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FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN ANAOCHA LGA, ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the factors affecting the performance of students in English language in Anaocha LGA, Anambra state. One research question was raised to guide the study. One null hypothesis was tested in the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design in order to conduct the study. The population of this study was 7413 students from public secondary schools in Anaocha LGA, in Anambra State. Data was collected using a questionnaire titled factors affecting the performance of students in English language (FAPSEL) .A sample size of 400 students was drawn from the population using the Taro Yamane formula. Respondents were then selected from public senior secondary schools in Anaocha LGA in Anambra State using the simple random sampling technique. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity while test retest was used to measure its reliability. The result of the tests was correlated using Pearson Product Moment, Correlation Co-efficient. The reliability coefficient of 0.76 was established. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation and the hypothesis was analyzed using the z-test at 0.05 level of significance. From the results, it was observed that most teacher use the local language to teach and interact with the students. It was therefore recommended that both public and private sectors should work hand in hand to make sure that English language students excel by providing English learning facilities and organized activities in which English is the common language.

Keywords: Student performance, English language proficiency, Socioeconomic factors, environmental factors, pedagogical factors

Introduction

An important factor underlying development is education. Formal education does not work in a vacuum. The quality of schooling is linked with the curriculum, qualification of teachers, teaching methodologies, educational resources, equipment and physical facilities. Student achievement is affected by several factors such as teacher competency, school environment, school management, physical facilities, the examination system, etc. Academic achievement at any point is a cumulative function of current and prior family, community, and school experiences. As Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain (2005) notes, a

study of the entire process would require complete family, community, and school histories, which are rarely available. They contend that in the absence of such information, the relationship between the level of achievement and school inputs for a single grade are susceptible to omitted variables biases from a number of sources. An alternative approach, they observed, is to focus on the determinants of the rate of learning over specific time period. This eliminates a variety of confounding influences including the prior and often unobserved history of parental and school inputs and controls for variations in initial conditions when looking at how schools influence performance during, for example, a given school year. While such an approach by no means eliminates the potential for specification bias, the inclusion of initial achievement as a means to account for past inputs reduces dramatically the likelihood that omitted historical factors introduce significant bias.

Students' academic performance has been an important issue for institutions and the role of the English language for enhancing educational achievement through improved communication cannot be over emphasized. If the learner is handicapped in the language of education, classroom interaction will be difficult and learning may not take place (Malekela, 2003). Students who have difficulties with English language may not function effectively, not only in English as a subject but in all their academic endeavours. The influence English as a medium of communication has on all the other subjects of the curriculum invariably point to the fact that students' performance in the English language influences their overall performance in other subjects.

Statement of problem

English is a core subject in secondary education curricula in Nigeria. In many contexts, it serves as the medium of instruction for other subjects and is a prerequisite for higher education and professional careers. Despite the critical role of English proficiency, there remains a significant gap in understanding the complex factors that contribute to poor performance among secondary school students. Existing research provides fragmented insights, lacking a comprehensive analysis of how these factors interact and affect student outcomes (Baker, 2018; Snow, 2019). This gap hinders the formulation of effective policies and teaching practices aimed at improving English language performance.

Objective of the study

The study aims at finding a relationship between the factors it is concerned about and students' performance in the English language. By examining socio-economic backgrounds, students' attitudes, social factors and extracurricular factors, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to English language proficiency.

Research question

1. This study tried to answer the following question:

Is there a relationship between performance in English and the attitudinal, environmental, socioeconomic, pedagogical and extracurricular factors among secondary school students in Anaocha local Government area?

Research hypothesis

The null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in mean rating between the views of male and female students on the factors affecting the performance of students in secondary schools in Anaocha Local Government Area?

Literature Review

English, as a critical subject in the Nigerian educational curriculum, plays a pivotal role in determining students' overall academic success. The performance in English language in secondary schools in Nigeria is influenced by a myriad of factors. This literature review examines the major factors affecting students' performance, including socio-economic, pedagogical, environmental, and individual variables.

1.Socio-Economic Factors

1.1Family Background

Family background significantly influences students' academic performance in English. Studies indicate that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds generally perform better due to better access to educational resources and conducive learning environments (Adeyemo & Babajide, 2020). Factors such as parental education level and occupation impact children's learning experiences and attitudes towards English.

1.2Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is crucial for enhancing students' performance in English. Research by Olatunji and Akinyemi (2018) shows that active parental engagement in children's education, including monitoring homework and attending school meetings, positively correlates with better academic outcomes. However, the level of involvement often varies with socio-economic status, affecting the quality and quantity of support students receive.

2 Pedagogical Factors

2.1 Teacher Quality

The quality of English language teachers is a significant determinant of students' performance. Teachers' qualifications, experience, and pedagogical skills directly influence students' understanding and proficiency in English (Ogunsiji & Daramola, 2022). Effective teachers employ diverse instructional strategies that cater to students' varying learning needs and abilities.

2.2 Teaching Methods

Traditional lecture-based teaching methods have been found less effective compared to interactive and student-centered approaches. A study by Uwaifo and Uwaifo (2019) emphasizes the need for innovative teaching methods, including the use of technology and collaborative learning, to enhance students' engagement and comprehension in English language classes.

2.3 Curriculum Content

The relevance and comprehensiveness of the English language curriculum affect students' performance. According to Agboghoroma and Oghuvbu (2018), a well-designed curriculum that integrates modern literature, language skills, and cultural contexts enhances students' interest and performance in English. Conversely, outdated or overly theoretical curricula may lead to disengagement and poor performance.

3. Environmental Factors

3.1 School Infrastructure

Adequate school infrastructure, including libraries, language labs, and learning materials, is essential for effective English language learning. Schools with well-equipped facilities provide a conducive learning environment that supports students' academic achievements (Onyeachonam & Eze, 2021).

3.2 Class Size

Class size also impacts students' performance in English. Smaller class sizes allow for more personalized instruction and better teacher-student interactions, leading to improved language skills and performance (Afolabi & Adesina, 2020).

4. Individual Factors

4.1 Motivation and Attitude

Students' motivation and attitude towards English play a crucial role in their performance. Positive attitudes and high motivation levels are associated with better engagement and higher academic achievement in English (Ibe & Maduewesi, 2017). Factors influencing motivation include interest in the subject, perceived relevance, and future aspirations.

4.2 Language Proficiency

Initial language proficiency also affects performance in English. Students with strong foundational skills in English, often developed in primary education or through early exposure at home, tend to perform better in secondary school (Bamidele & Ayeni, 2023).

4.3 Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, can impede students' ability to perform well in English. Recognizing and providing appropriate support for students with learning disabilities is crucial for their academic success (Abang & Ekong, 2019).

Conceptual framework in this study is based on Bloom's (1982) model of evaluation because of its suitability in the process of language learning and teaching. It was useful in examining the interdependence of variables, teaching and learning process to students' performance in English language subject. The model consists of three items: Predictor variables, Mediating variables and Performance. According to Bloom (1982) predictor variables and mediating variables influence greatly students' performance. The model as presented in this study summarized the idea contained in the model that if the predictor variables and mediating variables were of high quality, then teaching and learning process would produce good performance in language comprehension, production and attitudes towards English. The model examines the relationship between variables, teaching and learning

process with performance in English language. It was anticipated that if there were enough and well qualified teachers to teach English language subject, availability of teaching and learning materials, they would contribute to students' high performance in the subject. It was also hoped that students would perform better if they had motivation to learn the language because their motivation would determine their success. Additionally, if teachers had motivation to teach the language, students would perform better because teachers were the ones who determine students' success. The study also assumed that if the school environment especially classrooms and home environment were conducive to students' learning they would contribute to high performance not only in English subject but also in other subjects taught in English, hence, high school achievement. Furthermore, it was expected that students' attitudes toward the language they learn could predict their academic performance. Also students' frequent use of the language inside and outside classrooms would influence the level of performance in the language they learn. On top of that, it was expected that if English language teachers could manage to organize content, learning objectives, and apply recent methods of teaching and learning English, students would perform highly in the subject at the end of the course. Performance in language refers to level of mastery in terms of comprehension, production and attitudes toward the subject. On one hand, it was anticipated that when predictor variables and mediating variables were favourable then, the level of performance would be high; on the other hand, when they were of low quality then, performance would suffer.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded on The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory. Communicative Language Teaching has its origins in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s and more generally in the developments of both Europe and North America. It was postulated in 1972 by linguist D. A. Wilkins (1972). This approach varies from traditional approaches because it is learner-centred. Communicative language teaching refers to both processes and goals in classroom learning. The identification of learners' communicative needs provides a basis for curriculum design (Van Ek 1975).Also, linguists state that there is a need to focus on communicative proficiency in language teaching and that Communicative Language Teaching can fulfill this need.

By definition, CLT puts the focus on the learner. Learners' communicative needs provide a framework for elaborating program goals with regard to functional competence. Functional goals imply global, qualitative evaluation of learner achievement as opposed to quantitative assessment of discrete linguistic features. This theory stresses that the definition of appropriate communicative competence for learners requires an understanding of the sociocultural contexts of language use. Learners should work in pairs or groups and try to solve problematic task with their

available language knowledge (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Empirical Studies

Modada and Masha's (2015) study which investigated the impact of English language proficiency on learners' academic achievement in mathematics, economic and management science and natural science in South Africa, showed a weak but positive relationship. This confirmed result of research conducted by Wilson and Komba (2012) on the link between English language proficiency and academic performance of Morogoro Urban District students in Tanzania, where the results indicated a positive but weak relationship. Robelle and Roland's (2015) study on the relationship between the English language proficiency and academic performance in science, mathematics and English language among Grade 8 students of Philippine Science High School showed a significant positive relationship between the two variables. Findings of Arsad et al. (2014) study, which investigated students' English language proficiency and its impact on the over-all performance of a bachelor level engineering programme at a university in Malaysia, also concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between the two variables. A study in Iran by Sadeghi, Kashanian, and Maleki's (2013) on English language proficiency as a predictor of academic achievement among medical students in their national comprehensive basic science examination, indicated that English language proficiency significantly influenced academic achievement of medical students.

O'Connor and Lussier (2011) study suggested that ELLs performed lower than their peers because their limited English proficiency was a barrier to understanding mathematics word problems. Adding to this, Kempert (2011) explained that ELLs ability to solve mathematics word problems provided an accurate predictor for measuring individual learners' achievement progress in mathematics. Analyses of 2011 study by Han showed that weak language proficiency among ELLs was the major challenge to their success in their high school subject-area courses and in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. A study by Kong and Williams (2012) indicated that English language proficiency scores are significantly predictive of academic reading test scores for K–12 ELL students. According to Oakeley and Urrabazo (2001), ELLs' level of English proficiency on the Woodcock-Muñoz language survey in Texas significantly correlated with their scores on statewide assessments on writing, reading, and mathematics. Aina and Ogundele (2013) study examined the relationship between students' English language proficiency and their academic performance in science and technical education in Nigeria. Results of research showed that the higher the proficiency of students in English language, the higher their scores in other content areas. In their study on learning mathematics in English at Basic Schools in Ghana, Fredua-Kwartengand Ahia (2015) research results indicated that learners with limited English

background did not perform well in mathematics.

There are lots of evidences from empirical studies that English proficiency plays a crucial role in academic achievement (Chen & Li, 2010). Empirical evidences from Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia, Iran, Philippines, Canada among others have revealed that academic performance depended largely on their level of proficiency in English language. This research study has contributed to the growing body of research on the factors affecting students' performance in the English language.

Research Method

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all 7413 students in public senior secondary schools in Anaocha local government area in Anambra state. A sample size of 400 students was drawn from the population using the Taro Yamane formula. Respondents were then selected from public senior secondary schools in Anaocha local government area of Anambra state using the simple random sampling technique. The instruments used for this study was a questionnaire titled: Factors affecting the performance of students in English language (FAPSEL) with the 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was subjected to face and content validity while test-retest was used to measure its reliability. The result of the tests was corrected using Pearson Product Moment, Correlation Co-efficient. The reliability co-efficient of 0.76 was established. The instrument was administered directly by the field assistants and the data collected were analyzed using the simple mean standard deviation and the null hypothesis was tested using the z-test at 0.05 level of significance. A criterion mean of 2.5 was adopted as decision rule to answer the Research questions.

RESULTS

Table 1: Mean rating of respondents on factors affecting the performance of students in the English language.

Factors items	SA	A	D	SD	N	MEAN	REMARK
Like speaking English in class.	86	54	34	226	400	1.64	Rejected
Practice speaking English outside classroom.	92	49	9	250	400	1.96	Rejected
Like learning English.	81	68	64	187	400	2.11	Rejected
Live in a big family.	42	199	110	49	400	2.59	Accepted
Live in a rented house.	94	43	7	256	400	1.93	Rejected
Have own room in house.	22	10	82	286	400	1.42	Rejected
Family's income high.	96	82	75	147	400	2.32	Rejected
Parents good in English.	123	22	45	210	400	2.15	Rejected
Travel abroad and speak English.	10	47	121	222	400	1.61	Rejected
Read books other than text.	23	199	163	15	400	2.58	Accepted
School provide English learning	234	97	43	26	400	3.35	Accepted

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materials.							
Have English dictionary.	22	17	250	111	400	1.88	Rejected
Watch English TV programmes.	87	217	86	10	400	2.95	Accepted
Listen to English radio programmes.	210	87	50	53	400	3.13	Accepted
Most tutors do not interact with English.	29	10	233	128	400	1.85	Rejected
Some tutors use the local language to teach.	226	54	34	86	400	3.05	Accepted
Students do not have access to Library.	101	107	98	94	400	2.54	Accepted

From table 1, respondents generally disagreed with items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 20 and 11, while they agreed to items 4, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16 and 17 that living in a big family, reading books other than texts, school's provision of English learning materials, watching English TV programmes, listening to English radio programmes, use of local language while teaching and having access to the library affects performance of students in English.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in mean rating between the views of male and female students on the factors affecting the performance of students in secondary schools in Anaocha Local Government Area.

Table 2: test of difference between the views of male and female students on factors affecting the performance of students in secondary schools in Anaocha Local Government Area.

Respondents	N	X	SD	Df	Z-cal	Z-crit	Level of significance.	Decision
Male.	171	2.40	1.24	398	0.34	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Female.	229	2.37	1.34					

Results on test of the hypothesis show that the z-calculated value of 0.34 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 398, hence the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in mean rating between the views of male and female students on the factors affecting the performance of students in secondary schools in Anaocha local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

The statistical evidence tabulated in table 1 shows the importance of studying the factors affecting the performance of students in English language in general. The study covers attitudinal, socioeconomic, environmental and pedagogical/extracurricular factors. The findings of this study showed that students

do not like learning or practicing English in and outside the classrooms. The finding is in line with Ibe & Maduewusi (2017) who reported that most students lack the zeal to learn and speak English. The finding of study also revealed that most teachers teach and interact with the students using the local language. The finding is in line with Ogunsiji & Daramola (2022) who were of the opinion that teachers' qualifications, experience and pedagogical skills directly influence students' proficiency in English. Following are some broad generalizations:

- Students who like to learn English report better performance in English than those who do not like to learn English.
- Students who practice speaking English in and outside the classroom perform better than those who don't.
- Students from small families report better performance in English than those from big families.
- Living in one's own house or a rented house does not have an effect in the performance of students in English.
- Students who think they belong to high income families perform better in English than those who think they are of low income families.
- Students whose parents are good in English report better performance in English than those whose parents are not good in English.
- Students who travel abroad and have the chance to speak English there report better performance in English than those who don't.
- Schools provide English learning materials for students and teachers.
- Students who read English books other than texts perform better than students who don't.
- Watching English TV programmes and listening to English radio programmes does not have an effect on the performance of students in English.
- Students who have and frequently use dictionaries report better performance in English than those who do not have dictionaries.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study shows that secondary school students' performance in English as a subject is clearly affected by different factors. The need to learn English as a language is high. This is realized from the high status which English has obtained in most walks of life. English has become a necessity to excel in science and technology and to catch up with the ever developing discoveries and inventions. Policy makers are called upon to take care of the welfare of individuals and societies whose lives are strongly affected by modern life requirements where English is the main means of communication. The factors this article investigates are closely related to the learning of English as a language. Therefore, improving the environment to raise learners' performance in English should receive more attention from educationists and linguists. Public and private sectors are called upon to work hand

in hand to make sure that English language students excel by providing English learning facilities and organize activities in which English is the common language. The same could be done at schools by encouraging communication in English.

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