

## ENHANCING ENGLISH ORAL FLUENCY: A STUDY ON SIERRA LEONE'S SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

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### Abstract

This study investigates factors and strategies to improve oral fluency, proficiency, and competency in English among senior secondary school students. Objectives include examining the influence of a speaker's first language and cultural factors on second language (L2) learning. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, 25 out of 97 senior secondary schools in the southern province were chosen, involving 9,870.25 students and 59.5 teachers. The research assessed oral fluency enhancement using questionnaires and interviews, focusing on word pronunciation and public speaking exercises. Results showed over 80% of students had pronunciation issues and used frequent calques. Students in district headquarters performed better than those in remote areas. Common problems included poor sentence construction, spelling, pronunciation, and subject-verb agreement. Traditional teaching methods like grammar-translation and rote learning were prevalent but less effective. These teacher-centered approaches relied heavily on textbooks and did not promote student engagement or language acquisition. The study concludes that a shift towards student-centered teaching, involving classroom participation, interaction, group work, and public speaking, is necessary for effective English language learning.

**Keywords:** *speaking fluency, proficiency, competency, intervention strategies, sociolinguistic factors, public speaking*

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### INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates the challenge of improving oral English proficiency among L2 learners, a concern that remains inadequately addressed despite numerous efforts. It appears that underlying factors such as unidentified weaknesses, varying compatibility, and teaching methodologies might contribute to the shortfall in achieving pedagogical goals. Merely hypothesizing about these issues is insufficient; thus, this study embarks on a rigorous examination of the circumstances. Focusing on senior secondary school students, the research explores the enhancement of oral English proficiency through the application of sociolinguistic elements. The relevance of English as a Second Language (ESL) in educational settings has gained considerable attention in applied linguistics, sparking debates, particularly in European and Asian contexts (Johnson, 2014; Burton, 2013; Aifuwa, 2013; Coyle, 2010; Bamisaye, 2006). In many countries, including Sierra Leone, there is an urgent need to develop communicative competence in English, either as a foreign or second language. The integration of sociolinguistic elements in oral communication is essential for proficiency, aiding learners in speech processing, generation, and overcoming socio-cultural and personal anxieties. The global aspiration to learn English, driven by the desire to compete in the computer industry and global market, has surged in the past decade. In Sierra Leone, this has translated into an increased demand for English proficiency across various life spheres, reflecting the population's eagerness to engage competitively in the global market.

Oral language skills, encompassing listening, speaking, and non-verbal gestures such as eye contact and facial expressions, are pivotal in interactive language classrooms, forming a core aspect of Applied Linguistics (Kabellow, Omulando, & Barasa, 2022; Shteivi & Hamuda, 2016; Çelik & Kocaman, 2016; Burton, 2013; Aifuwa, 2013; Brown, 2000). Proficiency in English is deemed vital for today's market, social interactions, and technological advancements (Brown, 2011). The role of English as a neutral lingua franca, transcending socio-cultural and linguistic diversity, is increasingly recognized, highlighting its numerous advantages in contemporary life (Christian, McCarty & Brown, 2020; Putri, Herdi, & Hamuddin, 2018; Chan, Ying, Hall, & Ashley, 2016; Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi, 2015; Cholakova 2015; Demir, 2013; Dutro, Levy, & Moore, 2011; Brown, 2011; Chang, 2011; Chan, 2011; Mantz, 2007; Graddol, 2006; Brown, 2003). English's prominence in global communication, political, socio-economic growth, and institutional development is undisputed, often serving as a unifying language in diverse settings and reducing ethnocentrism and linguistic conflicts. Despite Sierra Leone's introduction of free and quality education three years ago, progress towards quality seems slow. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Round 6 by Statistics Sierra Leone (2017) revealed that 84% of children in the country struggled to read a simple story, highlighting the dire need for oral English language improvement (Thulla, Moriba, Adom & Mensah-Gborie, 2021). This study aims to address this gap by investigating effective strategies to enhance oral English proficiency among L2 learners.

## **Literature review**

### ***Global prevalence of English***

Recent developments in applied linguistics underscore the ascendancy of English as a preeminent global language. According to King (2019), English is recognized as the primary medium of instruction and communication in 98% of universities worldwide, as per the Shanghai Jiao Tong University index (2018). Its role as a lingua franca in various domains, including education, business, science, and diplomacy, is unchallenged (Crystal, 2020; Deepika, 2019; Graddol, 2010; Chen & Chang, 2004). King (2019) further asserts that the integration of English into the educational systems of Europe, Asia, and Africa has significantly contributed to its global dominance.

### ***Decline in English proficiency***

Contrasting the global dominance of English, research points to a decline in English proficiency, particularly in spoken English. Perez & Holmes (2010) highlight challenges in advanced English skills among Americans. August & Shanahan (2006) reveal a concerning trend: only 10% of native English-speaking students graduate from high school, compared to 31% of non-native speakers. These discrepancies persist across generations for some immigrant groups (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011).

### ***The case of Sierra Leone***

In Sierra Leone, despite the curriculum's emphasis on English, there's an apparent neglect of oral English skills in teaching (Putri, Herdi, & Hamuddin, 2018). King (2019) discusses the complexities of second language learning in multilingual societies, highlighting the influence of one's first language (L1) on the acquisition of a second language (L2). The pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary errors in English among Sierra Leoneans often reflect their diverse linguistic backgrounds.

### ***Implications of multilingualism***

Multilingualism has been extensively studied from applied linguistics and sociological perspectives (Edwards, 2004; King, 2019). Promoting bilingualism from an early age is seen as beneficial, with strategies such as the one-parent-one-language approach being effective (Barron-Hauwaert, 2011; Baker, 2000).

### ***Sociocultural factors in language learning***

The intertwining of language and culture is undeniable (Brown, 2001; McKay, 2000). Access to cultural and social capital profoundly impacts the English language learning process (Pishghdam, 2011; Arikan,

2011). Additionally, learners' performance in oral English is influenced by available resources and societal roles (Çelik, & Kocaman, 2016; Khan, 2011).

***Sociocultural sensitivity in L2 pronunciation***

Sociocultural background plays a significant role in L2 acquisition, influencing access to resources and learner relationships (Pishghdam, 2011; Arikan, 2011). Cognitive ability and socioeconomic background are both crucial in language learning, though their relative impacts are debated (Marks, 2013; Meng & Wang, 2006).

***Challenges in English speaking proficiency***

In Sierra Leone, the focus on exam-based assessments undermines the development of holistic English proficiency (Jacob, 2022; Knapp, 2021). Factors contributing to learners' difficulties include limited resources, linguistic diversity, and social-emotional influences (Nation, 2001; Wu & Lin, 2014). The need for oral English communication skills transcends academic contexts, affecting social and professional interactions.

In conclusion, while English continues to dominate globally, disparities in proficiency, particularly in spoken English, pose challenges. In multilingual contexts like Sierra Leone, the interplay of linguistic backgrounds, sociocultural factors, and educational practices influences English language acquisition. Addressing these complexities requires a nuanced understanding of the socio-educational dynamics at play.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The study employed a mixed-method approach to accurately collect data regarding individuals, events, and contexts, along with examining correlations between various variables. Data collection methodologies included conducting interviews, administering questionnaires, observing classrooms, and surveying the selected sample. A Pre-test - Post-test Design was selected as the sampling strategy, deemed most effective in accurately representing the entire demographic of students, teachers, and schools. This strategy minimizes the potential for errors related to learner and teacher characteristics. The assessment of speaking skills involved evaluating students' abilities in unstructured interactions with peers and structured communications with teachers and researchers. Students were instructed to identify similarities and differences between their native languages and the English language.

The researcher's primary focus was on proper pronunciation to gauge learners' oral fluency and proficiency. This was assessed through recitations of short stories, text excerpts, or engaging in open conversations, aiming for clarity and precision. A systematic random sampling method was used, with a sample size interval of 4. From 97 senior secondary schools in the southern province, 24.25 schools were selected. Correspondingly, 9,870.25 out of 39,481 students and 59.5 out of 239 senior secondary school teachers were chosen, as detailed in the following table (source: MBSSE Annual School Census Report 2021).

Table 1. Population and Sample Size of Schools, Teachers, and Senior Secondary School Students

<b>REGION</b>	<b>Total Number of Schools</b>	<b>Sample Size of Schools</b>	<b>Total English Teachers</b>	<b>Teacher Sample Size</b>	<b>Student Total Population</b>	<b>Student Sample Size</b>
<b>BO CITY</b>	22	5.5	6.9	17.25	16,716	4,179
<b>BO DISTRICT</b>	24	6	40	10	9,642	2,410.5
<b>BONTHE DISTRICT</b>	9	2.25	25	6	4,686	1,171.5

<b>BONTHE MUNICIPAL</b>	3	0.75	5	1.25	469	117.25
<b>MOYAMBA DISTRICT</b>	28	7	70	17.5	5,390	1,347.5
<b>PUJEHUN DISTRICT</b>	11	2.75	30	7.5	2,578	644.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	97	24.25	239	59.5	39,481	9,870.25

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Findings*

The results are presented in two subsections. The first investigates the correlation between a speaker's first language (L1) background and their second language (L2) proficiency level in English. The second examines the influence of cultural and societal factors on L2 learning at the senior secondary school level. The overarching goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving oral fluency among the students in the study area.

### *Correlation between L1 Background and L2 Proficiency*

Research Question: Do differences exist between the sound systems of the students' native languages and the English language?

Table 2. Perception of Sound System Differences between Native Languages and English

<b>District</b>	<b>%</b>
Bo	57.1
Pujehun	81.3
Bonthe	86.7
Moyamba	81

The majority of respondents across all districts acknowledged differences in pronunciation, spelling, and sound systems between their native languages and English. Notably, 86.7% of respondents in the Bonthe district recognized this difference, indicating a significant impact on their spoken English language learning and vocabulary development. Pujehun, Moyamba, and Bo districts followed with 81.3%, 81%, and 57.1%, respectively. The relatively small percentage difference between the Moyamba and Pujehun districts (0.3%) suggests a consensus among respondents regarding the distinctions between the sound systems of their native languages and English. This finding underscores the importance of pronunciation in learning, speaking, teaching, and general English language usage, as well as its role in developing adequate vocabulary skills.

The study reveals a prevalent belief among students in the surveyed districts that distinct differences exist between the sound systems of their native languages and English. These differences appear to have a substantial impact on their oral fluency and overall English language proficiency. The findings highlight the need for targeted educational interventions focusing on pronunciation and vocabulary development to enhance English language learning outcomes.

Table 2 presents data from respondents across four districts: Bo, Bonthe, Moyamba, and Pujehun. The table highlights the percentages of respondents who perceived no significant differences between the sound systems of their native languages and that of the English language. These perceptions suggest a high degree of similarity between the sound systems of the native languages and English, potentially influencing oral fluency in English language learning.

The data indicates that Pujehun District had the highest percentage of respondents (81.3%) who believed that pronunciation differences have minimal or no impact on learners' oral fluency in English. Moyamba District closely follows with 81.0% of respondents sharing this view. Bonthe District ranks third with 86.7% of respondents perceiving no significant sound system differences. Bo District has the

lowest percentage, with only 6.9% of respondents indicating no perceived differences between the sound systems of their native languages and English.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by District

District	%
Bo	6.9
Pujehun	18.3
Bonthe	12.9
Moyamba	18.2

This distribution reflects varying perceptions across the districts regarding the similarity between native language sound systems and the English language, which may have implications for language teaching and learning strategies in these regions.

***Impact of Linguistic Differences on Oral English Competence: An Analysis of Four Districts in the Southern Province of Sierra Leone***

The study investigated the influence of disparities between mother tongues and the English language on oral English competence. This analysis was conducted across four districts: Bonthe, Moyamba, Pujehun, and Bo, located in the southern province of Sierra Leone. The primary focus was to determine if these linguistic differences affected fluency, proficiency, and overall competency in oral English. The data indicated a significant perception among respondents that variations between their native languages and English impede their ability to learn, speak, teach, and utilize the English language effectively. These challenges were particularly noted in the aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary development, and spelling.

A district-wise breakdown of the responses revealed the following:

**Bonthe District:** This district exhibited the highest proportion of respondents (72.5%) affirming that linguistic disparities significantly impact oral English competence. This included aspects such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary growth, and overall language acquisition. **Moyamba District:** Following closely, Moyamba district recorded a proportion of 71.9% of respondents acknowledging the influence of these linguistic differences. **Pujehun District:** Positioned third in the ranking, the Pujehun district had 66.7% of respondents recognizing the impact. **Bo District:** This district had the lowest response rate, with only 6.9% of participants acknowledging the effect of linguistic disparities. The study highlighted a marginal difference, specifically a 1.4% gap, between the top two districts (Bonthe and Moyamba) concerning the perception of the impact of linguistic differences on oral English competence. Overall, the majority of participants across the districts acknowledged that the divergences between the sound systems of their mother tongues and the English language have a substantial effect on various aspects of English language acquisition and usage. This consensus underscores the need for tailored language education strategies that address these linguistic challenges to enhance English language proficiency in these regions.

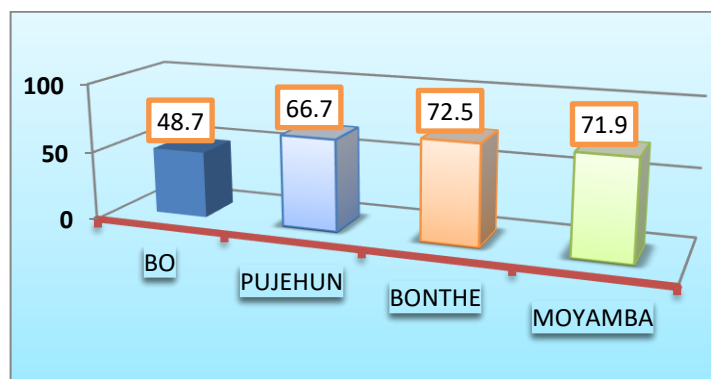


Figure 1. Students who Acknowledge the Impact of these Variations on their Oral English Proficiency

This table summarizes the responses of students from Senior Secondary Schools (S.S.S.) in the districts of Bo, Bonthe, Moyamba, and Pujehun regarding the perceptions of Sound System Similarities between Native Languages and English among Senior Secondary School Students in Various Districts. The focus is on students' confidence regarding the similarities between the sound systems of their native languages and that of the English language. The collected data indicates that a significant portion of respondents perceive little to no differences between the sound systems of their mother tongues and English.

These perceptions seemingly have no substantial impact on their development of vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, oral fluency, and general use of English in natural communication contexts. The implication is that these students consider themselves proficient in various linguistic aspects of English, and that pronunciation and fundamental abilities are not hindered by these perceived similarities. The ultimate goal for many appears to be achieving proficiency in English comparable to that of native speakers. From the analysis, the following district-wise percentages were observed in terms of respondents affirming minimal impact of sound system differences on their English language skills:

Bonthe District: 65%

Pujehun District: 33.3%

Moyamba District: 27.3%

Bo District: 15.3%

These findings reveal significant percentage gaps (at least 6%) between any two of the four districts under study. Specifically, there is a 6% difference between the Pujehun and Moyamba districts, with Pujehun having the second-highest percentage of respondents asserting minimal impact of sound system differences. The majority of respondents across the districts believe that the similarities between the sound systems of their native languages and English are substantial. They perceive that these similarities do not significantly affect learning, pronunciation, speaking, teaching, and general English language usage. While acknowledging that good pronunciation is partly fostered by proper vocabulary skill and ability development, the overarching sentiment is that the perceived similarities override potential difficulties in these areas.

Table 4. Student Responses on the Impact of Sound System Differences in Oral English Fluency

<b>District</b>	<b>%</b>
Bo	15.3
Pujehun	33.5
Bonthe	65
Moyamba	27.3

The analysis presented in Table 4 elucidates the correlation perceived by respondents between their first language (L1) proficiency and their competence in English. It highlights the instrumental role of speaking in enhancing vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, and overall oral English proficiency. This is despite the acknowledged discrepancies between the sound systems of the respondents' native languages and English.

The data in Figure 2 reveals a notable trend among respondents from the Bonthe district, with a majority affirming parity between their oral English competencies and those in their native languages. Furthermore, these respondents expressed a preference for speaking English. This trend is comparatively analyzed with data from other districts: Moyamba with 45.8%, Bo with 21.1%, and Pujehun with 48.7%.

A meticulous examination of the percentage differences among the districts of Bonthe, Moyamba, and Pujehun unveils a striking proximity in responses. Specifically, the gap between Bonthe and Pujehun, the districts with the highest affirmative responses, is a mere 0.1%. Pujehun leads with 48.7%, closely followed by Bonthe. The results indicate a generally high correlation between L1 proficiency and English language proficiency across the surveyed districts, with particularly close percentages in

three out of the four districts studied. This suggests a nuanced regional variation in the perception and reality of bilingual competencies within the study area.

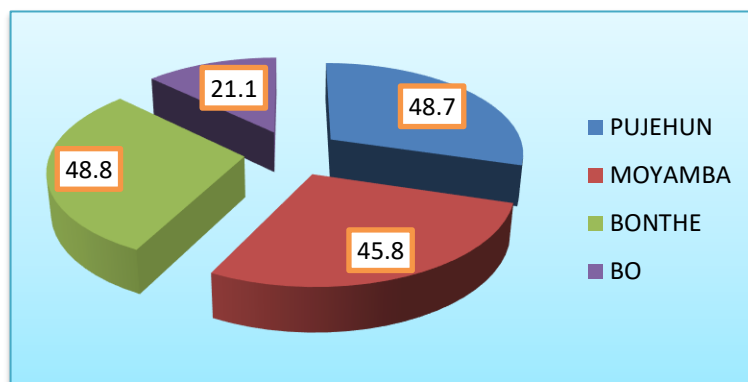


Figure 2. The Percentage of Students Who Said Yes

Table 5 presents findings related to the respondents' perceptions of the correlation between their proficiency in their first language (L1) and their proficiency in English. It was observed that a significant proportion of respondents across various districts reported a lack of correlation between their proficiency in their mother tongue and their English language skills.

The Bothe district exhibited the highest percentage of respondents acknowledging a disparity between their spoken English proficiency and their proficiency in their mother tongue, with 95.2% affirming this view. Bomthe district followed closely, with 91.2% of respondents expressing similar sentiments. In Moyamba district, the percentage stood at 94.1%, while in Bo district, it was notably lower at 63.3%.

An analysis of the data reveals minor percentage differences among three of the four districts studied (Bonthé, Moyamba, and Pujehun). Pujehun district, which had the highest response rate on the topic, demonstrated a marginal difference of 1.2% from Moyamba district, the second-highest with a response rate of 94.1%. This indicates a relatively consistent perception across these districts regarding the disparity in language proficiencies.

Table 5. Respondents Admiring Individuals Proficient in English

District	%
Bo	91.2
Moyamba	63.3
Bonthé	94.1

The table above highlights the percentages of students in each district who expressed admiration for individuals with good English speaking skills. The data underscores a significant appreciation for English language proficiency across the districts, with Pujehun district leading at 95.3%.

***Assessing the impact of cultural and societal sensitivity on second language (L2) learning at the senior secondary school level***

To this end, data were collected to evaluate the frequency with which students engaged in English-speaking practices outside of classroom settings. The findings are encapsulated in the following rephrased results, suitable for a refereed journal:

The data presented in Table 6 illustrate the proportion of students who reported engaging in oral English communication outside the formal classroom environment. This encompasses interactions in societal contexts and with peers, parents, and other individuals. The analysis revealed significant variations among different districts.

In Bonthe district, 41.2% of respondents indicated that they occasionally practice speaking English in non-classroom settings. This was the highest percentage among the surveyed districts, indicating a relatively greater inclination towards English language utilization in everyday interactions in this region.

Following Bonthe, the Pujehun district reported a percentage of 33.3% for students practising English outside the classroom. This suggests a moderate level of engagement with the English language in informal contexts among students in this area.

Moyamba district exhibited a slightly lower percentage, with 30.8% of students reporting occasional use of English in their daily conversations and activities. This indicates a relatively lower but still notable engagement with the language outside formal education settings.

Lastly, the Bo district presented the lowest percentage, with only 20% of respondents affirming their occasional practice of English speaking skills outside the classroom. This suggests a more limited use of English in everyday interactions among students in this district.

Table 6. Percentage of Students Occasionally Speaking English Outside Classroom Situations

<b>District</b>	<b>%</b>
Bo	32.7
Bonthe	22.5
Pujehun	19.2
Moyamba	15.6

These findings indicate varying degrees of engagement with English language practices outside of formal educational settings across the different districts. The data suggest that cultural and societal factors may play a role in the extent to which L2 learning permeates students' daily lives at the senior secondary school level.

This study also investigates the prevalence of English usage outside the classroom by students in various districts. The findings highlight a notable discrepancy in the frequency of English usage in informal settings, with some districts showing significantly higher rates of non-usage.

Table 7 presents the percentage of students not using oral English skills outside the classroom. The data collected reveals a significant portion of students who assert that they do not utilize their oral English skills outside of an academic setting, including casual conversations. This phenomenon was particularly pronounced in certain districts, despite some inconsistencies noted during interviews.

1. Pujehun District: The highest reported rate of non-usage was in Pujehun, with 32.7% of respondents indicating they never practice oral English outside the classroom.
2. Moyamba District: Following Pujehun, 22.5% of students in Moyamba reported not using English outside the classroom.
3. Bonthe District: In Bonthe, the percentage was slightly lower at 19.2%.
4. Bo District: Bo exhibited the lowest rate among the studied areas, with 15.6% of students not practising English outside of class.

A comparative analysis across the districts reveals a close percentage gap among three of the four districts studied (Bo, Bonthe, and Moyamba).

Median Tier: The Bonthe and Moyamba districts showed a marginal percentage difference of 3.3%, with Moyamba (22.5%) having the second-highest rate of non-usage.

Lower Tier: Bo and Bonthe exhibited a percentage difference of 4.4%, positioning them at the lower end of the spectrum.

The study highlights a notable disparity in the utilization of oral English skills outside the classroom among students in different districts. This disparity suggests potential variations in the cultural or educational practices across these regions, warranting further investigation.



Table 7. Students who Never Spoke English Outside the Classroom

District	%
Pujehun	32.7
Moyamba	22.5
Bonthe	19.2
Bo	15.6

***Integration of Native and English Cultures: Perceptions of Confusion among Students***

This study investigates the perceived confusion among students when practicing their native and English cultures side by side, particularly in the context of home and community environments. The influence of societal factors, such as the prevalence of uneducated individuals and the encouragement of indigenous language cultures, is also explored.

Table 8 presents the findings from the survey conducted across different districts. The data highlights the proportion of students who affirmed experiencing confusion in practicing both their native and English cultures simultaneously.

Table 8. Proportion of Students Reporting Confusion in Practicing Native and English Cultures Side by Side

District	(%)
Moyamba	65.2
Bonthe	68.3
Pujehun	62.0
Bo	36.7

The highest incidence of reported confusion was observed in the Bonthe district, where 68.3% of respondents indicated challenges in practicing the two cultures concurrently. This was followed by Moyamba with 65.2%, Pujehun with 62.0%, and Bo with the lowest at 36.7%. The study sheds light on the complexities faced by students in balancing their native and English cultural practices. It underscores the need for further research to understand the underlying factors contributing to this confusion and to explore potential educational and social interventions.

***Exploring Cultural Integration: Native and English Cultures in Parallel***

The investigation into whether students find it challenging to practice their native and English cultures concurrently yielded insightful results. The data, as illustrated in Table 9, indicates a significant variation in responses across different districts.

Moyamba district reported the highest proportion of students who did not perceive the simultaneous practice of their native and English cultures as confusing. A substantial 85% of respondents from this region indicated ease with cultural integration, potentially attributable to their early exposure to the English language.

Following Moyamba, Pujehun district exhibited a notable 35.3% of students expressing comfort with practising both cultures side by side. Similarly, Bonthe district accounted for 31.5% of students who did not find the dual cultural practice confusing. In contrast, the Bo district reported the lowest percentage, with only 26.9% of students indicating no confusion in practising their native and English cultures together. This variation across districts underscores the diverse cultural experiences and adaptability among students in these regions.

Table 9. Students Reporting No Confusion in Practicing Native and English Cultures Side by Side

District	Percentage (%)
Moyamba	85.0
Pujehun	35.3
Bonthe	31.5
Bo	26.9

These findings contribute to the broader understanding of cultural assimilation and language adaptation among students in multilingual contexts.

### ***Discussion***

The study under review reveals a notable deficiency in the proficiency of English sentence construction among students in the surveyed area, which consequently manifests in their subpar performance in oral English examinations, both at the national and international levels. This issue is particularly pronounced in the interior regions of southern Sierra Leone, where students exhibit even lower levels of oral English fluency compared to their counterparts in district headquarters towns. These observations corroborate a range of previously unverified opinions, feedback from external examiners, and findings reported in the literature (Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi, 2015; Yayan Yu, 2019; Dansieh, 2018).

In a related study, August & Shanahan (2006) discovered a stark disparity in educational outcomes based on language proficiency. Their research indicated that only 10% of students who speak English as a first language complete high school, in contrast to 31% of students who are non-native English speakers. This disparity appears to persist across generations among certain immigrant groups, continuing into the second and even third generation. This trend is echoed in the reports from the West African Examination Council Chief Examiner (2017–2021), which highlight the necessity for improvement in students' English language skills. The Council's data reveals a decline in English Language Performance Score Range A1-C6 from 54.06 per cent in 2017 to 46.79 per cent in 2018, marking a 7.27 per cent decrease. Furthermore, "The Daily Guides" (2018–2021 Editions) indicates that this downward trend has been ongoing for several years.

Brown (2011) addresses a related issue, noting that oral English proficiency remains a significant barrier for students learning English as a second language, even when they have grasped linguistic elements such as clustering, redundancy, colloquial language, and intonation. Brown's observations are particularly pertinent to the context of Sierra Leone, where students may understand various language elements yet still struggle to achieve fluency in spoken English and improve their performance on the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

### **CONCLUSION**

The research findings underscore a pervasive issue in students' ability to attain fluency in spoken English. To address this, policymakers and educational leaders within the English language discipline must integrate regular public speaking activities into the educational framework. Implementing such exercises is crucial for enhancing students' social interaction, communication skills, public presentation abilities, and the cultivation of critical thinking and leadership competencies. A holistic approach in this regard is anticipated to markedly improve oral English proficiency among students.

Furthermore, creating avenues for students to articulate their well-organized, impassioned perspectives, thoughts, and insights in a compelling and shareable manner is crucial for advancing their spoken English fluency. For instance, prompting students to create and orally present poems, stories, or books can introduce a fun and engaging element to the learning experience for both students and educators. This strategy not only promotes language development but also encourages creativity and self-assurance in young learners.

From a policy perspective, educational authorities and curriculum developers should prioritize the incorporation of public speaking and expressive activities in English language education. This could involve allocating resources for training teachers in effective public speaking pedagogies, revising curriculum guidelines to include public speaking components, and fostering a supportive environment

for oral expression in schools. Additionally, the discipline should recognize and address the multifaceted nature of spoken English proficiency, encompassing not just linguistic abilities but also interpersonal and cognitive skills. Adopting these recommendations has the potential to significantly enhance English language education and better prepare students for both academic and real-world communication challenges.

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