted at Federal Polytechnic Bauchi involving 600 students, 82.8% highlighted effective communication of content as the top characteristic of a good lecturer, emphasizing that even deep knowledge fails to impress if not conveyed clearly and engagingly.

Conversely, perceptions turn negative when lecturers appear disorganized such as arriving unprepared with unstructured lessons or exhibit unfairness in grading or attendance policies, which erodes trust and motivation (Badmus and Oluwatobiloba, 2021). Physical attributes further amplify these impressions during initial encounters; a lecturer's clear voice modulation for audibility in large halls, confident body language that projects authority without intimidation, and friendly facial expressions or smiles create an inviting classroom atmosphere, making students more receptive to learning (Usman and Inuwa, 2021). Gender biases also subtly influence this domain, with male lecturers often rated higher for perceived credibility in technical or STEM-related disciplines common in polytechnics, stemming from cultural stereotypes that associate masculinity with technical prowess, while female lecturers may face heightened scrutiny on the same traits unless they overcompensate with assertiveness (Abboh, 2024).

Their effectiveness in teaching characterized by innovative methods like the Community of Inquiry (CoI) frameworks that improved English performance by 25% and increased interest by 40% at Delta State Polytechnic through collaborative social, cognitive, and teaching presence (Eze, 2024); peer tutoring and cooperative learning strategies enhancing employability skills in building technology programs (Okafor and Eze, 2020); implementation of ICT tools such as educational mobile apps and video assignments enhancing communication outcomes in Ekiti and Ondo State polytechnics (Akinwumi, 2022); and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches focusing on needs analysis and real-world scenarios at Auchi Polytechnic (Balogun, 2020) includes classroom management amid overcrowding, fostering interpersonal relationships to boost motivation, and assessment practices utilizing formative feedback (Eze, 2024; Balogun, 2020). These approaches together influence how students view the relevance of the courses to their academic paths, career prospects, and personal communication development, particularly in light of secondary shortcomings where a substantial percentage of incoming students achieve below credit level (C6) in senior secondary English examinations **(Olanrewaju & Yusuf, 2021; WAEC, 2023).**

Approachability and interpersonal dynamics have a significant affective impact, particularly on multilingual students who arrive with secondary-level English inadequacies. Empathetic feedback, humorous delivery techniques, and friendly demeanors have been shown to empirically reduce anxiety related to learning a foreign language, fostering 78% positive attitudes as opposed to just 42% under remote or authoritarian styles (Dörnyei, 2001; Scholastica, 2015). In Nigeria's diverse classroom settings, where cultural hierarchies and power disparities heighten the need for relational pedagogy to promote risk-taking in oral tasks like GNS 201 discussions, this rapport proves especially crucial for fostering communication willingness and maintaining skill development persistence.

Gender emerges as a significant factor influencing students' perceptions of lecturers in Nigerian higher education, including polytechnics, through lecturer gender and student gender dynamics. Zivkovic et.al (2015) provide empirical evidence from an American-style university in Nigeria, where student evaluations across business, arts/sciences, and IT courses consistently rated male lecturers higher than females in course perception,

instructor quality, and overall effectiveness. The scholars attributed this bias to cultural stereotypes favoring male authority, particularly in technology fields, where students perceived males as more credible and structured, recommending bias-awareness training to address distorted evaluations.

Complementing this, Ainabor et.al (2014) examined Auchi Polytechnic, revealing severe female underrepresentation (16% of 702 academics) and student preferences for male lecturers' commanding presence, especially in general studies like Use of English. Students viewed females as less authoritative due to recruitment biases and cultural factors. Similarly, Akinola (2020) at Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro found female students rated lecturers higher overall than males, valuing approachability, though both genders favored males in technical courses due to patriarchal associations with expertise. These scholars collectively highlight gender's moderating role, where cultural norms inflate male perceptions while scrutinizing females. Therefore, gender serves as a key moderating variable influencing students' perceptions of lecturers in Nigerian polytechnics, shaping how traits like expertise and approachability are evaluated through the interplay of lecturer and student gender. This moderation effect, central to the current study on Use of English lecturers at The Polytechnic, Ibadan, reveals persistent biases rooted in cultural expectations of authority and teaching roles.

Finally, previous studies were done in isolation such as teaching methodology, personality factors, instructional practices, problems, challenges etc. without looking at joint contribution to students' successes and academic achievement. This study fills these voids by providing a holistic approach, institution specificity, and a course-specific baseline data from The Polytechnic, Ibadan, rigorously testing both null hypotheses through the theoretical framework to inform targeted pedagogical interventions and NBTE policy refinement.

Statement of the problem

The Use of English is a compulsory course and a foundational structure of the curriculum in Nigerian polytechnics. It is designed to equip students with the language skills required for effective academic engagement and professional communication. As English remains the medium of instruction across all disciplines, students' proficiency in language is essential for understanding lectures, completing assignments, writing examinations, and producing technical and vocational reports. Meanwhile, despite the continuous offering of the course from the National Diploma to the Higher National Diploma levels, many polytechnic students continually display persistent weaknesses in grammar, writing, oral communication, comprehension, and appropriate academic register. These shortcomings often translate into poor performance not only in language-related courses but also in technically oriented subjects that demand clarity and precision in communication.

Studies have shown that these challenges are not only influenced by the students' diverse linguistic backgrounds but also by institutional factors surrounding the teaching of Use of English. Large class sizes, limited contact hours, inadequate teaching resources, and an overreliance on lecture-centred teaching methods limit opportunities for interaction, practice, and individualized feedback. In such learning environments, the effectiveness of the Use of English lecturer becomes a critical factor, as lecturers are the main agents through whom curriculum objectives are translated into meaningful learning experiences. When lecturers are perceived by students as ineffective, unapproachable, unfair in assessment, or unable to relate language skills to students' fields of study, learners are more likely to develop negative attitudes toward the course, resulting in low motivation, poor attendance, and reduced engagement. Despite the importance of these issues, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on students' perceptions of Use of English lecturers at The Polytechnic, Ibadan. This gap necessitates a focused investigation to inform instructional improvement and enhance the effectiveness of English language teaching in the institution. The study aims to provide empirical evidence that will contribute to understanding the students' perceptions of Use of English lecturers at The Polytechnic, Ibadan. The findings are expected to serve as a basis for improving teaching strategies, enhancing lecturer-student interaction, and strengthening the effectiveness of the Use of English programme in Nigerian polytechnics.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate students' perception of Use of English lecturers at The Polytechnic, Ibadan. The specific objectives of the study are stated below:

a. examine gender differences in students' perception of Use of English lecturers.

Hypotheses

i. There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students of Use of

English lecturers.

Scope of the Study

The study was delimited to HND I and HND II students of The Polytechnic, Ibadan. The geographical scope of the study is The Polytechnic, Ibadan, while the content scope focuses on whether students' perception differs by gender.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study significantly help several stakeholders in the educational sector and bring the needed reformation in the sector. First, it will be useful to the Use of English lecturer**s**, as it will provide insights into how students perceive their teaching, communication style, and overall effectiveness. This feedback will help lecturers improve professional practices and responsibilities. Also, it will provide empirical study to The Polytechnic, Ibadan administrators, NBTE, and curriculum planners, as it will provide evidence based facts that can inform policy decisions regarding the teaching of general studies courses, staff development, and instructional supervision. Furthermore, the improved teaching approaches arising from the findings will enhance the students learning experience and proficiency in English, which is essential for academic and professional success. Lastly, the study will contribute to existing literature on language education and students' perception of lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions and serve as a reference material for future researchers interested in similar studies.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. The research design was employed to know the perception of students about the use of English lecturers in The Polytechnic, Ibadan. The population of this study consisted of all the HND I and HND II students in The Polytechnic, Ibadan, across all the faculties who registered for the Use of English courses GNS 301 and GNS 401. These students were considered suitable for the study because the Use of English course is compulsory for all the HND students, and they have first-hand experience about the lecturers who teach the course. The participants were 600 respondents. The respondents include both male and female students. A self-made structured questionnaire titled *Students' Perception of Use of English Lecturers Questionnaire (Sr=0.77).* A letter of introduction for the study was collected from the Head of Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Ibadan. The consent of the Head of Department of Languages and Communication, The Polytechnic, Ibadan was gotten before the researcher administered the questionnaires to the HND I and HND II students at the various faculties. Two research assistants were trained on how to administer the instruments. The researcher along with the research assistances guided the students during the process of data collection. The students were adequately informed about the purpose of the study, and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistic of frequency, percentage score, mean, standard deviation, independent-samples t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

This chapter presents the detailed data analysis and discussion of the findings on the students' perception on the use of English lecturers in the Polytechnic, Ibadan. It further presents in depth discussion on the research question and the two hypotheses that serve as the frame work for this study.

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant difference between the perception of male and female students of Use of English lecturers

Table 1: Summary of Independent Samples T-Test on Di fference in Students' Perception by Gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig (2 - tailed)	Cohen's D
Students' Perception	Male	203	60.22	11.36	-2.444	580	0.015	-0.213
	Female	379	62.46	10.03				
	Total	**600**						

Levene's Test: F = 0.021, p = 0.886 (Equal variance Assumed)

The 1 shows that there is a significant difference between the male and female students' perception (t (580) = -2.44, p= 0.015<0.05). Since the Levene's Test for Equity of Variance is greater than 0.05 (0.886), and the assumed equal variance is less than 0.05 (0.015), the difference between the two group

is considered statistically significant. Also, the group statistics; females (mean = 62.46) and males (mean= 60.22) indicates that the female students have a significant higher perception than the score of the male. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The magnitude of the effect size is determined by the Cohen's d estimate which is -0.213. The negative sign simply reflects the direction of the difference, showing that female students scored higher than male students. Meanwhile, this is generally considered as a small effect size which suggests that gender accounts for only a minimal difference in perception levels. Therefore, while it is statistically significant, the practical impact of gender on students' perception is relatively small.

Discussion

Gender Differences in the Perception of Use of English Lecturers

The study revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the male and female students' perception. The findings further indicated that the female students have a significant higher perception than the male. The perception of the students towards the use of English lecturers differs base on gender, in fact the female gender has a higher perception towards the use of English lecturers. The findings of Ogude et.al (2024) corroborate this. Their study on the effect of community of inquiry on polytechnic undergraduates' performance in English language: a case study of delta state polytechnic explored whether there is a difference in how male and female students differ in performance and engagement in English courses within the polytechnic. The study which adopt a quasi-experimental design found a statistically significant difference between the both genders. The female has a higher mean performance scores and expressed more favourable assessments of the approaches to instruction. The findings conclusively indicate that gender may shape students' perceptions of instructional effectiveness in Use of English courses.

Similarly, Fayowa (2019) investigated the influence of gender on the perception and attitude of students towards the Use of English course across selected Nigerian higher institutions. The study used a descriptive survey research design to focus on the students' perception of the lecturers' pedagogical approaches and the general relevance of the course to their academic careers. The findings of the study indicated that there is statistically significant difference between male and female students' perceptions; the female students possessed a more positive perception of Use of English lecturers and were more receptive to their instructional methods

Conversely, other empirical studies report no statistically significant gender differences. Akinleke and Omowunmi (2015) carried out a survey study on students' perception of classroom treatment by lecturers in a Nigerian polytechnic. The study was carried out using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis to evaluate gender-based differences. The findings of the study revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students' perception scores ($p > 0.05$). The researchers therefore concluded that instructional treatment and lecturers' behaviour are similarly across gender categories.

The study on *polytechnic students' attitude and their achievement in the use of English and communication course by* Olowoyeye and Aladesusi (2022) also negate the findings. In examining the relationship between students' attitudes and their academic achievements in the Use of English and Communication courses within a Nigerian polytechnic setting, it was found that there was no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of their Use of English lecturers. It was suggested in the data that compulsion of the course in the polytechnic curriculum made both male and female students viewed the lecturers through the perspective of academic requirement rather than interest of gender.

Conclusion

The study investigated students' perception of the use of English Lecturers in The Polytechnic, Ibadan. Sequel, to the survey study and finding that revealed that gender played an important role in shaping students' perception of Use of English lecturers since female students demonstrated a more favourable perception over their male counterparts.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. A gender inclusive strategy should be adopted by the lecturers to cater for both male and female students without prejudice to ensure equal engagement and perception.

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