

Factors Militating against High Academic Performance of Students in English Language in Some Secondary Schools in Ife Central Local Government

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Abstract

Students especially those studying English Language in most Schools fail in this subject area due to some reasons. Such reasons include the attitudes of their parents, teachers, students themselves, the people in the society and the government at times. While the learning failure rate is disturbing, it brings about serious concern to most parents and education state holders. Apart from academic disturbance which students that fail the subject face in terms of progress to higher institutions, incompetency in English language undoubtedly affect the expressions of students in this official language in their endeavours. The study therefore examined the role of parents, education stake holders and students toward the poor attitude of students in this language with the hope that recommendations towards solving the problems of academic laxity will be proffered.

INTRODUCTION

It is not doubtful that students fail English language seriously at both their internal and external examinations in schools. Reports of the West African Examinations and National Council of Examinations testify to this claim of academic failures yearly. The table below shows failure rate in selected Schools as in case study.

The roles of the society, values and customs also affect the learning of English. Attention has been shifted from academic to acquisition of money through decisions means. Society did not value education again. People wanted to take a short cut to success. Education is of no value to some section of the society. Even there are society that frown on western education, to Islamic education. The academic status of parents also determines the level of students' performance in the school as far as English language is concern. Parents who are rich are able to give the best to their children, while parents of poor economic status could not afford to give his children 3 square meals in a day, talkless of providing essential amenities for their children education. This makes it difficult for children to cross the vision of poverty in future. The society also frown at the teaching and learning of English every where. The aforementioned point when discussed with performances of students in three secondary schools in Ife Central for the past three years in WASSCE and NECO shows that students that passed English are scanty. The schools we are going to use are:

The table shows the performance of students in English in WASSCE and NECO from 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011.

Table 1: Academic performance of English Language Students in selected Schools

School A	School	No of Students	Year	Grade		Credit	7xE8	F9	Remark'
	Oduduwa College	400	2008-2009	A1,	B2	N12	40	338	3
	"	350	2003-210	-	-	10	36	+310	
	"	380	2010-211	-	-	10	40	330	
School	Urban Day Grammar School	280	2008-2009	-	-	20	60	200	
	"	290	2009-2010	-	-	30	60	200	
	"	300	2010-2011	-	-	50	50	200	

With reference to the table above we are able to know that students could not have A1 or B2 in all the schools. At Credit level Oduduwa I had 12, 10, 10 credits passes no of children in 2008-2009, 2009-20 to 2010-2011, 40.30.40 children have passes while 338, and 330 failed.

In school B Urban Day Grammar School, no excellent but 20 30, and 58, students have credit passes for three years while passes are 60,60,50 children while 200,200 and 200 students had failed.

In the third school which is Oluorogbo High School out of 400, 350, 360 students that sat for the Examination 30, 30, 30 have credit passes, 70, 70, 100 have E7 and D8, while 300, 350, and 240 failed totally. Most of the problems affecting the failures of these students ranged from poor background, lack of text books.

Students' position – some students do not have adequate textbooks, in English language to study in the class. It has been argued that students in various secondary schools do not have adequate preparation towards the study of English language, in the sense that English language itself is a second language to learners in African countries like Nigeria. So, to assimilate English language like the Native speaker is an up hill task, since they could not be compared with the native speakers in the areas of pronunciation, and social communication. With this, many students find it difficult to cope in English, due to inability as a Yoruba student to learn the structure and rudiment of English. The study of English is supposed to commence from elementary schools. Thus most cannot afford to send their children to run the foundation is poor. Some of the students' brain could not cope with English vis a vis other indigenous language. Apart from this the lukewarm attitude of students to read. Novels that could improve their standard of English often affect them, since attention has been shifted from reading culture to other things like browsing through computers and other unproductive materials in the computer sectors. Most of the students do not have adequate preparations, at the virtual stages that will help them to know the rudiment of English. In addition students were not encouraged through incentive, like news and reading clubs, literary and debating society, readers club, and drama and journalism press clubs in the school. It is the duty of the school to organize various committees like readers clubs, literary and debating society, press club to mention a few that could benefit the students.

Teachers play their own role in the problems affecting students' performance in English language in secondary schools. Most of the teachers selected to teach English in secondary school are not capable; they do not have recognized certificates that qualify them to teach English. English teachers are scarce in secondary schools. With these you see graduates of history teaching English and vis versa.

Apart from these those qualified to teach English I mean those with B.A/B.Ed in English could not teach certain aspect of it very well. Personal investigation to the teaching and learning of English language in some Secondary Schools in Ile – Ife and its environment revealed that:- hardly could you see teachers teaching composition and letter writing at least twice in a term to students. Statistics have shown that most of English teachers could not give essays and letters to students, talk less of marking them. There are no textbooks for schools, no good curriculum, no recommended texts on English language. This is a serious situation. Most of English teachers could not teach summary and comprehension to students in the school. They only concentrate on lexis and structure which is 20% of the total mark. They could not teach oral English successfully, since they could not teach and pronounce words correctly like the native speakers. There are no language laboratories for teachers to practice with students.

The role of government also affect the performances of students in English language in secondary schools the government do not have a strict policy on education, and curriculum on English language. Frequent change of government do not give room to continuity in education policy, hence it affects English language teaching as a subject. These government lacks adequate personnel as human resources manager to manage language teaching and acquisitions in both federal and state ministries of education.

The lack of appropriate books, to be provided by the government is another factor. There are no good books, since authors always lobbied their ways for their books to be selected, not minding whether they are of good quality or not. The government needs to provide English teachers, to teach English.

Teaching itself has no incentive and people are running away from teaching, they prefer, lucrative courses like medicine to teaching talkless of studying English at the university. The government needs to give incentive and reward teachers adequately. If both the Federal and State government refuse to provide incentive to teachers it will reach a stage when there will be no teachers to teach English in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Parents also played some role in the problem of students' failure in English language in secondary schools. Some parents could not give their children adequate and necessary materials needed including textbooks on English language. Parents do not take the education of their children seriously. They could not provide a single exercise book for their children. They believed that everything is free, and it is the duty of the government to even provide textbooks, WASSCE fees, NECO fees and coaching classes for their children. They are not ready to contribute anything to the education of their children. A student that does not have money for food; books, school uniforms, and other things may not be able to learn effectively in the school.

The economic status of parents also affect the performance of students in English. In a home where parents are stark illiterates may find it difficult to assimilate English very well since his parents communicate with him in Yoruba and other indigenous languages. Children from broken homes may find English language difficult to learn, since there is no body to pilot him to study very well. The level of communication in indigenous language also affects the students. Parents who have separated could not allow their children to study very well since there is nobody to take up the responsibilities of their children education. Parents of poverty stricken homes may find it difficult to encourage their children to learn, while parents of good education background will take the education of their children as paramount. The economic status of parents also affects

the children. It is easy for parents of good economic background, to teach their children, with exterior lessons at home, than children whose parents have poor economic status.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Government, Society, Parent, Teachers, and students should play their roles as expected and highlighted above.

-The Government should play his role by providing textbooks on English language to students. Good and qualified seasoned teachers should be employed to teach English language. Education should be made compulsory by the federal government from primary to Universities level. Some states governor have been paying students WASSCE fees which is a good development so as to allow children of poor people to have access to education.

-Parents should provide essential materials like textbooks on English language to their children. Good uniform, sandals, money and pocket money for feeding should be made available for children going to schools. Teachers should be alive with their roles as teachers of English to each English aspect very well.

-Teachers in various secondary schools should place more emphasis on letters and essays, summary and comprehension which carry high marks in public WASSCE and NECO Examination. Teachers who graduate in English should be allowed to teach English in secondary schools. Teachers should encourage literary and debating societies, teachers club, press club, journal club. Teachers should give students one essay or letter every week and mark them accurately. Teachers of English should be allowed to mark WASSCE and NECO life questions to as to give them knowledge on how to teach English in the school. Teacher should make use of marking guide on English language as a way of guiding him to teach students in the class. Teacher should encourage the constant use of dictionary by students at all times. Language laboratory should be established in each school and allow students to the practicing word pronunciation accurately on the issue of oral English.

-Teacher should take the teaching of English seriously serious and not use laissez faire attitude in teaching. Other Bodies and societies like Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A) should see to the welfare of students and effective teaching of English language in the school. The P.T.A could organize for P.T.A teachers if there are not enough teachers in the school. Since English language is the life wire of all courses. It has to be taken seriously at all times. The idea of using other teachers who do not specialize in English should be discouraged always.

-Parents should endeavour to speak English with their children in the home at all times. This will improve their standard of spoken English, social economic status of parents, environmental factors, political problems changing in orientation and culture of societies towards reading. If all these could be taken care off, performances of students in English will improve drastically in public examinations.

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