

EFFECTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND ATTITUDES ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN READING COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to find out the effects of socio-economic and attitudes of secondary schools students on their academic achievement in reading comprehension in English language. Quasi-experimental design was employed for the study. 270 students constituted the sample for the study using multistage and purposive sampling techniques. The research instruments used were: Questionnaire on Students' Attitude to Reading Comprehension in English Language (QSARCEL) Questionnaire on Students' Socio-Economic Background (QSSEB) and Achievement Test on Reading Comprehension (ATRC). Test re-test method of reliability was used to determine the reliability of the instruments and reliability co-efficient of 0.82, 0.78 and 0.75 were obtained respectively. Two research hypotheses were posited. Data collected were analysed and tested at 0.05 level of significance using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). Findings showed that socio-economic and attitudes had no significant influence on students' academic achievement in reading comprehension in English language. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Government at all levels be advised to improve the infrastructures in schools and the well-being of its citizenry with a view to improving students academic achievement in reading comprehension in English language which is an hallmark of academic excellence. Students are also encouraged to read widely to develop the reading comprehension competence that is essential for academic achievement.

Key words: Socio-economic, Attitude, Academic Achievement and Reading Comprehension.

Introduction

The importance of reading comprehension cannot be overemphasized. Educational researchers have found that there was a strong correlation between reading and academic success. Better still, a student who is a good reader is more likely to do well in school and pass examinations than a student who is a weak reader. Good reader can understand the individual sentences and organizational structure of a piece of writing. They can comprehend ideas, follow arguments and detect implications because they know most of the words in the text already, but they can also determine the meaning of many of the unfamiliar words from the content aside this, they can use their dictionary effectively.

Ogenyi (2014) summed up the importance of reading as reading begets education; one who is educated is liberated from the shackles of ignorance, disease, poverty and oppressive dominance. One who reads must be one who is functionally literate and economically independent. Reading and literacy liberate individuals and societies from the clutches of backwardness. Reading is at the heart of every school curriculum, and all school subjects and the learner's achievements including academic progress rest on it.

Comprehension is very important in all subjects. Dallman and Rough (1974) asserted that comprehension means getting meaning from what is perceived in written text. Reading comprehension is a process that involves mental reconstruction using knowledge of language and the word which involve: thinking, judging, imagining, problem solving and even intelligent guessing. According to Oyetunde (1989) reading comprehension is the process of understanding the ideas expressed in a written or printed text. This shows that, the reader is actively involved in trying to make sense of the written or printed text by interpreting his previous relevant experiences with the textual information. Therefore, the degree of comprehension of a text would depend on the physical condition of the reader, his skills, and the difficulty of the text and the purpose of reading the text.

Mandeville & Kennedy (1993) cited by Osalusi (2009) found that regardless of the time and period of poverty in the life of the child, there are negative effects in terms of verbal achievement. Furthermore, in America the issue of education inequality was researched into. The project explores the belief that socio-economic status is indeed a determinant of one's educational achievement. A standardized assessment of America students reveals that large achievement gaps were brought about by socio-economic status. For instance, in 2007 National Assessment for Education Progress

(NAEP) pointed out that those fifth graders who were eligible for reduced-price and free meals scored lower points in class than their peers from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds. Educational inequality presented itself as one of the most fundamental socio-political issues in America. However, there have been many attempts at reforming, this educational inequality but a recurring decimal has been the other of the day.

In Nigeria, socio-economic background of a family is always linked with the academic achievement of students. It is assumed that students from affluent homes are better exposed to learning facilities such as library, radio, television etc (Ogunleye, 2002). However, Oyinloye (2005) reported that socio-economic status of students exposed to reading materials had no significant effect on the achievement scores of students in essay writing. Nevertheless, the findings of scholars like Yoloye (1976), Onibu (1981) and Kopala (1999) all agreed that socio-economic status of the students provided an intellectual atmosphere which helped the students' performance in language learning at school. They concluded that the exposure of students to aids like books, radio and television can serve as very high reinforcement to language learning especially reading comprehension.

Scholars have posited that people act according to their attitudes when situations arouse and they are confident of the correctness of their attitudes and intend to express the attitudes in action and also know how to implement the appropriate behaviour. Attitude may be described as way of thinking; feeling or behaving. This may be closely linked to the reasons for learning. According to Gardner (1998) cites by Oyinloye (2002) remarks that the most significant point about attitudes is that there is evidence that the attitudes of children are almost always determined by the attitudes of their parents. Attitude correlates positively with success in learning. Therefore, parents play a significant role in determining how well a child will learn a second/foreign language. Attitudes generally influence language learning especially in a multilingual society like Nigeria. However, Akinwumi (2015) posits that attitude had no significant effect in the achievement of secondary school students in Essay writing in English language.

Language learning has psychological and social aspects on attitude to second language learning affects the ability of the learners to master a language. In 1992, Baker focused on the importance of research about effect of attitude in language learning (Zainol Abidin, et al., 2012). In Popham's (2011) states:

The reason such affective variables as students' attitudes, interests, and value are important to us is that those variables typically influence

future behavior the reason we want to promote positive attitudes towards learning is because students who have positive attitude towards learning today will be inclined to pursue learning in the future. The affective status of students lets us see how students are predisposed to behave subsequently.(p.3817)

In the view of Nunan (2000) learners' attitudes, skills and strategies determine their underachievement or accomplishment. Ajzen (2005) in Hassan, S & Somayeh (2013) states that the attitude of students to language learning is a hypothetical construct that cannot be observed directly and must be inferred from responses that reflect evaluations of the attitude object. Gardner (1985) considers attitudes as components of motivation in language learning. According to him, motivation...refers to the combinations of efforts plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language. However, Wenden (1991) proposes a broader definition of the concept 'attitude'. He states that the term attitudes include three components namely: cognitive, affective and behavioural. A *cognitive component* is made up of the beliefs and ideas or opinions about the object of the attitude. The *affective* one refers to the feeling and emotions that one has towards an object, 'likes' or 'dislikes' with or 'against'. Finally, the behavioural component refers to one's consisting actions or behavioural intentions towards the object.

To Ayelaagbe (2000), attitudes to language are distinguished from other attitudes by the fact that they are precisely about language. Attitudes to language also include attitude towards the speakers of a language. This explains why Grojean (1982) assets that attitude as an instrument of communication and as symbol of group identity, language is accompanied by attitudes as values held by users and also by persons who do not know the language. What is important to realise, however, is that attitudes towards a language whether it is beautiful, efficient, rich and so on are often compounded with attitude towards the users of that language. Ayelaagbe (2002), therefore, advocates that to solve the problem of attitudes to language usage, types of attitude must be studied by looking into (i) the language attitudes of teachers and (ii) the language attitudes of second language learners. In short, language attitudes most especially second or foreign language learners can be based on a strong point i.e. requirement. This may explain why English language still remains a requirement to be passed at credit level in GCE or WAEC if admission is being sought into any Nigeria University.

Statement of the Problem

Year in year out there has been a great hue and cry by stakeholders over the poor academic achievement of secondary school students in

various public examinations in English such as: West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) National Examinations Council (NECO) National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB). There is no doubt that one of the major ways of solving this abysmal failure is by students' exposure to reading comprehension because reading comprehension is central to all subjects.

The researcher also observed that if the socio-economic and attitudes of parents and students are not of expected standard, teacher may find it difficult to read English comprehension. These are problems and concerns that led to the investigation of the effect of the socio-economic and attitudes of secondary school students at enhancing their academic achievements.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of socio-economic status and attitudes on the academic achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in Ekiti State.

Hypotheses Tested

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference between the achievement of students as a result of social-economic status between the experimental and control groups.
2. There is no significant difference between the achievement of students as a result of attitudes between experimental and control groups.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitude of students as a result of socio-economic status between the experimental and control groups.

Methodology

This study was a quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test and control group design. It examines the effect of two variables (Socio-economic status and attitudes) of students towards academic achievement in reading comprehension in English language. The population of this study comprises all students of Senior Secondary Schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The estimated population of public secondary schools as at the time of this research was 184; while the sample for this study comprises 270 Senior Secondary School two students (SS II) from nine schools of which three schools each were selected through multistage and stratified random sampling techniques from the three senatorial district of Ekiti State.

The researcher made use two of self-designed questionnaires as follows: Questionnaire on Students' Attitude towards Reading Comprehension in English Language (QSARCEL) and Questionnaire on students' Socio-Economic Background (QSSEB). Achievement Test in Reading Comprehension (ATRC) designed by West African

Examination Council (WAEC) was also used. These instruments were used to elicit information from the respondents on the impact of socio-economic status and attitudes of students on the academic achievement of Senior Secondary School students in reading comprehension.

The instruments were validated with the assistance of experts in English Language Education, Tests and Measurements and Psychology.

The reliability of these instruments were determined using test re-test method and reliability coefficient of 0.82, 0.78 and 0.75 using Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis were obtained for QSARCEL, OSSEB and ATRC respectively. Those were adjudged reliable. The data collected were analysed using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) and all hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results:

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the achievements of Student as a result of socio-economic status between the experimental and control groups.

In order to test the hypothesis, achievement means scores of students from low, medium and high socio-economic status between the experimental and control groups were compared for statistical significance using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level. The result is presented in table 1.

Table 1: 3 x 3 ANCOVA of Students' Achievement in Reading Comprehension by Socio-Economic Status (SES) and Treatment.

Sources	SS	Df	MS	F-cal	P
Corrected model	15115.695	5	1679.522	53.270*	0.000
Covariate (pretest)	3180.891	1	3180.891	100.889*	0.000
SES	15.632	1	7.816	0.248	0.781
Group	846.854	2	423.427	13.430*	0.000
SES *Group	254.857	1	63.714	2.021	0.092
Error	8197.401	264	31.528		
Corrected Total	23313.096	269			
Total	329882.000	270			

* $p > 0.05$

The result in table one revealed that there was no significant difference in the achievement of students as a result of socio-economic status between the experimental and control groups ($F = 2.021$, $P > 0.05$). The null hypothesis was accepted. The main effect of socio-economic status on students' achievement was not statistically significant at 0.05 level ($F = 0.248$, $p < 0.05$).

However, there was significant difference in the achievement of students in experimental and control groups ($F = 13.430$, $p > 0.05$).

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the achievement of Students' as

a result of attitudes between experimental and control groups.

Attitudinal mean scores of students in experimental and control groups were compared for statistical significance using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in table 2.

Table 2: ANCOVA of Students' Attitude in Experimental and Control Groups

Sources	SS	Df	MS	F-cal	P
Corrected model	4340.401	3	1446.800	43.815*	0.000
Covariate(pretest)	3332.045	1	3332.045	100.903*	0.000
Groups	770.065	2	385.032	11.660*	0.000
Error	8783.899	266	33.022		
Corrected Total	13124.300	269			
Total	2108759.000	270			

*p < 0.05

The result in table 2 showed that there was a significant difference in the attitude of students between the experimental and control groups $F=11.660$, $p < 0.05$. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the attitude of students as a result of socio-economic status between the experimental and control groups.

Table 3: 3 x 3 ANCOVA of Students' Attitude toward Reading Comprehension by Socio-Economic Status and Treatment

Sources	SS	Df	MS	F-cal	P
Corrected model	4497.875	9	499.764	15.063*	0.000
Covariate (pretest)	3254.916	1	3254.916	98.103*	0.000
SES	102.518	2	51.259	1.545	0.215
Group	143.883	2	71.941	2.168	0.116
SES *Group	46.337	4	11.584	0.349	0.845
Error	8626.425	260	33.179		
Corrected Total	13124.300	269			
Total	2108759.000	270			

p > 0.05

Table 3 showed that there was no significant interaction effect of socio-economic status and treatment on students' attitude towards reading comprehension was not statistically significant at 0.05 level ($F = 0.349$, $p > 0.05$). Similarly, the main effect of socio-economic status ($F = 1.545$, $p > 0.05$) and treatment ($F = 2.168$, $p > 0.05$) on students' attitude towards reading comprehension was not significant at 0.05 level in each case.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that socio-economic status of students had no significant effect in the academic achievement of students in reading comprehension. This finding corroborated with the finding of Oyinloye (2005) that socio-economic status of student had no significant effect on the academic achievement score of students.

The finding further showed that there was no significant difference in students' attitudes towards reading comprehension in English language. This

supported the finding of Akinwumi (2015) that students' attitude had no effect in the achievements of secondary school students in Essay writing in English language. However, the findings of scholars like Yoloye (1976), Onibu (1981) and Kopala (1999) all agreed that socio-economic status of the students provided and atmosphere which helped the students' performance in language learning at school. They submitted that the exposure of students to aids like books, radio and television could serve as high reinforcement to language learning.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In view of the findings, it was recommended that Government at all levels should improve the infrastructure in schools and well-being of its citizenry with a view to improving students academic achievement in reading comprehension in English language.

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