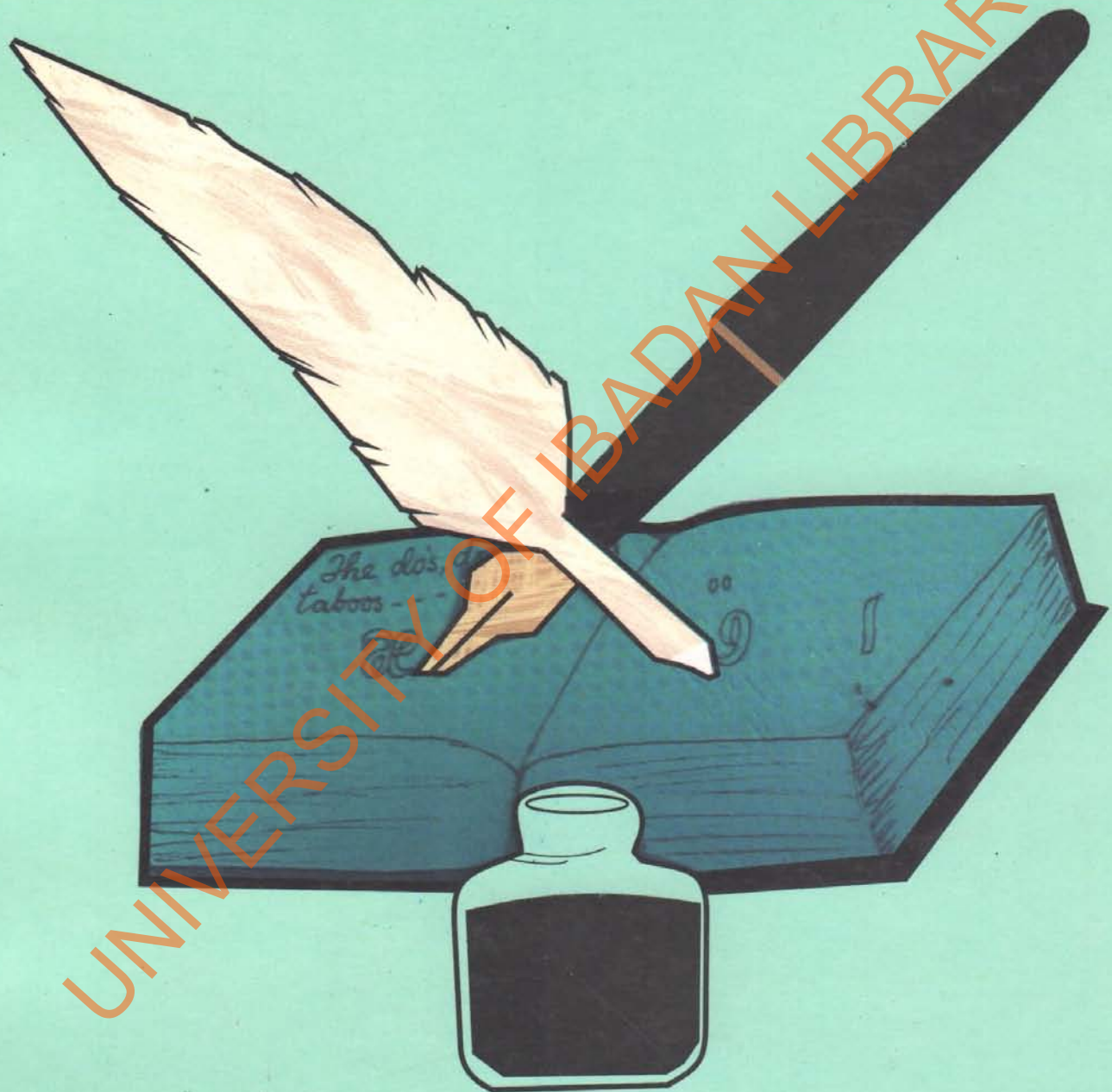


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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Listening Competence and Attitude of Students with Credit Pass in O/Level Yoruba Matemilola, P.A. Ph.D - - - - -	1
Portfolio Assessment: A Compatible Form of Evaluation for Inclusive Education Ali T. Abdullahi Ph.D - - - - -	9
Psychological Empowerment: A Panacea for Combating Corruption in Nigeria for National Emacipation Jibril T. Abdulkadir - - - - -	16
Influence of Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Niger State, Nigeria Kolo, Elisha Ndaman - - - - -	24
Effects of Religious and Ethnic Conflicts on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Kaduna State. Nwogo Alagbu, Ph.D - - - - -	33
Competence of Senior Secondary School Leavers in Speaking Yorùbá Matemilola, P.A. Ph.D - - - - -	40
Effects of Langaue Proficiency and Attitude on Achievement in Yoruba Essay Writing of Senior Secondary Students in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State Adeyemi Abiodun Adeyinka Ph.D - - - - -	48
Objective Interpretations of Islamic Texts: A Panacea For Peaceful Coexistence Abdulazeez Balogun Shittu, Ph.D, & Olaofe Musa Adeyemi, Ph.D - - - - -	58
Religious Conflicts And Peace Building in Northern Nigeria: A Conceptual and Theoretical Considerations. Terwase Akuya - - - - -	70
Islamic Perspective on Peace- Building Muhammad Yahaya, Ph.D & Lawal Tambaya Ahmad - - - - -	81
An Appraisal of Democratic Experimentation in Nigeria between the Years of 1999-2011 Muhammad Nurudeen Musa, Ph.D - - - - -	90
Approaches in Classroom Management: Opinions of Teachers in Two Secondary Schools in Zaria. Abubakar M. Jumare & Musa Muhammad Ibrahim - - - - -	99

Impact of Classroom Facilities on Bridging the Gaps between Theory And Practice In The Teaching of Christian Religious Studies In Nigerian Colleges Of Education Florence Abiola Dare (Mrs.) - - - - -	108
Examination Malpractice: Issues and Problems in Contemporary Education in Secondary Schools, Kano State, Nigeria Olubadewo Esther Jumoke - - - - -	113
Sculpture, Painting, and Damage: A Review Essay of F. David Martin's Article Eze, Ngene - - - - -	123
Computer Application to Textile Production for Enhanced Motif Design and Serigraphy Printing Processes Ajayi Adewale Olusegun - - - - -	130
Challenges of the Christian Religious Studies Teacher in the 21 st Century Kwasau, J. N., Ph.D - - - - -	137
Improving Access to Schooling for Northern Nigerian Women: Implications for Literacy Acquisition Phebe Veronica Jatau, Ph.D - - - - -	143
The Music Art: Nigerian Popular Music and the Challenge of Public Morality Amodu Musa Makhu - - - - -	149
A Critical Discourse Analysis of The Nigeria National Gender Policy Phebe Veronica Jatau, Ph.D - - - - -	157
The Church, Gospel and Culture in an Age of Globalization: Problems and Possibilities Titus Justine Midala & Oluwawunsi, O. Adekola - - - - -	167
Students' Attitude to Life Sculpture Modeling In Fine Arts Department Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria Kevin Samuel Damden & Oladesu O. Johnson - - - - -	176
Strengthening Peace Building through Adult Education Sulaiman Dikko - - - - -	189
An Assessment of Counseling Needs of Adult Literacy Learners in Katsina State. Dikko Sulaiman & Bala Zakari, Ph.D - - - - -	198
Relationship between Scores of Mathematics Knowledge and Teaching Practice of Diploma Mathematics Students: a Quest for Quality Assurance. Adamu, L.E. (Mrs) - - - - -	205

A Contrastive Analysis of Interference on A Native Speaker of Hausa Language in the Learning of Arabic as a Second Language (L2) Iliyasu Abbas, Ph.D	211
Assessment of Availability, Access and Utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Secondary Schools in Zaria Metropolis Muhammad Lawal Ibrahim	216
Analytical Studies on the Role of Zakah in Poverty Alleviation Abubakar Ismaila Shika & Mustapha Isa Qasim Ph.D	225
Achieving the Millennium Development Goal of Science and Technology Education through Entrepreneurship Skills Development of "Sogokebinhy" Simulation of Environmental Education in Colleges of Education, Kaduna State Rev. Dr. Obeka Samuel Sunday Ph.D	231
Analytical Study on The Concept of Tawhid Ar-Rububiyah And its Implications on the Life of Nigerian Muslims Danyaro Abdullahi	238
Application of Harmony in Work Place on Staff Performance In Federal College Of Education, Zaria. Musa Muhammad Ibrahim & Salamatu Bello	243
Influence of Previous Knowledge Student Adopt on Essay Writing Among Undergraduate of Kaduna State University. Aliko Buhari Aliyu & Ahmed Mustapha Shina	254
Impact of Homelessness on Child Development in Nigeria Yunusa U. Ph.D & Takur, H. A. Ph.D	261
Impact of Politics in the Management of Universal Basic Education (UBE) In Nigeria Usman Abubakar Zuba, Abdulrahman Ndajiya, Ph.D, Ahmed Baba Muhammed, & Umar H.I.S	269
Impact of English Language and Communication Skills on the Performance of Diploma in Mathematics Education Students of College of Arts and Science Kano, Kano State, Nigeria. Muhammad Umar, Sumaila	275
التداخل اللغوي والاستعارة بين العربية ولغة الهوس Dr. Muhammad Rabi'u A. Sa'ad,	283
A Rhetorical Review in the Poetry of Dr. Sani Rijiyar Lemu ظاهرة الالتفات في قصائد الدكتور محمد الثاني عمر رجيير ليمو بلاغية تحليلية دراسة Jabir Abdullahi	288

Teacher Education and Arabic in Nigerian Educational System

إعداد المعلمين والتّعليم العربي في النظام التربوي النيجيري:

Dr. I. S. Mahmoud

292

دور الأصوليين في الدراسات اللغوية

معاذ محمد رابع

295

معاني حروف الجر ومدلولاتها في سياق اللغة وبلاغتها ودورها في التشريع في الكتاب والسنة

د/ عبدالقادر لاميطو إبراهيم

300

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EFFECTS OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ATTITUDE ON ACHIEVEMENT IN YORUBA ESSAY WRITING OF SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, OYO STATE

BY

ADEYEMI ABIODUN ADEYINKA Ph.D

Department of Teacher Education

University of Ibadan

Abstract

This study examines the effects of language proficiency and attitude on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. A descriptive survey research design of correlational type was adopted for the study. Three research questions were generated. Using 200 students randomly selected from Senior Secondary schools in Ibadan Metropolis. Three instruments were used and data obtained were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis. The findings are as follow: The language proficiency positively correlates with achievement in Yoruba essay writing ($r = 0.317$, $p < 0.001$) and students' attitude to Yoruba essay writing ($r = 0.292$, $p < 0.05$). It reveals significant joint contribution of the independent variables (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) to the prediction of achievement in Yoruba essay writing. The result yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions $R = 0.658$ and multiple R -square = 0.433.3. This shows that, the two predictor factors (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) are potent predictors of achievement in Yoruba essay writing. The more potent factor was language proficiency (Beta = .473, $t = 8.214$, $P < 0.001$); and followed by students attitude to Yoruba essay writing (Beta = .146, $t = 2.594$, $P < 0.05$). Based on these results, appropriate recommendation on ways to improve the performance of students in Yoruba essay writing is made in the body of the paper.

Introduction

Yoruba language is the mother-tongue of the people who occupy what is now known as Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Lagos, Ondo, Ekiti and parts of Kwara and Kogi States of Nigeria. Yoruba people are also found scattered about in different parts of the world like Cuba, Sierra Leone and Brazil, Abimbola, (1990). Awoniyi (1978) has put the development in Yoruba language as school subject into phases. The 1800-1880, the pre-colonial era; 1882-1960, the period when the colonial government showed special interest in development of African languages. The third phase of 1960 upward has been a remarkable period in curriculum development of Yoruba language in education. It was also reported that such groups like Egbe Omo Odua, Egbe

Akomolede ati Asa Yoruba did especially provide basis for the standardized version of Yoruba Language in education. Today Yoruba language is being taught as a subject in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions making the prospect of Yoruba language in education brighter.

The official recognition given by the Nigerian Government was expressed in the National Policy on Education first published in 1977, revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004. In Junior secondary school (JSS) which is of three year duration the child must study three languages:

- i. His mother-tongue (if available for study) or an indigenous language of wider communication in his areas
- ii. English language

iii. Just anyone of the three major indigenous languages in the country, namely Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The language chosen is distinct from the child's mother-tongue.

In senior secondary school (SSS) which also lasts three years, the child must study two languages: An indigenous language and English Language. The awareness created by the policy has helped in identifying other Nigerian languages and the process of committing them into writing. Till date, not much has been done in many indigenous languages. The use of the mother tongue as tool of communication will give the learners an opportunity for adequate perception and logical thinking. This will liberate the learner from the problem of linguistic complexity that impedes communication. Efficacy of mother tongue as medium of instruction was tested and proved in the Ife Primary Education Research Project (1970-1978). Unfortunately, many did not capture the vision and embrace its use. Rather, they had the erroneous believe that its use in school at elementary stage will hinder perfect understanding and fluency in English language. Worse still is the fact that many educated elites who should advocate the development of the minority languages are advocates of the continued use of English language as the medium of instruction and Nigeria's official language. (Adegbite, 2003). This among other reasons accounts for why most of these private schools teach pupils in English all through, some even do not teach the three major languages at all (Awonusi, 2004).

Many scholars like Fafunwa (1982) and Adegbite (1993) have spoken on the relevance of L1 in the literacy development of a child in an L2 context. Adegbite (1993) goes further to suggest segmental bilingual approach in which the reading skill is introduced to pupils in L1 earlier than L2 but with a proviso that the listening and speaking skills in both the L1 and L2 are taught earlier to facilitate the later in acquisition of L2. In

his submission, L1 enhances rather than impeding learning of L2.

Literature review

As far as language learning and acquisition is concerned, especially in Nigeria where there is pronounced linguistic multiplicity or polarity of languages, people tend to be favorably and positively disposed to using both in speech and writing and tolerating a language that has

- i. A considerable national and international coverage of users
- ii. A metropolitan or cosmopolitan status
- iii. A considerable numerical strength and some measure of economic and political power
- iv. A sufficient reliable codified form (Adeagbo (2004).

On the other hand, if a language does not possess the above instrumental and interpretive forces, people's attitude towards it is bound to be negative. Today, because of our colonial experience, Bamgbose, (1981), Olukpe, (1975) and Awoniyi (1978) remarked that English still enjoys a prime of place in Nigeria in official and educational cycle compared to Yoruba Language. Thus students' attitudes towards English Language are more positive than that of Yoruba language. The above submission was held by Akindele and Adegbite, (1999) and Oyetade (2000).

Among the features that affect students' performance in language is attitude. Osborne (2003) see attitude as an organismic factor that affects behaviour and that positive attitude facilitates learning while negative hinders learning, making it an aspect that should be examined when discussing issues relating to language acquisition and development especially as it affects students in teaching-learning situation. Makinde, (1991) and Akuburo, (2004) have revealed that attitude affects what is learned in cognitive, affective and the psychomotor domains since it is the attitude of an individual to learning that

determines his desires to perform. Sonaiya (2007), lamenting on the disuse of African languages says:

...what continues to be of great concern to many Africa is the fact that even after independence not only are European languages still being maintained within the educational system, but very little is being done to develop African languages which had suffered over a century of neglect pg. 18.

This state of affairs is what Djite (2004) in Adegoju (2008) refers to as "the most painful and absurd interface between Africa and the rest of the world" The fact is that Africa is the only continent in the world in which language in _ education "is largely exogenous to the society it seeks to serve. This makes it relatively important to determine the place of attitude to writing in student's performance in Yoruba essay writing. Fafunwa (1982) among others, submit that if learning is to be made easier and meaningful for the Nigerian child, and also serve as a springboard for cultural transmission, mother tongue is the best tool of communication.

Olanrewaju (1986) posited the poor performance of the pupils who were taught in English which is the current medium of instruction for virtually all subjects except Yoruba language. If the child must learn well at school, easily grasp the basic concept to be taught, make progress in later life and at school, the environment in which he begins his formal education must not be strange to him. The use of mother tongue will be a way out for the modern scientific and technological breakthrough in our nation state as creativity and ingenuity which has for long been an illusion would be solved. Nwokedi (1984) quoted in Adegoju (2008) submitted that certain student's poor performance in science related subjects is as a result of problems encountered in the teaching and learning of sciences in English Language. Students had problems of getting

linguistic alternative of the mother tongue in English language. This was supported by Obinabo (1978) when he asserted that:

...where a language is foreign the student scientist must battle with the language first and then the concept after which follows the application. When the student scientist masters the language and the concept the dissemination of the idea is again impeded by the same language barrier and instead of the student scientist serving as a catalyst in the advancement of the country, he becomes a moribund scientist. Thus has in turn left him in darkness out of a whole range of physical phenomena around him pg. 3.

There must be a fostering of better communication among Nigerians through the promotion of effective intellectual utilization of language skills acquired for development through its use as an effective medium of instruction. The use of the mother tongue as tool of communication will give the learners an opportunity for adequate perception and logical thinking. This will liberate the learner from the problem of linguistic complexity that impedes communication.

Among the factors responsible for students' poor performance in essay writing as identified by researchers such as, Jiboku (1998), Ezeokoli (1999); Adelabu, (1998), Idogo, (2005) and Ajayi (2004) include poor knowledge of the rules of grammar, ignorance of acceptable sentence patterns, inability to construct a complete sentence and lack of teachers' exposures to modern methods of teaching. It is imperative to assess the effect of students' language proficiency on student's performance in Yoruba essay writing.

Statement of the problem

Good as the use of indigenous language is in teaching and learning, it is expected that no learner should have any

problem in oral and written forms of his mother tongue. Contrary to this assertion is the case of many Yoruba speaking students. With the lukewarm attitude that the society has towards speaking Yoruba language, many could not speak Yoruba fluently without the interference of English language and as well have problems in writing the language down correctly. Ezeokoli, (1999), asserts that it is difficult for many Nigerian students to perform beyond average because their negative attitude made them lack some reading and writing skills required for effective study. Hence, we have a good number of students failing in internal and external examinations in Yoruba. Over the years the WAEC chief examiners reports on candidates' performance in Yoruba essay writing have been that students' writing lack content knowledge, linguistic input, tone mark and orthography. Lack of proficiency in Yoruba language even among the students' who are indigenes calls for cross-examination. Studies on cognitive and affective factors in language learning are more on foreign languages than indigenous languages. Hence, to fill this gaps, this study aim at examining the effects of language proficiency and attitude on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing

Objectives:

1. To find the relationship between the independent variables and students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing.
2. To explore the joint contribution of the independent variables on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing.
3. To draw out the relative contribution of each of the independent variables on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing.

Methodology:

Research Design: A descriptive survey research design of correlational type was adopted for the study. This type of research starts with the observation of the dependent

variable and simultaneous studies of independent variables for their possible effects on the dependent variable

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between the independent variables (language proficiency and students' attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) and achievement in Yoruba essay writing?

Research Question 2: What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) on achievement in Yoruba essay writing?

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) on achievement in Yoruba essay writing?

Population: The population for this study comprised of Senior Secondary School II students in Ibadan metropolis.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The researcher made use of simple random sampling technique in selecting sample from the population. The participants for this study were 200.

Instrumentation: Three instruments were used for this study. The instruments are as follows: Students' Attitude Towards Essay Writing (SATEW)

- i. Students' Language Proficiency Test (SLPT)
- ii. Yoruba Essay Writing Achievement Test (YEWAT)

Students' Attitude Towards Essay Writing (SATEW): The draft of SATEW consisted of 20 items was developed by the investigator to measure students' attitude towards Yoruba essay writing. The students were expected to respond by indicating their

levels of agreement or otherwise with each of the items on a four point modified Likert Scale: Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The validity of the 20 items was assured through assistance of practicing teachers of Yoruba language in some of the senior secondary schools in Oyo State. These individuals assessed the SATEW with respect to adequacy, language structure, relevance and coverage of the behavioural objectives, levels and content coverage. The SATEW was also pre-tested using 20 SS II students in a school in Ibadan North (not part of the study sample). The estimated reliability of the SATEW is 0.81 Cronbach co-efficient alpha values. The pre-test provided the empirical basis for determining estimates of validity and reliability of the instrument.

Students Language Proficiency Test (SLPT):

The test on students Language Proficiency was designed by the researcher to collect information on students' Language Proficiency – Yoruba sentence structure and figurative expressions. The test was presented to experts in Yoruba language for face and content validity. The reliability co-efficient was established using Kuder Richardson formular 20 which was found to be 0.70.

Yoruba Essay Writing Achievement Test (YEWAT):

The test consists of two essay

topics drawn by the researcher to collect information on students' achievement. Objectivity and consistency in scoring was ascertained by adopting Teachers of English for Education Purpose (TEEP) attributes writing scale as a marking guide for scoring the essays. This is an instrument developed by Weir (1988) standardized and adopted by teachers of English for educational purposes. The scorer reliability index was .91.

Procedure for Data Collection: The researcher approached the Principals of schools used for the study to obtain permission to release the students for the study. The researcher educated the participants on how to fill the questionnaire, after the questionnaire was well filled; the researcher collected the instruments, appreciated the participants and took questionnaire for data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis were used to analyse data obtained from the field work.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between the independent variables (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) and achievement in Yoruba essay writing?

Table 1: Correlation matrix showing the relationship between study variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	1	2	3
Language proficiency	54.8800	13.66599	1.000	""	
Student attitude to Yoruba essay writing	34.3900	10.58338	.580**	1.000	
Achievement in Yoruba Essay writing	40.1500	14.88440	.317**	.292*	1.000

*Correlation is significant at 0.05(2-tailed)

Table 1 reveals the relationship of each independent variable with the dependent variable. (language proficiency and students attitude on students' achievement in Yoruba essay

writing). The language proficiency positively correlates with achievement in Yoruba essay writing ($r = 0.317, p < 0.001$) and students attitude to Yoruba essay writing ($r = 0.292, p < 0.05$). This implies

that the higher the influence of language proficiency and students attitude to Yoruba essay writing the greater the achievement in Yoruba essay writing.

Research Question 2: What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) on achievement in Yoruba essay writing?

Table 2: Summary of regression for the joint contributions of independent variables to the prediction of achievement in Yoruba essay writing:

R =.658					
R Square =.433					
Adjusted R square =.424					
Std. Error =10.37258					
		Sum of			
Model		Squares	Df	Mean square	F
1	Regression	16077.403	2	8038.70	74.71
	Residual	21087.717	196	107.59	
	Total	37165.120	198		
					Sig.
					.000 ^a

Table 2 above reveals significant joint contribution of the independent variables (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) to the prediction of achievement in Yoruba essay writing. The result yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions $R = 0.658$ and multiple R-square = 0.433.

This suggests that the two factors combined accounted for 42.4% (Adj.R2=.424) variance in the prediction of achievement in Yoruba essay writing. The other factors accounting for 57.6% variance in the prediction of achievement in Yoruba essay writing is beyond the

scope of this study. The ANOVA result from the regression analysis shows that there was a significant effect of the independent variables on the achievement in Yoruba essay writing, $F(3, 196) = 74.71, P < 0.001$.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) on achievement in Yoruba essay writing?

Table 3: Relative effect of the independent variables to the prediction of students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing:

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1 (Constant)	30.272	5.100		5.935	.000
Language proficiency religiousity	.610	.074	.473	8.214	.000
Attitude to Essay writing spirituality	.134	.052	.146	2.594	.010

Table 3 shows that, the two predictor factors (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) are potent predictors of achievement in Yoruba essay writing. The more potent factor was language proficiency (Beta = .473, $t=8.214$, $P<0.001$); and followed by students attitude to Yoruba essay writing (Beta = .146, $t = 2.594$, $P<0.05$). This implies that, an increase in language proficiency and students' attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing could increase the achievement in Yoruba essay writing.

Findings:

- i. The language proficiency positively correlates with achievement in Yoruba essay writing ($r = 0.317$, $p<0.001$) and students attitude to Yoruba essay writing ($r= 0.292$, $p<0.05$).
- ii. It reveals significant joint contribution of the independent variables (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) to the prediction of achievement in Yoruba essay writing. The result yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions $R = 0.658$ and multiple R -square = $0.433.3$.
- iii. This shows that the two predictor factors (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) are potent predictors of achievement in Yoruba essay writing. The more potent factor was language proficiency (Beta = .473, $t=8.214$, $P<0.001$); and followed by students attitude to Yoruba essay writing (Beta = .146, $t = 2.594$, $P<0.05$).

Discussion of Findings:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between the independent variables (language proficiency and students

attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) and achievement in Yoruba essay writing?

In this study, both attitude and language proficiency are found to be of relative importance to performance in Yoruba essay writing. This finding is however contrary to the result of Oyinloye and Gbenedio (2010) who found slight differences in attitude and language proficiency of learners but statistically insignificant. This finding is corroborated by the findings of Ogunyemi, (2010) that competence in writing is a pre-requisite for students' academic success. Kolawole (1998), notes that academic ability of the learner determines their language adequacy and the extent to which proficiency is attained in a language. Therefore the two variables corroborate to enhance learning of Yoruba essay writing.

Research Question 2: What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) on achievement in Yoruba essay writing?

This study shows that among variables that are germane to prediction of students' academic achievement in language learning, attitude and language proficiency are vital. Psychologists have emphasized the role of attitude in learning. For example, Owoye, (2001) gave the following analysis that if we develop a negative attitude towards examination; the negative attitude may seriously interfere with our performance in examination. He submits that attitude works hand - in - hand with learner's will power and that a candidate who has a negative attitude towards a particular examination may find this attitudinal frame of mind negating his performance in the examination. Having right attitude will encourage learners to intensify effort, seek help when lacking understanding and thereby improve their language skills. Baker (1993) found that students with positive attitude spend more

effort to learn the language by using strategies such as asking questions, volunteering information and answering questions. Right attitude leads to high proficiency which comes to bear on student's writing.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (language proficiency and students attitude to achievement in Yoruba essay writing) on achievement in Yoruba essay writing? This shows that the level of students' knowledge of basic principles in Yoruba language reflected in their performance in essay writing. Language proficiency is the system of linguistic knowledge possessed by native speakers of a language. It is in contrast to the concept of linguistic performance the way the language system is used in communication. Gok & Silay (2010) define attitude as a mental concept that depicts favourable or unfavourable feeling toward an object. The picture that learners have about the importance of Yoruba language to their career on one hand, and the weight accorded essay writing in particular in Yoruba language examination on the other, can go a long way to determine the attitude they put up. Fakeye, (2010) asserts that, learning occurs more easily when the learner has positive attitude towards the learning of the language rather than when having negative attitude. This indicates that attitude readily work on what is feasible.

Conclusion:

The study has been able to assess the language proficiency of students in Yoruba language and their attitude to Yoruba essay writing. The effect of these independent variables on Yoruba essay writing has been evaluated. It is hoped that teachers, parents and all stakeholders will see the need to develop the affective factors of the learners as well as the cognitive to be able to bring out the best in them. It is shown in the findings that both attitude and language

proficiency corroborate to enhance good performance in Yoruba essay writing.

Recommendations

- i. Teachers should use relevant and thought provoking instructional materials to teach writing such that learners would have good command of a wide variety of forms, genres, styles and tones, and the ability to use same in their essay writing.
- ii. Students should develop good attitude toward their indigenous languages and appreciate the culture it represents.
- iii. Parents and guardians should learn how to create a home environment that will promote learning and reinforces what is being taught at school. They should show interest in Yoruba language for there in, lies our cultural heritage. They should provide necessary materials for their children to learn the language well.
- iv. The teaching of Yoruba language should be enforced in all private primary and secondary school.

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