

SCHOOL-BASED FACTORS AFFECTING SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN EDO STATE

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ABSTRACT

English Language is Nigeria's lingua-franca and as such is very important to Nigeria as a nation. It is a core subject among secondary school students. In fact, it is a prerequisite for admission into tertiary institutions in the country. Despite this status, students' achievement in this subject has been low at the secondary level. Thus, this study examined the influence of school-based factors on Senior Secondary School Students' achievement in English Language in Edo State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 40 English teachers and their 1504 SSS Class III students. The instrument was validated by experts. Three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data collected were analyzed using Spearman Brown Rank Correlation technique and results revealed that teachers' qualification, instructional materials and text messaging significantly influence student's academic achievement in English Language ($p < 0.01$). Based on the findings, it was recommended that only qualified teachers should be employed to teach English language in senior secondary schools.

Keywords: School-based factors, Instructional Materials, Text Messaging, English Language.

INTRODUCTION

English is much more than the language of both the English and British people. It is the mother (MT) of majority of the people of the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. In many part of Africa, Asia, Europe and South-American countries, it is the most recognized national language (Bock Muniz, 2007). It is used as a second language in these countries. In fact, English is one of the most important world languages. English Language cuts across political and ideological lines because of its conveniences as a lingua franca. It is regarded as a key, which opens doors to scientific and technical knowledge, and it is indispensable to the economic and political development of vast areas of the world. One major area where the importance of English language cannot be overlooked is its provision of access to education, which is the most powerful instrument for social, cultural, religious and economic progress.

Nigeria as a nation attained her independent from the British colonial masters on October 1, 1960. Prior to her independence, the British curriculum was used in schools and English language was a core subject in the curriculum. After independence, the nation agitated for an indigenous curriculum which led to a curriculum conference in Lagos between 8th-12th September, 1969. This in turn led to yet another seminar workshop in 1973. It is the fall-out of these meetings that gave birth to the 1977 National Policy on Education (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1977). This policy has however been revised four times with its latest published edition in 2013. Amongst the subjects listed in this policy document, as core,

is English language. This situation applies to almost every part of the world where Britain once colonized, hence the diffusion of the language to almost every part of the globe.

The study of English Language as a second language (ESL) is thus a remarkable phenomenon in many parts of the world. Recently, the term, English as second language has been used to describe English taught or learnt for practical and necessary uses of communication, whether to serve as a language of instruction in education, for specialized studies or as a lingua franca among those whom English is the “other tongue”. Many countries use English as a medium of instruction in one form or the other. In Nigeria, English language is very important subject in the curriculum. Admission to tertiary institution is predicted on a success (credit and above) in it at the senior school certificate examinations conducted by either West African Examination Council (WAEC) or National Examination Council (NECO). In other words, for a candidate to gain admission into any tertiary institution to study are course in Nigeria, such a candidate must have at least a credit in English Language.

English Language in Nigeria is not only a core subject taught and learnt in the classroom, but it is, also, the medium of instruction in classrooms. Apart from these, the language is the lingua franca for the people. In fact, amongst the elite today, it is the language in the home (Bamgbose, 2008). In other words it has taken the place of mother tongue (L1) thereby reducing the L1 and L2. Going by these trends, one may assume that Nigerian students would perform well in English language, but this is not the case as there has been poor performance in English language over the years. For instance, an analysis of senior secondary school certificate results in English language between 1988 and 1996, indicate that the percentage of failure was between 53.3% and 72.71% (Olapopo, 1998). For Maduabum (2005), an analysis of students’ performance in English at the Senior School Certificate level between 1991-2000 involving 5,204,974 revealed that students who achieved a credit pass and above (A1-C6) was 6.6-14.1% which is considerably low. In the year 2000, a total of 28,612 students sat for NECO (SSCE) English Language and only 3.21% of the students passed at credit level. In 2002, 38,445 students wrote the examination and only 3.72% passed at credit level.

In 2003, 31,476 candidates wrote the examination, and only 2.622% of the candidates passed at credit level. In 2004, out of the 26,279 candidates that wrote the examination only 2.93% passed at credit level. In 2005, 35,793 students wrote the examination and only 1.80% passed at credit level and in 2006, 25,733 students wrote the examination and 2.74% of the students passed at credit level. In 2007, out of the 1,275,466 candidates, 325,754 represent 25.5% passed at credit at level. In 2008, 188,442 representing 13.76% passed at credit level. In 2009, out of 1,373,009 candidates, 356,981 representing 25.9% passed at credit level. In 2010, out of 1,351,557 candidates that enrolled for the exam, only 337,071 representing 24.9% passed at credit level. In fact available statistics from West African Examination Council (WAEC) revealed that the available percentage of student non-performance (that those with grades D7 to F9) are usually more than 75% of the total examination candidates each year. In 2011, 38.81% of candidate that sat for the SSCE & passed English language. In 2012 36.57% passed English language. In 2013, 31.28 percent passed English language.

From the analysis, the high rate of students’ failure is abysmal; consequently, this study sets out to examine the quality of English language teachers, instructional materials in facilitating learning and problems of text messaging on written communication. The situation is so bad that experts feel that the level of English usage by Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) candidates suggests that English is a foreign language in Nigeria and not a second language. Scholars have made concerted efforts at investigating the factors responsible for

the poor level of students' achievement in English Language (Kolawole, 1998; Ayodele, 2002; Adegbite, 2005; Alufohai, 2011). Adenuga (2002) attributed the poor performance of students to lack of infrastructural materials, laboratories, libraries, teaching facilities and classrooms. Sanders and Rivers (1996) found that differential teachers' effectiveness is a strong determinant of differences in students' learning. They noted that students who are assigned to several ineffective teachers in a row have significantly lower achievement than those who are assigned to several highly effective teachers in sequence.

Therefore, teachers' effectiveness is highly related to students' achievement. This finding was further corroborated in the study of Umar-ud-Din, Khan and Mahmool (2010) who declared that qualified English teachers performed better than unqualified English language teachers. This declaration is also in consonance with the assertion of Alufohai (2011). The reason for this is that the qualified teachers have had a better exposure in method or techniques of teaching English Language during their training in the Faculty, College or Institute of Education. This corroborates with Darling-Hammond and Young's (2002) position that teacher education and certification are related to teachers' effectiveness and academic achievement of students. This is in line with Khurshid (2006) who declared that trained teachers know how to teach effectively. According to Habila (2006), teaching competence is a knowledge skill acquired by a student teacher while in training. Thus, professional training is needed for effective performance by teachers. This is in line with Abd-El-lehalick (2006) and Grossman, Wilson and Shulman (1989) who have enumerated several categories of professional knowledge base needed for teaching. These categories include content knowledge, curricular knowledge, knowledge of learners, knowledge of educational contexts, knowledge of educational aims, goals, and purposes and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK).

The place of instructional materials in facilitating teaching and learning has been a major concern of researchers in recent times. Abimbade (1997) and Lasisi (2001) agreed that no matter the method or strategies chosen for effective teaching, there is need to make use of appropriate instructional materials in facilitating learning. The use of audio-based media such as radio communication medium has been found to enhance learning. Thus, Ojo and Ekhoviye (2008) declared that any instruction that lacks essential educational media cannot achieve its stated objectives. For Olumide and Oluwole (2009), the availability of equipment and facilities are very vital for the attainment of any educational objectives. Despite this importance, Okanos (2006) declared that in Nigeria, instructional facilities are not available, and where available, they are outdated and need replacement.

In fact, several researches have been carried out by different experts on the importance of instructional materials in the effective dissemination of schools curriculum. For instance; Hallack (1977), Akinwunmi and Orimoloye (1987), Afolabi (2001) and Olumide and Oluwole (2009) observed that the availability of equipment and facilities are very vital for the attainment of any educational objectives. Hallack (1977) emphasized that the main factors that lead to high academic achievement in a learner includes libraries, laboratories, equipment and facilities. He declared that availability, adequacy and utilization of these resources contribute to high academic achievement. Akinwumiju and Orimoloye (1987) corroborated the view of Hallack when they declared that the availability and adequacy of equipment and facilities are necessary for the attainment of any educational objective. Emphasizing the importance of equipment and facilities in Nigeria secondary schools, Afolabi (2001) averred that the fallen standard of education emanated from lack of equipment and facilities. This fact was further corroborated by Olumide and Oluwole (2009) when they declared that the

availability and utilization of instructional resources lead to the attainment of educational goals and objectives.

Text messaging is yet another important variable that could impact on students' academic achievement. Text messaging is a recent development which emerged in 1992 by Neil Papwort. It can be described as a brief typed message sent using the Short Message Service (SMS) of mobile cell phones. Text messaging was initially used for interpersonal communication, but today it is used for formal communication in place of Standard English amongst students (Hemmor, 2009). It has been asserted that changes in language are not usually obvious and noticeable until they are widespread. Consequently, language of text messaging is subtly injecting deviations into Standard English (Odebiyi, 2011). Furthermore, Odebiyi (2011) opined that most errors of spellings, punctuations and tenses recorded/observed in recent times might be connected with text messaging communication which often entails using limited space in order to reduce cost. Chiluya (2007) notes the observations of teachers of English that text messaging spelling conversations and orthography are infiltrating students' essay writing even in important certificate examinations. This observation of Chiluya (2007) was also made by Mgbemena (2007) who asserted that "we have observed an increase in spelling errors among students; we have observed in formal examinations (use of English examinations), some students use some of these SMS shortened".

According to Odebiyi (2011), the representation of words with similar one or similar sound can affect the graphic representation as well as phonological production or pronunciation of words. Thus, the constant use of SMS shortened is likely to affect grammar in formal writing (Mgbemena, 2007). Alabi (2003) opined that many students who send and receive many text messages have not been able to switch easily or are willing to switch to the Standard English. Explaining further, Alabi observed that the student formal writing include long essays, and in fact, examination papers have come to be punctuated with this written language of GSM. Alabi's observation were aptly summarized by Wilkins (2010) who declared thus "despite all the economic benefits that text messaging brings to mankind, I strongly believe, it is diminishing over ability to communicate and will adversely affect the current generation and future generation. The fact that good old fashion letter writing has experienced a decline, if not demise, should be a great concern..... text messaging has done little in the way of preserving/strengthening our command of the writing skills".

In fact, many studies have shown that there is significant link between text messaging or SMS and the poor performance of students in English Language (Connor, 2006; Barasa and Mous, 2010, Burgese, 2010, Odebiyi, 2011). Despite the problems associated with SMS, they are however prospects. For instance, Wood, Jackson, Plester and Wilde (2010) observed that text messaging can help in developing sensitivity, confidence and flexibility with phonology and orthography which may in turn enhance the development the development of the students' literacy skill.

Research Questions

Three research questions are raised to address the problem of this study:

- 1) Is there any relationship between teachers' qualification and students' academic achievement in English language?
- 2) Is there any relationship between teachers' use of instructional materials and students' academic achievement in English language?

- 3) Is there any relationship between text messaging among students and their academic achievement in English language?

Hypothesis

The three research questions were reduced and tested as one composite hypothesis as shown below:

1. There is no significant relationship between teachers' qualification, teachers' use of instructional materials, students' text messaging and academic achievement of students in English Language

Method of Study

The descriptive survey was used to carry out this research. The population for the study consists of all the final year students and their English Language teachers in the three secondary districts Edo State. The sample for the study was proportionate sampling technique. This technique was used to select 40 teachers. 1504 students taught by these 40 teachers were used for the study. In order to elicit information from the teachers, a self-designed questionnaire titled: English Language Teachers' Qualification and Instructional Material Usage Questionnaire (ELTQUIMQ) was designed. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section, sought to obtain information on the qualification of teachers. This section was used to collect the demographic data of the teachers. The second section consisted of 15 questions soliciting information on teachers' utilization of instructional materials.

The second instrument for the study was a questionnaire titled: Students' Text Messaging Practice Questionnaire (STEMPRAQ) was designed of elicit information from the students on the use of Short Message Service (SMS) of mobile phones. The questionnaire consisted of one section comprising of 10 questions. The third instruments used for the study was the English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). ELAT is made of one section of fifty questions. Students were expected to supply the answers by filing the blank spaces. ELAT was developed by the researcher to measure the students' ability and competence in English Language. The close test procedure was used to measure ELAT. The instrument was administered to secondary school students after due permission was taken from their principals. Spearman Brown Rank Correlation technique was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. This was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS Computer version 20).

Results

The result from the test of hypothesis is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Summary analysis of Correlation between Independent variables and the Dependent Variable

			Teachers. Qualification	Teachers. instructional. Material.usage	Students.text. messaging	Students. academic performance
Spearman's rho	Teachers. qualification	Correlation Coefficient	1.000			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.			
		N	1424			
	Teachers.instructional Material.usage	Correlation Coefficient	.378**	1.000		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.		
		N	1424	1424		
	Students.text. messaging	Correlation Coefficient	.626**	.213**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	
		N	1424	1424	1424	
	Students.academic performance	Correlation Coefficient	.547**	.192**	.563**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	1424	1424	1424	1424

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Result in Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficient of 0.547 for teachers' qualification, 0.192 for teachers' use of instructional materials and 0.563 for students' text messaging is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between teachers' qualification, teachers' use of instructional materials, text messaging among students and students' academic achievement in English Language is rejected while the alternate is accepted. Hence, this implies that academic achievement of students in English Language is significantly correlated with teachers' qualification, teachers' use of instructional materials and text messaging among students.

DISCUSSION

Results from the analysis showed that teachers' qualification influences students' academic achievement in English Language. This corroborates the findings of Darling-Hammond and Young (2002), Umar-ud-Din, Khan and Mahmool (2010) and Alufohai (2011) who found that teachers' educational qualification and certification influences teachers' effectiveness and academic achievement of students. Alufohai (2011) substantiated that the reason for this is because qualified teachers have had a better exposure in method or techniques of teaching English language during their training in the Faculty, College or Institute of Education. Buttressing this, Khurshid (2006) declared that trained teachers know how well to teach effectively.

Results further showed that teachers' use of instructional materials affects students' academic achievement in English Language. Abimbade (1997) and Lasisi (2001) earlier found similar result and consequently averred that no matter the strategies chosen for effective teaching, there is need to make use of appropriate instructional materials in facilitating learning. Ojo and Ekhoviye (2008) further reiterated that any instruction that lacks essential educational media cannot achieve its stated objectives. This explains that the availability of instructional materials in secondary schools, are very vital for the attainment of any educational objectives. Emphasizing the importance of equipment and facilities in Nigerian secondary schools, Afolabi (2001) declared that the fallen standard of education emanated from lack of equipment and facilities. This fact was further corroborated by Olumide and Oluwole (2009) when they declared that the availability and utilization of instructional resources lead to the attainment of educational goals and objectives.

Findings from the Table (Table 1) showed that there is a relationship between text messaging among students and their academic achievement in English Language. This implies that students' use of the text messaging service of their mobile influences their academic performance. The correlation coefficient from the result indicates that the relationship between the former (text messaging) and the latter (students) is positive. This is against the findings of Odebiyi (2011) who argued against the negative influence of text messaging on students' writing skills in English Language. He opined that most spelling errors, punctuations and tenses recorded/observed in recent times might be connected with text messaging communication which often entails using limited space in order to reduce cost. Chilwa (2007) notes the observations of teachers of English that text messaging spelling conversations and orthography are infiltrating students essay even in important certificate examinations. This observation of Chilwa (2007) was also made by Mgbemena (2007) who asserted that "we have observed an increase in spelling errors among students; we have observed in formal examinations (use of English examinations), some students use some of these SMS shortened".

According to Odebiyi (2011), the representation of words with similar one or similar sound can affect the graphic representation as well phonological production or pronunciation of words. Thus, the constant use of SMS shortened is likely to affect grammar in formal writing (Mgbemena, 2007). Alabi (2003) opined that many students who send and receive many text messages have not been able to switch easily or are willing to switch to the Standard English. Explaining further, he observed that the student formal writing include long essays, and in fact, examination papers have come to be punctuated with this written language of GSM. Corroborating findings from this study, Wood, Jackson, Plester and Wilde (2010) observed that text messaging can help in developing sensitivity, confidence and flexibility with phonology and orthography which may in turn enhance the development the development of the students' literacy skill.

CONCLUSION

The importance of teachers in the school system cannot be overemphasized. With the constantly changing nature of the English Language and current increase in information around the world, much demand is placed on teachers among significant others in the school in the teaching of English Language as a second language in secondary schools. The English Language curriculum at the Senior Secondary School (SSS) level is becoming so high that 'an ordinary' graduate teachers who is not well grounded on the subject content cannot teach it. Hence, the study concludes that teachers' qualification, teachers' use of instructional materials and text messaging among students affects students' academic achievement in English Language. Furthermore, it is important to note that text messaging in itself is not evil as revealed by its positive influence on students' learning outcome. However, its unbridled use among learners of English Language could interfere with their sentence construction, word spelling, and punctuation usage when the need to write a formal essay arises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made on the study:

1. State government should intensify its efforts in monitoring schools to ensure that only qualified teachers are employed to teach in schools

2. School authorities should make it a point of duty to provide teachers with adequate instructional materials needed for teaching English Language in secondary schools in Edo State.
3. Lastly, teachers should recognize their role as facilitators of knowledge and try as much as they can to intelligently guide students on the 'healthy manner' to avoid unwholesome text messaging influence on their performance in English Language at school.

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