Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.4 No.2 June, 2021; p.g. 530 – 540; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

AN EVALUATION OF FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This study investigated the factors responsible for the students' attitude in learning the English language as a second language and to find out ways to improve teaching-learning of the subject. It also had the aim of coming up with useful suggestions and recommendations on how to ameliorate on the learning of English Language. It identified what and who are responsible for students' attitudes. The study targeted some selected secondary schools and teachers of English language in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State as its total population, but a purposive random sampling technique was used to select three hundred and thirty six and this include students and teachers. The findings reflected that there were various factors responsible for the student's attitudes, most students displayed negative interest in the subject. Most of the students at the initial stage have a poor language background and this inversely have negative effects on their language competence and at the end they perform woefully. The study concluded with the fact that there are not adequate and competent teachers in the field, while at the extreme end, the administrators on their part were not up to the task. Finally, the study recommended that students, teachers and administrators in charge of subjects should adequately play their diverse roles as expected in order to make the subject a favourite of students.

Keywords: Attitudes, Secondary School Students, Teachers, English language, Kwara State.

Introduction

English Language globally is the dominating Language. It is the language of science and technology, commerce and trade. A proficiency in English language in most cases is the perquisite and an obligation for employee and even students. School administrators, employers in both public and private sectors usually evaluate applicants based on their proficiency in the said Language.

Tamador, K. A. (2017) citing Ihmeid eh; Al- Omari & Dababnch, 2010 being good in English is a precondition and a must for job seekers. Employers both in public and private sectors evaluate applicants according to their English skills and chances of promotion thereby relying on the employee's abilities to communicate effectively in English.

Tamador K.A. 2017 carried out a study to explore the EFL student's attitude towards English Language learning in terms of several variables. Through analysis of survey questionnaire, 176 participants consisting of science faculties and faculties of humanities, the participants

depicted an overall positive attitude towards English Language learning because of reasons related; it assists them in finding better chance of education and careers. It was also found that, learning the English language helps in enhancing their self-esteem and self-image.

Kobayashi, Y.(2002) explored The role of Gender in Foreign Language Learning Attitude: Japanese female student attitude towards English Learning. This study proved that Japanese female hold higher positive attitude towards learning English compared with their male counterparts. The reason for this situation according to him is due to social aspects because English mostly is viewed as a more suitable academic and career field for women in the Japanese society which marginalizes the women's status.

The study conducted by Kolawole, Ope (2019) recorded that, majority of the participants are very effective in English Language because it is a simple subject that is easily passed. In other words, majority are proficient in English language. The study further stated that the majority of the respondents see English as an advantage, and it was also seen as a medium of expression with high importance and relevance which must be adequately handled, and qualified teachers should be employed to teach English Language in order to cut down the failure rate (bad result) and stated further that Learners should be encouraged to read useful, updated and relevant materials written in English language.

In Nigeria, being a multi-ethnic in nature has no single unified Language of its own; hence, the adoption and introduction of English Language which plays a vital role. It is the only official Language of communication and to a large extent, the official medium of communication in the Nigerian schools. It is also the Language of administration, constitution, Language of the mass media and in most international meeting with outside countries, the same English is used in conveying vital information.

In spite of its popularity in our various schools in Nigeria, the student's attitude towards it learning is still considered to be a major problem. The question here is who actually is responsible for this attitude being displayed by the students towards the learning of English Language.

The participants equally displayed an overall positive attitude in other reason related – being good in English will help in communicating in English effectively.

Ming, Ling and Jaafar (2011) examined the attitudes of secondary school Malaysian students learning English in an attempt to promote the process of language teaching. Through analysis of survey questionnaire, the respondent proved to have an overall positive attitude towards learning of English. Their findings reveal that, the science students showed more interest in improving their English than the art students. Through the study again, it was also found that the student who were rated as highly proficient showed higher positive attitude than the average and lower proficiency students.

Statement of the Problem

Although the English Language is the medium of instruction in schools, but students face a lot of problems in using it efficiently and equally display some attitudes towards its learning. As a result of the attitudes being exhibited by the students towards the learning of English

language, for instance, their overall performance in the said subject since ages is nothing to write home about. Diverse observations has equally shown that both the written and spoken form of English language have created a lot of problem to students and the obvious belief of most of them is that English is a very tough and hard subject such that when it is time for English lesson, most of them will not bother to attend punctually and even when they attend, they put little or no attention. Some of the students do not even care to purchase the recommended texts and even if purchased, they are not properly read with understanding. This study is aimed to be a contribution to handle the lack in our knowledge regarding the area of the attitude of students towards the learning English (EFL).

The specific objectives were done out of the desire to understand the learners, response (attitude) and this study is interested in examining the different factors that are responsible for this attitude. The reaction to learning of English Language as a second Language at the secondary school level.

The Objective of the Study

The specific objective of the study is to:

1. To examine the attitude of the students towards the learning of English language
2. Find out if incentive is giving to the subjects by the government.
3. Find out if the contents of English language syllabus have any relationship with the national objective of education.
4. To examine whether teachers are responsible for the attitude of the student towards the learning of English language.
5. To investigate if the school authority and parents are responsible for the student attitude towards the learning of English language.

Research questions

This research work will be guided by these research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of students towards the learning of English language?
2. Is the attitude of students towards learning of English language influenced by the government incentive for the subject?
3. Are teachers responsible for the attitude of students towards the learning of English language?
4. Does the school authority contribute to the attitude of students to the learning?
5. Do parents play a significant role in influencing students' attitude towards the learning of English language?

Scope of the Study

To carry out this research, seven secondary schools in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State were chosen out of all the available designed secondary schools in the area and the study will be limited to these seven schools of Kwara State.

Methodology

The survey method was adopted for this study. Questionnaires were used as the data collection instrument. The total population of students in all secondary schools in Offa Local Government Area is estimated at 3980. However, students from seven schools were used namely; Iyeru Grammar School, Nawarudldeen, Tawakalitu Secondary School, Anglican

College of Commerce, Ansaruldeen College, Olalomi Comprehensive College and Government Day Secondary School were selected to form the study population. Systematic random sampling technique was applied for the study and simple percentage was used from each of the selected schools, a sample of 30 (male and female) students were selected from each school and in all, a sample of three hundred and thirty-six(336)respondents was selected for the study, (students & teachers)

In the study, 436 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents (students and teachers) out of 436 copies of the questionnaires distributed to those in the sample size, 336 were returned. However, it was discovered that most sections, 100 out of the 436 copies returned were not filled by the respondents. Hence, the 100 copies were discarded. Therefore, only 336 copies of the questionnaires were discovered to be valid. From this, it represented 6% return rate while the remaining copies not returned represented a minimal percentage of 4% which are not reliable for the study.

Discussion

The items (1-4) in the first section of the questionnaire designed to investigate the students' attitude towards English Language and this includes their interest, preference of English to other subjects and their participatory level. The items refer to the questions, while frequency indicates the rate of occurrence (The number of times) of Yes or No by the respondents using simple percentage counts. The total average for 'Yes' was arrived at by summing all the number of times of 'Yes' by students divided by the total number of items, while the average percentage obtained by summing up all the percentage divided by the total number of items (four).

Percentage for each item arrived at by summing all the total number of frequency (The total number of Yes) divided by the total number of sample size (Respondents) multiply by one hundred (100). The same method applied for the total number of ('No') in the table.

Research question one: what are the attitudes of students towards the learning of English language?

(i) Do you offer English Language in your school?
(ii) Are you interested in English Language as a subject?
(iii) Do you prefer English language to other subjects?
(iv) Have you been participating actively in the class?

Table 1: Percentage analysis of students' interest in English Language

S/N	ITEM	RESPONSES			
		Yes		No	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Do you offer English Language in your school?	336	100	-	-
2.	Are you interested in English Language as a subject	200	59.5	136	40.5
3.	Do you prefer English language to other subjects?	180	53.6	156	46.4
4.	Have you been participating actively in the class?	140	41.7	196	58.3
Average		214	63.7%	122	36.3

The data in table 1 could further be discussed as follow:
The majority of students that is 100% of the respondents agreed that they offer English language in their various schools.

The table also shows that 59% of the respondents agreed that they have interest in the learning of English language as a subject, while 40.5% disagreed or of contrary opinion.

53.6% of the respondents accepted that they preferred English language to other subjects, though not their mother's tongue Language, yet most of the students see English Language as an advantage, see it as medium of expression with high importance, but 46.4% differed. Also, in this table, 41.7% agreed that they have been participating actively in the class, while 58.3% did not actively participated in class during English language lesson.

On the average, 63.7% agreed that they have interest in English language while 36.3% disagreed that they are not interested in the language.

Research Question Two (2):
Is the attitude of students towards learning of English language influenced by the government incentive for the subject?

Question two includes the following sub-questions:

(i) Do Government provide adequate number of teachers to teach English language?
(ii) Do government provide enough relevant, updated teaching and learning materials for English language?
(iii) Is the government giving/supplying free and relevant textbooks to students?

Table 2: Percentage analysis of government incentives for the subject

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES			
		Yes		No	
		Frequency (number of 'Yes')	Percentage	Frequency (number of 'No')	Percentage
1.	Do government provide adequate number of relevant teachers to teach English language?	120	35.7	216	64.3
2.	Do government provide enough, relevant updated teaching and learning materials for English language	95	28.3	241	71.7
3.	Is the government giving free and relevant textbooks to students?	70	20.8	256	76.2
	Average	95	28.3	241	71.7

The table shows that 35.7% of the respondents agreed that the government provide qualified and adequate number of teachers to teach English language, while 64.3% disagreed or were of the opinion that government failed to provide qualified and adequate number of teachers. The result also shows that 28.3% were of the opinion that government provides teaching and learning materials, while 71.7% differed. About 70 which represent 20.8%quite agreed that free related updated textbooks were given to the students while 79.2% totally disagreed.

The result further reveals that qualified English teachers were not sufficient to handle the course efficiently and effectively, and there were not even enough teaching and learning materials while in some cases such materials were not even introduced to them at all. On the average, 28.3% were of the opinion that government to a large extent influenced the different learning attitude displayed while 71.7% differed or held a contrary view.

Research Question Three (3)

Are teachers responsible for the attitude of students towards the learning of English language? Under this research questions, three separate items were given and these are:

1. Are the teachers well motivated?
2. Were you (students) given assignment regularly by your teachers?
3. Does your teacher make use of teaching aids?

Table 3: Percentage analysis of teachers' responsibility towards the learning of English language

S/N	ITEMS		RESPONSES		
		Yes		No	
		Frequency (number of 'Yes')	Percentage	Frequency (number of 'No')	Percentage
1	Are the teachers well motivated to teach English?	120	35.7	216	64.3
2	Were you given assignment regularly?	100	29.8	236	70.2
3	Does your teacher make use of teaching aid?				
	Average	100	29.8	236	70.2

From the analysis from table 3, it could be seen clearly that teachers greatly contributed to the attitude of students in relation to learning of English language. This is obvious because 35.7% agreed that teachers are well taken care of, while 64.3% disagreed. This is not too good because the number of those that disagreed outweigh those that agreed ultimately the teacher put in little or no effort in impacting the students positively as a result of the way and manner they were been treated by the government, this adversely affects their morale and the zeal to impact the learners. Also 29.8% agreed that assignments were given promptly by their teachers, while 70.2% differed. This shows that prompt/regular assignments were not usually given to the students in order to test their level of understanding of the subject or their retention capacity which could have gone a long way to assist them.

On the other hand, 23.8% agreed that teachers always use teaching aids while 76.2% disagreed.

The likely reason for this result could be that most teachers were not encouraged to go in for in-service studies in order to better their lots or upgrade their knowledge. Other motivations which would have gear them up and encourage them to teach effectively to enhance complete comprehension on the part of the learners were not given them. The result however, shows that modern teaching aids, which could have been utilized to retain permanency were not adequately supplied and if they were supplied, were not appropriately used by the teachers who on their part may not even know how to use these aids.

Research Question Four (4)

Does the school authority contribute to the attitude of students?

Research question four equally has some sub-questions under it and these are:

(i) Do you have a library in your school?

(ii) Is your library well equipped with relevant and current textbooks?

(iii) Were you encouraged to speak English language always within and outside the classroom?

Table 4: Percentage analysis of school authority's contribution to the attitude of students towards the learning of English Language

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSE			
		Yes		No	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Do you have a library in your school?	336	100	-	-
2.	Is your library well equipped with relevant and current textbooks?	120	35.7	216	64.3
3.	Were you encouraged to speak English language always within and outside the classroom?	285	84.8	51	15.2
	Average	247	73.%	89	26.5%

The data in table 4, item one shows that 100% of the respondents agreed that they all have a school library functioning or not respectively. Item 2 of the same table revealed that 35.7% of the respondents agreed that the libraries were well equipped with relevant and current textbooks, while 64.3% disagreed with the statement that though they have one but their libraries were not well equipped with standard, updated and relevant textbooks, 84.8% of the correspondents quite agreed. In item 3 that they were encouraged to always speak English language, while 15.2% held a contrary opinion to the statement or they were not motivated to speak English at all. Also, in most schools, emphasis were not laid on the use of English as a means of communication within the school environment during the lesson.

Research Question Five (5)

Do parents play significant roles in influencing students' attitudes towards the learning of English language?

(i) Do parents provide relevant, updated textbooks for learning of English language?
(ii) Do your parents assist you in your assignments?
(iii) Do you speak English at home?

Table 5: Percentage analysis of Parent's roles in influencing students

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSE			
		Yes		No	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Do your parents provide relevant textbooks for learning of English language?	120	35.7	216	64.3
2.	Is your library well equipped with relevant and current textbooks?	95	28.3	241	71.7
3.	Were you encouraged to speak English language?	85	25.3	251	74.7
	Average	100	29.8%	236	70.2%

From the table above, item 1 revealed that 35.7% out of the respondents agreed that parents do provide relevant, standard and updated textbooks to their children or wards, while 64.3% were of different view. Item 2 of the same table, indicates that 28.3% of the respondent agreed that their parents do help them in finding answers to assignments given to them while, 71.7% differed and of the opinion that their parent do not assist them in their home works at all.

The table further shows that 25.3% (85 respondents) agreed that English were spoken at their different homes, while 74.7% (251 correspondents) held a contrary view.

The table equally shows that 25.3% agreed that English were spoken at their different homes, while 74.7% held a contrary view.

This result is much expected because most of the parents who could have assisted were illiterates who could neither read nor write, so the importance of buying textbooks may not be known to them or matter to them. Also, some of the parents who eager to are not buoyant enough, hence, could not afford to even purchase the recommended textbooks for their children, which could have on the other hands assist their learning of the English language and at the end improve their attitudes positively.

From the analysis, also 70.2% of the average total indicates that parents do play a significant role in influencing the attitude of their children towards the learning of English language.

Summary of the Findings

The study is an attempt to identify the different factors responsible for students' attitude towards the learning of English language. The result of the study however, has been able to show that virtually in all the secondary schools English Language is one of the compulsory subject and also a prerequisite subject which must be passed before being admitted into any tertiary institution in Nigeria.

The result of the study further revealed the following:

- All sampled secondary schools offer English language.
- All the schools have library, but not all the libraries were equipped with standard, updated and relevant textbooks.
- Students have negative attitude towards the learning of English language.
- The teachers, the students, the parents and the government inclusive contributed to the unseemingly attitude of the students towards the learning of the English language.
- Lack of motivation on the side of the teachers and interest on the part of the students which has resulted to non-challant attitude of the students towards the learning of English language.
- Lack of adequate, updated, standard and relevant textbooks for the students to enhance the smooth work in the classroom or to do assignment given to them.
- Lack of parental/guidance encouragement and motivation by not meeting with the needs of the students especially in the area of purchase of relevant materials such as textbooks on the subject, newspaper, magazines and so on.

The result also revealed that, the student, the parent, the school authority, and the government have in one way or the other contributed to the attitude of students toward the learning of the English Language.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the paper concluded that there are various factors responsible for the student attitude towards learning of English language and these emanated from the students' influence, poor and in organized study habits, lack of interest in English Language by most of the student this in turn affect their performance in the said language, the teachers, factor, lack of quality and competent teachers, inadequate teaching methods, the parents and the government at large. All in one way or the other contributed to the attitude recorded.

Recommendations

Instructor/ Teachers, according to Harner (2002) should provoke interest and involvement in English Language even when the student shows no interest. Their attitude, their seriousness all these will go a long way to influence the students positively.

The students should be tutored to realize the importance of English language even in the cause of their future career after secondary school education. Teachers should encourage their students to perceive the subject as not difficult but rather simple and easy to comprehend. Teachers should equally improve the learners' attitude towards English by eliminating all the sources of anxiety in their classes.

The government should encourage teaching facilities, modern classrooms setting and employ more trained, qualified, competent and brilliant individuals in the field of English language in order to adequately prepare the learners for the task ahead. Teaching aids and useful methods at the teachers' disposal should be effectively employed in order to get the students to comprehend what they are teaching and encourage Open door policy for students to consult when in difficulty.

Teachers of English language should be encouraged to write regularly more relevant, updated textbooks (Textbooks dealing with correct trends in the syllabus).In-depth grammatical structures, continuous writing should equally be taught. Reading of different related materials outside the classroom to reinforce what was done in the classroom should be encouraged. Literacy and debating society should be encouraged and made functional in the schools.

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