

INFLUENCE OF HOME BACKGROUND ON NIGERIAN STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN O' LEVEL ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT: *This work investigated the influence of students' home background on their academic achievement in O' Level English in Nigeria, using Oyo State secondary schools as a case study. In the selection of the respondents, multistage sampling approach was adopted. Stratified sampling technique was used to select four schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to select students on the basis of home background. Only students from illiterate homes were selected from the public schools while only students from literate homes were selected from private schools. Two private and two public schools were selected from each of the zones making a total of ten private and ten public schools in all. Random sampling technique was used to select twenty students from each of the twenty selected schools, making a total of four hundred respondents in all. Three research hypotheses were raised. Questionnaire was used to gather information on the availability of materials on English language on the basis of home background. It was also used to gather information on students' attitudes to English language on the basis of home background. Fifty multiple test items were used to test students' level of achievement in English language based on home background. Chi-square was used to analyse all the hypotheses set. The findings showed that there was a significant difference in the availability of reading materials on English; there was a significant difference in the attitudes of students to English and there was a significant difference in students' achievement in O' Level English on the basis of home background. Recommendations were made to the stakeholders.*

KEYWORDS: home background, attitudes, achievement, O' level English

INTRODUCTION

English language is one of the compulsory subjects that every student must pass at least at credit level before he/she can gain admission into any higher institution in Nigeria. Every secondary school always make sure there is a teacher of English in the school. There are situations where two or more English language teachers are employed to take different aspects of English in the school ranging from essay and letter writing, summary and comprehension to lexis and structure. The cognizance given to English is as a result of the important roles the language plays in the Nigerian society. Makinde(2001), Foyewa, Adebajo and Adelokun (2007), Adebajo and Foyewa (2009), Okedigba (2011), Adebajo (2012) and Foyewa (2013) among others have stressed the general roles the English plays in Nigerian societies. According to them, it is the language of education, religion, commerce, government, advertisement just to mention a few.

Most parents attached much importance to the subject than any other one in the school. No wonder, any school that has fifty percent (50%) passes in English language at O' level examinations is always adjudged as one of the best schools. Whereas, any school that has one hundred per cent (100%) passes in all other subjects with zero per cent (0%) passes in English might not be seen as a good school.

Through English language, most Nigerians have the opportunity to communicate with outside world. It is the major language that unites the multi-lingual nation called Nigeria. As a result of this, most writers on English language concentrate on students' academic performance in the subject, especially at the Ordinary level examinations. It is on this note that this work observed the influence of students' home background on their academic achievement in O' level English in Oyo State secondary schools.

Students' Academic Performance in English

It has earlier been stated in this paper that most writers on English language concentrate on students' academic performance in the subject. Oladunjoye (2005) investigated secondary school students' perception of English language as a qualifying subject of entrance into Nigerian universities. According to her, most students have ambivalent attitude towards the subject. This accounts for their poor performance in the subject. Fakeye (2012) observed teachers' qualification and subject mastery as predictors of achievement in English language in Ibarapa divisions of Oyo state. He observed that teacher's factor takes prominence in determining the quality and performance of students in O'level English. Adebajo (2014) wrote on refocusing the teaching and learning of English in Nigerian secondary schools: Strategies for improvement towards a better performance of students in the subject. She argued that teachers' teaching methodologies go a long way in improving students' academic performance in the subject.

Foyewa (2014) also investigated teacher's qualification as a determinant of students' academic achievement in O' level English in Oyo Metropolis. His findings revealed that students taught by University graduate teachers usually perform better in O' level English than those taught by non-university graduate teachers. This work is in line with others. It investigated the influence of home background on students' academic achievement in O' level English. It observed the issues of availability of reading materials on English language between the literate and illiterate homes. It also observed the attitudes of students to English language between the educated and the illiterate homes. Finally, it investigated the students' achievement in O' level English between the literate and illiterate homes.

Statement of the Problem

A lot of writers have investigated series of factors responsible for students' academic performance in English. In spite of all the findings and recommendations, the present writer observed that students' poor performance is on the increase yearly, especially in Oyo state. Therefore, the writer considered it necessary to investigate the influence of home background on the academic achievement of students in O' level English in Oyo state. Whether the students' background (literate or illiterate) has any effect on students' academic achievement in O' level English in Oyo state secondary schools or not.

Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant difference in the availability of reading materials on English to the learners on the basis of home background.
- ii. There is no significant difference in students' attitudes to English language on the basis of home background.
- iii. There is no significant difference in the students' achievement in English language on the basis of home background.

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population for this study contains all secondary schools in both private and public schools in Oyo state. The target population comprises all senior secondary school III in the state. The sampled population, however, contained the four hundred (400) students selected from twenty schools from the five geo-political zones of the state. The five zones include Oyo, Ogbomoso, Ibadan, Oke-ogun and Ibarapa.

In the selection of the respondents, multistage sampling approach was adopted. Stratified technique was used to select four schools from each of the five zones. Purposive sampling technique was used to select students on the basis of home background. Only students from literate homes were selected from the private schools while only students from illiterate homes were selected from the public schools. Two private and two public schools were randomly selected from each of the zones, making a total of ten private and ten public schools in all. Random sampling technique was later used to select twenty students from each of the sampled schools, making a total of four hundred respondents in all, that is, two hundred from private and two hundred from public schools. This represents eighty respondents from each of the five geo-political zones. The exercise was restrained to only the SS3 students in the selected schools.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used to gather data for the study.

- (i) A researcher-designed instrument tagged "Home Background and Academic Achievement in English Questionnaire" (HBAAEQ) was used to collect relevant data on the study. There is a portion where students' home background among others, was indicated. The instrument was used to gather information on availability of materials on English language and students' attitudes to English.
- (ii) The researcher also prepared fifty (50) multiple choice test items based on WAEC and NECO syllabus. The test covers areas of grammar, lexis, tips on summary writing, comprehension and oral English. It was adapted from Foyewa (2014)

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The researcher visited all the schools personally to administer copies of the questionnaire and the test. The test items were attached to the questionnaire given to the students to avoid mixups. Through the assistance of the schools permanent English language teachers, copies of the questionnaire and test items were administered. The students were encouraged to be serious with the exercise, that it could earn them opportunity for scholarship. This was done to get the best out

of them. The students were given fifty (50) minutes to respond to the questionnaire and answer the multiple test items. At the end of the fifty (50) minutes, the materials given to the students were collected.

Method of Data Analysis

Chi-square was used to analyse all the hypotheses set. It was used to analyse the availability of materials on English language on the basis of home background. It was also used to analyse the significant difference in the attitudes of students to English language on the basis of home background. Students' response to the test items were marked and graded based on one hundred percent. Chi-square was also used to analyse the significant difference in students' achievement in O' level English on the basis of home background.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Students were divided into groups. The first group, identified as group A contains students from literate homes while the second group identified as group B contains students from illiterate homes.

Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant difference in the availability of reading materials on English to the learners on the basis of home back ground*

Table 1a. Frequency Distribution of Availability of Reading Materials on English on the Basis of Home Background

Groups		Availability of Materials			Total
		Available	Fairly Available	Not Available	
A	Obs/expected	152 (79.5)	33 (24.5)	05 (91.0)	200
B	Obs/expected	07 (79.5)	16 (24.5)	177 (91.0)	200
Total	Obs/expected	159	49	182	400

Notice that group A contains students from literate homes while group B contains students from illiterate homes

Table 1b. Chi-square Summary Table on Availability of Reading Materials on English on the Basis of Home Background

No	Cal X ²	Df	Sig.	Remarks
400	112.33	2	0.000	HO1 Rejected

Table 1a indicates that 152 students out of the 200 respondents from literate homes have access to reading materials on English while 33 students claimed that materials on English are fairly available in their homes. Only 5 out of the respondents from literate homes claimed that reading

materials on English language are not available in their homes. Also, 177 respondents from illiterate homes asserted that reading materials are not available in their homes. Only 7 out of the 200 respondents claimed they have access to reading materials on English. The calculated X^2 value of 112.33 also indicates that the result was significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in the availability of reading materials on English to the learners on the basis of home back ground is rejected. The implication of this is that there was a significant difference in the availability of reading materials on English language on the basis of home background in favour of students from literate homes.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in students' attitudes to English language on the basis of home background.

Table 2a. Frequency Distribution of Availability of students' attitudes to English language on the Basis of Home Background

Groups		Students' Attitudes		Total
		Positive	Negative	
A	Obs/expected	163 (128.5)	37 (71.5)	200
B	Obs/expected	94 (128.5)	106 (71.5)	200
Total	Obs/expected	257	143	400

Notice that group A contains students from literate homes while group B contains students from illiterate homes

Table 2b. Chi-Square Summary Table on Students' Attitudes to English Language on The Basis of Home Background

No	Cal X^2	Df	Sig.	Remarks
400	116.35	2	0.000	HO2 Rejected

From Table 2a, 163 out of 200 respondents from literate homes had positive attitude to English while 37 had negative attitude. 94 out of the 200 respondents from the illiterate homes had positive attitude to English. However, 106 out of the 200 respondents from the illiterate homes had negative attitude to English language. The calculated X^2 value of 116.35 also indicates that the result was significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in students' attitudes to English language on the basis of home background is rejected. The implication of this is that there was a significant difference in t students' attitudes to English language on the basis of home background in favour of students from literate homes, though the general attitudes of students to English was not all that bad.

Hypothesis 3: *There is no significant difference in the students' achievement in English language on the basis of home background.*

Table 3a. Frequency Distribution of Availability of students' Achievement in English Language on the Basis of Home Background

Groups		Students' Achievement			Total
		A-C	D-E	F	
A	Obs/expected	129 (78.0)	62 (63.0)	09 (59.0)	200
B	Obs/expected	27 (78.0)	64 (63.0)	109 (59.0)	200
Total	Obs/expected	156	126	118	400

Notice that group A contains students from literate homes while group B contains students from illiterate homes

Table 3b. Chi-Square Summary Table on Students' Achievement in English Language on the Basis of Home Background

No	Cal X ²	Df	Sig.	Remarks
400	118.31	2	0.000	HO ₂ Rejected

From Table 3a, 129 out of the 200 respondents from literate homes had their grades between C and A. In other words, majority of the students from the literate homes passed the test given them at credit level while just 9 had outright failure in the test. On the other hand, 109 students from the illiterate homes failed the test out rightly while just 27 out of the 200 respondents had their grades between C and A.

The calculated X² value of 118.31 also indicates that the result was significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in students' achievement in English language on the basis of home background is rejected. The implication of this is that there was a significant difference in the students' achievement in English language on the basis of home background in favour of students from literate homes.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has made an investigation into the possible influence of home on students' academic achievement in O'level English in Oyo state secondary schools. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the availability of reading materials on English language between literate and illiterate homes. Students from literate homes have most materials on English language. This affords them the opportunity of independent reading at home. They also have the

grace of reading ahead of the class unlike the majority of students from illiterate homes where reading materials are not adequately available in most homes. The result of the findings also indicated that there was a significant difference in the attitudes of students to English language in Oyo state secondary schools on the basis of home background. Probably because of availability of reading materials for students in the literate homes, their attitudes to English language is far better than that of their counterparts from the illiterate homes. Most students from the illiterate homes have negative attitudes towards English language as a subject.

The result of findings also showed that there was a significant difference in the performance of students in O' level English on the basis of home background. The poor performance of students from illiterate homes might not be unconnected with their negative attitude towards English. Their negative attitude might be as a result of unavailability of reading materials on English at home. The better performance of their counterparts from literate homes might be as a result of access to reading materials on English language in their homes. Likewise, learners from literate homes are not far from all forms of encouragements. Concepts not clear can be easily explained by their learned parents unlike their counterparts from illiterate homes. Furthermore, parents who are literate can employ services of additional services of additional teachers of English to be coaching their wards at home. All this will motivate the learners to learn and improve their attitudes towards the subject and consequently improve their performance in the subject.

Recommendations

The government should come to the aid of public schools in the state by making provision for adequate materials on English language in the secondary schools. Most governments at all levels usually deceive the masses during campaigns that they shall make provision for free education. Textbooks should be distributed for students' use, school libraries should be adequately furnished with relevant materials on English language. Language laboratories should be built for schools, teachers should be adequately remunerated for maximum output.

The future of the children should be the major concerns of the parents of students in the public schools. The provision of materials on English language and other educational needs of their children should not be left with the government alone. Efforts should be made by the parents to acquire relevant materials on English language for their children. The students in the public schools should be motivated by their parents to learn English language. Since English language is one of the compulsory subjects that must be passed before any student can gain admission to any higher institution of learning in the country, students should be more serious with the subject. They should develop a better attitude towards the subject and ensure every effort is geared towards passing the subject at credit level.

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