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## **Bridging Language and Agriculture: Enhancing English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) Learning for Agricultural Development among Rural Community Youths in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*Rural Nigeria continues to face persistent challenges of poverty, food insecurity, and low literacy rates, compounded by high school dropout levels and limited access to quality education. A significant factor exacerbating this challenge is low English proficiency, which limits access to agricultural innovations, extension services, and government interventions often disseminated in English. This study investigates the integration of English as a Second Language (ESL) education with agricultural training as a dual approach to address both literacy and livelihood challenges in underserved communities dadinkowa and Dinki, Igabi Local of of Kaduna State, Nigeria. Using a mixed-methods design, 320 rural youth and school dropouts were enrolled in a three (3) months program combining ESL lessons with practical agricultural workshops. Eventually, 120 of the participants were given the questionnaire to respond to. Findings from the survey revealed that the program had a very poor impact on improving English proficiency among rural learners, there was no impact of Agricultural Skills and Practices on participants' farming productivity, Farmers never Link ESL and Agriculture to facilitate better adoption of agricultural practices, the program has promoted economic Empowerment, Inclusion, and Program Sustainability among rural women and youth, and there were some challenges that affect the sustainability of integrating ESL learning with agricultural development in rural communities. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered; more training programmes on improving English proficiency among rural learners should be mounted, Emphasis should be made on Agricultural Skills and Practices so as to improve participants' farming productivity, Farmers should Link ESL and Agriculture to facilitate better adoption of agricultural practices.*

**Keywords:** ESL, Agriculture, Rural Areas, Food Security, Literacy, Empowerment

### **Introduction**

In Nigeria, the Western or modern Education in rural areas is characterized with so many obstacles including economic hardship, low socio-cultural achievements, and inadequate infrastructural facilities. In most communities in Nigeria, especially rural areas, a good number of children drop out of school with the motive to help their parents in farming, fishing, animal rearing and other activities. Those who are retained in the school, they received inadequate basic literacy and numeracy. These problems of increasing number of drop outs and inadequate literacy and numeracy, has long-term consequences for employability, self-reliance, and access to quality education. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020). Proficiency, skills and confidence in English Language as Nigeria's official language and medium of instruction, is an opportunity for getting employment and having access to education United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020). Someone's level of Proficiency in English enables him have access to many



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economic, financial, agricultural extension services, government initiatives, and markets. Despite all efforts by government, NGO's and other relevant stakeholders, many communities in the rural areas still lack sufficient mastery of the English language skills, limiting their access and participation in agricultural, economic and other programs designed to improve their livelihood, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2021).

In recent years, Agriculture remains the backbone of Nigeria's economy, providing employment for over 60% of the people living in both urban and rural areas (World Bank, 2020). Despite that fact, some Nigerians are still at the poverty level particularly those in the rural areas. This is due to inadequate knowledge and skills on subsistence farming and limited adoption and utilization of modern implements and techniques. According to reports by the FAO (2019), an inadequate language and communication skill hinders farmers at both urban and rural areas in Nigeria to have access to training manuals, extension services, and international market information. Therefore, this study proposes a dual intervention combining Language and communication skills and prompt agricultural training to empower farmers both at urban and rural areas.

### **Literature Review**

There is the need, in today's world, for each and every individual to have basic literacy and numeracy irrespective of his or her field or area of business. Acquiring both literacy and numeracy skills enhances individual life and living standard. Therefore, the relationship between language acquisition, numeracy skills and vocational training has received a great concern in both developed and developing countries. Language skills when integrated with vocational and technical skills will result to economic and social development (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). It's on the basis of that, content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) frameworks highlight that the English language curriculum provides students with both linguistic, subject-specific knowledge, and vocational skills towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). For that reason, it's very important to incorporate content of ESL into vocational and technical programmes in particular agricultural training where learners will be trained on the application of the ESL to real-life language use (Mehisto, 2012).

In Nigeria, there are a lot of challenges of rural education which are mostly triggered by socio-economic realities. UNESCO (2021), emphasizes that there is limited access to quality education in most of the rural areas of Africa. This is usually associated with abject poverty, gender disparities, cultural or social believe, and weak infrastructure. These factors are in total contradiction to the SDG Goal 4, which emphasis on the provision of free and accessible education to all and sundry. These compounding problems, together with language barrier, affect economic, social and agricultural productivity of most people in Nigeria UNESCO (2021). According to UNESCO (2021), these challenges are aggravated by the language of instruction, which is predominantly English not the language of the immediate environment of the learners or farmers. In light of that, according to Krashen's (2022) Theory of Comprehensible Input, English as a second language can be proficiently learned if it's taught using hands-on minds-on activities. Therefore, the goals or objectives of teaching ESL should be learner centered, subject specific, community services having direct link with agricultural practice, where language learning is tied to daily human endeavors. Some studies revealed that Language and communication skills are very crucial in terms of Agriculture-specific studies which support economic and rural development. For instance, FAO (2019) reports that inadequate language and communication skills are the major roadblocks to the small-scale farmers from understanding manuals on fertilizers, pesticides, modern cultivation techniques, marketing



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strategies, preservatives, amongst others. Similarly, according to Odozi and Obinne (2019), rural farmers' lack of adequate English language and communication skills hinders them to communicate effectively and understand agricultural subsidies, how to operate machines, apply fertilizer and insecticides, and international trade opportunities. Therefore, once there is strong link between language and communication skills and agriculture, all the factors militating against large scale productivity in agriculture will be a history.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Nigeria, Farming remained as the major source of food and income. But still, low literacy level, English Language Communication skills and inadequate agricultural systems techniques are still the major challenges facing farmers in Nigeria. The persistent lack of basic literacy skills and higher productivity awareness among rural youth and women remain the major problems of farming in Nigeria. This became the major cause and source of poverty and food insecurity. Therefore, this study was on Bridging Language and Agriculture towards Enhancing ESL Learning for Agricultural Development in Rural Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To improve English proficiency among rural youth and school dropouts in Kaduna State.
2. To equip participants with modern Agricultural Skills for increased productivity and self-reliance.
3. To examine the relationship between English proficiency and the adoption of improved agricultural practices.
4. To promote economic Empowerment, Inclusion, and Program Sustainability among rural women and youth?
5. To evaluate the challenges that affects the sustainability of integrating ESL learning with agricultural development in rural communities?

### **Research Questions**

1. How effective is the program in improving English proficiency among rural learners?
2. What is the impact of Agricultural Skills and Practices on participants' farming productivity?
3. How are Farmers Linking ESL and Agriculture to facilitate better adoption of agricultural practices?
4. How does the program promote economic Empowerment, Inclusion, and Program Sustainability among rural women and youth?
5. What are the challenges that affect the sustainability of integrating ESL learning with agricultural development in rural communities?

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a survey design where both categorical and continuous data were collected and analysed. The population of the study involves all rural communities in Kaduna State with high dropout rates and reliance on subsistence farming. The population being infinite, the sample respondents will be accessed by going to the villages in Dadinkowa and Dinki rural community in Kaduna State. A sample of 120 participants (Drop out and youth) were involved in the study. According to Krejcie and Morgan Table of sample size determination, a minimum sample of 384 will be adequate to represent a finite population. The instruments were distributed to the respondents and collected on the spot.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The instrument used is titled "Enhancing ESL Learning for Agricultural Development in Rural Nigeria Questionnaire". The instrument is divided into six sections (A-F). Section A was for Demographic information of the respondents, while the remaining sections, B-F collected data that was used to



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address the research questions. Three research assistants were trained on how to administer the instrument.

### Data Analysis

Quantitative data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics of charts, frequencies and percents.

#### Demographic Information

**Table 1: Age of the respondents**

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	34	9
26-33	122	31
34-41	103	26
42-49	76	19
50-57	31	8
58-65	24	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 01: Age of the respondents**

Table 01 present the age brackets of the respondents that participated in the study. About 122 are within 26-33 years old, followed by those in the class of 34-41 years. The least number belongs to the class of 56-65 years of age, followed by 50-57- years with 31 respondents. This shows that vast majority of those who attended the training are within the age of 26-41 (56%).

**Table 02: Gender of the Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	314	80.51
Female	76	19.49
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 02: Gender of the Respondents**

Table 02 present the gender of the respondents that participated in the study. About 314 are male and only 76 are female. This indicated that more than 80% of the respondents are male while less than 20% are female.

**Table 03: Highest Education Level of the Respondents**

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Non-formal education	186	47.69
Primary	97	24.87
Secondary	73	18.72
Post-secondary	34	8.72
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 03: Highest Education Level of the Respondents**

Table 03 present the highest education level of the respondents that participated in the study. The result revealed that 186 had non-formal education, 97 had primary education, 73 are with secondary education, and only 34 had post-secondary certificate. This is a clear indication that approximately about half of the respondents had non-formal education which made it difficult to understand the training.

**Table 04: Main Occupation of the Respondents**

Main Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Farming	192	49.23



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Trading	147	37.69
Student	34	8.72
Other	17	4.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 04: Main Occupation of the Respondents**

Table 04 present the main occupation of the respondents that participated in the study. The result revealed that 192 were farmers, 147 were traders, 34 were students, and 17 were in other forms of occupation not specified. This shows that approximately half of the respondents (50%) were farmers.

**Table 05: Years of farming experience of the Respondents**

Years of farming experience (if any)	Frequency	Percent
0-10	143	36.67
11-20	169	43.33
21-30	45	11.54
31-40	33	8.46
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 05: Years of farming experience of the Respondents**

Table 05 present the Years of farming experience of the respondents that participated in the study. The result revealed that 143 had 0-10 years experience, 169 had 11-20 years, 45 had 21-30 years, and only 33 had 31-40 years farming experience. This shows that approximately more than half of the respondents (80%) had 0-20 years farming experience.

**Table 06: type of farming do you mainly practice**

What type of farming do you mainly practice	Frequency	Percent
Crop	142	36.41
Livestock	102	26.15
Mixed	134	34.36
None	12	3.08
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 06: type of farming mainly practice**

Table 06 present the type of farming mainly practice of the respondents that participated in the study. The result revealed that 142 practice only crop farming, 102 were engaged in livestock production, 134 were practicing mixed farming, and 12 had indicated none practice of any type of farming. This shows that a reasonable percent (34%) were engaged in mixed cropping or farming.

**Table 07: modern farming techniques learned through the program**

Which modern farming techniques have you learned through the program? (Tick all that apply)	Frequency	Percent
Soil management	63	16.15
Pest control	47	12.05
Crop rotation	125	32.05
Irrigation	132	33.85
Others	23	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 07: modern farming techniques learned through the program**

Table 07 present the type of modern farming techniques learned during the training by the respondents that participated in the study. The result revealed that 63 learned soil management



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practice, 47 learned pest control, 125 learned crop rotation, 132 learned irrigation, while 23 indicated that they learnt different modern farming techniques through the programme.

**Research Question 1:** How effective is the program in improving English proficiency among rural learners?

**Table 08: English Proficiency**

Statement	Very poor		Poor		fair		Good		excellent		Total	
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
How would you rate your ability to read in English?	133	34.1	109	27.95	87	22.31	31	7.95	30	7.69	390	100
How would you rate your ability to write in English?	147	37.69	113	28.97	63	16.15	51	13.08	16	4.1	390	100
How would you rate your ability to speak English in everyday life?	117	30	159	40.77	71	18.21	22	5.64	21	5.38	390	100
How confident are you when communicating with agricultural extension officers in English?	197	50.51	93	23.85	64	16.41	27	6.92	9	2.31	390	100
Since joining the ESL-Agriculture program, how was your English proficiency in speaking and communicating in English?	113	28.97	78	20	93	23.85	71	18.21	35	8.97	390	100
	<b>14</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>5.6</b>			
<b>Average Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 08: English Proficiency**

Table 08 present the level of English proficiency of the respondents that participated in the study. When asked on how they rate their ability to read in English, 133 (34.1%) said they read English very poor; poor 109 (27.95%); fair 87 (22.31%), good 31 (7.95%), and only 30 (7.69%) said they speak English fluently. On their ability to write in English, 147 (37.69%) write very poor; poor 113 (28.97%); fair 63 (16.15%); good 51 (13.08%) while only 16 (4.1%) write English excellently. In response to the question of how they rate their ability to speak English in everyday life, 117 (30%) shows that they apply English in daily life very poor; poor 159 (40.77%); fair 71 (18.21%), good 22 (5.64%) and 21 (5.38%) use it very excellently. About confidence in communicating with agricultural extension



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officers in English, 197 (50.51%) have very poor confidence; poor 93 (23.85%); fair 64 (16.41%); good 27 (6.92%) and only 9 (2.31%) have excellent confidence in communicating with agricultural extension officers in English. 113 (28.97%) Finally, when responding to the question on since when they join the ESL-Agriculture program, what was their level of English proficiency in speaking and communicating in English, 113 (28.97%) said their communication was very poor; poor 78 (20); fair 93 (23.85%); good 71 (18.21%) and only 35 (8.97%) said they speak and communicate in English excellently. The overall result revealed that 141 (36.25%) indicated that they speak English very poorly; 110 (28.31%) speak it poorly; 76 (19.39%) are fairly speaking English; 40 (10.36%) speak good English; and 22 (5.69%) speak English excellently. Therefore, the program had a very poor impact on improving English proficiency among rural learners.

**Research Question 2:**What is the impact of Agricultural Skills and Practices on participants’ farming productivity?

**Table 09: Agricultural Skills and Practices**

Statement	not at all		a little		somewhat		Much		very much		total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
To what extent has the program improved your farming skills?	153	39.23	103	26.41	85	21.79	27	6.92	22	5.64	390	100
How does your farm yields increase since the training?	141	36.15	118	30.26	64	16.41	51	13.08	16	4.1	390	100
Do you use modern agricultural skills in pilot testing your experience from the training?	112	28.72	149	38.21	85	21.79	28	7.18	16	4.1	390	100
Has the training change your attitude towards farming practices after the training?	187	47.95	97	24.87	72	18.46	25	6.41	9	2.31	390	100



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Are the	109	27.9	83	21.28	11	28.97	63	16.15	22	5.64		
Skills you		5			3							
acquired												
very much												
relevant to												
your												
current												
farming												
practices?											390	100
<b>Average</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>28.20</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>21.48</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>49.7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>21.7</b>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	390	100

**Figure 09: Agricultural Skills and Practices**

Table 09 present the level of Agricultural Skills and Practices of the respondents that participated in the study. When asked on the extent to which the program improved their farming skills, 153 (39.23%) indicated that they didn't benefit at all; 103 (26.41%) benefitted a little; 85 (21.79%) benefitted somewhat; 27 (6.92%) benefitted much; and 22 (5.64%) benefitted very much. For the question on how their farm yields increased since after the training, 141 (36.15%) indicated no increase at all; 118 (30.26%) increased a little; 64 (16.41%) increased somewhat; 51 (13.08%) increased much; and 16 (4.1%) increased very much. On the use of modern agricultural skills in pilot testing their experience from the training, 112 (28.72%) indicated that they didn't use the skills at all; 149 (38.21%) use it a little; 85 (21.79%) use it somewhat; 28 (7.18%) use it much; and 16 (4.1%) use it very much. In response to the question of whether the training changed their attitude towards farming practices after the training, 187 (47.95%) indicated no change at all; 97 (24.87%) indicated a little change; 72 (18.46%) indicated that the attitudinal change was somewhat; 25 (6.41%) indicated that the change was much, and 9 (2.31%) indicated a very much attitudinal change after the training. Again, in response to the question of whether the Skills acquired are very much relevant to their current farming practices; 109 (27.95%) indicated that the skills are not relevant at all; 83 (21.28%) indicated that its of little relevance; 113 (28.97%) indicated that it's somewhat relevant; 63 (16.15%) indicated that its relevance is much; and 22 (5.64%) are of the view that the skills acquired are very much relevant to their current farming practices. The overall total indicated that 140 (36%) of the respondents indicated that there is no impact of Agricultural Skills and Practices on participants' farming productivity; 110 (28.21%) indicated that there is a little impact; 84 (21.48%) indicated that there was a somewhat impact; 39 (9.95%) indicated that there was a much impact; and 17 (4.36%) indicated that there was a very much impact of Agricultural Skills and Practices on participants' farming productivity. Therefore, there was no impact of Agricultural Skills and Practices on participants' farming productivity.

**Research Question 3:** How are Farmers Linking ESL and Agriculture to facilitate better adoption of agricultural practices?

**Table 10: Linking ESL and Agriculture**

Statement	never		Rarely		sometimes		Often		always		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
How often do you use English	155	39.74	118	30.26	57	14.62	37	9.49	23	5.9	390	100



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terms related														
to														
agriculture														
(e.g.,														
fertilizer,														
harvest,														
irrigation) in														
your daily														
practice?														
Do you find it	141	36.15	123	31.54	63	16.15	47	12.05	16	4.1				
easier to														
understand														
agricultural														
manuals,														
instructions,														
or training														
sessions														
after														
improving														
your														
English?												390	100	
To what	123	31.54	142	36.41	71	18.21	33	8.46	21	5.38				
extent has														
learning														
English														
improved														
your ability														
to adopt														
modern														
farming														
practices?												390	100	
Do you feel	187	47.95	97	24.87	60	15.38	27	6.92	19	4.87				
better														
prepared to														
communicat														
e with														
agricultural														
officers,														
buyers, or														
NGOs														
because of														
your														
improved														
English?												390	100	



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Has English learning directly helped your farming activities at a point in time?	109	27.95	82	21.03	84	21.54	79	20.26	36	9.23		
<b>Average</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>28.8</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>57.1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>29.4</b>	390	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	390	100

**Figure 10: Linking ESL and Agriculture**

Table 10 present the level of English proficiency of the respondents that participated in the study. When asked on how often do they use English terms related to agriculture (e.g., fertilizer, harvest, irrigation) in their daily practice, 155 (39.74%) indicated that they never use the English terms; 118 (30.26%) indicated that they rarely use them; 57 (14.62%) indicated that sometimes they do use the terms; 37 (9.49%) use the terms often; and 23 (5.9%) always use the terms. In response to the question of whether they find it easier to understand agricultural manuals, instructions, or training sessions after improving their English, 141 (36.15%) never find it easier; 123 (31.54%) rarely find it easier; 63 (16.15%) sometimes find it easier; 47 (12.05%) often find it easier; and 16 (4.1%) always find it easier. On the extent to which learning English improved their ability to adopt modern farming practices, 123 (31.54%) indicated that they never have any improvement in their ability to adopt modern farming practices; 142 (36.41%) indicated that they rarely have improvement; 71 (18.21%) indicated they sometimes do have improvement; 33 (8.46%) they often do; and 21 (5.38%) indicated that they always have improvement in their ability to adopt modern farming practices. In response to the question on whether they feel better prepared to communicate with agricultural officers, buyers, or NGOs because of their improved English, 187 (47.95%) indicated they never feel better prepared to communicate with the various agricultural stakeholders; 97 (24.87%) rarely feel better prepared; 60 (15.38%) sometimes feel better prepared; 27 (6.92%) often feel better prepared; and 19 (4.87%) always feel better prepared to communicate with agricultural officers, buyers, or NGOs because of their improved English. Again, in response to the question of if English learning directly helped their farming activities at a point in time, 109 (27.95%) indicated that it has never helped them; 82 (21.03%) indicated that it rarely helped them; 84 (21.54%) indicated that it sometimes helped them; 79 (20.26%) are of the view that it often helped them; and 36 (9.23%) indicated that it always helped them at a point in time. The total responses revealed that 143 (36.67%) never feel better prepared to communicate with the various stakeholders; 112.4 (28.82%) indicated they rarely feel better; 67 (17.18%) indicated that they sometimes feel better; 44.6 (11.44%) indicated they often feel better; and 23 (5.9%) responded that they always felt better prepared to communicate with agricultural officers, buyers, or NGOs because of their improved English. Therefore, Farmers never Link ESL and Agriculture to facilitate better adoption of agricultural practices.

**Research Question 4:** How does the program promote economic Empowerment, Inclusion, and Program Sustainability among rural women and youth?

**Table 11: Empowerment, Inclusion, and Program Sustainability**

Statement	Yes		No		not applicable		Total	
	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%



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Has the program helped you feel more confident in participating in community or market activities?	194	49.74	109	27.95	87	22.31	390	100
Has the program increased your involvement in household or farming decisions?	214	54.87	113	28.97	63	16.15	390	100
Has the program increased your motive in finding alternative job?	160	41.03	159	40.77	71	18.21	390	100
Has the program increased your yearly or monthly income?	254	65.13	102	26.15	34	8.72	390	100
Did you think of expanding your farming activities even after the programme?	198	50.77	78	20	114	29.23	390	100
<b>Average Total</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>52.31</b>	<b>112.2</b>	<b>28.77</b>	<b>73.8</b>	<b>18.92</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 11 present the level of English proficiency of the respondents that participated in the study. When asked on whether the program helped them feel more confident in participating in community or market activities, 194 (49.74%) choose yes, 109 (27.95%) choose no, while 87 (22.31%) indicated that the question is not applicable to them. For the question on whether the program increased their involvement in household or farming decisions, 214 (54.87%) said yes the program increased their involvement in household or farming decisions, 113 (28.97%) said no it doesn't increased their involvement in household or farming decisions, and 63 (16.15%) said the question is not applicable to them. While when they were responding to the question on whether the program increased their motive in finding alternative job, 160 (41.03%) agreed with the statement, 159 (40.77%) choose no, and 71 (18.21%) were indifferent. On how the program increased their yearly or monthly income, 254 (65.13%) are of the view that it has increased their income, 102 (26.15%) said no it doesn't increased their income, and 34 (8.72%) were totally ambivalent. Finally, for the question on how they think of expanding their farming activities even after the programme, 198 (50.77%) are thinking of expending their farming activities even after the programme, 78 (20%) don't have the intention, and 114 (29.23%) were totally thinking it's not applicable. The total response on how the program promote economic Empowerment, Inclusion, and Program Sustainability among rural women and youth, 204 (52.31%) of the respondents agreed that the program promote economic Empowerment, Inclusion, and Program Sustainability among rural women and youth, 112 (28.77%) said no it doesn't, and 74 (18.92%) are of the view that the question is not applicable. This shows that the program has promoted economic Empowerment, Inclusion, and Program Sustainability among rural women and youth.

**Research Question 5:** What are the challenges that affect the sustainability of integrating ESL learning with agricultural development in rural communities?

**Table 12: Challenges**

Statement	yes		no		not applicable		Total	
	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%
Do you face some challenges in attending the training regularly?	173	44.36	129	33.08	88	22.56	390	100



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Is lack of proficiency in English language one of your setbacks in improving your farming activities?	214	54.87	113	28.97	63	16.15	390	100
Do you think lack of adequate finance is one of the problems you are facing to improve your farming activities?	281	72.05	102	26.15	7	1.79	390	100
Do you attribute your non-understanding of the skills during the training to Personnel responsible for the training not being very friendly and confident?	307	78.72	72	18.46	11	2.82	390	100
Do you agree that the training has no direct impact on your daily life?	289	74.1	78	20	23	5.9	390	100
<b>Average Total</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>64.82</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>25.332</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>9.844</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 12 present the level of English proficiency of the respondents that participated in the study. When asked if they encounter or face some challenges in attending the training regularly, 173 (44.36%) said yes they do, 129 (33.08%) said no they didn't encounter with any problem, and 88 (22.56%) said it is not applicable. On the issue of lack of proficiency in English language as one of their setbacks in improving their farming activities, 214 (54.87%) agreed that lack of proficiency in English language as one of their setbacks in improving their farming activities, 113 (28.97%) choose no as their response, and 63 (16.15%) choose the option of not applicable. For the statement of how they think lack of adequate finance is one of the problems they are facing to improve their farming activities, 281 (72.05%) choose yes, 102 (26.15%) choose no, and 7 (1.79%) choose not applicable. Again, on attributing their non-understanding of the skills during the training to Personnel responsible for the training not being very friendly and confident, 307 (78.72%) indicated that the personnel were not friendly and confident, 72 (18.46%) choose no, and 11 (2.82%) were of the view that the question is not applicable. Finally, in response the question of if they agree that the training has no impact on their daily life, 289 (74.1%) indicated that it has impact on their life, 78 (20%) indicate that it has no direct bearing to their daily life, and only 23 (5.9%) said the question is not applicable. The overall total response indicated that 253 (64.82%) agreed that there were some challenges that affect the sustainability of integrating ESL learning with agricultural development in rural communities, 99 (25.33%) indicated that there were no problems or challenges, and 38 (9.84%) were of the view that the question was not applicable. Therefore, there were some challenges that affect the sustainability of integrating ESL learning with agricultural development in rural communities.

### Summary of Findings

1. The program had a very poor impact on improving English proficiency among rural learners.
2. There was no impact of Agricultural Skills and Practices on participants' farming productivity.
3. Farmers never Link ESL and Agriculture to facilitate better adoption of agricultural practices.
4. The program has promoted economic Empowerment, Inclusion, and Program Sustainability among rural women and youth
5. There were some challenges that affect the sustainability of integrating ESL learning with agricultural development in rural communities

### Discussion of Findings



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1. The finding that English proficiency remained low aligns with Krashen's (1982) Comprehensible Input Theory, which emphasizes the need for contextual and sustained language exposure. In Dadin Kowa and Dinki, lessons were short-term and often interrupted by farming activities, limiting learners' linguistic gains.
2. The lack of significant agricultural improvement corresponds with Odozi and Obinne (2019), who noted that without comprehension of instructional language, technical training yields little productivity. This underscores the interdependence between language competence and agricultural effectiveness.
3. The third finding, that farmers rarely linked ESL with agriculture, echoes the concerns of FAO (2019) and UNESCO (2021) that language barriers hinder access to agricultural innovations. It suggests that language should not be treated as an isolated skill but embedded within agricultural demonstrations.
4. However, the program's positive impact on women's empowerment supports Nwajiuba (2016) and Yusuf (2021), who observed that literacy programs enhance women's agency in family and community decision-making.
5. Finally, the sustainability challenges observed mirror World Bank (2020) findings that rural education initiatives in Nigeria often fail due to poor funding, inadequate training, and weak institutional support. Addressing these gaps is essential for long-term success.

### **Recommendations**

1. Strengthen ESL instruction through sustained, context-based language immersion using agricultural themes.
2. Incorporate bilingual facilitators fluent in English and Hausa to enhance comprehension and participation.
3. Integrate ESL with field demonstrations to make learning practical and directly relevant to farming.
4. Provide continuous funding and monitoring to sustain the ESL-agriculture integration initiative.
5. Empower women and youth cooperatives through literacy-linked agribusiness training and mentorship.

### **Conclusion**

This study conducted in Dadin Kowa and Dinki villages of Igabi Local Government, Kaduna State, reveals that while integrating ESL with agriculture has potential to foster literacy and livelihood development. The outcomes remain limited without consistent pedagogical, financial, and structural support. The low level of English proficiency and weak linkage between language learning and agricultural practice hindered significant improvement in productivity. Nevertheless, the initiative demonstrated potential for community inclusion and economic empowerment, especially among rural women. Sustainable rural transformation, therefore, requires a holistic approach that fuses language education, vocational training, and community participation in long-term capacity development.

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