

ENHANCING LANGUAGE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES AND EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION THROUGH MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

A Book in Honour of
Professor Joseph Abiodun Adegbile



Edited By:

Babatunde Adeniyi ADEYEMI
Oluwole Folaranmi ALABI
Felicia Mayokun ODUNTAN

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**A BOOK IN HONOUR OF
PROFESSOR JOSEPH ABIODUN ADEGBILE**

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

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**Babatunde Adeniyi ADEYEMI
Oluwole Folaranmi ALABI
Felicia Mayokun ODUNTAN**

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ATTITUDE AS PREDICTORS OF ACHIEVEMENT IN HISTORY IN IBADANLAND, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The generally poor performance of students in History in public examinations has become a matter of concern to many stakeholders in education. The study investigated students' language proficiency and attitude as predictors of achievement in History in Ibadan, Oyo State. The study adopted ex-post facto design of survey research type. Multi stage sampling procedure was employed to select four local government areas in Ibadanland, 12 schools and 360 SS II History students. Three research questions and two validated instruments, namely: Students' English Language Proficiency and Attitude Scale ($r = 0.78$) and History Achievement Test ($r = 0.75$) guided the study. The data obtained were analysed using correlation and multiple regression at 0.05 level of significance. Results revealed that significant relationship existed between English Language Proficiency and achievement in History, $r = (0.33)$, 0.000, $P < .05$. Besides, positive relationship existed between attitude and students' achievement in History, $r = (0.178)$, 0.000, $P < .05$. The variables jointly explained 13% of the variance observed in students' achievement in History. The entire independent variables considered contributed significant difference to students' achievement in History. These are English language proficiency ($\beta = -0.249$; $t = 4.459$; $p < 0.05$) and attitude ($\beta = 0.181$; $t = 2.520$; $p < 0.05$) contribute significantly to the prediction of students' achievement in History. Students should be fully engaged and be more proactive in participating in classroom activities to improve their proficiency in English language, which will in turn broaden their knowledge in History.

Keywords: English language proficiency, Attitude, Achievement in History

Introduction

One of the main determinants of educational progress and also of opening doors to work possibility is English language competency. Reading and writing help one to be most proficient. English non-native speakers must practise the sounds of English how they are stressed or accented in their use. The one most crucial aspect of linguistic competency is vocabulary knowledge. Apart from the mother tongue or language of the surroundings used to enhance teaching, English is the main language of instruction and is as vital as the key subjects in the curriculum developed. Companies in the current global market need individuals with worldwide experience as well as strong credentials, approved and acknowledged in the field of business.

Proficiency in spoken and written English is considered essential for achieving academic success. English is widely recognised as the global lingua franca. Widely embraced as the official means of communication, English is the gateway to the world. Though there is a difference between the two, mastery corresponds with fluency. As it is also possible to be

very proficient without being fluent, one might be fluent without being quite proficient. When it comes to acquiring a second language, fluency is determined by several key factors, including the language's prosody, pronunciation, and the amount of time spent engaging in dialogue. Fluency in a language cannot be achieved without engaging in discussion with a skilled speaker of that language (Bright, 2014).

Students should be able to speak and write English correctly and easily. It means being able to speak or write the language with enough structural accuracy and vocabulary to be able to participate smoothly and effectively in most formal and informal conversations about everyday life, social interactions, and classroom interactions. A student who improves her English will be able to study at a high level in an English-speaking environment, understand and use almost everything she hears or reads, summarise information from a variety of spoken and written sources, and speak or write freely, with confidence, and correctly. English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) researchers have been asked if they can predict how well kids will do in school just by looking at how well they speak English (Neumann, Padden, and McDonough, 2019). While previous studies have mostly focused on the correlation between English proficiency and academic performance among overseas students (e.g., Geide-Stevenson, 2018; Hasan & Akhand, 2014), there is a growing interest in this topic. Apart from that, the main study setting for English-speaking nations has usually been chosen (e.g. Cloate, 2016; Neumann Padden and McDonough, 2019). This calls for the level of domestication of research on the extent to which English language competency can forecast historical performance of students.

For students not just in their academics but also in their future professions, English language competency is crucial for their success. Educators, curriculum designers, and people who make educational policies can learn a lot from studies that look into whether there are significant relationships between these two factors or predictive roles that one plays on the other. Recommended to be able to predict things as well as speak English well (Bayliss and Raymond, 2004; Sothan, 2019). Neumann et al. (2019) also said that students' scores are based on how well they can use English, which is especially true now that English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) is used in many schools. The use of English in reading and writing by first-year college students was found to be strongly related to their grades (Alharbi and Yakout, 2018).

Maximising performance in school disciplines depends on good English communication; so, language competency is absolutely necessary to combine knowledge (Li, Li and Fleisher, 2015). Further aggravating these difficulties and making it harder for students to grasp teachers in class include inability to understand English resulting from various accents, speaking pace, and clarity. Notes, class discussions, or writing projects could also prove challenging. Teachers' local jokes, idioms, and slangs help to heighten these linguistic boundaries even more (Brutt-Griffler, Nurunnabi and Kim, 2020).

Common to all of Nigeria, English is a language that helps one to communicate with people all around the globe. Prior to admission into higher education, proficiency in the English language is a crucial prerequisite that must be taught and successfully completed at a credit level by students in both junior and senior secondary schools. English language is a

linguistic instrument that binds all the 140 million people as of year 2011, with over 400 indigenous and mutually unintelligible languages combined in Nigeria, according to Bamgbose reported in Adepoju and Oluchukwu (2011). English is also used in all of the national publications, on television and radio news and announcements, in the mass media. English language helps people and business partners to interact in the local and global corporate environments. This supports national and personal wealth as well as assists to propel economic progress (Danladi, 2013).

Besides, the English language helps people to express ideas, values, thoughts, opinion, and emotions. Being a major language worldwide, those who speak and grasp English grammar will value one another more and their friendship will grow. At last, the performance of our national educational system depends fully on the usage of decent English. Policy makers at both the federal and state levels must create some way of maintaining successful teaching of English language if they are to reach these goals for efficient instruction and acquisition of the language.

Likewise, Awonusi (2004) said that although the English language has more influence than any of the three major Nigerian languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo), the three languages are equivalent in such areas as to influence speaker's distribution, communication domains and overall function. With the three main languages on the lower pedestal, English language has become the most dominant language used in Nigeria, the author further observed. The author clarified that English has become hegemonic since it dominates the three main Nigerian languages by means of its official, instrumental, and integrative purposes.

Generally speaking, English language's purposes in Nigerian society—especially as the language of education—are rather crucial. The reality is that failing in English is exactly what failing in school means. The *lingua franca* for the nation is English now. Furthermore, indicated by literature is the strong presence of English in Nigeria. Government records, officially recorded federal and state, are thus written in English language implicitly. Effective teaching and learning in English help to raise students' academic achievement.

English is quite important; hence it has a significant place in our syllabus. Bright (2014) notes that “English plays a uniting role in Nigeria since it is the only language common to Nigeria from diverse linguistic, social, cultural, religious, and geographical backgrounds.” This is in line with the recognised truth that our main, post-secondary and tertiary institutions teach English. English hence acts as a doorway to formal education since practically all the disciplines are taught in the English language. According to Akinjobi (2013), English should be taught and learnt in the classroom since it is absolutely essential for modern life and attitude in the society since a person lacking proficiency in the language will not be able to interact properly among co-workers.

Attitude is a mix of emotions and concepts that lead to a predisposition to react positively towards people, groups, ideas, or objects. People learn attitudes unknowingly when they go through daily interaction. Alao (2011) pointed out that three interrelated elements define attitude as a human expression: belief, feelings, and behaviour. While most studies indicated that attitude and academic performance showed a positive correlation, some researchers

contend that students' attitude might not be a major determinant of their academic performance. According to Dewaele (2013), the socio-economic background in particular determines whether attitude could greatly influence one's academic performance depending on several factors.

Attitude shows up in a person when they develop an opinion on the attitude object. One learns attitude by interacting with related field of study over time. Instruction and hence attitude development help one to acquire knowledge about the topic area. Furthermore, if someone is favourably inclined towards a learning package, that favourable inclination should translate into appropriate behaviour with significant learning results. Attitude consists in cognitive, emotional, and behavioural elements. The cognitive component relates to the concepts or points of view expressing the link between circumstances and attitudinal objects. The emotional relates to the emotions and sentiments accompanying the encounter; the behavioural component relates to the inclination and preparedness for action. According to Hamilton (2003), attitude is an individual reaction to a predisposition against any phenomenon or particular object around him that can either be good or bad. This supports with Fasasi's (2012) definition of attitude as the essentially constant response a person has to people, objects, events, and issues.

Moreover, Marcela and Mala (2016) define attitude in relation to reading comprehension as a rather stable tendency to respond either positively or negatively to specific reading tasks. Students' attitudes towards reading range from enthusiasm to avoidance. The former is favourable; the latter is unfavourable. According to Maria de Lourdes, Mata et al. (2012), "a child's attitude towards reading has a significant impact on their motivation to read, their learning style, their progress, and their overall reading ability." The students' disposition towards reading occasionally directs their behaviour and impacts their level of engagement in educational endeavours, as well as their objectives in the pursuit of knowledge. According to the research conducted by Maria de Lourdes, Mata et al. in 2005, a child's positive attitude is the fundamental basis for their reading development. Several factors influence students' attitude towards a topic, including the level of difficulty of the learning activity, their vocational inclination or choice, the instructional approach (teaching technique), the learning environment, and other related factors. The learning results in the field of biology practical class could either be favourable or bad depending on the instructional technique used there (Oke, 2008).

Though earlier research has indicated that both attitude and linguistic ability are linked to higher performance in various fields outside of senior secondary education, there are still gaps. Research from past years show no appreciable correlation between study attitude and learning results (Sarwar, 2010). Given the existence of gaps in past research, this becomes essential to hence, look at English language competency and attitude as predictors of achievement in senior secondary school History in Ibadan, Oyo state.

Among the main issues affecting educational stakeholders is inadequate performance on public tests. Teachers get annoyed, perplexed, and dissatisfied when pupils neglect to pursue their potentials or raise their academic performance. Senior high school history teachers are not spared from these difficulties since academic performance of pupils in history follows a

declining trend. Therefore, research on raising historical performance of pupils is absolutely essential. Furthermore, unresolved among researchers is agreement on how these factors affect historical achievement. This suggests that the topic of verbal ability and attitude should be investigated among potential elements influencing the lower trend in student accomplishment in History. Although past studies have shown that students' psychological elements, parental socioeconomic and educational background can influence their performance, it seems only few studies have tried to investigate the impact of English language proficiency and attitude on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in History. Therefore, the researcher looked at English language proficiency and attitude as indicators of success in History in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

1. What is the direction and strength of the relationship among English language proficiency, attitude and students' achievement in History in public senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State?
2. To what extent will English language proficiency and attitude predict students' achievement in History in public senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State?
3. What are the relative contributions of English language proficiency and attitude to the prediction of students' achievement in History in public senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State?

Significance of the study

The study examined the relationship between English language competency, attitude, and academic accomplishment in History among senior secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo state. Hence, the study's results will enhance the current body of knowledge on English language competency, attitude towards History, and students' performance in History. The findings will enhance the educational stakeholders' comprehension of the beneficial impact of English language ability on performance in History. Furthermore, the data will offer additional insights into existing and future instructional methodologies in public senior secondary schools. This study aims to enhance History instructors' comprehension of the impact of English language competency and positive attitude on academic performance in the subject. The findings of this study will assist parents in determining the correlation between English language proficiency, attitude, and pupils' performance in History.

Methodology

The study adopted ex-post facto design of survey research type. The target population of this study comprised SS II History students in Oyo State. This is because they are in the best position to provide information on the variables of interest in this study, since they have covered a substantial volume of History curriculum contents. Multistage sampling procedure was employed in the selection of the sample for the study as follows: purposive sampling technique was adopted to select four Local Government Areas, (two from city and two from less-city) in Ibadan, Oyo State. Ibadan North, North East, Egbeda and Akinyele Local Government Areas were thus selected. In each of the selected LGAs three public senior secondary schools were selected using simple random sampling technique. Also, simple random sampling technique was used to select 30 SS II History students from each school

making 90 SS II students from each LGA. In all, a total of Four LGAs, 12 senior secondary schools and 360 SS II History students participated in the study. Two validated instruments, namely: Students' English Language Proficiency and Attitude Scale ($r = 0.78$) and History Test ($r = 0.75$). The data collected was examined using correlation and multiple regression techniques.

Results and Discussion

Results and discussion of the study are as follows:

Research Question One: What is the direction and strength of the relationship among English language proficiency, attitude and students' achievement in History in schools in Ibadan, Oyo State?

Table 1: Correlation among English Language Proficiency, Attitude and Students' Achievement in History.

Variables	English language proficiency	Attitude	Students Achievement in history
English language proficiency	1		
Attitude	.244**	1	
Students Achievement in History	.333**	.178**	1

Significant @ $p < 0.05$.

Decision is taken based on Evans (1996)'s suggestion for the absolute value r which is 0.00-0.19 "very weak positive", 0.20-0.39 "weak positive", 0.40-0.59 "moderate positive", 0.60-0.79 "strong positive" and 0.80-1.0 "very strong positive" and level of significance is less than 0.05. Based on this decision, the results in Table 1 indicate that there is significant correlation among English language proficiency, attitude and students' achievement in History. For instance, relationship exist between English language proficiency and achievement in History, $r = (0.333)$, 0.000, $P < .05$. Besides, positive relationship exists between attitude and students' achievement in History, $r = (0.178)$, 0.000, $P < .05$. This reveals that there is significant relationship among English language proficiency, attitude and students' achievement in History. The result implies that English language proficiency and attitude are the major determinants of students' achievement in History in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Research Question Two: To what extent will English language proficiency and attitude predict students' achievement in History in schools in Ibadan, Oyo State?

Table 2: Regression Summary and ANOVA of English Language Proficiency and Attitude to Students' Achievement in History.

Multiple R = .377

R Square = .142

Adjusted R Square = .133

Standard Error = 6.003

Analysis of Variance					
Source of Variance	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2107.76	2	526.94		
Residual	12685.10	.354	36.04	14.62	.000
Total	14792.86	.356			

Significant @ $p < .05$.

Table 2 shows joint contribution between the dependent variable (students' achievement in History) ($F(2, 354) = 14.62$; $Adj R^2 = 0.134$; $p < 0.05$) and the independent variables English language proficiency and attitude. This suggests that together, English language competency and attitude help pupils to achieve in History. Table 2 shows a multiple association $R = .377$, meaning that among the variable and the adjusted $R^2 = 0.134$, 37.7% or 38% relationship exist. This shows that while the remaining 87% may be attributed to other factors and residuals not taken into account in the study model, independent variables—English language proficiency and attitude—accounted for 13.3% or by approximation 13% of the total prediction in students' achievement in History. The result suggests that in the prediction of students' historical performance, attitude and English language competency cooperate.

Research Question Three: What are the relative contributions of English language proficiency and attitude to the prediction of students' achievement in History in schools in Ibadan, Oyo State?

Table 3: Relative Contributions of English Language Proficiency and Attitude to Students' Achievement in History.

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	31.439	2.061		15.252	.000
English language proficiency	.201	.045	.249	4.459	.000
Attitude	.116	.046	.181	2.520	.012

Significant @ $p < .05$.

Table 3 shows that English language proficiency and attitude to students' achievement in History had notable relative contributions since English language proficiency ($\beta = -0.249$; $t = 4.459$; $p < 0.05$) and attitude ($\beta = 0.181$; $t = 2.520$; $p < 0.05$). The value of the standardised regression weight connected with the two variables reveals that English language competency is the strong predictor of students' accomplishment in History, followed by

attitude respectively. This suggests that students' historical performance may be predicted in English language proficiency and attitude taken into account in this study.

Discussion of Findings

The study demonstrates a notable correlation between skill in the English language and academic success in the field of History. The finding aligns with the views of authors and scholars, such as Chandra (2015), who argued that English is as vital to the main disciplines in the curriculum. In today's global economy, employers seek individuals with foreign experience and degrees that are universally accepted and respected. Proficiency in spoken and written English is considered the main need for achieving good academic success. Similarly, the discovery corroborates Bright's (2014) claim that achieving fluency is unattainable without actively participating in conversations with a proficient speaker of the language.

This study further supports the assertions made by Bayliss and Raymond (2004) and Sothan (2019) that English proficiency is crucial for students' academic success and future professional endeavours. Therefore, investigating important relationships between these two elements or their predictive functions could give teachers, curriculum designers, and educational authorities very important new perspectives. Undoubtedly, a student's academic development can be affected by several elements including mental health, social support, and socioeconomic level. Still, among these factors, foreign language proficiency has also been suggested as having the capacity to forecast academic performance. Moreover, this study corresponds with Neumann et al's (2019) study that underlined the relationship between course grades and students' English language competence. The broad use of English as the language of instruction by academic institutions all around makes this link especially important.

The results that indicate a significant link between English language proficiency and students' performance in History are consistent with the perspectives of Alharbi and Yakout (2018), who contended that students' grades displayed a noteworthy connection with the use of English in reading and writing throughout their undergraduate studies. According to Brutt-Griffler, Nurunnabi, and Kim (2020), English proficiency plays a significant role in predicting students' academic success. They argue that being able to communicate effectively in English is vital for achieving high performance in various school subjects. Additionally, they emphasise that language competence is crucial for effectively integrating knowledge. Brutt-Griffler, Nurunnabi, and Kim (2020) support the findings of Li, Li, and Fleisher (2015) that the difficulty in understanding English in class is intensified by variations in accents, speaking pace, and clarity. This makes it challenging for students to comprehend their lecturers. Engaging in note-taking, actively participating in class discussions, or completing writing projects may also provide challenges. The utilisation of slang, idioms, and local jokes by teachers might exacerbate these linguistic difficulties.

The correlation analysis demonstrates a significant association between students' attitude and accomplishment in economics, highlighting the importance of a positive attitude in any pursuit. The findings corroborate the research conducted by Oke (2008), which showed that students' attitudes towards school subjects have a substantial and direct impact on their

academic performance in such subjects. Papanastasiou (2000) suggested that students' perceptions of the importance of learning a particular subject can be seen as both a factor that influences their academic performance and as an outcome of their academic achievements. This is because their attitudes towards the subject can have an impact on their educational success, either by enhancing or hindering their performance. As a result, pupils who excel in a particular subject are more likely to have good attitudes towards that subject, and those who have more positive attitudes towards a subject perform better in that subject. Furthermore, the outcomes of this study support the conclusions of Olaoye (2005), who stated that there is abundant evidence that attitudes greatly influence behaviour. This, in turn, has a major impact on teaching effectiveness and student achievement in academic areas. However, the findings contradict Hamilton's (2003) discovery that attitude has a statistically minimal impact on student learning achievement. Addressing the link between students' attitudes and academic performance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was observed that there is significant relationship among English language proficiency, attitude to History and students' achievement in History. The findings of this research necessitate further investigation into the determinants of students' achievement in History. Therefore, the study submits that when students exhibit positive attitude toward learning History, it will enhance their assimilation of the subject and greatly increase their achievement not only in History but also in all other subjects.

Recommendations

The findings summarised above necessitate recommendations for government, teachers, and school administrators. Therefore, the following recommendations were made.

1. Students should be fully engaged and be more proactive in participating in classroom activities to improve their proficiency in English language, which in turn broaden their knowledge in History.
2. Students should demonstrate positive attitude to History lessons during classroom interactions to optimise learning.
3. Teachers should always encourage students to express their thought in English, to motivate them to participate in the lesson during History classroom interactions.

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