



Effect of students' attitude on academic achievement in English language in senior secondary schools in Calabar metropolis, cross river state, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated whether students' attitude towards English Language has a significant influence on their academic achievement in English Language. The study took place in Calabar metropolis, Cross River State, and made use of a sample size of 660 Senior Secondary School two students (SSS II) drawn from 22 public secondary schools in Calabar metropolis. Purposive and Stratified Random sampling techniques were used to select the subjects and schools for the study. Data was generated through a well-structured and validated questionnaire titled "Student Characteristics Rating Scale" (SCRS) and a 30-item English Language Students' Achievement Test, (ELAT). The Split-half reliability analysis was used to test for the reliability of the questionnaire; while Kudar-Richardson 20 (KR-20) tested the reliability of the English Language Achievement Test. Data were analysed using Independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis showed that students' attitude has a significant influence on their academic achievement in English Language in Calabar metropolis. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that parents should inculcate the habit of reading in their children right from childhood because, as they grow up, it will also become part of their lives. In addition, parents should not give up on their children but should realize that their children can still develop good self-image and the right attitude towards their educational pursuits.

Keywords: attitude, academic achievement, English language

1. Introduction

Students' academic achievement in English Language has remained poor and even on the decline in Nigerian schools. Government, parents and school administrators to their dismay have seen that the output of education system cannot equate the huge investment made on it. Considerable efforts have been directed to identify the factors associated with this poor academic achievement among English Language students, but not much has been achieved. For instance, the government of Cross River State has provided textbooks for students in all subjects, after school lessons for students and holiday classes for SSS one to SSS 3 students in order to prepare them for both internal and external examinations, built new schools to decongest classes, organised re-training programmes for practicing English teachers across the state to enhance pedagogical competence through seminars and conferences; all these to enhance students' academic performances especially in English language. Also researches have been conducted on parental background, study habits, teachers' variable and motivation, among others to no avail. What then is responsible for students' poor academic achievement in English Language?

Research has identified various factors as influencing language learning, perhaps the most important of these factors is the question of attitude on that of the learner; attitudes are positive or negative feelings that an individual holds about objects or ideas. In their submission, King (2008) [8] and Adebisi (2010) [2] posited that attitudes are generally regarded as enduring, though modifiable by experience, and or

persuasion; and are also learnt rather than innate. To them, achievement of any learner is depended on his/her attitude towards the learning materials. This is based on the general belief that a positive attitude more often than not lead to successful learning. Adebisi (2013) [2] identified intellectual capacity and an appropriate attitudinal orientation as an underlying factor to the development of skill in learning a second language. Just as having positive attitude towards tests is also claimed to be one of the reasons which make students perform better on the tests (Malallah, 2000) [10] so is the relationship between positive attitude and better performance in English Language (Coleman, Strafield, & Hagan, 2003) [5]. In the view of Adeosun (2010) [3], in a typical language-learning situation, there are a number of people whose attitude to each other can be significant; the learner, the teacher, the learner's peers and parents and the speakers of the language. Each relationship has shown to be a factor controlling the learner's motivation to acquire the language.

In a study by Fakeye (2011) [6] on students' personal variables as correlates of academic achievement in English as a Second Language in Nigeria, which was designed to find out the relationship between students' personal variables such as attitude and academic ability and their achievement in English Language: Four Research Questions were generated for the Study in Lagos State. The instruments used were Questionnaire on Students' Attitude to English (QSAE) and Students' Academic Ability Test (SAAT), four hundred 400 senior Secondary II (SSII) Students randomly selected from five (5) secondary schools were involved in the study. A

correlational Analysis was run on the variables and their annual scores in English and t-test calculated. The result of the study showed that there was a positive relationship between Students' Attitude and their academic achievement in English Language.

In another study, Onyiloye and Babatunji (2011) [9] investigated technical college students' achievement in speech works in English Language. It was found that though English Language occupies a unique position in all facets of life of an average Nigerian, Technical college students seem not to show interest in the study of speech work in English Language. This attitude seems to have affected their performances at both written examination and the use of English Language orally and for specific purposes. The population of the study was all the six Technical Colleges in Ekiti State, with a sample size of ninety students selected randomly from three Technical colleges in Ekiti State. The students were taught with instructional packages in segmental and supra-segmental features of English Language after which an achievement test was administered on the subjects. Chi-square statistics was used for analysis. The findings of the study revealed that, female students develop positive attitude than male students to the acquisition of speech work by willing to imitate native speakers' model.

Sa'ad and Usman (2014) [11] in a related study of causes of poor performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School Students in Dutse Metropolis of Jigawa State, Nigeria, using a sample of 379,(300 students, 79 teachers). The descriptive survey design was used and questionnaire as instrument for data. Frequency and simple percentage were used in the analysis of data. 72 respondents representing 19% prefer speaking English Language than their mother tongue and other local Languages while in school, but 307 representing 81% prefer speaking their mother-tongue and other local languages than English Language. The findings of the study led to the conclusion that negative attitudes of students toward English Language, the dominance of mother tongue, inadequate qualified teachers of English Language, improper use of method in teaching English Language, inadequate instructional media and facilities, lack of language laboratory for teaching English Language were the causes of poor performance in English Language among secondary school students of Dutse metropolis of Jigawa state.

Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi and Alzwari (2012) [1] in a similar study investigated Libyan secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English in terms of the behavioural, cognitive and emotional aspects. A total of 180 participants in

the three study years from three specializations of Basic Sciences, Life Sciences, and Social Sciences took a questionnaire as a measuring instrument. Regarding the three aspects of attitude i.e., cognitive, behavioural, and emotional, the participants showed negative attitudes towards learning English. The respondents' obvious negative attitude towards English may lead to conclude that they are not aware of the importance of English and learn it as a compulsory subject. From the review it is summarized that attitude is considered as an essential component in language learning.

2. Purpose of the study

This study was set to examine students' attitude toward English language and academic achievement in English Language in senior secondary school in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria

3. Statement of the hypothesis

Students' attitude towards English Language has no significant influence on their academic achievement in English Language.

4. Methodology

This study adopted survey design. The population of this study comprised all the second year students in Senior Secondary School (SSS II) in the 22 public secondary schools in Calabar Metropolis totaling 5,020 students (2719 males, 2301 females). Out of that number, a sample of 660 students was drawn constituting 20% of the population through the stratified Random Sampling. The stratification was based on gender. This was to ensure that both male and female students were adequately represented in the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select schools for the study on the basis of the most populated schools. Consequently, 12 most populated secondary schools were selected and used for the study. This is shown in Tables 1 & 2.

Two instruments were used for data collection and analysis. A validated researcher-made Questionnaire titled, "Student Attitude Rating Scale" (SARS) and an achievement test, titled "English Language Students' Achievement Test" (ELAT) were designed for data collection. To establish the reliability estimate of the instruments used for this study, the split-half and the Kuder-Richardson (KR-20) methods were adopted with a reliability index of 0.80; while KR-20 and .87 respectively. The data for this study was collected and analysed using Independent t-test. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Distribution of students in senior secondary schools two (SS II) by sex and Local Government areas in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State

S/N	LGA	No. of Schools	Male	female	Total Population of Students
1	Calabar Municipality	15	1721	1417	3,138
2.	Calabar South	7	998	884	1,882
	Total	22	2719	2301	5,020

Source: Cross River State Secondary Education Planning, Research and Statistics unit. (2014)

Table 2: Sample distribution of students in selected schools on gender

Sample schools	Local Government Area Population	Male	Female	Sample	
A	Calabar South	270	36	18	54
B	Calabar South	360	38	34	72
C	Calabar South	290	23	35	58
D	Calabar South	264	29	24	53
E	Calabar South	309	36	25	61
F	Calabar South	239	28	21	49
G	Calabar Municipality	225	23	22	45
H	Calabar Municipality	236	29	18	47
I	Calabar Municipality	231	25	21	46
J	Calabar Municipality	295	31	28	59
K	Calabar Municipality	339	35	32	67
L	Calabar Municipality	245	18	31	49
Total		3303	351	309	660

Source: Cross River State Secondary Education Planning, Research and Statistics Unit. (2014)

5. Presentation of Result

Ho: Students’ attitude towards English Language has no significant influence on their academic achievement in English Language.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is students’ attitude while the dependent variable is academic achievement in English Language. The students’ attitude was categorized into positive and negative attitude. So the hypothesis was tested to verify the influence of students’ attitude on their academic achievement in English Language. The independent t-test was employed to test for significance. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Result of independent t-test analysis of the influence of attitude towards English Language on academic achievement in English Language.

Dependent Variable	Attitude	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal
Academic achievement	Positive attitude	468	13.02	4.02	638	3.54*
	Negative attitude	172	11.92	4.10		

N=640, P <.05, significant*, critical t-value=1.96

The result on table 11 shows the English academic achievement mean scores and standard deviations for the two categories of respondents for attitude towards English Language. The mean score for students with positive attitude was greater than the mean score for students with negative attitude (13.02>11.92). This produced calculated t-value of 3.54 which is higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 significance level with 638 degree of freedom. This implies that students’ attitude towards English Language has a significant influence on academic achievement in English Language. In other words, students with positive attitude performed better than students with negative attitude. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate was upheld.

6. Discussion of findings

The hypothesis stated that students’ attitude towards English Language has no significant influence on students’ academic achievement. The mean score of achievement in English for students with positive attitude was greater than the mean score for students with negative attitude (13.20>11.92). This produced a calculated t-value of 3.54 which was higher than

the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 significance level with 638 degree of freedom. This implied students’ attitude towards English Language has a significant influence on academic achievement in English Language. In other words, students with positive attitude performed better than students with negative attitude.

The findings of this study on the influence of students’ attitude towards academic achievement in English Language agreed with the findings of Onyiloye and Babatunji (2011) [9], Abidin, Pour-Muhammad and Alzwari (2012) [11] Fakeye (2011) [6] whose studies showed a positive relationship between Students’ Attitude and their academic achievement in English Language. The findings of this study are also in agreement with that of Sa’ad and Usman (2014) [11] in their study, the causes of poor performances in English Language among senior secondary school students in Dutse Metropolis of Jigawa State. They found out that negative attitude of students toward English Language correlates with poor performance.

The result is not surprising. People gravitate naturally towards what they like. Students for whatever reason who like English Language will develop more interest in learning it. Such students are likely to engage in activities such as reading and essay writing in their leisure hours, such interest driven activities will result in some academic gains. They will develop a larger vocabulary, be acquainted with varieties in writing styles. They are likely to devote time and energy to a subject to which they have positive disposition. Of course, the reverse would be the case with those who are not interested in English, who dislike the subject or the teachers. They may not be able to convert their apathy to increased effort; rather they would be nonchalant in the study of the subject. With such attitudes, their performances would plummet rather than improve. It therefore behooves on the students to develop a positive attitude towards a subject like the English Language by developing love for reading and writing because these major skills will help enhance their performances in the subject. A credit pass in English Language is a prerequisite for admission into any tertiary institution and this should engender in the students to develop positive attitude towards learning the subject in order to attain high academic achievement in the subject.

7. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that students' attitude to study is important to their achievement in English language.

8. Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation is made:

The English Language teachers should evolve effective teaching and learning strategies for English Language to develop students' positive attitude to the subject. The teachers should treat and handle the students equally, giving room for individual differences. Teachers should learn to appreciate the students' peculiar problems and help them especially as regards their study patterns.

9. References

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