EFFECTS OF HOME LITERACY ENVIRONMENT ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ILORIN

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Abstract

English language is the official language in Nigeria therefore it is given prominent roles in the educational policy in Nigeria. It is observed that Nigerian students are not performing well in the English language as a school subject. Many factors have been considered to be the cause of the poor performance of students. Home environment is one of such factors that influence the academic performance of students. This study investigates the effect of home literacy environment and its variables on the performance of SSS3 students in English in selected Secondary Schools in Ilorin. Data were collected through the One Hundred and ten (110) Students' Home Environment Questionnaire (SHEQ) and written tests which were administered in six Selected Secondary schools. Lev Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory was adopted. This study found that home literacy environment with its variables (like parental involvement, home literacy facilities, societal influences) has great effect on students' performance in English. It recommended that the parents and society should be sensitized to identify their influence on the performance of students' in English and how they can influence the students positively to improve on the performance of the students in language learning.

Keywords: Home Literacy Environment, English Language, Secondary Education, Performance

1.0   Introduction

English language occupies an important position in Nigeria in spite of the numerous local languages; it is used to enhance national unity and cultural integration (Adeniran, 1979). From the time of colonialism up to now, English has risen in profile in terms of the functions it performs in Anglophone Africa and Nigeria in particular. The importance of English in Nigeria includes its roles as an inter-ethnic lingua franca; an instrument of nationalism, an official language, medium of instruction, language of politics and governance, the mass media, formal business and the judiciary; the language of diplomacy; the language of employment and economic fortunes; a status symbol; and several other important sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic functions in Nigeria (Teilanyo, 2011).

Secondary education is the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage (Jubril, 1986). Apart from serving as the link between primary and tertiary education, it provides opportunity for a child to acquire additional knowledge, skills, and traits beyond the primary level. A major factor that necessitates the acquisition of secondary education in Nigeria is that the education being provided at the primary level is proving to be insufficient for a child to acquire permanent literacy, communicative, and numeracy skills expected from him/her at the end of the training. "Certification at the end of this phase depends on the performance of a student in the Continuous Assessment (CA) and Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), coordinated by West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO)" (Ige, 2012:2). The broad aims of the "secondary education within the overall national objectives of Nigeria are to prepare for useful living within the society and to prepare for higher education" (NPE, 2004, p.13).

A child must obtain a minimum of five credits including English Language and Mathematics to be able to proceed to the tertiary level of the educational

system. In Nigeria, where English is an official language and the means of communication in the society, the medium of instruction and language of textbooks, it is expected that every child should be able to read and write in English. The child's performance in English language can help the child in the choice of courses in tertiary institutions, even in performing well in other subjects at the level of secondary education.

It is observed that there is a decline in the academic performance of Nigerian students in the English Language examinations at the secondary school level in recent times. Poor performance in English has been linked to many factors among which home environment of the student is one. It appears that some home environments help or hold back the development of language learning.

The family lays the psychological, moral, and spiritual foundation in the overall development of the child (Agulanna, 2000). The parents are the child's first teacher; they are the first and primary source of social support for young children. Parental educational qualification and occupational status are highly correlated with children's educational choices and attainment (Graetz, 2009). This implies that the higher the parental educational qualification, the higher the occupational status of such a parent and possibly a better home literacy environment. Generally, the home has been identified as an overwhelming factor affecting students' performance academically.

"The home literacy environment is defined by the availability of educational materials, including books for school subjects, notebooks for writing school work, writing equipment and parental involvement in children's school learning" (Ngorosho, 2011:26). Home literacy environment are the home literacy materials and experiences such as exposure to story book reading, child opportunities for verbal interaction, parental literacy teaching activities and parent's literacy habits (Ngorosho, 2011). Home literacy environment includes

various teaching strategies provided by parents and other people in the home and neighbourhood.

The parents' interest and encouragement have a great impact on student's performance in the school. Children's school achievement is specially accounted for by the variation in parental attitudes than by the variation in the material circumstance of parents (Amarveer and Vyast, 2014). "Children need to be helped to achieve satisfying social relations with their peers and adult members of the community" (Omoruyi, 2014:12).

The kind of mental challenges to which a child is exposed at various periods is likely to determine the kind of mental abilities which he or she displays. Mullis (as cited in John Steiner & Mahn, 1996) notes that parents can take many positive steps to help their children, including the following: they can encourage students to pursue advanced course work, to invest significant amount of time in their homework and to devote more time to reading than to television. DeBaryshe, Binder and Buell (as cited in Chu &Wu, 2010) state that home literacy is when children have opportunities at home to

1. Become familiar with literacy materials;
2. Observe the literacy activities of others;
3. Engage in joint reading and writing activities with other people;
4. Independently explore literate behaviours;
5. Benefit from the teaching strategies that family members use when engaging in joint literacy tasks.

"The availability of books and reading-related materials in the home depends on the parents' level of income" (Ngorosho, 2011:56). Children from low socio- economic status home environment may not have such facilities. However, irrespective of parents' socioeconomic situation, a supportive environment at home will certainly and positively influence children's learning (Zuze, 2008). Children develop more literacy skills if they are encouraged to

practice what they have learnt in school, and if the value of education is regularly reinforced at home (Entwisle, Alexander & Olson, 1997). Akinbiyi & Taiwo (2014) concluded in their work that the home background factors are significant factors to determine students' academic achievement. Children who are learning language will always master the language system that is found in their environment.

The home literacy environment (like parental involvement, literacy facilities and environmental influences) of a child is seen as one of the factors that can either help or hinder the academic excellence of the child. It is concluded that the more parents are devoted to their children's academic performance, the better their performance. Also the literacy facilities and environmental influences are factors that can positively or negatively affect the academic performance of students. We set out to answer three research questions in this article. They are:

1. Does parental involvement have effect on student's performance in English Language?
2. Do home literacy facilities have effect on student's performance in English Language?
3. Do environmental influences have effect on student's performance in English Language?

2.0 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this work is Lev Vygotsky (1978) socio-cultural theory. The theory emerged from the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978). "The power of Vygotsky's ideas lies in his explanation of the dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996:192). Within this framework, humans are understood to utilize existing cultural artifacts and to create new ones that allow them to regulate their biological and behavioral activity.

The basic assumption in Vygotsky's theory is the idea that psychological structures do not exist in the individual's mind; rather, they are formed as a result

of interaction with the social context. Mitchell and Myles (2004) state that socio-cultural theory views learners as active constructs of their own learning environment. "Successful learning involves shifting control within activities from the social to the individual, from the external to within self" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005:232). The most significant contribution of socio-cultural perspective to learning and consequently decreasing learners' problems is providing a supportive environment for cognitive development.

"Vygotsky believed that children are born with basic biological constraints on their minds. Each culture provides what he referred to as tools of intellectual adaptation" (Kendra, 2015:1). These tools allow children to use their basic mental abilities in a way that is adaptive to the culture in which they live. Vygotsky used the dialectal method to analyze, explain and describe inter-relationships fundamental to human development. Using this approach, socio-cultural theorists analyze internalization and individual and social processes as inter-related parts of neuro-physiological, psychological, educational, cultural systems (Tobach, 1995).

Shayer (2002) postulated that collaboration and interaction among peers create a collective zone of proximal development (ZPD) from which each learner can draw from as a collective pool. Vygotsky attached importance to prediction of a child's future capabilities, he formulated the concept of ZPD which he defines as "the distance between a child's actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving, and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Wertsch, 1985:60). "To facilitate the learners' cognitive development and social construction of knowledge within their ZPD, the teacher may scaffold students in different ways" (Behroozizad, Nambiar & Amir, 2014:220). For examples, giving helpful suggestions in the process of doing tasks, asking leading questions, drawing tables and charts, and

giving feedback concerning the students' group work. Schools need to reflect the literacy learning that occurs in diverse homes to provide opportunities for children to build upon their existing background knowledge (Campbell, 1998). Panofsky (1994) studied the role of parent- child book reading in early literacy socialization and illustrates the role of scaffolding and ZPD; she noted a shift in the use of functions from a predominance of parent initiations to a predominance of child initiation. In the study of Latino household, Gallimore and Goldenberg (1993) identified meaningful settings, which provide literacy activities such as letter writing for novice learners of reading and writing. Acknowledging and attempting to understand the culturally conditioned knowledge students bring to classroom can help and also lead to effective language teaching.

3.0   Method

The methods adopted in gathering data for this study were questionnaire and written tests. Omoruyi's (2014) questionnaire was adapted; percentage and frequency (like tables and graphs) are the statistics tools in analyzing data in this research work.

3.1   Research Design

The study investigates the effect of home environment on the performance in English of SSS3 students in selected secondary schools in Ilorin. The questionnaire used was constructed according to the research questions in this work .The dependent variable is performance of students in English Language. Independent variables are environmental influences, parental involvement, literacy facilities. These variables were believed to be related to one another because researchers like Adekola, 2012, Akinbiyi & Taiwo, 2014, Fakeye, 2010, Ngorosho, 2011 have shown that the parental support and home facilities have effect on academic performance of the students and attitude of students to second language learning.

3.2   Study Population

The population of this study comprises of Senior Secondary School three (SSS 3) students in selected secondary schools in Ilorin. The schools selected in the study area were chosen based on the environment or community in which they are located. The selected schools in this study are located in three Local Government Areas in Ilorin. They are Ilorin South, Ilorin West and Ilorin East. A total number of six senior secondary schools formed the target population comprising four public schools and two private schools. Schools selected were those that have at least participated in West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) examination for the past five years. This was done in order to identify the previous performance of the students in each school in the English Language in WASSC examination. The schools chosen were;

1. Government Day Secondary School, Tanke
2. Government Day Secondary School, Alore
3. Community Grammar School, Ile- Apa
4. Government Secondary School, Lajiki
5. Rehoboth College, Pipeline Tanke
6. Socrates College, Awomaradu.

Twenty students (20) were selected from the public schools while fifteen (15) students were selected from the private schools. A total number of one hundred and ten (110) students were used as respondents.

3.3   Tools for Data Collection

A questionnaire comprising twenty four items and a letter writing test were the tools used for data collection in this study. The respondents were asked to respond to the questions on a four point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The written test was conducted in order to rate the responses of the respondents in the questionnaire with the performance in the written test. The researchers made marking scheme of 100% for this test. The

grades A, B, C & D were the ones that passed that test, while the grade E and F were the ones that failed in the written test.

3.4 Procedures for Collecting and Analyzing Data

The researchers approached the principals of each school and was directed to the vice principal academics, and was later directed to the examination coordinator in each of the schools for the collection of WAEC examination result analysis. The examination coordinators later introduced the researchers to the subject teacher then helped in the distribution of questionnaires to the respondents. This study employed stratified random sampling techniques. The students filled the questionnaires and wrote the letter writing tests given in the written test. All the responses (110) were analyzed using frequency and percentage like table and graph. These were chosen to know the number and proportion of respondents that answered the questionnaire and performed in the written test in a certain way.

4.0 Results and Discussion

This section examines the analysis, presentation and discussion of data obtained from the data collected in this research work. The questionnaire used is divided into two sections. Section A deals with the demographic information of the respondents, while section B deals with the research questions.

4.1 Presentation of Data

This section provides demographic information about the respondents. This information from respondents is analyzed by using number of frequency and simple percentage.

Table 1: Respondents' percentage based on type of school

Type of school	Number of students	Percentage
Public school	80	72.7%
Private school	30	27.3%

Total	110	100 %

It can be seen from the table 1 that the public schools selected have 72.7% respondents while private schools have 27.3% of the respondents in this research work. This shows that the public schools have the highest percentage of the respondents in this research work.

Table 2: Number of respondents based on their parents' highest educational qualification

Parents' Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	15	13.6%
Secondary school	34	31%
ND	10	9.1%
HND	11	10 %
NCE	06	5.4
Bachelor degree	09	8.2%
Master's degree	16	14.5%
Above Master's degree	9	8.2%
Total	110	100

Respondents whose parents have primary school certificate are 13.6%, Secondary school certificate are 31%, and ND are 9.1%. Master's degree have 14%and above Master's degree have 8.2% number of respondents.
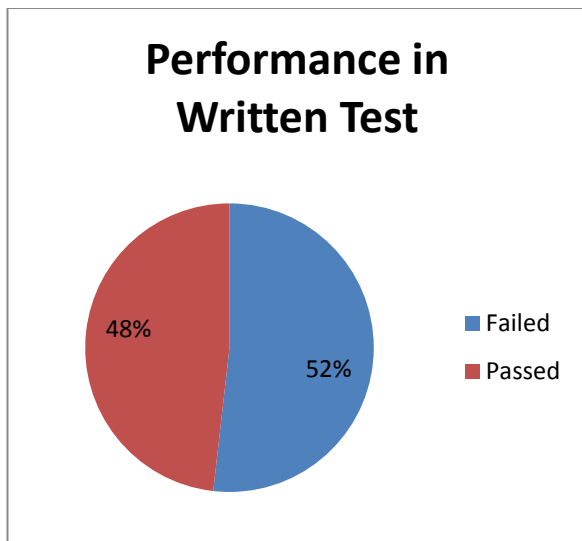
Performance in Written Test

48%
52%

- Failed
- Passed

Chart 1: Respondents' performance in the written test.

From the chart 1, 52% of the respondents failed, while 48% of the respondents passed in the written test. This shows that the percentage of the number of the respondents that failed the written test is more than those that passed the written test.
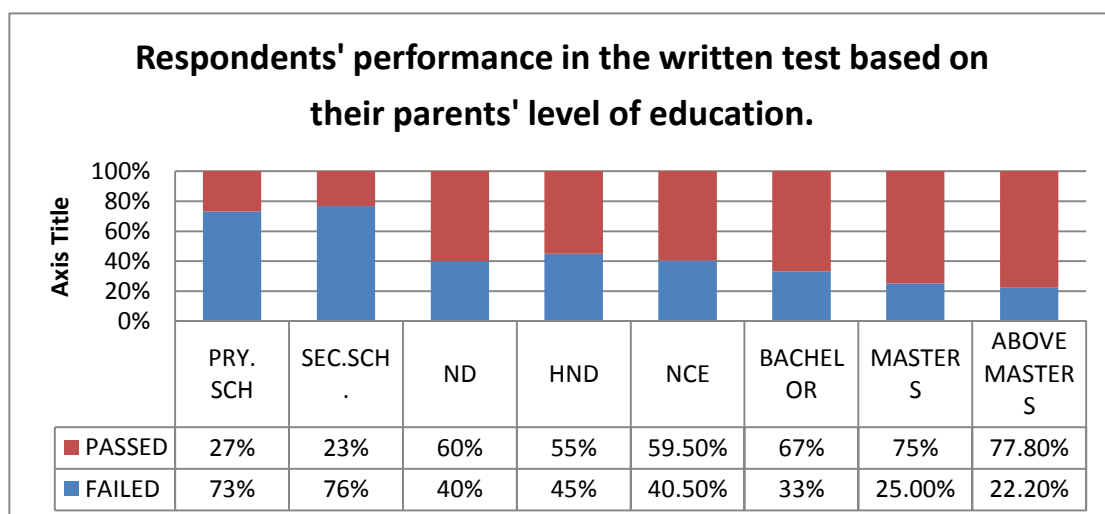

Respondents' performance in the written test based on their parents' level of education.

	PRY. SCH	SEC.SCH.	ND	HND	NCE	BACHELOR	MASTERS	ABOVE MASTERS
PASSED	27%	23%	60%	55%	59.50%	67%	75%	77.80%
FAILED	73%	76%	40%	45%	40.50%	33%	25.00%	22.20%

Chart 2: Respondents' performance in the written test based on their parents' level of education.

From the chart 2, it shows that 73% of respondents' whose parents have primary school certificate failed while 27% passed the test, 76% of those whose parents have secondary certificate failed while 23% passed, while 40% whose parents have ND failed while 60% passed. Also, 45% of the respondents whose parents have HND failed while 55% passed, 40.5% of whose parents have NCE failed while 59.5% passed. 33% of those whose parents have bachelor degree failed while 73% passed, also 25% of students whose parents have Master's degree failed, 75% passed and 22.5% of students' whose parents have above Master's degree failed while 77.5% passed the written test. This indicates that the higher the educational qualification of parents, the better the performance of respondents in the written test because the respondents whose parental educational qualification is above Master's degree have the highest numbers with (77.5%) of the respondents that passed in the written test while those with secondary school certificate have the highest number (76%) of the respondents that failed in the test.

4.2 Analysis and Discussion of Data

This section analyses and discusses data based on the research questions in this work.

4.2.1 Does parental involvement have effect on students' performance in English Language?

This section shows the effect of parental involvement in students' performance in English. This is to identify the significance of parental involvement in performance of students in English.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of respondents' responses on parental involvement

Parental Involvement	SA	A	Total	%	D	SD	Total	%
My parents do provide	64	40	104	94.5	02	4	06	5.5

for my educational needs								
My parents do encourage me to study at home	56	46	102	92.7	04	4	08	7.2
Grand Total	120	86	206	93.6	06	08	14	6.4

We can see from table 3 that Strongly Agree has 120 while Agree has 86 number of frequency, while Disagree has 6 and Strongly Disagree has 8 number of frequency. This depicts that parents of respondents in selected schools are involved in their children academy. 93.6 % of the respondents Strongly Agree and Agree that their parents are involved in their academic. This shows that parental involvement has effect on their academic performance. The parents' interest and encouragement have a great impact on student's performance in the school. Children's school achievement is specially accounted for by the variation in parental attitudes than by the variation in the material circumstance of parents (Amarveer &Vyast, 2014).

From the responses, we discover that 93.6 % of the respondents indicated that their parents support them in their academic pursuit and this has significant effects on their performance in English. This reveals that parents of the respondents in the place of study are involved in their children's academic. The parental support is seen as a factor that has significant effect on the performance of students in English. This is in support of Adekeye, 2002, Adetunji and Olagunju , 2014, Amarveer and Vyast, 2014 and Omoruyi, 2014 .This is also in line with Ngorosho (2011) submission that parents are seen as important in the preparation of child for school based formal instruction. The kind of mental

challenges to which a child is exposed at various periods is likely to determine the kind of mental abilities which he or she displays in academic performance.

This is also in support of Rogoff's (1991) guided participation which is the expanded version of Vygotsky's genetic law of development. She documented children's various forms of participation with the parents and peers. She found that even when children were not conversational partners with adults, they were involved in the adult world of participants, using the supportive engagement of Mayan mothers with their children as an example of nonverbal guidance of adults give to children. The routines arrangements and interactions between children and their caregivers and companions provide children with thousands of opportunities to observe and participate in the skilled activities of their culture. Rogoff (1991) states that through repeated and varied experience in supported routine and challenging situations, children become skilled practitioners in the specific cognitive activities in their commodities.

4.2.2 Do home literacy facilities have effect on student's performance in English Language?

This section shows the relationship between literacy facilities at home and students' performance in English. This is to identify the effect of home literacy facilities on students' performance in English.

Tables 4: Frequency and percentage of respondents' responses on literacy facilities.

Literacy Facilities	SA	A	Total	%	D	SD	Total	%
There is availability of reading materials at home.	29	58	87	82.1	17	02	19	17.9

I do make use of literacy facilities at home and it improves my performance in English.	29	59	88	82.2	13	06	19	17.8
I do attend extra mural class after school and this has effect on my English performance.	19	37	56	51.3	39	14	53	48.6
Grand Total	77	154	231	71.7	69	22	91	28.3

From table 4, we can see that 71.7 % overall respondents Strongly Agreed and Agreed that home literacy facilities have effect on their performance in English, while 28.3 % Strongly Disagree and Disagreed that home literacy facilities have effect on their performance in English. This indicates that home literacy facilities have positive effect on the academic performance of students. Mullis (2002) notes that parents can take many positive steps to help their children, including the following: they can encourage students to pursue advanced course work, to invest significant amount of time in their homework and to devote more time to reading than to television. The kind of mental challenges to which a child is exposed at various periods is likely to determine the kind of mental abilities which he or she displays.

Home literacy facilities are examined as a variable under home literacy environment in this research work, and it is discovered that literacy facilities at home exert positive effect on students' performance in English. 71.1% of the respondents agreed that literacy facilities exert positive effect on their performance in English. Home literacy facilities are seen as one of the factors at home that improves and enhances the students' performance in English. This is

in support of position that literacy facilities at home can influence students' performance in English (Peter, 2009).

This discovery is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) semiotic mediation. "Humans do not make their relationship with the outer world only through direct stimulus-response reflexes; rather, they have the ability to use physical tools to make indirect connections and mediate their relationship" (Behroozizad, Nambiar & Amir (2014: 220). Mitchell and Myles (2004) believe that learning is mediated partly through learner's developing use and control of mental tools.

4.2.3 Do environmental influences have effect on student's performance in English Language?

This section shows the influence of society on the students' performance in English. This is to identify the effect of students' environment on their performance in English.

Table 5: Frequency and percentage of respondents' responses on environmental influences

Environmental influence	SA	A	Total	%	D	SD	Total	%
The home environment has effect on my English performance	25	37	62	57.4	28	18	46	42.6
The conversation I engage in at home influence my performance	24	43	67	61.5	30	12	42	38.5

I do communicate in English with my peers	38	45	83	76.2	15	11	26	26.8
People in my home environment do speak English	18	57	75	69.4	21	12	33	30.6
Grand Total	105	182	287	66.1	94	53	147	33.9

Table 5 shows that 66.1 % of the respondents agreed, while 33.9% disagreed. This implies that the environmental influences have effect on their performance in English and that the activities respondents engage in at home influence their performance in English. Societal influences have significant effect on students' performance in English. Supportive environment at home will certainly and positively have an influence child's learning (Zuze, 2008). Children develop more literacy skills if they are encouraged to practice what they have learnt in school, and if the value of education is regularly reinforced at home.

It is revealed that societal influence exerts strong effects on the students' performance in English. This is in line with Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) view that successful learning involves shifting control within activities from the social to the individual, from the external to within self. Also, this is also in support of Vygotsky's social sources of development. Kendra (2015) viewed that Vygotsky believed that children are born with basic biological constraints on their minds. Each culture provides what he referred to as tools of intellectual adaptation. These tools allow children to use their basic mental abilities in a way that is adaptive to the culture in which they live. Learners participate in a wide variety of joint activities that provide the opportunity for synthesizing several influences into learner's novel modes of understanding and participation.

5.0   Conclusion

This research work has been able to identify the home literacy environment variables that have effects on students' performance in English. The study identified home as the first school of learning for students. And it is believed that the kind of environment a child is exposed to at home will likely have positive effects on his academic performance. Using questionnaires and written test, this research found that parental involvement and literacy facilities have great effect on students' performance in English and that positive environmental influences are found to have positive effect on students' performance in English.

In conclusion, this research identified home literacy environment as one of the factors that have significant effect on the performance of students in English. It is found that home environment with its variables exert great effect on students' performance in English and students in the place of study have positive attitude to English Language. However, it is observed that, we did not get 100% of the respondents agreeing that home environment with its variables have effect on their performance in English. This shows that there are instances when home environment with its variables will not be factors that affect the academic performance of students, but rather as a result of high academic intellectual ability of such students in learning. We concluded that for the academic performance of Nigerian students to improve in English Language, the society and the parents must support the efforts of the teachers in school. They should render help to the students when necessary and provide encouraging and supporting environment for them at home in order to improve their academic performance as education is the only legacy parents and society can give to children and also the instrument for the national development.

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