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CONVERSATIONAL DISCOURSE AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN BASIC SCIENCE CLASSROOM IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABEOKUTA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OGUN STATE

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ABSTRACT

Learning a language in the classroom is a consequence of the exposure of the learner to the linguistic environment manifested in the interaction between the participants in that context. This study examined the conversational discourse of the science classroom in urban and rural schools, private and public schools and the relationship between classroom discourse and students' performance. Two hundred students were randomly selected from four schools, (2 private and 2 public), two each from urban and rural areas, in Abeokuta North Local Government Area of Ogun State Nigeria. The data gathering tools included a tape-recorder, researchers' observation notes and a performance test. Data were analysed using bar charts, percentages and graphs. Urban schools (86.0%) outperformed rural schools (62.0%) in terms of students' achievement. Private schools, both urban (86.0%) and rural (56.0%), performed better than the public schools (urban (62%) vs rural (52%). Rural classrooms showed higher rate of code-mixing (65%) and switching (22%) in conversational discource, whereas, urban schools had minimal code-mixing (0.13%). Based on these findings, teachers in rural regions should limit usage of code-mixing and switching to increase students' comprehension. Public schools should encourage students' participation in class sessions and teachers should ensure that teachings are aligned with the English language medium of assessment. Workshops and seminars on successful interactive classroom communication should be held to assist teachers improve their instructional techniques.

Keywords: Conversational analysis; discourse analysis; classroom discourse; language competence.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a social action, and thus depends on social interaction. The process of education which is knowledge dissemination, involves exchange of information which could be informal or formal. The informal education is learnt at the community level and family set-up, while the formal education is learnt at the school set-up. Formal education occurs in small places in small social units through interactions (Vanderstraeten, 2021). A teacher talks to a group of students for a period of time in minute segments. They share what they know; how they do what they know; what they feel; what they think and what they plan to do all

through interactions in the classroom. These moments of sharing are coordinated around a set of previously established rules. The classroom thus becomes a platform where a teacher and students recurrently negotiate on how to organize their actions.

The purpose of every conversation is to exchange information, establish and maintain the relationship between people. The participants in a conversation always follow certain principles to develop towards some general directions. The goal of practical conversation in classrooms is to train students' learning skills in accordance with the context to control conversational activities and develop their all-round conversational competence from short-turn to long-turn and from transactional turns to intersectional turns. Practical conversation in the classroom builds in the students the competence to apply their acquired academic knowledge meticulously and creatively to the society with meaningful consciousness (Supakorn, 2020).

Conversational Analysis (CA) is the study of talk interaction (both verbal and non-verbal) in the situations of everyday life. CA attempts to describe the orderliness, structure and sequential patterns of interaction, whether institutional (in schools, a doctor's clinic, court or elsewhere) or in casual conversations. In conversation analysis, the various mechanisms determining people's use of language in an extended, open conversational setting are explored: who holds the right to speak (often called the "floor", because that is where one traditionally stands when speaking in an assembly such as the House of Commons); what kind of rules are there for taking, yielding or holding the "floor", what makes a particular point in the conversation particularly appropriate for a "turn" i.e., one speaker relinquishing the floor, another taking it (Ainy et al. 2023).

Singleton & Newman (2009) reported that a typical classroom is always pictured with the teacher talking for a whole lesson while students write down the notes. Thus, the question would be "control". Who should be in control of the classroom? Empowering students or controlling students is an important issue for teachers to consider and explore in the second language (L2) classroom.

In classroom discourse, the proto-typical teacher-student interaction consists of recurring three-part sequences. These sequences are generally known as teacher initiation, learner response, and teacher follow-up or feedback (IRF) in the British school (Sinclair & Coulthard, 2005), and initiation, response and evaluation (IRE) in the American school (Mehan, 1979).

However, IRF/IRE sequence is not without its criticism in the Nigerian context. On one hand, it is thought to limit meaningful student participation because teachers have the right to initiate speech, to distribute turns and evaluate students' utterances, whereas students have much more restricted participation rights, opportunities to ask questions and negotiate meaning (McCarthy, 1991; Markee, 2000; Cullen, 2002; Walsh, 2002; Lee, 2007;). On the other hand, Spruit et al (2019) contends that IRF is not unnatural because it appears in parent–child interaction and that it suits the core goal of learning or education.

Research on IRF/IRE concentrates on what types of questions are initiated in the first turn and to what extent, they are pedagogically effective (e.g. questions that introduced negotiation elicited substantive student con-

tributions) and the role of the third turn with its functional categories (e.g. focus on form / content; recasts, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, clarification requests, and repetition) (Nassaji & Wells, 2000; Cullen, 2002; Hellerman, 2003; Lee, 2007). These studies in general claim that IRF/IRE sequences need not to have a restrictive function and can be used to create communicative, more life-like, teacher-student interaction.

In classroom discourses, the teacher always dominates the class. He or she has the last word in any exchange because of the relationship that exists in the classroom. Coulthard (1977) noted that teachers talk within an average of two third of the talking time. In the classroom, topics are not suddenly changed but there can be digressions which will still be along the line of the main topic unlike causal conversations, where no single participant has control over the flow of talk or topic because discussion comes up depending on the situation of things around the participants. To Sinclair & Coulthard (1975), a lesson in the classroom is realized by transaction. Each transaction is realized by exchanges while exchanges are realized by moves that are labelled as opening (initiation), answering (response) and follow -up (feedback).

In the classroom, the main transaction that takes place is the lesson. A lesson has an exchange as its main element in structure. In exchange, there are teacher and pupil exchanges.

Payne & Hustler (1980) and Macbeth (1992) focused on class beginnings, stressing that presentation
of new topic and co-ordination of students as a unit matters a lot and improves participation in the classroom. The reports also shared the view of Bremme &Erickson (1977) and Mehan (1982) which stressed students' participation and the need for teachers to carry students along during lessons.

This indicates that during classroom learning, there is a teacher's time, student's time and transitions between the teacher and the students. However, Bremme & Erickson (1977) has a distinct view, stressing that personal experiences enhance learning.

The teacher's concept and his ability to adapt theory and ideas were based on the learners' reaction. The students also were able to adjust to what they were taught with the help of their previous knowledge. The reactions and adjustments of the teacher and students agrees with the view of the above scholars on students' participation during lessons and this can only be achieved when the teacher considers the learning environment of the students in knowledge dissemination (Fig.1).

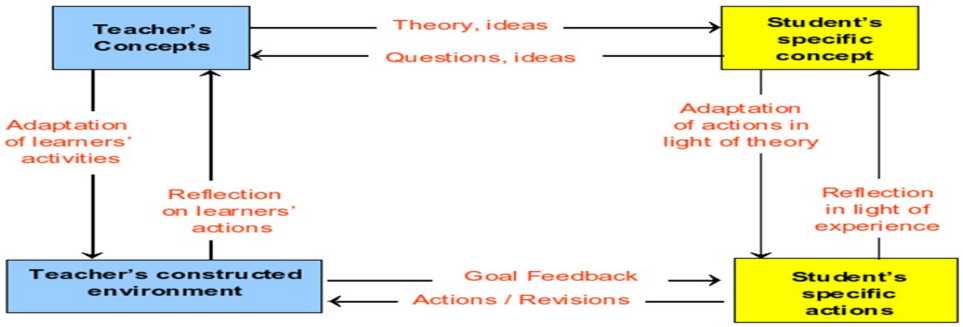

Figure 1: Teacher's and Students' concept

Statement of the Problem

Scholars have been successful in capturing the interplay among students' discourse style, teacher expectations in particular classroom tasks and achievement outcomes. It is however observed that the finding and recommendation of such studies have not brought the desired changes. This study was therefore conducted aiming at analysing the influence of classroom discourse on the kind of learning instruction students receive in Basic Science classroom in secondary schools in Abeokuta North Local Government Area and also its effects on the learning outcome performance.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the differences between the science classroom discourse of urban and rural schools; and between private and public schools.
2. Determine the relationship between classroom discourse and students' performance.

Research Design

This research design combined qualitative and quantitative designs whereby the conversational discourse of teachers and students were recorded, and assessment test was given the students based on the topics taught by the teachers.

Population

There are twelve public secondary schools and fifteen private secondary schools in Abeokuta North Local Government Area of Ogun State. The total population consists of twenty-seven secondary schools. Out of this, four were purposively selected: two in the rural area (one public and one private) and two in urban area (one public and one private).

Sampling Procedure

In order to create room for effective conduct of this research, two public and two private schools in the rural and urban areas were sampled. The following schools were selected from Abeokuta North Local Government Area:

i. African Church Grammar School Ita-Eko, Abeokuta (Public)
ii. Comprehensive Academy Lafenwa, Abeokuta (Private)
} Urban Schools

iii. Ilewo Community High School, Ilewo-Orile (Public)
iv. Ajiboyede Comprehensive School, Ibara-Orile (Private)
} Rural Schools

Basic Science subject is offered in Junior Secondary School (JSS) 3. Therefore, the conversations in the Basic Science Junior Secondary School (JSS) 3 were observed. Two hundred and four (204) students and teachers participated in the study.

Research Instruments

A tape recorder was used to record the verbal conversations between the teacher and the students while the researcher's observation note and rating complimented the recording. A class performance test was administered to the students at the end of the observation of the three lessons in each school.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted for four weeks. Three lessons each were observed in the four different selected schools based on the weekly timetable for Basic Science. The researcher did not interfere with the settings of the classroom but a list of relevant paralingual activities of the situation was made. The researcher did not allow her presence to influence the students in the classroom. The four teachers taught three topics each. The topics were presented in order of teaching

and in accordance with JSS III Basic Science Curriculum Syllabus.

Data Analysis

Data collected for this study were analysed using percentages, bar charts and graphs, to examine the structure of the spoken form of discourse in a Basic Science Lesson (teacher exchange and students' exchanges). The data were analysed based on the school type (private and public) and location (urban and rural).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Data of Participating Schools according to School Type and Location

The breakdown shows four teachers and 200 students in the four schools. Fifty students from each of the four selected schools (rural, urban, public and private) took part in the study.

Drug Abuse, Depletion of Ozone Layer and Metabolism in Human Body were the topics covered in the course of the four weeks of the research. The topics were taught as required in the curriculum.

Differences between the Pattern of Conversational Discourse of Urban and Rural Areas Basic Science Classroom

There was a non-significant difference between the pattern of conversational discourse of urban and rural areas. In the rural schools, teachers delivered their lessons in code-mixing and switching, using the language of the immediate environment (Yoruba) with English Language. It is a strategy employed to enable students understand better. However, it was over used by the rural public-school teachers, while the urban schools did not code-mix/switch during the lesson.

Rural Private Lesson Extracts

Teacher: Mo so tele wipe ofurufu ati ozone layer ma nmu cooling effect wa si aiye. (I

Table 1: Demographic data of the respondents

School Name	School Type	Location	No of Students	No of teachers	Class
African Church Grammar School, Abeokuta	Public	Urban	50	1	JSSIII Basic Science
Comprehensive Academy, Abeokuta (COMPRO)	Private	Urban	50	1	JSSIII Basic Science
Ajiboyede Community School, Ibara-Orile (AJIBOYEDE)	Private	Rural	50	1	JSSIII Basic Science
Ilewo-Orile Comprehensive High School (ILEWO)	Public	Rural	50	1	JSSIII Basic Science

Source: Field Survey, 2024

said earlier that the atmosphere and ozone layer brings… to the earth). So, we can say it brings a cooling effect to the atmosphere and earth. O ma nfa ultraviolent rays that are emitted by the sun i.e. it absorbs the ultraviolent rays

Rural Public Lesson Extracts
Teacher:
Now eni ti o lo je nkan ti o da si inu e ti reaction ba se le ki ni o ma sele si, ibo le ti ma koko mo, ara skin abi when the skin change e ti mo wipe e le yi nkan kan nba ja, e ti ri ninu body e wipe o ti shrink, o ti ti rin, ko san ra mo, oju re ma se kini… Irun e ma se kini, o ma change ti e ba ti ri e ti mo wipe eleyi ti ni problem.
All these spheres *won ti wa* cut exosphere *e ti o gbe yin, lo de mo ibi ti heat po si*, stratus layers *ki nkan to le ara won*, tropo *lo* next *si* the earth surface *gbogbo* layers layers *kini se won* just to protect the ultraviolent ray of the sun. This is touch light *ti a ba tan, aiye ni eleyi a wa fi* transparent paper block *ina a ma tan die die* but *ko le* cross *si o hun yen beeni abi beeko*, ka assume *pe* this is the sun *awon* layers *ni ele yi* stratosphere etc *awa pa po tan si se* ray of light *yi le po si ori e*

Vitamin C – you always take vitamin c here because there is a lot of fruit in this school. If you take orange, *e mo nkan ti won pe ni* vitamin *ti e ma nla yen, Ikan ni* red *Ikan ni* white. That is what is called ascorbic acid

Teacher in Urban Public

Folake nsun
O ba ti so fun mi ki n ko egba si ni eyin

Source: Field Survey, 2024 (Extract from a Recorded Lesson)

Code-mixing and Switching
Findings from the study revealed that code mixing and switching were employed during teaching in the two schools selected from the rural but they were more used by teachers in the rural public schools (Table 2). The lesson on drug abuse was basically presented in Yoruba (language of the immediate environment).

Teacher in **Rural Public**:
Now Drug abuse *ti a n so yi* is general something *nkan ti o* affect the global system *ni. Gbogbo agbaye ni kini yi* affect*, ti won o ba tete* curb *e ti o tan lo to ba ya* everybody *ma wa* abuse *si* drug *ti* everybody *ba ti se be yen a ma tete ku ni yen*, o better *ki a tete curb e, ka* prevent *e ko ma ba* grow *mo ni odo wa.*
Ti e ba je obi, ti agbalagba ba koko je obi won o ni fe sun, ti won ba mu tea e feel *pe* something is there, *e* feel *e ni* body system *yin* what is there is caffeine –*Rural Public*

Teacher in Rural Private:
You all know what is drug abuse, *e mo itumo e Mo ni ki ni a n pe ogun ti a n lo* without doctor's prescription *Pupo ninu awon ti won wa ni Aro le ni* is as a result of drug. So anything *ti o ba fe ra wo boya o ni* NAFDAC number So tell your parents at home to bury bushes *e so fun won n'le ki won ma sun oko na mo. Ti e ba jeun ni* villis *a fa omi ati awon nkan to o ku*

Source: Field Survey, 2024 (Extract from a Recorded Lesson).

Adoption of code mixing for teaching in the rural schools (65.00) was higher than its use in the urban school (0.13), while code switching was only favoured in the rural schools (Table 3).

Classroom Discourse and Students' Performances in Rural Private
Classroom discourse is a process of face-to-face classroom teaching, embracing verbal interaction between teachers and students.

Teacher and students' exchange during the course of a lesson keeps the students alert and ensures that the students participate effectively. This cyclic pattern repeats itself throughout the course of a lesson.

There was a relationship between classroom discourse and students' performance. The students' performance at the end of the test showed the level of interaction in the classroom. Data collected revealed that students tend to perform well when the classroom discourse is participatory. Among the four schools sampled, Ajiboyede Junior Secondary School students were a good example, because during the lesson, the teachers taught them, but the lesson was not that interactional. The low level of students' engagement during the classes must have affected the performance of the students when compared to what the other students from the other sampled schools scored.

Students' Performances in Rural Private Science Classroom

The modal class was 10-12 because less than half of the students (17) fell under the category while 11 students scored between 13 and15 marks; seven students scored very poorly (0-3 marks). Three students scored between 18 and 20 marks (Figure 2).

Table 2: Percentage of the Code-mixing and Code-switching Used by the Teachers

Code Type	School Type	School Location	Rate	Percentage
Mixing	Public	Urban	5/3500	0.14
Mixing	Private	Urban	6/5000	0.12
Mixing	Public	Rural	4500/6000	75.00
Mixing	Private	Rural	2000/4000	50.00
Switching	Public	Rural	1500/6000	25.00
Switching	Private	Rural	700/4000	17.5

Table 3: Overall Percentage of the Code-mixing and Switching used by Rural and Urban Schools Teachers

Code Type	Schools Location	Rate	Percentage
Mixing	Urban	11/8500	0.13
Mixing	Rural	6500/10000	65.00
Switching	Rural	2200/10000	22.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

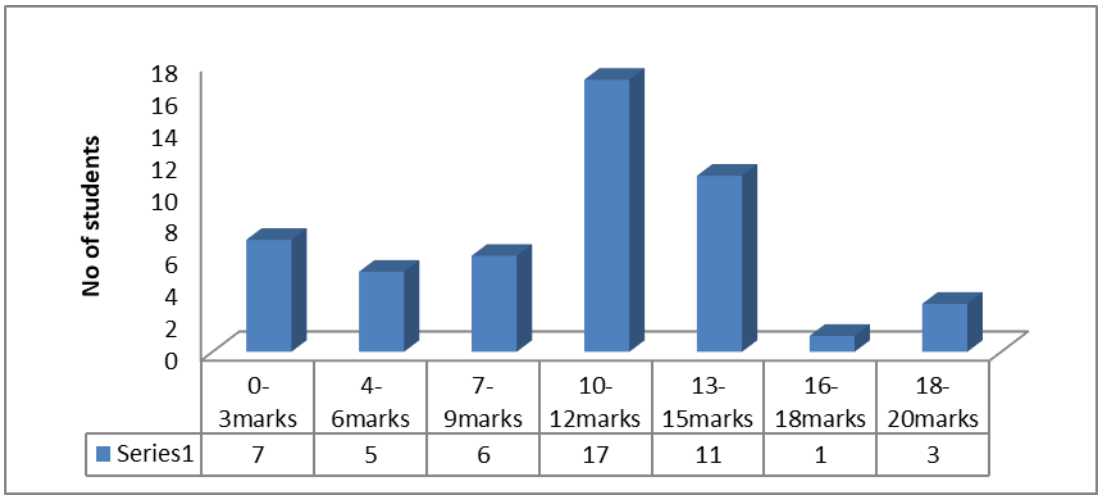

Figure 2: Students' Performances in Rural Private Science Classroom

Performance of Students in Urban Private Science Classroom (Comprehensive Academy)

About 20 students scored between 10 and12 marks, 16 students scored 13-15 marks while only 5 students scored between 18 and 20 marks (Figure 3), indicating that majority of the students scored above average marks while few (7) of the students scored below average marks (Figure 3).

Performance of Students in Rural Private Science Classroom (Ajiboyede School)

The modal class was 10-12 marks as thirteen of them fell into this group. Almost half (22) of the class scored below average. However more students (14) scored higher marks (Figure 4).

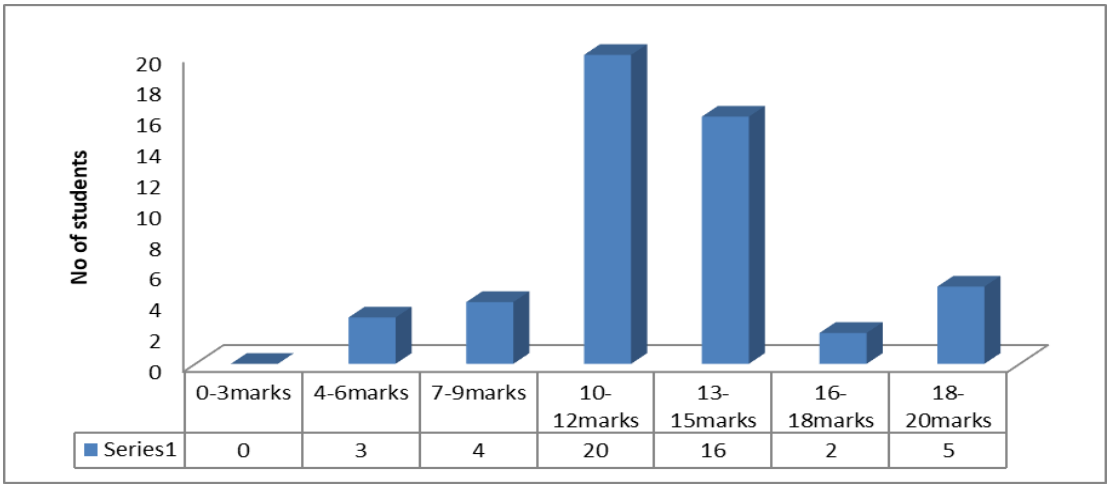

Figure 3: Performance of Students in Urban Private Science Classroom (Comprehensive Academy)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

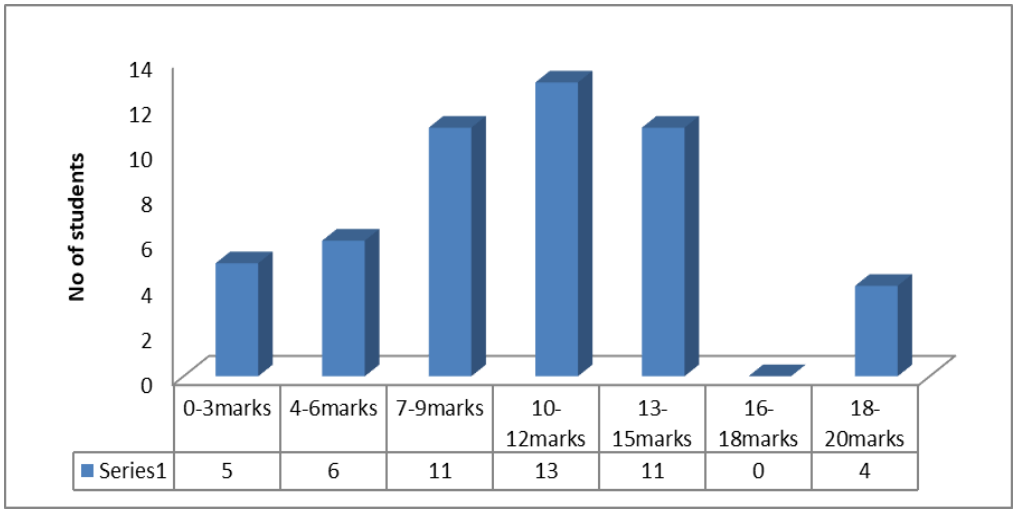

Figure 4: Performance of Students in Rural Private Science Classroom (Ajiboyede School)
Source: Field Survey, 2024

Performance of Students in Rural Public Science Classroom (Ilewo Community High School)

Majority (18 students) scored between 10 and12 marks, 13 students scored between 13 and 15 marks while 16 students scored below average marks (between 0 and 9 marks). Majority of the students scored average mark which fell between 10 and 12 marks (Figure 5).

Urban schools (86.0%) outperformed rural schools (62.0%) in terms of students' achievement (Table 4). Private schools, both urban (86.0%) and rural (56.0%), performed better than the public schools. Also, urban

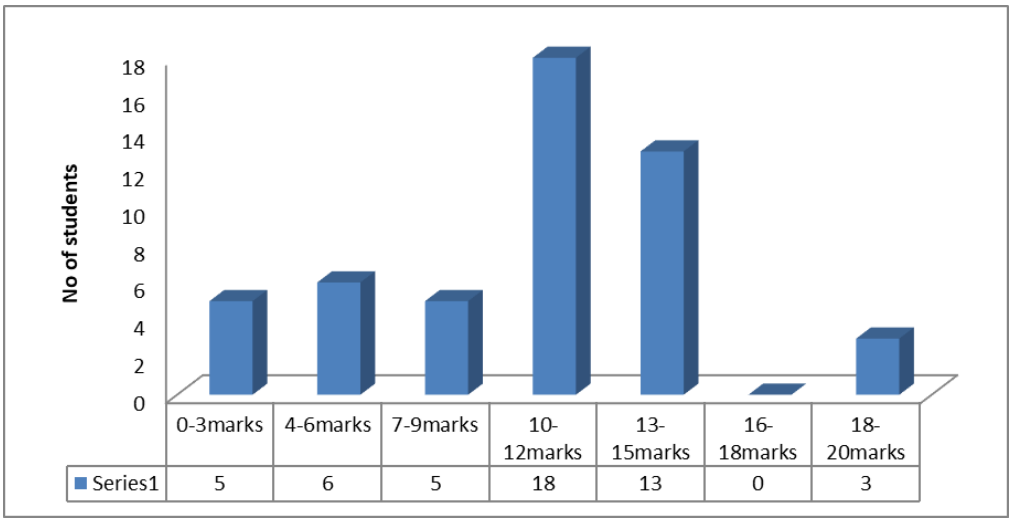

Figure 5: Performance of Students in Rural Public Science Classroom (Ilewo Community High School)
Source: Field Survey, 2024

public school (62%) performed better than the rural public schools (52%) -Table 4.

Comparison of Students Performance in Rural Public and Private Science Classrooms School

Performance of the students in rural public science classroom (Ilewo) was better than that of rural private school (Ajiboyede) The lowest scores in Ilewo was 4-6 marks while the lowest scores in Ajiboyede was between 0 and 3 and the number of students that scored above average marks was higher in Ilewo (31 students) than those in Ajiboyede (14 students; rural private) - Figure 6.

Comparison of Students' Performance in Urban Public and Private Science Classrooms

Private school students performed better in the test than the public-school students. The number of students that scored between 0

Table 4: Percentage of students that passed in each school:

SCHOOLS	NO OF STUDENTS THAT PASSED	(%)
African Church Grammar School	32/50	62.0
Comprehensive Academy	43/50	86.0
Ajiboyede High School	28/50	56.0
Ilewo Community School	26/50	52.0

Field Survey, 2024

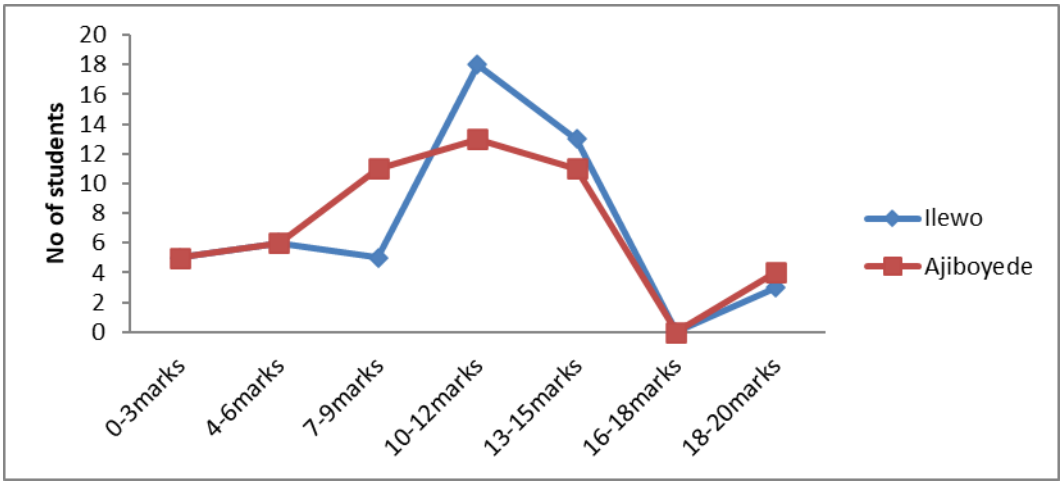

Figure 6: Comparison of Students Performance in Rural Public and Private Science Classrooms School
Source: Field Survey, 2024

and 3 marks was high in the urban public school (7 students) while no student in the urban private school scored less than 4 marks. Those that scored the highest marks were lesser in the urban public school (17) than the urban private school (20) - Figure 7.

Comparison of Students' Performance in Private Urban and Rural Schools

About 17 students in Ajiboyede (rural private) and 18 students in Comprehensive Academy scored between 16 and 18 marks in the assessment which is significant. Comprehensive Academy (Urban School) students performed better than AJIBOYEDE (rural private school) students. In all, the two private schools did well in the assessment.

This implies that the better performance of the private schools' students in this research work was as a result of how interactive and participatory their classes were (Figure 8).

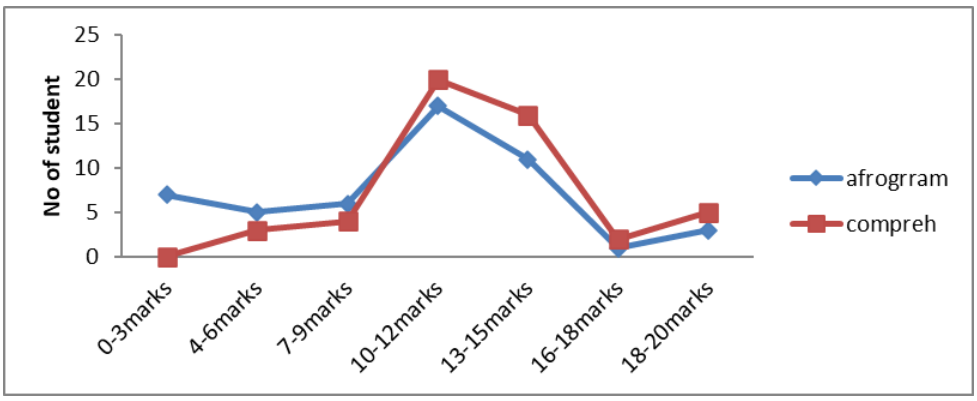

Figure 7: Comparison of Students' Performance in Urban Public and Private Science Classrooms
Source: Field Survey, 2024

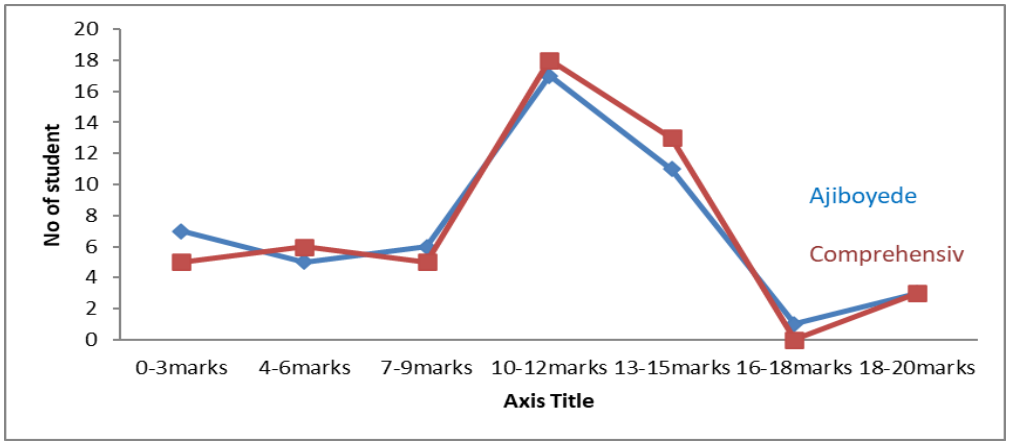

Figure 8: Comparison of Students' Performance in Private Urban and Rural Schools
Source: Field Survey, 2024

Comparison of Students' Performance in Public Urban and Rural Schools

In African Church Grammar School 17 students and 18 students in Ilewo scored between 16 and 18 marks. ILEWO students in the rural area performed better than AFROGRAM students in the urban area. This implies that the performance of students in this research work is not as a result of the school type and location (Figure 9).

Comparison of Students' Performance in Two Urban and Two Rural Schools

About 15 students in the urban centre and 19 in the rural area scored between 16 and 18 marks. This indicates that the students in the rural area performed better than students in the urban area in the test given to them. This implies that school location does not have effect on the performance of the students, the better output of the rural school students may be attributed to the excessive use of code mixing during the teaching sessions (Figure 10).

Comparison of Students' Performance in Two Public and Two Private Schools

Students (26), in the public schools and 29 students in the private schools scored above the modal marks. This indicates that the private schools' students performed better than the public-schools students. This shows that

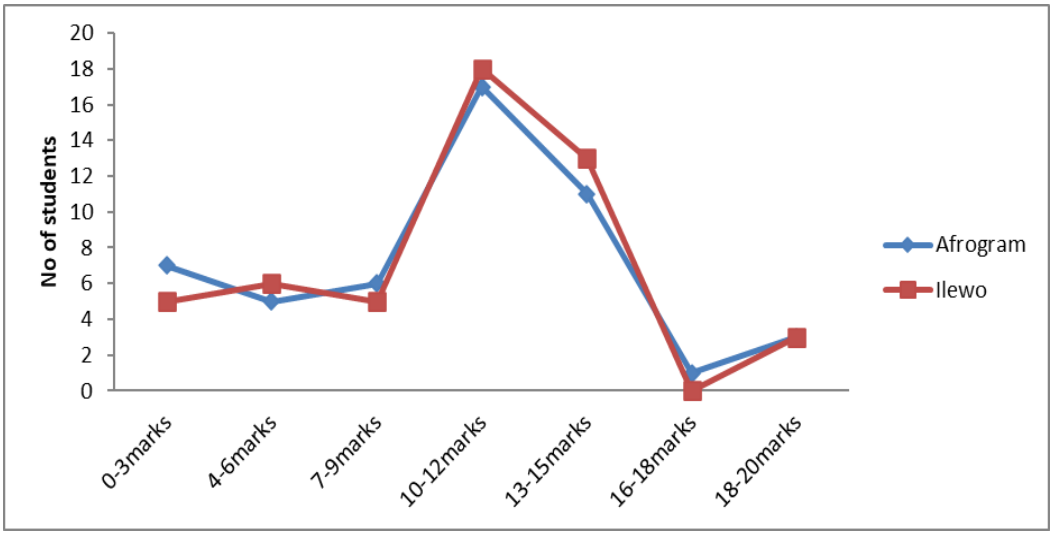

Figure 9: Comparison of Students' Performance in Public Urban and Rural Schools
Source: Field Survey, 2024

the excessive use of code mixing and switching may not guarantee better performance in students (Figure 11).

Conclusion

The study focused on the conversations in classroom settings between teachers and students in Abeokuta North Local Government Area, Ogun State. It considered the spoken form of discourse and exchange between teachers and students and the effects on their (students) performances.

Findings from the study showed that in some of the classrooms, code-mixing and switching (the stipulated language of the community) dominated the conversation and was observed in almost all the lessons,

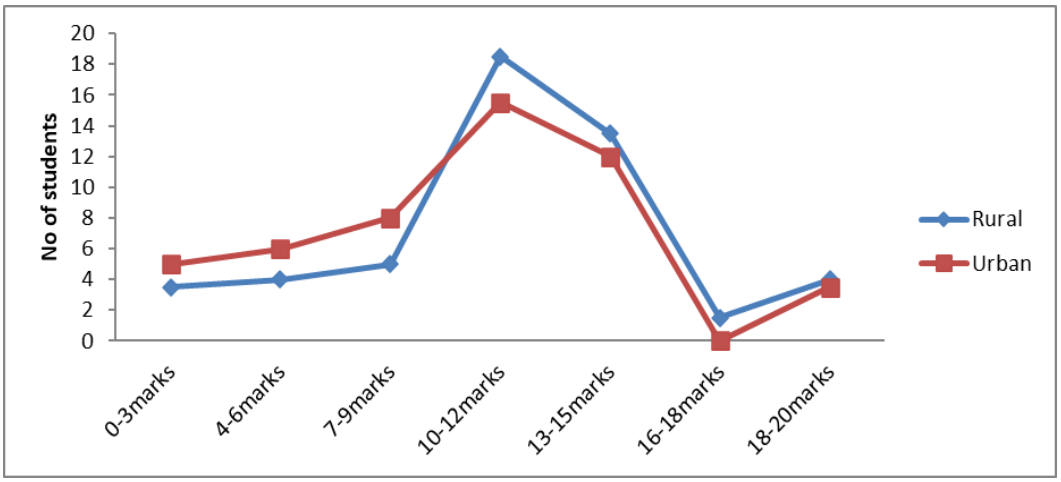

Figure 10: Comparison of Students' Performance in Two Urban and Two Rural Schools
Source: Field Survey, 2024

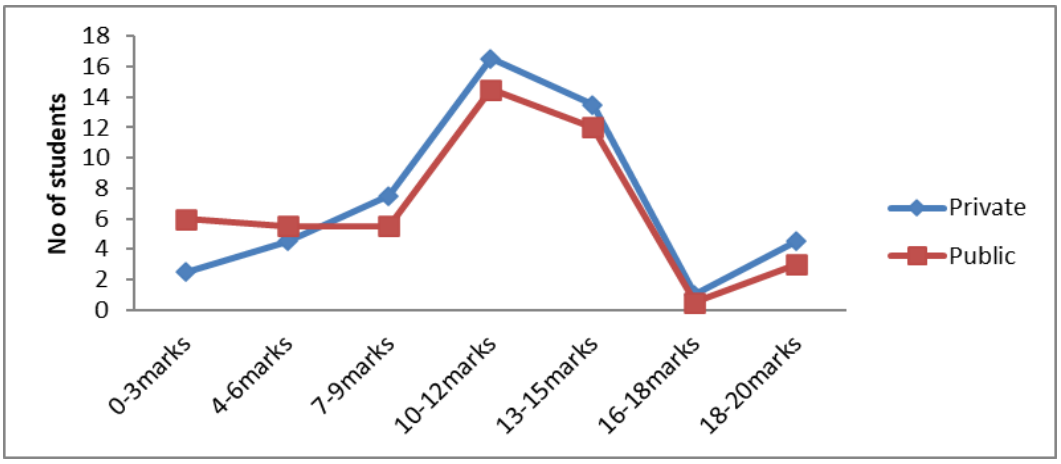

Figure 11: Comparison of Students' Performance in Two Public and Two Private Schools
Source: Field Survey, 2024

to the extent that students also responded to some questions asked mixing Yoruba and English languages. Though, more rampant in the rural than urban schools, it showed that teachers' interaction tend to study the students' level of capability or competence to receive information using only the official medium of instruction (English language). There was poor use of English language during the lessons. Findings also showed that code mixing and switching aided students' understanding in science-based courses because of the scientific terminologies.

The implication of the poor use of English language by teachers on students is that it will affect the students' ability to express themselves well in English language, thereby affecting their language use which could lead to poor performance in other subjects. It will

also make the students to think that code-mixing and code-switching is a normal pattern of communication, even in formal situations. It is therefore recommended that Teachers should monitor their language performance by frequently listening to their recorded lessons.

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