

## **Gender Differentiation as a Determinant of Students' Academic Achievement in General English Courses in Nigerian Colleges of Education**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This work investigated the attitude of male and female students towards General English and their achievement in the course in Nigerian colleges of education. Three research hypotheses were set and t-test was used to test the significant difference in the attitudes of students to General English based on gender. The instrument was also used to find out if there is a significant difference between male and female students' achievement in General English. Pearson product moment Correlative co-efficient was used to find out if there is any significant relationship between students' attitudes to General English and their achievement in the course based on gender. Simple sampling technique was used to select two hundred male and two hundred female students used for the research. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the attitude of male and female students to General English. It was also discovered that there was a significant difference in their achievement in General English. The findings equally showed that there was a relationship between students' attitude to, and achievement in General English. It was therefore recommended that male students should be encouraged to develop positive attitude to General English, more General English lecturers should be employed, and management in colleges of education should make provision for more lecture theatres, public address system and other facilities that can enhance the teaching and learning of General English.*

**KEYWORDS:** achievement, attitude, gender, general English

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Lots of writers have attempted to make a comparison between male and female academic ability and performance in various disciplines. This work made an attempt to compare the achievement of students of Nigerian colleges of education in General English on the basis of gender. Gender, according to Oluokun (2002), has been interchangeably used with sex. While sex, according to her, refers to the biologically determined characteristics or functions of males and females, gender refers to those characteristics and functions that the society ascribes to males or females.

The belief from many quarters is that female children are not to be given equal opportunity to education like their male counterparts. Okeke (1989) and King (1996) gave certain traditional beliefs while female education is not encouraged in Africa. Ogbu and Gallagher (1991) observed that researches on Gender issues in college of education are scanty. They also gave reasons why it is important to research gender issues in colleges of education. Researching into gender issues in colleges of education, according to Eta (2000), is a first step to managing gender crisis in Education.

The society, according to Oluokun (2002), expects males to be aggressive, independent, rational and assertive, while the females are expected to be gentle, submissive, dependent, passive and emotional. That adduces reasons why Foyewa (2014) asserted that any time any of the General English classes is rowdy; the noisemakers are usually the male students. According to him, the male students have the tendency to disturb the class more than their female counterparts.

In terms of career choice, Oluokun (2002) observed that females enroll more in arts related courses than in science and technology related courses, and as such, there tends to be more female students in the Schools of Education, Arts, Social Sciences and Languages, while there tends to be more male students in the school of Science and Vocation and Technical Education. The major concern of this work, however, is to observe students' academic achievement in General English on the basis of gender.

Writers like Offor (1991), Adegbija (1994), Oniemayin (1997), Yusuff (2002) and Foyewa (2012) among others have stressed the general importance of English language in Nigerian education and importantly, General English in the curriculum of teacher education. Teachers-in-training proficiency in English cannot be compromised. English language is the major medium of instruction in majority of Nigerian schools. Therefore, teachers under training are expected to be sound in English so as to be effective in discharging their responsibilities. General English is therefore necessary in colleges of education because it affords the student teachers the opportunity to improve themselves in English, especially those who are O' level deficient in the language. Offor (1991) gave the following reasons for studying General English:

- (i) All instructions at all levels (tertiary) are done in English
- (ii) Most textbooks (except for other languages) are written in English.
- (iii) All tests and examinations (except those majoring in foreign or indigenous languages) are administered in English.
- (iv) The multi-lingual nature of Nigeria makes English the language of communication and interaction.
- (v) Considering the plurality of the linguistic groups that live on campus in tertiary institutions, students require a good mastery of English language to be able to enjoy meaningful interaction.
- (vi) For would-be teachers, who are to train the leaders of tomorrow, proficiency in the language is not only desirable but necessary.

In his own view, Lawal (1995) opines that General English in college of education hinged on a model that assumes a wide range of communicative competence on which specialized knowledge of reading and writing related to academic and professional pursuit can be built. The same view, is shared by Olajide (1998) when he said that one of the goals of General English programme is to inculcate in teachers, the ability to communicate effectively.

However, students' poor academic performance in General English has attracted a lot of attentions from different quarters. It is on this note that this work investigated students' academic performance in General English on the basis of Gender.

### **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The role of English in Nigeria as a nation cannot be overstressed. Hence, the general purpose of this study is to investigate Nigerian colleges of education students' academic performance in General English on the basis of gender.

Specifically, this work intends to find out:

1. the general attitude of students to General English in Nigerian colleges of education;
2. the students' achievement in General English in colleges of education;
3. the influence of gender on students' attitude towards General English
4. the influence of gender on students' achievement in General English;
5. the relationship between attitude and achievement based on gender.

### **Research hypotheses**

H01- There is no significant difference in the attitude of students to General English based on gender

H02 - There is no significant difference between male and female students' achievement in General English.

H03 - There is no significant relationship between the students' attitude to General English and their achievement in the course based on gender.

The findings of this work shall bring about improvement to students' attitude towards General English courses. This will on the long run improve their performances in the courses.

### **Research Design, Population and Sampling**

The target population is all students in Nigerian colleges of education, while the sampled population contains two hundred male and female students selected from the five colleges. The students were selected through purposeful sampling technique. Twenty male and twenty females were selected from each of the five colleges of education, making a total of four hundred respondents in all. Only part III students were used for the research.

### **Research Instrument**

Questionnaire formed the major instrument of data collection for this research. The researcher designed a questionnaire titled "Students Questionnaire on Gender Differentiation as a Determinant of Performance in General English Courses" The instrument contains sections A and B. Section A was used to gather information on the respondents age, sex, course combination and results in GSE 111, 112, 211 and 221 while section B contains twelve items drawn from the three hypotheses

### **Validity and Reliability of Instrument**

The instrument was given to experts in instrument design to examine its face and content validity. In the process, some items were modified, some remove, few others were added. The reliability of the questionnaire was established at 0.72.

**Method of Data Collection**

The researcher personally went round to administer the instrument to students in the five schools. Since no name was required, the students were encouraged to be as honest as possible. The students cooperated with the researcher; their responses were gathered and collected on the spot.

**Method of Data Analysis**

t-test was used to analyse the difference in the attitude of students to General English based on gender, It was also used to analyse the difference between male and female students' achievement in General English while Pearson product moment correlative coefficient was used to analyse the relationship between students' attitude and achievement in General English based on gender.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

*Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the attitude of students to General English based on gender.*

**Table 1: Analysis of the difference between Male and female students' attitude to General English**

				<b><u>t-value</u></b>		
Group	No	Mean	SD	Calculated	Critical	Remark
Male	200	10.04	1.41	11.45	1.980	Ho Rejected
Female	200	14.52	1.49			
Total	400					

Evidence on table 1 above revealed that the calculated value (11.45) is greater than the critical value (1.980) at 0.05 significant level and for 98 degree of freedom. Therefore the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected, this shows that there was a significant difference in the attitude of students to General English based on gender. This could be due to the fact that female students often develop positive attitudes to General English classes than their male counterparts. Foyewa (2014) opines that anytime any of the General English class is rowdy, the noisemakers are usually males. This is in consonance with the view of Oluokun (2002) when he claims that the society expects males to be aggressive, ... while females are expected to be gentle, submissive and so on.

*Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between male and female Students' achievement in General English.*

**Table 2: Analysis of the difference between male and female students' achievement in General English**

				<u>t-value</u>		
Group	No	Mean	SD	Calculated	Critical	Remark
Male	200	12.14	1.63	13.21	1.980	Ho Rejected
Female	200	16.48	1.84			
Total	400					

Evidence on table 2 above revealed that the calculated value (13.21) is greater than the critical value (1.980) at 0.05 significant level and for 98 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is rejected. This shows that there is a significant difference between male and female students' achievement in General English. The results of students collected in GSE 111, 112, 211, and 221 testified to this. Female students perform better than their male counterparts in most of the General English examinations.

*H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the students' attitude to General English and their achievement in the course based on Gender.*

**Table 3: Analysis of the relationship between students' attitudes to General English and their achievement in the course based on gender**

				<u>r-value</u>		
Variable	No	Mean	SD	Calculated	Critical	Remark
Independent	200	18.32	1.41	.3853	.195	Ho Rejected
Dependent	200	18.74	1.62			

**Notice:** The independent variable is students' attitude while the dependent variable is students' achievement.

Evidence on table 3 above shows that the calculated Pearson product moment correlative co-efficient (.3853) is greater than the table value (.195) at 0.05 significant level and for 199 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, which shows that there was a significant relationship between students' attitude to, and their achievement in General English Courses. Foyewa (2018) observed that students' attitude determines, to an extent, their performances in English language. A student's attitude will certainly determine his academic achievement in any course of study. If a student has positive attitude towards a course, he will buy all the reading materials on the course, he will do all the necessary reading and assignments on the course. However, if a student has a negative attitude to a course, he will not see any reason to attend classes or buy reading materials on the course and may not even attempt any continuous assessment tests and assignments given by the lecturer in charge. Definitely, the performance of such a student in such a course will be poor.

**Table 4 Analysis of students' GSE 111, 112, 211 and 221 Results**

	GSE 111			GSE 112			GSE 211			GSE 221		
SEX	A-C	D&E	F	A-C	D&E	F	A-C	D&E	F	A-C	D&E	F
Male	111	43	46	66	85	49	55	67	78	87	53	60
Female	150	33	17	162	27	11	92	105	03	99	82	19

From the above table, in GSE 111, it is evidently clear that majority of female students (150) have between A and C in the course as against III as recorded by male students. While just 19 female students failed GSE 111, 46 male students recorded failure in the course. The difference in academic achievement between male and female students was clearly manifested in GSE 112. While 162 female students recorded A-C in the course just 66 male students had between A-C. Majority of male students used for the research (134) had between D-F while just 38 female students had between D-F in the course. While 78 out of two hundred male students used for this research failed GSE 211 woefully, just 03 female students failed the course. Although, the general performance in GSE 211 is not as impressive as in GSE 111 and 112, yet the number of female students who had between A and C outnumbered that of male counterparts (55). While 19 female students failed GSE 221, 60 out of the 200 male students used for the research failed GSE 221. It can therefore be concluded that the results of female students used, as sample for this research is not as bad as that of their male counterparts. Female students can therefore be said to have performed better than their male counterparts in all the General English Courses. This might not be unconnected with their positive attitude to General English classes and General English lecturers as against their male counterparts' negative attitude towards General English classes and General English lecturers.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

This work investigated the issue of gender as it affects students' attitudes to, and achievement in General English courses in Nigeria colleges of education. The research revealed that male students have lackadaisical attitude towards General English in the colleges, and as such, their achievement in the course is usually below expectation. Female students on their own have positive attitude to the General English courses; therefore, their academic achievement is usually better than their male counterparts in the course. The work revealed that there was a significant difference in the attitude of male and female students towards General English Courses.

The research also revealed that there was a significant difference between male and female students' achievement in General English. The students' results proved that male students' academic achievement in General English is not as good as those of female students. This was manifested in their GSE 111, 112, 211 and 221 results. The findings also revealed that there was a significant relationship between students' attitude to General English and their achievement in the course. The students' attitude will certainly determine their achievement in any course. Positive attitude will certainly bring success and good reward while negative attitude will lead to poor achievement.



**Recommendation**

There is the need for male students to change their attitude towards General English courses. They should attend classes regularly and punctually. They should always buy reading materials on General English and endeavour to read them always. On the other hand, the lecturers of General English should also avoid all forms of discriminations against the male students. Male students should not be seen as unserious, those without future ambitions or problematic students. They should always encourage the male students to be more serious and dedicated to their work.

The management of each college of education should embark on programmes that can assist the students. More lecture theatres should be built. Students will be encouraged to attend classes if there is enough space to sit. Public address system and amplifiers should be provided in General English classes. More lecturers of English should be employed in General English Unit. This will assist in reducing students-teacher ratio, which will eventually lead to effectiveness.

If all these recommendations are considered, there shall be a balance in the attitude of male and female students towards General English. This will definitely reduce the wide gap between male and students' academic achievement in General English.

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