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STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OJO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF
LAGOS STATE: - THE EFFECTS OF FAMILY PATTERNS AND
SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

By

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of family pattern and socio-economic background on students' performance in English Language. Data was collected from 120 students from 4 schools (2 Private and 2 public). An achievement test and a questionnaire were used. It was discovered that there is no significant difference in the performance of males and females in English Language; in the performance of students who attend Private and Public schools; in the performance of students from Nuclear and Extended families and in performance of students from High and Low Socio-Economic Status in English Language. However, a significant difference between the performance of students from Polygamous and Monogamous homes in English was discovered. It was concluded that the performance of students in English Language does not depend on family pattern and socio-economic background alone, but also on a fixed factor which is the student himself. It was recommended that students should be consistent in the use of the language; teachers should endeavour to be Received Pronunciation speakers. Parents should provide reading materials for their wards and the Government should employ qualified teachers to teach the Language.

Introduction

There are so many languages in the world. Some are living languages, while others become extinct. English is one of the living languages. More than sixty per cent of the world's mail is in English. Four hundred years ago, English was a dialect, but today, it has earned the status of the major world language.

English is the official language in Nigeria i.e. it is the language of the government; the judiciary; of most of the mass media and commerce. It plays a significant role in the daily life of Nigeria and it is the language of Education. It is used as a medium of instruction. The National Policy on Education (2004:16) states that the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years and from the fourth year English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction..

The status of English implies that it plays a key function in the social, professional and educational life of Nigeria. Banjo (1989:3). According to Broughton et al (1980) 'a good command of English in a second language situation is the passport to social and economic advancement and the successful user of the appropriate variety of English identifies as a successful integrated member of the language community. 'The decline in the standard of Education can be attributed to the quality of English teaching and learning in the school. Proficiency in English is required for a person to be regarded as an educated Nigerian. Banjo (1989:3) corroborates this view by stating that: if an educated man is defined as one who has had secondary education, then no Nigerian who speaks can be regarded as being educated. The reason for this is various. English is a key subject at the primary and secondary levels and indeed becomes the medium of instruction before the end of primary school.

Today, an Arts inclined student who does not possess a minimum of credit pass in English Language will not be offered admission into any university. A science student is required to possess a minimum of 'D7' to secure admission. Therefore, the importance of English Language cannot be overemphasized. The performance of students in English Language calls for concern. The performance of students cannot be devoid from their socio-economic background and family patterns. The home front of a child has always been believed to affect the academics of a child. The level of families' socio-economic class is argued to have positive correlation with the level of intelligence of their offspring. (Omokhodion 2001:68). If such is the case does the competence of a child not have any correlation with the socio-economic status of their parents?

The Standard of English Language in Schools

The standard of English has declined at all levels of the educational system. A number of writers have supported this view. It will not be surprising to find out that before and after the completion of secondary school, most students do not have mastery of the language. Akere (1995:16) corroborates this view: The primary school leaver /apart from the products of a few elite private schools does not possess the required competence in the four language

skills for both cognitive and communicative functions. Mohammed (1999:141) also asserts that: Many students come to secondary school, without knowing little or no English thereby necessitating the continued use of mother tongue as a medium of teaching the subjects in some instances. In fact, some teachers complain that in the case of science subjects, they have to resort to this practice even at the SSS level to get students to fully understand.

The problem is not limited to the primary and secondary schools alone. Akere (1995:141) observed that: At the tertiary level of education, students have so much difficulty with their communicative skills in English that they cannot function effectively in their academic use of English. Adejare (1995:173) commented on this view, when he opined that: University entrants are so linguistically defective that many would not have acquired secondary certificate in English two decades ago. But they come in good grades and no thanks to JAMB, they are literally foisted in the universities..

Since English is not spoken at home and students do not have access to novels, magazines, newspapers and most of their friends do not engage in speaking the language, the students see the language as a burden. When some students make grammatical errors in the language they are not even aware of it! Aliyu (1983:141) relates that: The level at which English is known might be so narrow that it is restricted to the spoken medium. When it comes to the written medium one of the areas that such learners are even familiar with, only a handful possess the ability to read and write. Therefore, an improvement in the standard of English is imperative!

Home Environment and Family

One of the most important factors that influence a child's level of achievement in school is home environment. Other factors are inborn ability; quality of the schooling the child receives and the child's self conception or aspiration. Shannock (1980) as reported by Burt (1911:7), suggests that children from better homes excel in the composition, in Arithmetic (problems) and Reading; though he had to enquire further to discuss the problem in detail in relation to the causes -economic, social and hereditary. Child that is born with average ability into a home that promotes learning will do well in school. Research on the cognitive development of children summarized by Bloom (1964), Hunt (1979), Schoor (1989) and Schaefer (1991) points to the family as the major influence and to the pre-school years as crucial for mental development. When one parent ignores the child's question, but another parent makes it a point to read to the child's hearing everyday, two different environments are

created. The first environment has created an environment that operates against learning. Because the social classes tends to provide differing environments, the child tends to be more or less prepared for to help to do well in school. (Holmes 1988).

Though family socio-economic status statistically correlates with a child's school achievement, there are exceptions. The exceptions show that relatively low achievement of the socio-economic class is a characteristic of individual families and that is not connected to low economic status. It has been observed that children from lower economic social groups have a greater proportion of school's academic failure and drop outs which may be as a result of lower native intelligence and lack of concern by the parents. This leads to the conclusion that even though parents know the importance of education, different families create different environments that influence children's motivation and intellectual growth in different areas.

Research Questions

To a large extent, family pattern, socio-economic status of parents, environmental factor and socio interaction affect a student's performance in English Language. This paper will give answers to the following research questions:

- Do family patterns -nuclear or extended affect the performance of students in English Language?
- Does the status -lower or upper class of the parents affect the performance of students in English Language?
- Does the environment affect the performance of students in English Language?
- Does social interaction with regard to communication affect the - performance of students in English Language?

HYPOTHESIS

- There is no significant difference in family pattern and the performance of a child in English Language.
- There is no significant difference in the linguistic environment in which a child grows up and his performance in English.
- There is no significant difference in the medium of communication and the people a child interacts with, and his performance in English Language.
- There is no significant difference in the class of parents and the performance of students in English Language.

Materials

The research design was an inquiry and test performance research type. Ticking the correct item method was used for the questionnaire and the performance test. The performance test covers lexis and structure in English. Four secondary schools (Comprising 2 Public and 2 Private) in Ojo Local Government were used. 30 students were chosen at random from each school. The instruments used were:

1. An achievement test (ATLEA). The students were required to answer 20 questions drawn from past West African School Certificate.
2. The Questionnaire: The students were to fill in information such as sex, family background and other questions based on the purpose of the study.

Necessary modifications were made using the Crombach Alpha Statistical formula. The reliability of the Questionnaire was established at 0.63.

The method of data analysis was carried out using the student's t-test to compare the mean and standard deviations of the various groups.

Results

School	Numbers of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of freedom	T-test	2 tail probability	Decision
Public	60	11.1333	3.234	118	1.28	0.203	$p > 0.025$
Female	60	11.8833	3.184				Not significant

HYPOTHESIS 1: There is no significant difference between the performance of male and female students in English Language.

Table 4.2.1 Comparison of male and female students' performance in English Language.

Sex Type	Numbers of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of freedom	T-test	2 tail probability	Decision
Male	64	11.3906	2.854	118	-0.43	0.67	$p > 0.025$
Female	56	11.6429	3.610				Not significant

$t = 0.43$; $d.f = 118$; $P > 0.025$ Not significant

From table 4.2.1 above, the mean score for 64 males is 11.3906 while for females is 11.6429, the standard deviation for male and female are 2.854 and 3.610 respectively. The degree of freedom is 118, the t-test is -0.43, 2 tail probability 0.67 and the decision is $P > 0.025$. This

shows that there is no significant difference between the performance of male and female students in English Language. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

HYPOTHESIS II: There is no significant difference between the performance of students who attend private and public schools in English language.

Table 4.2.2: Comparison of performance in English of students from Public and Private schools. $t = 1.28$, d.f. = 118, $P > 0.025$ Not significant

From the table above, the mean for students from public and private schools are 11.1333 and 11.8833 respectively. The standard deviation is 3.234 for public and 3.184 for private schools. The degree of freedom is 118 while t -test is 1.28. This shows that there is no significant difference between the performance of students from public and private schools in English language. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

HYPOTHESIS III: There is no significant difference between the performance of students from extended and nuclear families in English language.

Table 4.2.3: Comparison of performance of students from Extended and Nuclear families in English Language

Family Type	Numbers of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of freedom	T-test	2 tail probability	Decision
Extended	40	10.8250	2.772	117	1.62	0.107	$P > 0.025$
Nuclear	79	11.8354	3.402				Not significant

$T = 1.662$; (d.f. = 117); $P > 0.025$ Not significant

From table 4.2.3 above, the mean for students from extended and nuclear families are 10.8250 and 11.8354 respectively. The standard deviation is 2.772 for Extended family and 3.402 for Nuclear family. The degree of freedom is 117. The t -test is 1.62 while decision is $P > 0.025$ which is not significant. This shows that there is no significant difference between students from Extended and Nuclear families in English language. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

HYPOTHESIS IV: There is no significant difference between the performances of students from High and low socio-economic status in English language.

Table 4.2.4: Comparison of students from High and Low Socio-Economic status in English language Type

Socio-Economic	Numbers of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of freedom	T-test	2 tail probability	Decision
High	86	11.6512	3.176	114	1.21	0.229	$p > 0.025$
Low	30	10.8333	3.228				Not significant

$T = 1.21$, (d.f. 114), $P > 0.025$ Not significant

From the table above, the numbers of cases are 86 for High socio-economic status and 30 for low socio-economic status. The mean are 11.6512 and 10.8333 for high and low classes respectively. The degree of freedom is 114 and the standard deviations are 3.176 and 3.228 for high and low. The 2 tail probability is 0.229. While Decision is $P > 0.025$ which is not significant. There is no significant difference between the performances of students from the two classes. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

HYPOTHESIS V: There is no significant difference between the performance of students who desire a career in English and those who do not.

Table 4.2.5: Comparison of performance of English Prospects and Non- Prospects in English Language.

Career in English	Numbers of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of freedom	T-test	2 tail probability	Decision
English Prospects	85	11.2824	3.315	117	1.10	0.274	$P > 0.025$
Non Prospect	34	12.0000	2.964				Not significant

$t = 1.10$; (d.f. 117); $P > 0.025$ Not significant

From the above table, the number of cases are 85 for English prospects and 34 for non-prospects. The mean of students who desire English is 11.2824, while students who do not is 12.0000, the standard deviation are 3.315 and 2.964 for English prospects and non-prospects respectively. The degree of freedom is 117 while t -test is 1.10 the 2 tail probability is 0.274. The decision is $P > 0.025$ which means that the difference between the performances of the two sets is not significant. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

HYPOTHESIS VI: There is no significant difference between the performance of students from Monogamous and Polygamous homes in English language.

Table 4.2.6: Comparison of performance of students from monogamous and polygamous homes in English Language

Family Size	Numbers of cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of freedom	T-test	2 tail probability	Decision
Monogamous	88	11.9773	3.311	118	2.87	0.005	$p > 0.025$
Polygamous	30	10.0067	2.586				Not significant

$t = 2.87$; (d.f. 118) $P > 0.025$ Not significant

From the table above, the mean for monogamous families is 11.9773 while for polygamous families, it is 10.0067, the standard deviation is 3.311 for monogamous and 2.586 for polygamous. The degree of freedom is 118 while the t-test is 2.87. The probability is 0.005. The Decision is $P < 0.025$, which means that there is a significant difference between the performance of students from monogamous and polygamous homes in English language. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

The results indicate that there is no significant difference between the performance of male and females in English Language. This can be adduced to the different environments created for boys girls by their different families. This is in consonance with previous studies that one of the most important factors that influence a child's level of achievement in the school is the home environment. Girls tend to spend more time reading novels, magazines etc. while boys would rather be interested in playing football.

No significant difference was found between the performance of students who attend private schools and public schools in English Language. Students from private schools were expected to do better because a good learning environment promotes success in language acquisition. Actually, a significant difference would have been expected considering the fact that students from private schools have access to school library, private teachers, electric gadgets, more dedicated teachers etc. However the study shows that school environment does not affect the performance of students in English Language to a great extent.

A significant difference between the performance of students from monogamous and polygamous homes in English Language was discovered. This goes to prove that home environmental variables affect performance in English Language and also play an important role in language acquisition. This agrees with the view of Makinde (1991) which states that home environmental which comprises socio-economic background, parental motivation and cultural background are related to success in cognitive skills than any factors.

A significant difference was not found between the performances of students from high and Low socio-economic status in English Language. Though children from high economic class performed better, this can be adduced to various exposures, they have. This may be as a result of the interests of the students in their studies. High socio-economic class spend less time busy with their studies.

There is no significant difference between the performance of students who desire a career in English and those who do not. The Non-English prospects had fewer cases and performed better than the English prospects. This may have to do with their rate of reading. The implication of this is that the environmental variables affect language acquisition.

Recommendations

For effective use of the Language, the students, teachers, parents and government have roles to play.

- * The students should make adequate efforts to use the Language consistently everyday. Spend more time to read novels, magazines and other literary texts. And desist from the use of pidgin.

- * The teacher who wants to teach English effectively should aspire to an R.P (Received Pronunciation) speaker. Spend time to read texts. Make sure that students master the four language skills

- * The parents have a lot of work to do: They should provide their children with the necessary reading materials. The educated ones should encourage their children to use the language.

- * The government should employ qualified teachers to teach the language. The teachers should be paid high incentives. The standard of English has actually fallen in the country the government should implement a policy that will take care of the situation.

Conclusion

This study has confirmed the study that there is a relationship between socio-economic class of families and the academic ability of children in Lagos State. Other studies have also confirmed a positive situation and academic achievement Omokhodion (2001:167)

Though family pattern and socio-economic background have always been seen to affect the performance of students in English, it does not depend on these variables alone. The fixed factor is the student himself and what he makes of his studies.

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