

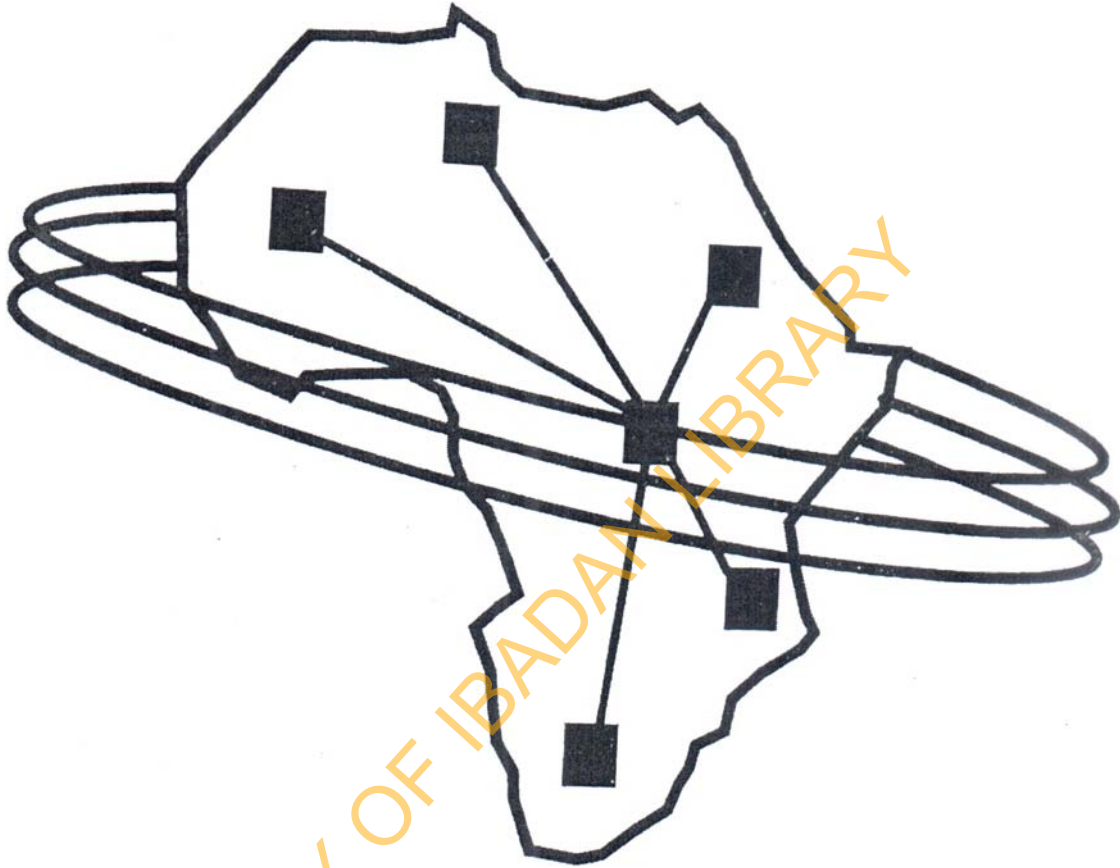


# AFRICAN JOURNAL OF THEORY AND PRACTICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (AJTPER)

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## ENVIRONMENTAL AND PERSONALITY FACTORS AS CORRELATES OF STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN YORUBA LANGUAGE ESSAY WRITING IN OYO STATE.

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### Abstract

*Yoruba language essay writings have attracted the interest of linguists and language educators, as observations reveal that construction of meaningful expression has become a challenge among secondary school students in recent times. Ongoing research attention has consequently been focused on a myriad of factors that could possibly explain students' achievement. This research, therefore, investigated environmental and personality factors as correlates of students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing in Oyo State. The study used survey research type of ex-post facto design; where three hundred (300) students were drawn through a multi-stage sampling procedure, from three educational zones in Oyo State. Three instruments were used to gather information: Environmental Factors Questionnaire ( $r=0.75$ ); Personality Factors Questionnaires ( $r=0.80$ ); and Yoruba Language Essay Writing Achievement Test (YLEWAT) ( $r=0.86$ ). The data obtained were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple regression analysis. Results of the study showed that a relationship exists between environmental variables (physical environment and classroom environment) and students' achievement in essay writing ( $r=0.482$ ,  $p<0.05$ ; and  $r = 0.218$ ,  $p<0.05$ , respectively). Also, all the personality variables were significantly related to achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $r=0.140$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); ( $r=0.136$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); ( $r=0.144$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) for attitude, self-efficacy and gender respectively). Furthermore, all the variables jointly explained 27.3 of the variance observed in students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. And only the environmental variables contributed to the prediction of students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $\beta = 0.433$ ;  $t = 8.172$ ;  $p<0.05$  and  $\beta = 0.123$ ;  $t = 2.300$ ;  $p<0.05$ , respectively for physical and classroom environments). The study recommended, among other things, that School administrators, government and parents should provide an enabling environment for the students to motivate them for learning.*

**Key words:** Environment, Personality-trait, Achievement, Yoruba-Language, Essay

### Introduction

Yoruba essay writing dates back to as far as when Yoruba Language gained its written form in 1842. Today, Yoruba essay writing takes 30 of the overall score for the subjects in the external exams (including the West African Senior School Certificate

Examinations WASSCE). This relatively high expectation partly stems from the aim of achieving, at the end of senior secondary education, students' capability of being involved in effective writing of Yoruba Language. This implies that any flaw in Yoruba essay writing can mar the students' high achievements in the subject as a whole. As such, a great deal of work is needed to improve students' performance in the aspect of the subject. Also, enormous research information needs to be provided as to what variables or factors of relevance to consider obtaining and sustaining the desired achievement levels and goals.

However, a great deal of concern has been expressed about the disappointing nature of students' essay writing in Yoruba Language. The teaching of Yoruba essay writing schools appear to be most inadequate, pointing to a need for improvement Abijo (2009). Chief Examiners Reports of the major examining bodies in Nigeria over the years have it that, it is unfortunate that examination papers in Yoruba essay writing are, with few exceptions, disappointing; the students' attempts do not meet up with the expectations. Despite the different methods used to teach essay writing in Yoruba Language and different variables researched into by researchers, students' performance still remained poor. It appears that the poor performance of students in Yoruba essay writing is not only due to inappropriate methods of teaching essay writing. And so other factors, such as the environmental factors of the school and classroom, plus the students' personality factors, should be researched into, hence the need to assess the schools' environmental and students' personality factors as correlates of students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing in Oyo State.

School environment has become critical in the world over the years. A school environment can be said to be an embodiment of the entire things that surround and interact with students in a school set-up, and which invariably shapes learners' development and achievement. Some of the physical, social and psychological indicators of school environment include school location and size, school type and classroom activities. The school environment, thus, is seen as the overall set of forces that characterizes the mode of operation of the teaching-learning situation in a given school setting. Many educators, such as Lehtinen (1997) and Olatoye (2006) have acknowledged the influence of school factors (or environment) on students' achievement, since learning takes place in an environment.

It implies that the nature of school factors could influence learning. Thus, school factors involve a lot of interactive variables. It relates to school construction and, more particularly, defining a quality, enabling physical environment, measuring it and analyzing the results (OECD, 2006). The concept of physical learning environment, with respect to physical structures, relate to spaces, equipment and tools within the school. Lehtinen, (1997) suggests that the concept has evolved into an even more complex structure that includes teaching equipment; sources of information and events outside of schools, where students can take part in the learning process both directly and virtually. The term evolved as a result of the recent changes taking place in pedagogy, whereby

actual learning has been transposed outside of schools, thanks to developments in communication and information technology. Internet has already brought about significant changes in the school environment. Both the immense quantity of information available and easy access to social networks have strengthened the link between schools and learning, and therefore modified the traditional teacher-student scenario. The learning process is becoming more co-operative, changing the teacher into a learner too.

Contributing to the issue of the school environment, Manninen, (2007) categorizes school environments according to five different contexts: physical, local, social, technological and didactic. The basic structure of teaching spaces does not seem to have evolved much over the past century. This fact inspired the research team to investigate the reason why, despite the recent changes in pedagogy and the widespread use of information technology inside classrooms and school spaces, the physical learning environment has not yet changed in keeping with this evolution. In order to plan and construct effective physical learning environments, not only technical specifications need to be elaborated; qualitative aspects also need to be considered (Nuikkinen, 2009).

Attitudes promote or inhibit student behaviour in the classroom, the home, and among the peer group and ultimately learning and the choice of a career. Furthermore, they are considered to influence choices to attend, respond to value, participate in and make a commitment to educational activities. Olaye (2005) stated that considerable evidence demonstrates that attitudes play an important role in determining behaviour, which is a potent tool for determination of teaching effectiveness and the extent of student learning in school subjects. Moreover, Owolabi (1996) affirmed that a relationship exists between attitude and learning, since both involve experience and behaviour change, and that outcome in learning can be positive or negative, owing to the fact that the basis of determining ideas and forming opinions about a subject matter involves our attitude.

Likewise, Ogunkola, (2002) asserted that the attitude of a learner towards science would determine the measure of the learners' attractiveness or repulsiveness to science. This will invariably influence the learners' choice and even learning outcome in the subject. In that regard, positive attitudes will lead to persistence and better achievement. Awolola, (2009) discovered a non-significant effect of attitudes on students' learning achievement. Osborne, (2001) proved that there existed a positive correlation between students' attitude toward science and achievement. Fasasi (2012), in his study, "improving learners' attitude to science under the Universal Basic Education Program: the effect of ethno science-based instruction" observed a significant main effect of treatment on attitude to science as well as interaction effect of location and treatment on students' attitude to science. Such investigation is imperative in Yoruba language essay writing.

Similarly, Ezeanochie, (2009) noted that attitude is a human expression that is made up of three interrelated components; belief, feelings and behaviour. An attitude manifests in an individual when he/she forms an opinion (belief) about the attitude object.

Attitudes are learned over time by being in contact with the subject area. Information about the subject area is received through instruction and consequently, an attitude is developed. Moreover, if a person is favourably predisposed towards a learning package, that favourable disposition should lead to favourable behaviours like substantial learning achievement. Attitudes have cognitive, affective and behavioural components. The cognitive aspect pertains to the ideas or propositions that express the relation between situations and attitudinal objects. The affective pertains to the emotions and feelings that accompany the encounter, while the behavioural component pertains to the predisposition of readiness for action. Alao (2011) and Sallabas (2008) described attitudes as an individual's responses to any phenomenon, or a certain thing around him, which can either be positive or negative.

This corroborates with Araromi's (1987) definition of attitudes as the more or less stable ways in which a person reacts to people, things, situations and problems. Johnson and Johnson (2001) defined attitude in relation to reading comprehension as a relatively stable tendency to respond in a favourable or unfavourable fashion to a specific reading task. Students' attitudes towards reading range from excitement to avoidance. The former is positive while the latter is negative. Briggs (2002) opines that the students' positive attitude is the foundation upon which his reading growth and development is built. Many factors influence students' attitude to a subject; the difficulty of learning task, the occupational preference/choice, the instructional strategy (teaching method), the learning environment and self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is a construct that was first introduced by Albert Bandura in the year 1977 through a seminar publication of "self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioural change", in his response to behaviourism studies of the 1950's and 1960's. Behaviour theory believes that behaviour, followed by unpleasant consequences, tends not to be repeated, not learned (Abesha, 2012). Self-efficacy has received increasing attention in educational research, primarily in studies of academic, motivation and self-regulation (Kim and Lorschach, 2005). Researchers have focused seriously on three areas, the first area has explored the link between efficacy beliefs and college majors and career choices, particularly in science and mathematics (Lent and Hackett, 1987, cited in Kim and Lorschach, 2005). Self-efficacy in academics pertains to a student's perceived capability to manage his/her learning behaviour, to master academic materials and to fulfil academic expectations (Matsushima and Shiomi, 2003).

Likewise, Pajares and Schunk (2001) described self-efficacy as a person's evaluation of his or her ability or competency to perform a task, reach a goal or overcome a difficulty. This theory further explains that people will avoid situations that they believe are beyond their coping skills, and also hypothesises that a good sense of self-efficacy provides the resilience for creative individuals to persist in pursuing an objective, even after being rejected many times (Pajares and Graham, 1999). Self-efficacy can have different meanings in varying contexts. Thus, when in an academic setting, self-efficacy can be used or measured. Furthermore, it influences how students think, feel, motivate

themselves and act (Steffen, McKibbin, Zeiss, Gallagher-Thompson, and Bandura, 2002).

Self-efficacy, as regarded in academics, is the belief that students have in their ability to perform academic tasks (Pajares and Miller, 1995). Moreover, Zimmerman (1995), cited in Polychroni and Anagnostou (2006), explained it as “personal judgement of one’s capabilities to organize and execute a course of action to attain designated types of educational performances” Polychroni and Anagnostou (2006) explained self-efficacy as an individuals’ conviction that they can successfully perform given academic tasks at designated levels, also seen as the extent to which students believe that they will be able to succeed in school. It has been identified as a positive predictor of academic performance within a diverse number of disciplines (Shumox and Lomax, 2001; Polychroni and Anagnostou, 2006)

Similarly, gender is one of the indices of personality factors in this study. Raghavan (2009) asserted that gender involves the psychological and socio-cultural dimensions of being male or female. Gender is the property that distinguishes organisms on the basis of their reproductive roles as female or male. Gender is the range of physical, biological, mental and behavioural characteristics pertaining to and differentiating between masculine and feminine (Raghvan, 2009). In the same vein, Ewumi (2009) in a study found that male participants achieved higher than the females. He stated that the findings are in line with researchers that have argued that gender differences in social, personality and academic variables may actually be a function orientation. People who learn earlier in life that their sex is not a limitation to education and career choices seldom experience failure when with their counterparts in a test situation. Sahragard, Baharloo and Ali (2011) asserted that there is no significant difference in scores for males and females with regard to their academic achievement.

In addition, Ghazvini and Milad (2011) reported however that, despite the fact that girls showing a more adaptive cognitive-motivational pattern than the boys, the former do not obtain significantly higher marks in the subject of mathematics. In summary, results suggest that differences exist in the cognitive-motivational functioning of boys and girls in the academic achievement. Sahragard, Baharloo and Ali (2001) asserted that there is no significant difference in scores of males and females with regard to their academic achievement, since the magnitude of differences in the average scores for each gender is small. Thus, males and females do not differ in their academic achievement significantly. Furthermore, Adeleke, Abimbade and Folawe (2013) revealed that more males are found to be achieving better in the fields of mathematics than females because of their ability to reason mathematically.

Supporting the earlier discovery, Anagbogu (2002) observed that there is a general belief that boys are superior to girls in terms of cognition and logical reasoning, and even academic performance. Supporting the earlier opinion, Okeke (2003) asserted that factors which affect students’ academic achievement in science subjects include

gender role stereotypes, masculine image and female socialization process, and inability to withstand stress.

The academic achievement of students' generally is the outcome or output of every educational program. This is because it is an indicator of the extent the educational objective has been achieved, and it is measured through examinations and at times continuous assessment tests. Students' academic achievement is also seen as the extent to which a student has achieved his educational goals (Betts, Andrew and Lorien, 2003). To linguists and language educators, the major means by which the students can express their ideas and opinions depends largely on their expertise in writing. And so, academic achievement of students should be measured utilizing students essay writings. However, it has been observed that construction of meaningful expression has become a challenge among secondary school students nowadays and this has influenced many scholars to investigate several factors militating against Yoruba language essay writing among secondary school students. Despite the proliferation of research in Yoruba essay writing, it seems investigation on the influence of environmental and personality factors on students' achievement in Yoruba language essay writing particularly in Oyo state have not received much attention in research context. Therefore, this study investigated environmental and personality factors as correlates of students' achievement in essay writing in Yoruba language in Oyo State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the pattern of strength and direction of relationship among environmental factors (school physical environment and classroom environment), personality factors (attitude, self-efficacy and gender) and students' achievement in essay writing in Oyo State?
2. To what extent will environmental factors (school physical environment and classroom environment), personality factors (attitude, self-efficacy and gender), when taken together, predict students' achievement in essay writing in Oyo State?
3. What is the relative contribution of vocabulary ability and reasoning ability to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing?

### **Methodology**

The study adopted an ex-post facto design of survey research type. The target population for the study comprised all SS2 Yoruba language students in public senior secondary school in Oyo State. Multistage sampling technique was adopted for the study. Three local Government Areas were randomly selected from the six Local Government Areas in Ibadan metropolis. Simple random sampling technique was employed in selecting five public schools from each of the selected L.G.A.s, making a total number of fifteen schools. An intact class was used in each of the selected schools. Two research questions and three instrumentals (namely: Environmental Factors Questionnaire (EFQ), with reliability coefficient of 0.75; Personality Factor Questionnaire (PFQ)  $r = 0.80$ ; and

Yoruba Language Essay Writing Achievement Test (YLEWAT)  $r = 0.86$ ) guided the study. Data collected was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regressions

## Results

**Research Question One:** What is the pattern of strength and direction of relationship among environmental factors (school physical environment and classroom environment), personality factors (attitude, self-efficacy and gender) and students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing in Oyo State?

**Table 4.1: Correlation Matrix Table of Environmental and Personality Factors and Students' Achievement in Essay Writing**

Variables	Students' Achievement in Yoruba Essay Writing	School Physical Environment	Classroom Environment	Attitude	Self-efficacy	Gender
Students' Achievement in Yoruba Essay Writing	1					
School Physical Environment	0.482*	1				
Classroom Environment	0.281*	0.330*	1			
Attitude	0.140*	0.020	0.017	1		
Self-efficacy	0.136*	0.065	-0.024	0.747*	1	
Gender	0.144*	0.064	0.155*	0.087	0.173*	1

Significant @  $p < .05$ ;  $n = 300$

Table 1 presents the intercorrelation matrix showing the correlation coefficients of the independent variable environment factors (school physical environment and classroom environment), personality factors (attitude, self-efficacy and gender) and the criterion variable (students' achievement in essay writing). From the table, there is a significant positive moderate relationship between school physical environment and students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that school physical environment relates with students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing.

Similarly, the result shows that classroom environment had a significant low relationship with students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $r = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, the table shows that attitude was statistically significant on student' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $r = 0.140$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that students' attitude, to a low extent, relates with students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. In addition, the table shows that self-efficacy was statistically significant on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $r = 0.136$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that students' self-efficacy also significantly relates with students' achievement in Yoruba essay

writing. Also, there is a significant positive moderate relationship between school physical environment and students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, a conclusion can be drawn therefore that, there are significant relationships among independent variables: environment (school physical environment and classroom environment), personality factors (attitude, self-efficacy and gender) and dependent variable (students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing).

**Research Question Two:** To what extent will environmental factors (school physical environment and classroom environment), personality factors (attitude, self-efficacy and gender) when taken together predicts students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing in Oyo State?

**Table 2: Regression Summary and ANOVA of Environmental and Personality Factors and Students' Achievement in Yoruba Essay Writing**

Multiple R= 0.522, R Square= 0.273		Adjusted R Square= 0.260 Standard Error= 22.057		Analysis of Variance		
Source	of Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Regression	55469.669	5	11093.934	22.057	0.00*	
Residual	147872.117	294	502.966			
Total	203341.787	299				

Significant @  $p < .05$ ;  $n = 300$

Table 2 shows that the combined contribution of the independent variables; environmental factors (school physical environment and classroom environment), personality factors (attitude, self-efficacy and gender) to the prediction of students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing in Oyo State was significant ( $F_{(5,294)} = 22.057$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that when environmental factors (school physical environment and classroom environment), personality factors (attitude, self-efficacy and gender) were taken together, they jointly predicted students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. The table in addition shows a multiple regression coefficient ( $R = 0.522$ ) and a multiple regression adjusted ( $R^2 = 0.273$ ). This means that 27.3 of the variation in students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing was accounted for by the composite contribution of the independent variables while the remaining 72.7 is due to other factors not in this model.

**Research question 3:** What are the relative contributions of Environmental and Personality Factors to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing?

**Table 3: Relative Contribution of Independent variables on Students' Achievement in Yoruba essay writing**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	117.921	9.295		12.687	.000
Phy_Environment	1.913	.234	.433	8.172	.000
Class_Environment	.130	.056	.123	2.300	.022
Attitude	.235	.154	.115	1.522	.129
Self-efficacy	.025	.196	.010	.129	.897
Gender	3.805	2.283	.086	1.667	.097

Table 3 reveals that the relative contribution of school physical environment to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $\beta = 0.433$ ;  $t = 8.172$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) was significant. Also, the relative contribution of classroom environment to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $\beta = 0.123$ ;  $t = 2.300$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) was significant. On the other hand, the contribution of attitude to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $\beta = 0.115$ ;  $t = 1.522$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) was not significant. Self-efficacy did not also contribute significantly to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $\beta = 0.010$ ;  $t = 0.129$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). And the relative contribution of gender to the prediction of students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ( $\beta = 0.086$ ;  $t = 1.667$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) was not significant.

The implications of these results is that students' environmental factors (physical and classroom environments) both had direct contributions to the model explaining variance in students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing, while students' attitude, self-efficacy and gender need to work through the environmental variables to contribute to variance in their Yoruba essay writing.

### Discussion of Findings

The result reveals a significant relationship between environmental factors (school physical environment and classroom environment) and students' achievement in Yoruba language essay writing. The findings are in consonance with the assertion of Adegun (2009) and Olatoye (2001) who have acknowledged the influence of school factors (or environment) on students' achievement, since learning takes place in an environment. It implies that the nature of school factors could influence learning. Likewise, the finding supports research of Lehtinen, (1997) and Olatoye (2006) who reported that, there exists an influence of school factors (or environment) on students' achievement. Furthermore, the finding buttresses that of Adesokan, (2000) who stressed that the nature of the classroom environment and how it is structured may be one of the necessary efforts being made in order to enhance students' performance in science as a process of enquiry. This implies that if positive classroom activities are created for students, their academic achievement will be highly enhanced.

Results of the study also reveal that all the personality factors (attitude, self-efficacy and gender) considered in the study were significantly related to students' achievement in Yoruba Language essay writing. The positive significant relationship between attitude and students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing support the assertion of Owolabi (1996); Osbome (2011); and Fasasi (2012) who affirmed that a relationship exists between attitude and learning, since both involve experience and behaviour change, and that outcomes in learning can be positive or negative, owing to the fact that the basis of determining ideas and forming opinions about a subject matter involves our attitude. To put it succinctly, negative attitudes inhibit learning, while positive attitudes promote learning. However, the finding negates (Awolola 2009) who found a non-significant relationship between attitude and student learning achievement.

On the other hand, the positive significant relationship between self-efficacy and student achievement in Yoruba essay writing support the assertion of Bandura, cited in Shunk, (2003) who concluded that self-efficacy affects college outcome by increasing students' motivation and persistence to master challenging academic tasks and by fostering the efficient use of acquired knowledge and skills. Low self-efficacy will therefore be associated with low academic motivation, such as not persisting at a task or not working hard Shunk (2003).

Also, the positive significant relationship between gender and students' achievement in Yoruba Language essay writing support the assertion of Dee, (2005) who found that gender interactions between teachers and students have significant effects on students' achievement. In addition, Ghazyini and Milad, (2011) reported that; despite the fact that girls show a more adaptive cognitive-motivational pattern than the boys, the former do not obtain significantly higher marks in the subject of mathematics. However, the result negates the assertion of Shragard, Baharloo and Ali (2011) that there is no significant difference in scores for males and females with regards to their academic achievements.

Additional findings of the study revealed that the environmental factors of both physical and classroom environments jointly, with the other personality variables (attitude, self-efficacy and gender), predict students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing, and only the environmental variables significantly predicted students' achievements in Yoruba Essay writing independently. This finding is very important and corroborates the earlier findings of the study. It could be deduced from the findings of this study that both the school and classroom environment should be conducive for better students' achievements in Yoruba essay writing. Also students' attitudes towards learning of Yoruba Language as well as their self-efficacy should be improved in order to have positive effects on teaching and learning within the school environments, which will in turn lead to students' improved achievements in Yoruba essay writing, since findings of the study revealed that the personality factors need to work through other factors to impact on the students' achievements in Yoruba essay writing.

## Conclusion

From the findings of the study, environmental variables are the most vital of the variables explored in explaining differences in students' achievements in Yoruba essay writing. The environmental variables of both physical environment and classroom environments are significantly related to and predict students' achievements in Yoruba essay writing. On the other hand, the personality variables (attitude, self-efficacy and gender) only are related to students' achievements in Yoruba essay writing, but do not significantly predict it, except by working with the other variables.

## Recommendations

From the findings of the study,

1. School administrators, government and parents should provide an enabling environment for the students to motivate them for learning.
2. Parents and the school should help their children to develop productive self-efficacy through constant involvement in the students' academic task.
3. The students should be guided to develop positive attitudes toward the teaching and learning process for desirable knowledge gain.
4. The school management as well as the teachers should ensure that classrooms look attractive in order to facilitate students learning.
5. Yoruba language teachers should always give students essay writing test and assignment to develop their skills in writing.

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