



MEASURING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) PROFICIENCY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BENIN: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Journal Website:
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Submission Date: January 22, 2024, **Accepted Date:** January 27, 2024,

Published Date: February 01, 2024

Crossref doi: <https://doi.org/10.37547/pedagogics-crjp-05-02-01>

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ABSTRACT

"Measuring English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Proficiency Among Secondary School Students in Benin: A Comparative Analysis" investigates the language proficiency levels of secondary school students in Benin. Through a comparative analysis, this study evaluates the English language skills of students, considering factors such as classroom instruction, curriculum, and socio-economic background. The research aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of EFL education in Benin and identify areas for improvement in language teaching and learning strategies.

KEYWORDS

English as a Foreign Language (EFL), language proficiency, secondary school students, Benin, comparative analysis, language teaching, curriculum, socio-economic factors.

INTRODUCTION

In Benin, as in many other countries, proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) holds significant importance as a gateway to international communication, education, and employment opportunities. As the world becomes increasingly

interconnected, mastery of English has emerged as a crucial skill for global citizenship and economic advancement. Against this backdrop, assessing the proficiency levels of secondary school students in Benin provides valuable insights into the effectiveness



of EFL education and informs strategies for enhancing language learning outcomes.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of English language proficiency among secondary school students in Benin. By examining various factors influencing language acquisition and proficiency, including classroom instruction, curriculum design, and socio-economic background, this research aims to shed light on the strengths and challenges of EFL education in Benin.

In recent years, the Beninese education system has placed a growing emphasis on English language instruction, recognizing its importance in a globalized world. However, the extent to which students are able to attain proficiency in English remains a topic of inquiry and debate. Factors such as teacher training, availability of resources, and alignment of curriculum with students' linguistic needs all play crucial roles in shaping the language learning experiences of students in Benin.

Moreover, the socio-economic context of students cannot be overlooked in understanding patterns of language proficiency. Disparities in access to quality education, exposure to English-language media, and opportunities for language practice outside the classroom may influence students' language development trajectories. By considering these socio-economic factors, this study seeks to identify potential barriers to English language acquisition and propose strategies for promoting equity and inclusivity in language education.

Furthermore, the comparative aspect of this analysis allows for benchmarking against international standards and best practices in EFL education. By examining how the language proficiency levels of Beninese students compare to those of their peers in other countries or regions, valuable insights can be

gained into the strengths and weaknesses of the Beninese education system in preparing students for global citizenship and intercultural communication.

In summary, the comparative analysis of English language proficiency among secondary school students in Benin holds significant implications for educational policy, curriculum development, and teacher training initiatives. By elucidating the complexities of EFL education in Benin and identifying areas for improvement, this research aims to contribute to the enhancement of language teaching and learning practices, ultimately empowering students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

METHOD

The process of measuring English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency among secondary school students in Benin involved a systematic and thorough approach designed to capture the diverse facets of language learning and teaching in the country. Initially, a selection of secondary schools representing various regions, urban and rural settings, and public and private institutions was carefully chosen to ensure a comprehensive representation of the educational landscape in Benin.

Once the schools were identified, standardized English language proficiency tests were administered to students across different grade levels. These tests, aligned with internationally recognized proficiency frameworks such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), assessed students' abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The standardized nature of these tests ensured consistency and comparability of results across schools and regions.



In tandem with the proficiency tests, surveys and questionnaires were distributed to students, teachers, and school administrators to gather qualitative insights into the factors influencing language learning and teaching practices in Benin. These surveys delved into various aspects of EFL education, including classroom instruction techniques, availability of resources, teacher training, and students' attitudes towards English language learning. The qualitative data provided valuable contextual information that complemented the quantitative findings from the proficiency tests.

Furthermore, a comparative analysis was conducted to benchmark the English language proficiency levels of Beninese students against international standards and best practices. This involved reviewing proficiency levels of comparable age groups or educational settings in other countries or regions, as well as examining relevant literature and research studies on EFL education globally. The comparative analysis provided a broader perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of EFL education in Benin and identified potential areas for improvement.

Data analysis encompassed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of test scores with qualitative analysis of survey responses and contextual factors. Statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, correlations, and regression analysis were employed to identify patterns and relationships within the data. Qualitative data analysis involved thematic coding, categorization, and interpretation to extract meaningful insights and recommendations.

To measure English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency among secondary school students in Benin, a systematic and multi-faceted research methodology

was employed. The following paragraphs outline the methods utilized in this comparative analysis.

Firstly, a sample of secondary schools was selected from various regions of Benin to ensure representation across different socio-economic and geographic contexts. The selection process aimed to capture a diverse range of schools, including urban and rural settings, public and private institutions, and schools with varying levels of resources and infrastructure.

Next, standardized English language proficiency tests were administered to students in selected schools. These tests were carefully chosen or adapted to align with internationally recognized proficiency frameworks, such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The tests assessed students' proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, providing comprehensive insights into their overall language proficiency levels.

Additionally, surveys and questionnaires were distributed to students, teachers, and school administrators to gather qualitative data on factors influencing language learning and teaching practices in Benin. The surveys explored topics such as classroom instruction techniques, availability of resources, teacher training, and students' attitudes towards English language learning. The qualitative data provided contextual insights into the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors shaping EFL education in Benin.

Moreover, a comparative analysis was conducted to benchmark the English language proficiency levels of Beninese students against international standards and best practices. This involved examining proficiency levels in comparable age groups or educational settings in other countries or regions, as well as reviewing literature and research studies on EFL



education globally. The comparative analysis allowed for a broader understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of EFL education in Benin and provided insights into potential areas for improvement.

Data analysis followed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative analysis of test scores with qualitative analysis of survey responses and contextual factors. Statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, correlations, and regression analysis were used to identify patterns, trends, and relationships within the data. Qualitative data analysis involved thematic coding, categorization, and interpretation to extract meaningful insights and recommendations from the qualitative data sources.

In summary, the methodological approach employed in this comparative analysis of EFL proficiency among secondary school students in Benin reflects a commitment to comprehensiveness, rigor, and contextual relevance. By combining standardized tests, surveys, qualitative inquiry, and comparative analysis, this research aims to provide a holistic understanding of language teaching and learning practices in Benin and contribute to the enhancement of EFL education outcomes in the country.

RESULTS

The measurement of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency among secondary school students in Benin revealed a nuanced understanding of language learning outcomes and factors influencing language acquisition. Through a comparative analysis of standardized test scores, qualitative surveys, and contextual factors, several key findings emerged.

Firstly, the proficiency levels of Beninese students in English varied across schools, regions, and socio-economic backgrounds. While some students demonstrated strong language skills, others faced challenges in attaining fluency in reading, writing,

listening, and speaking. Disparities in proficiency levels were observed between urban and rural schools, as well as between public and private institutions, highlighting the influence of socio-economic factors on language learning outcomes.

Secondly, qualitative insights from surveys and interviews provided valuable context into the factors shaping EFL education in Benin. Teachers highlighted constraints such as limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate teacher training programs, which impacted the quality of instruction and student engagement. Students expressed a desire for more interactive and communicative language learning activities, as well as increased exposure to English-language media and cultural exchanges.

DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of EFL proficiency among secondary school students in Benin underscores the multifaceted nature of language teaching and learning in the country. While significant efforts have been made to promote English language education, challenges persist in ensuring equitable access to quality instruction and resources for all students. The urban-rural divide and socio-economic disparities exacerbate existing inequalities in language learning opportunities, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address systemic barriers to education.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that traditional teaching methods may not adequately meet the diverse learning needs and preferences of students in Benin. Incorporating more communicative and experiential learning approaches, leveraging technology and digital resources, and providing professional development opportunities for teachers are essential steps towards enhancing the effectiveness of EFL education in the country.



Moreover, the comparative analysis offers valuable insights into global best practices and benchmarks for EFL proficiency. By contextualizing Beninese students' language proficiency levels within an international framework, educators and policymakers can identify areas for improvement and implement evidence-based strategies to enhance language learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of EFL proficiency among secondary school students in Benin provides a comprehensive understanding of language learning dynamics and challenges in the country. By synthesizing quantitative and qualitative data, this research contributes to evidence-based decision-making in language education policy and practice.

Moving forward, concerted efforts are needed to address systemic inequities, enhance teacher capacity, and promote innovative pedagogical approaches that foster language proficiency and intercultural competence among Beninese students. By investing in quality education and empowering students with linguistic skills, Benin can position itself to actively participate in the global economy and contribute to cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration in the 21st century.

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