

ISSN 1597-8540

VOLUME 12 NUMBER 2, MARCH, 2015



JOURNAL OF APPLIED EDUCATION

AND

VOCATIONAL RESEARCH

(JAEVR)

ISSN 1597 - 8540

*Journal of Applied
Education*

And

Vocational Research

Volume 12/Number 2/ March 2015.

*Official Journal of the College of Applied Education
and Vocational Technology,
Tai Solarin University of Education,
Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria.*

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Volume 12/Number 2/March 2015

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EFFECTS OF INDEPENDENT STUDY AND ABILITY GROUPING ON PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH ESSAY AND LETTER WRITING AMONG HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS IN IBADAN, OYO STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated effects of independent study and ability grouping on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing in Ibadan, Oyo State, using a pre-test, post-test, control group, quasi-experimental research design with a 3 x 2 x 2 factorial matrix. Six secondary schools and 78 SSS II high-achieving students were purposively selected as the participants were assigned into two experimental groups and control group. Students' Past Academic records, English Language Achievement Screening Test ($r=0.72$), English Language Essay/Letter Achievement Test ($r=0.78$) and Academic Self-efficacy Scale ($r=0.76$) were the instruments used for the study. Participants in the experimental groups were instructionally facilitated and control group taught with the conventional method. Five hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 significant level, while data analysed, using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and mean scores. Independent study and ability grouping were effective in improving the high-achieving students'

performance in essay writing as the participants exposed to ability grouping had the highest mean score of 35.934, followed by independent study with 32.478, showing better performance than their counterparts in the control group who had 25.879. The three groups maintained the same scoring order in letter writing performance, 33.405, 32.713 and 27.581. The result also revealed that in the two-way interaction effect of treatment and self-efficacy, there was a significant difference in high-achieving students' performance in essay writing ($F_{(2,74)} = 4.315, P < .05, \eta^2 = .119$), but no such interaction effect in their letter writing performance ($F_{(2,74)} = .487, P > .05, \eta^2 = 0.15$). However, male and female participants in the experimental groups benefitted equally from the treatment packages. Based on these findings, teachers of English should use these educational strategies for high-achieving students' educational development.

Keywords: Independent Study, Ability Grouping, High Achievement, English Essay and Letter Writing Performance.

Introduction

The importance of the English Language in Nigeria is daily being emphasized by its phenomenal growth and spread. It is a means of communication and unification in the country. It is a language with such prominence that serves as a means of social communication in the nation. Its use in the nation's education system has been consolidated by official policy, promulgated by the Federal Government. Kolawole (2013) clarifies that apart of English being an instructional language in Nigeria; it has also acquired the status of compulsory subject in the curriculum. Ezeokoli (2013) equally establishes that the English language is one of the core subjects taught at the various levels of Nigerian education, especially the primary, secondary and even the pre-primary grades. From the foregoing, it could be inferred that English remains a pivotal instrument for educational development in Nigeria. However, English, as a compulsory school subject in Nigeria has different aspects among which is essay and letter writing, being a discourse section, that engenders novelty, innovation, exploration and in-depth analysis of any topic of interest.

Essay writing is a process of presenting a short piece of writing on a given topic, written in continuous prose form that communicates its message effectively which could be sub-grouped into pre-writing, writing and re-writing stages. Douglas and Hine (1998) quoted in Balogun (2010) consider essay writing as a composition, usually short and in prose in any subject which could be divided into narrative, descriptive, expository and argumentative. Ajibola (2012) views essay writing as a process of writing that requires thoughts and judgement on a given topic which is sub-categorized into selection of the topic, making outlines and writing the discourse. Letter writing is a method of communication, via written or printed messages, which plays an important role in students' private, social and business life as well as an academic activity.

It is of enormous educational concern that quite a great number of students perform poorly in essay and letter writing exercises in external examinations. According to the report by the West African Senior Certificate Examinations Chief Examiner (2011), in spite of the fact that the writing course was within the scope of the students, their general performance was poor. Many of them chose topics for which they did not have adequate materials to develop. Some either deliberately ignored or were ignorant of the basic qualities of a discourse writing – content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy. However, this aspect of English is germane because it plays an important role in academic and sociological well-being of the students. It is on this premise that the researchers of this study used independent study and ability grouping to effect a change.

Independent study otherwise known as self-directed learning is an accepted and ideal strategy for the secondary school context. It is a programme that accommodates high-achieving students which ensures that their needs are met in the school setting (Education Review Office, 2008). Coleman (2001) describes independent study as a method that modifies the curriculum using enrichment, acceleration, sophistication and novelty. Independent study is a strategic orchestrated programme designed to advance the educational development in which the emphasis is on unique, original products. It could be observed from the

foregoing that independent study is a very resourceful instructional strategy that enriches the high-achieving students in secondary schools. Its qualitative effect on the learners will be of immense contribution to their overall development since the strategy is based on the interest of the students. Meyer, Haywood, Sachdev and Faradey (2008) also find independent study as a strategy that improves the academic performance of high-achieving learners, increases their motivation and confidence, gives them greater awareness of their limitations and their ability to manage them among others. However, the programme covers introduction, topic selection, topic organization, asking questions, a study method, information collection, a product development, information presentation and evaluation of the study. Besides, working conditions are attached to the study which set down clear behavioural and product expectations (Winebrenner, 2001).

Ufford and Uyanwa (2003) describe ability grouping, being a strategic means of facilitating the educational development of high-achieving students, as a provision that allows high-achieving students to be grouped in accordance with their ability in general or specific areas, based on mental age or subject aptitude. It involves a group of students collectively working together in activities in which they excel.

Brody (2004) identifies the purposes of grouping of ability as easing the delivery of appropriately differentiated curriculum to learners with similar educational needs; facilitating the use of appropriately differentiated instructional strategies to learners with similar educational needs; facilitating addressing the differential affective needs of these children in the most conducive manner and allowing for learners of similar abilities or performance levels to learn from one another. Grouping high-achieving students tends to be the most effective and efficient means for schools to provide more challenging course work, thereby giving the learners access to advanced content and providing them with a peer group.

In a similar development, ability grouping has been found to enable to adapt instruction according to students' ability levels, match work to students' needs and interests and provide appropriate tasks both for students with higher and lower abilities, skills and knowledge.

According to Toomela, Kikas and Mottus (2006) as quoted in Hallam and Ireson (2009), students benefit from co-operation and mutual facilitation provided through ability grouping while the teachers are found to have positive attitudes towards it. According to them, over the span of a school year, students in ability groups achieve more than those who have not been grouped. Importantly, when instruction is modified, students in ability groups achieve more greatly. The effects of ability grouping on students' academic, social and personal outcomes have been indelible. In respect of academic performance, ability grouping is beneficial for high-ability students. Self-efficacy is a variable considered as imperative in this study. Koura and Al-Hebaishi (2014) affirm that self-efficacy is a good predictor of human behaviour and actions. It is not a fixed trait that a person possesses in a fixed quantity from birth. It is rather a general capacity that develops through time and experience. This suggests to us that self-efficacy can be high or low. According to Fakeye (2010), a student with high academic self-efficacy feels that he has the ability to do well in a school subject while a learner with low self-efficacy emotes he does not have the power and ability to learn and do well in a school course and thus admits that failure starts from the start. In the views of Ogundokun (2009), self-efficacious learners feel confident about solving problems. They develop an approach to problem solving and attribute their success to their abilities. Students with strong self-efficacy set high goals for themselves and exhibit stronger commitment, motivation, perseverance and resiliency towards achieving those goals (Adeyemo, 2007). It implies that poor or low self-efficacy which implies a lack of confidence in facing and mastering environment, would be related to deficiency in the accomplishment for the learners which is their poor performance in school.

Gender as another variable in this study is a parameter for measuring performance levels of both male and female high-achieving students. Kamler (2000) remarks that the verbal ability of girls over boys contributes immensely to their language development and reading ability. Girls do speak more clearly, read earlier and perform consistently better than boys in test of spelling and grammar. Maccoby

and Jacklin (2001) agree with Kamler (2000), when they established that generally, researchers on development studies report that males and females learn at different rates. During the first to four years of life, girls tend to develop more linguistically quickly. On the average, they have been found to articulate more clearly, say their first word earlier, form sentences sooner and count more accurately at an early age than boys. They also note that girls learn to read more easily than boys; girls are rated higher in language skills such as spelling, punctuation and diagramming sentences. This study therefore examined the resultant effects of independent study and ability grouping on the English essay and letter writing performance among high-achieving students in senior secondary schools, as well as the influence of gender on the dependent variables.

Statement of the Problem

The incessant record of students' mass failure in external English language examinations, especially essay and letter writing exercises constitutes a problem of concern in education. This has been attributed to some factors such as the use of ineffective pedagogical practices by teachers, students' disinterestedness in the concepts, shortage of qualified teachers as well as poor motivation of teachers of English and students. Available studies focused on such issues as students' performance in Oral English, English grammar, summary writing and curriculum modification. However, studies that considered effects of independent study and ability grouping are very few. That is the reason why the researchers investigated the effects of such instructional strategies. It is believed that the strategies would effect a positive change in essay and letter writing performance of high-achieving students. The researchers also examined the influence of gender on the dependent variables.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the effects of independent study and ability grouping on high-achieving students'

performance in English essay and letter writing as well as the interaction effects of gender on the dependent variables

Significance of the Study

The study would be of immense benefit to the high-achieving students. It would provide them with adequate avenue or forum to express their potential abilities in the English discourse writing. It would afford them the opportunity to explore their specific areas of interest and preferred learning styles. It would equally be of help to them in shaping their belief system on their abilities. It would provide the language teachers with pedagogical information on the effective use of instructional strategies to enhance their students' performance in English written communications and improve their professionalism. Furthermore, it is hoped that the study would help the curriculum planners and designers to adjust the curriculum to cater for high-achieving students for them to maximize their unexpressed abilities in the English language in Nigerian secondary schools. It is believed that the result of the study would be useful to other stakeholders in education such as parents, guardians and school administrators to play their roles in helping the students use independent study and ability grouping for optimal performance.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant main effect of independent study, ability grouping and control group on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing;
2. There is no significant main effect of independent study and control group on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing;
3. There is no significant main effect of ability grouping and control group on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing;
4. There is no significant main effect of gender on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing;

5. There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing.

Methodology

The study adopted a pre-test, post-test, control group, quasi-experimental research design with a 3 x 2 x 2 factorial matrix. The target population for the study comprised all students with high achievement in senior secondary school two in Ibadan, Oyo State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select three public and private schools. In the identification of high-achieving students, the learners' past academic records on English language and their performance on English Language Achievement Screening Test were considered. The first thirty students who had cumulative 60% and above scores in senior secondary school one (SSS1) in English Language examinations were selected across departmental classes in the senior secondary school two (SSS 2) making 180 students. However, the first thirteen students who scored 70% and above in English Language Achievement Screening Test (ELAST) in each of the schools were considered as participants in the study. A total number of seventy-eight participants, comprising equal number of boys and girls were involved in the study. These students were randomly divided into experimental group I, experimental group II and control group. There were twenty-six students in each of the three groups, comprising one public and private school.

Three major research instruments were used in the study, namely: English Language Achievement Screening Test, (ELAST) self-developed and standardized with reliability co-efficient of 0.72, English Language Essay/Letter Achievement Test, (ELELAT), self-developed and standardized with reliability co-efficient of 0.78 and Adapted Academic Self-efficacy Scale (AASS) developed by Shwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). A test re-test method was used to compete the reliability and internal consistency of the item. A reliability co-efficient of 0.76 was obtained. ELAST was used for screening, ELELAT used as pre-test and post-test measures and AASS was used to measure academic self-efficacy of the students. The treatment lasted for eight weeks out of which two weeks

was used for pre and post – treatment assessments for the conduct of the experiment. The researchers employed the services of six trained research assistants (who are English Language teachers). Participants were exposed to treatment for six weeks, using independent study and ability grouping strategies. During the six weeks, participants in each of the experimental groups received training and control group was taught with the conventional method for two hours per week, covering forty (40) minutes as duration for each lesson. The researchers moved round the six schools to supervise the trained research assistants and offer assistance where need be. In the eighth week after training and teaching, post-test was administered.

Results

H_{01} : There is no significant main effect of Independent study, ability grouping and control group on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing;

Table 4.1: High- achieving Students' Performance in Essay Writing by Treatment, Gender and Self-efficacy

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta ² / Effect Size
Corrected Model	2173.143	12	181.095	15.029	.000	.738
Pretest Essay writing	677.376	1	677.376	56.216	.000	.468
<i>Main effect</i>						
Treatment	821.941	2	410.971	34.107	.000	.516
Gender	8.552	1	8.552	.710	.403	.011
Self- efficacy	21.400	1	21.400	1.776	.187	.027
<i>2-way Interactions</i>						
Treatment x Gender	30.407	2	15.203	1.262	.290	.038
Treatment x Self-efficacy	103.994	2	51.997	4.315	.017	.119
Gender x Self-efficacy	72.278	1	72.278	5.998	.017	.086
<i>3-way Interactions</i>						
Treatment x Gender x S.E	148.236	2	74.118	6.151	.004	.161
Error	771.169	64	12.050			
Total	2944.312	76				

(R-squared = .738, Adjusted R-Squared = .689)

The table 1 above reveals that in the main effect, there was a significant difference in treatment but none was found between Gender and Self-efficacy; in the two-way interactions, there was a significant interaction effect between treatment and self-efficacy, gender and self-efficacy but none was between treatment and gender. Also, in the three-way interactions, there was a significant interaction effect among treatment, gender and self-efficacy ($F_{(2,74)} = 6.151, P < .05, \eta^2 = .161$). This indicates that there was a significant difference in the treatment groups, gender and self-efficacy respectively on high-achieving students' performance in English essay writing. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected; the table also shows the contributing effect size of 16.1%. In order to determine the magnitude of the post-test mean scores obtained by the two treatment groups, mean score is used to present the result.

Table 2: Mean Scores of the Treatment Groups in Essay Writing

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Error
Independent Study	26	32.478	1.153
Ability Grouping	26	35.234	1.088

From table 2, it is obvious that high-achieving students exposed to ability grouping had the higher mean score (35.934), than independent study (32.478). It means that ability grouping is more effective than independent study in essay writing performance of the participants.

Table 3: High-achieving Students' Performance in Letter Writing by Treatment, Gender and Self-efficacy

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta ² / Effect Size
Corrected Model	1379.203	12	114.934	7.759	.000	.593
Pretest letter writing	326.797	1	326.797	22.061	.000	.256
<i>Main effect</i>						
Treatment	321.972	2	160.986	10.867	.000	.254
Gender	9.040E-02	1	9.040E-02	.006	.938	.000
Self- efficacy	16.149	1	16.149	1.090	.300	.017
<i>2-way Interactions</i>						
Treatment x Gender	5.595	2	2.797	.189	.828	.006
Treatment x Self-efficacy	14.421	2	7.211	.487	.617	.015
Gender x Self-efficacy	.195	1	.195	.013	.909	.000
<i>3-way Interactions</i>						
Treatment x Gender x S.E	7.442	2	3.721	.251	.779	.008
Error	948.069	64	14.814			
Total	2327.273	76				

(R-squared = .593, Adjusted R-Squared = .516)

Table 3 above shows that in the main effect, there was a significant difference in treatment groups but none was found between gender and self-efficacy; in the two-way interactions, there was no significant interaction effect between treatment and self-efficacy, gender and self-efficacy, treatment and gender. Also, in the three-way interactions, there was no significant interaction effect among treatment, gender and self-efficacy ($F_{(2,74)} = .251$, $P > .05$, $\eta^2 = .008$). This indicates that there was no significant difference in the groups on high-achieving students' performance in letter writing. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted; the table also shows the contributing effect size of 0.8%.

Table 4: Mean Scores of the Treatment Groups in Letter Writing

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Error
Independent Study	26	32.713	1.290
Ability Grouping	26	33.405	1.209

From table 4, it is evident that high-achieving students exposed to ability grouping had the higher mean score (33.405), than independent study (x 32.713), It means that ability grouping is more effective than independent study.

H_{02} : There is no significant main effect of independent study and control group on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing;

Table 5: Mean Scores of Independent Study and Control Group in Essay Writing

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Error
Independent Study	26	32.478	1.153
Control Group	26	25.879	.707

Table 5 above shows that participants exposed to independent study had the higher mean score of (32.478) than the control group (25.879). This shows that independent study is better at facilitating essay writing than the conventional teaching method used to teach the control group.

Table 6: Mean Scores of Independent Study and Control Group in Letter Writing

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Error
Independent Study	26	32.713	1.290
Control Group	26	27.581	.793

Table 6 above indicates that participants exposed to independent study had the higher mean score of (32.713), performing better than the control group (27.581). This reveals that independent study is better at

improving letter writing than the conventional method used to instruct the control group. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

H₀₃: There is no significant main effect of ability grouping and control group on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing;

Table 7: Mean Score of Ability Grouping and Control Group in Essay Writing

Discussion of Findings

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Error
Ability Grouping	26	35.934	1.088
Control Group	26	25.879	.707

Table 7 above shows that participants exposed to ability grouping had the higher mean score of (35.934) than the control group (25.579). This means that ability grouping is better at enhancing essay writing than the conventional teaching method used to teach the control group.

Table 8: Mean Score of Ability Grouping and Control Group in Letter Writing

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Error
Ability Grouping	26	33.405	1.209
Control Group	26	27.581	.793

Table 8 above reveals that participants exposed to ability grouping had the higher mean score of (33.405) than the control group (27.581). This means that ability grouping is more effective at fostering letter writing than the conventional teaching method used to teach the control group. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

H₀₄: There is no significant main effect of gender on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing;

Results on tables 1 and 3 show that there was no significant main effect of gender on the participants' essay writing ($F_{(1,75)} = .710, P > .05$,

$\eta^2 = .011$) and letter writing performance ($F_{(1,75)} = .006$, $P > .05$, $\eta^2 = .001$) respectively. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Ho₅: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing;

Results on tables 1 and 3 reveal that there was no interaction effect of treatment and gender on the participants' essay writing ($F_{(2,74)} = 1.262$, $P > .05$, $\eta^2 = .038$) and letter writing performance ($F_{(2,74)} = .189$, $P > .05$, $\eta^2 = .006$) respectively. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. This means that there was no interaction between treatments and gender.

Table 9: Mean Scores of Participants in Essay Writing by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Error
Male	39	31.921	.960
Female	39	31.940	.644

Table 9 reveals that male and female participants obtained about the same mean scores of 31.921 and 31.940 respectively. This shows that in terms of treatment packages, male and female did not show any discriminatory effect. Both instructional strategies were effective in fostering essay writing performance regardless of gender.

Table 10: Mean Scores of Participants in Letter Writing by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Error
Male	39	31.283	1.059
Female	39	31.183	.713

Table 10 shows that male and female participants obtained about the same mean scores of 31.283 and 31.183 respectively. This shows that in terms of treatment packages, male and female did not show any difference. Both instructional strategies were effective in enhancing letter writing performance irrespective of gender.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one

The hypothesis states that there is no significant main effect of independent study, ability grouping and control group on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing. The results on tables 1 and 3 indicated that there was significant main effect in essay and letter writing performance of participants exposed to independent study, ability grouping and control group. However, table 2 and 5 showed that ability grouping had the highest mean score (35.934) followed by independent study (32.478) and control group (25.879) in essay writing. This indicates that ability grouping is more effective than independent study in fostering essay writing performance of high-achieving students. The results on tables 3 and 4 showed that there was a significant main effect of independent study and ability grouping on the students' performance in English letter writing. The result showed that ability grouping had the highest score (33.405), followed by independent study (32.713), showing better performance than the control group (27.581). This means that ability grouping was more effective than independent study in promoting letter writing performance of the students. This finding on independent study being effective in discourse writing performance of high-achieving students supports the idea of Kato and Sugawara (2009) who found that independent study enables students to take an active role in English language course. This finding also corroborates the submission of Ahmed (2012) that students' essay writing ability improves when they work using self-paced instruction and course projects in English language. Thanh (2010) equally confirmed that independent study encourages interactions between students in a language course and enhances their performance.

Higher mean score of participants in ability grouping as revealed in this study shows that for better performance of high-achieving students, they would definitely need grouping by abilities for modified or enriched instruction in the English language. This will allow them to advance based on their ability levels. This is buttressed by the finding of Liu (2009) that ability grouping in English instruction fostered the

students' performance. Lee (2000) also established that effects of English ability teaching conforms to the adaptive learning, meets the needs of the students and increases the teaching-learning efficacy. Also, Lee and Lin (2013) indicated that application of English ability teaching solved some challenging academic problems. They reported that students accepted the teaching strategy and felt satisfied with the ability grouping teaching which enabled them to perform much better in English.

Hypothesis Two

The hypothesis states that there is no significant main effect of independent study and control group on high-achieving students' performance in essay and letter writing. The results on tables 5 and 6 showed that there was significant main effect of independent study on high-achieving students' performance in essay and letter writing. The mean score obtained by participants exposed to independent study in essay writing was (32.478) and followed by the control group (25.879). The mean score of participants exposed to independent study in letter writing was (32.713) and was followed by control group (27.581). In essence, the results revealed that independent study was more effective than conventional method. This finding agrees with Trivedi (2013) and Meyer, Haywood, Sachder and Faradey (2008) who concluded that independent study effected positive changes in learning outcome of high-achieving students.

Hypothesis Three

The hypothesis states that there is no significant main effect of ability grouping and control group on high-achieving students' performance in essay and letter writing. The results on tables 7 and 8 indicated that there was significant main effect of ability grouping on high-achieving students' performance in essay and letter writing. The mean score obtained by participants exposed to ability grouping in essay writing was (35.934) and was followed by control group (25.879). The mean score of participants exposed to ability grouping in letter writing was (33.405) and was followed by control group (27.581). Essentially, the

results revealed that ability grouping showed more efficacy than the control group. This finding is in line with the submission of Siegle (2006) and Abadzi (2001) that ability grouping is an effective strategy in facilitating high-achieving students' learning.

Hypothesis Four

The hypothesis states that there is no significant main effect of gender on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing. The result on table 1 ($F_{(1,75)} = .710, P > .05, \eta^2 = .011$) showed that there was no significant main effect of gender on performance in essay writing of high-achieving students exposed to treatments. The mean scores of male (31.921) and female (31.940) revealed that gender did not have effect on essay writing performance of the students. The result on table 3 ($F_{(1,75)} = .197, P > .05, \eta^2 = .003$) showed that there was no significant effect of gender on performance in English letter writing of high-achieving students exposed to treatments. The mean scores of male (31.283) and female (31.183) showed that gender did not have effect on letter writing performance of the students. This finding contradicts most of the general submission of earlier literature such as Camarata and Woodlock (2006), Demie (2001) and Summers (2000) who opined that there is a gap in the educational performance of high-achieving male and female students in schools and concluded that girls perform higher than boys in English. This result also contradicts Bijami and Kashef's (2013) opinion who established that females score higher than males in reading and writing.

Hypothesis Five

The hypothesis states that there is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on high-achieving students' performance in English essay and letter writing. The result on table 1 ($F_{(2,74)} = 1.262, P > .05, \eta^2 = .038$) revealed that there was no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on high-achieving students' performance in English essay writing. The finding on table 3 ($F_{(2,74)} = .189, P > .05, \eta^2 = .006$) also indicated that there was no significant interaction effect

of treatment and gender on high-achieving students' performance in English letter writing. This means that there was no significant difference between performance in essay and letter writing of male and female high-achieving students exposed to independent study and ability grouping. The finding in this study supports Babalola and Oyinloye's (2012) submission that gender had no significant influence on students' ability to acquire the tools of language, recommending that both sexes should be given equal opportunity in any language programme.

Conclusion

The study reveals that high-achieving students can be more facilitated and have their potential abilities enhanced with the use of appropriate instructional strategies such as independent study and ability grouping. The findings of this study have confirmed the postulation that high-achieving students would have their cognitive abilities enhanced when exposed to independent study and ability grouping. The students who did not really know their potential abilities in discourse writing were made to have their abilities bolstered through independent study and ability grouping. It invariably implies that independent study and ability grouping translate their potential abilities to demonstrated performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, some pertinent recommendations are made:

- Teachers should be dynamic, strategic and flexible in using the independent study and ability grouping to ensure optimal efficiency of the strategies in schools.
- Teachers are advised to use independent study and ability grouping with appropriate instructional materials so that learning can be more real to the students.
- Students should indicate interest and enter into agreement for independent study and ability grouping for the purpose of exploration and discovery.

- Students are advised to believe in their abilities if they would like to record optimal performance in discourse writing.
- The parents should help in the provision of materials needed for exploration and discovery by their children.
- The administrative personnel in schools should make sure that independent study and ability grouping as strategies for enhancing the educational performance, especially English essay and letter writing are incorporated into their school courses in order to cater for learning needs and interest of high-achieving students.
- School administrative cadre should ensure that the libraries in their schools are well stocked with relevant books, journal articles, magazines, newspapers, internet facilities for high-achieving students to relate with.

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