

Relationships Among Polytechnic Students' Entry Qualification, Attitude to, and Achievement in The Use of English Course

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Abstract

This paper reports the study of the relationships among Polytechnic students' entry qualification, their attitudes to, and achievement in the Use of English Course. Data were collected through a questionnaire on students' attitudes, graded scores of students' entry qualifications in English, and their raw scores in the end-of-course examination on the use of English. These were analyzed using Multiple Regression Analysis. The results indicated that attitude contributed more to students' achievement in the course than entry qualification which had a negative contribution. Furthermore, the Multiple R (0.03405) implies low relationships among the three variables, and R^2 Value (0.001) reflects the low contributions of the two independent variables to the dependent variable.

Keywords: Relationships, Entry Qualification, Attitudes, Achievements, Use of English,

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INTRODUCTION

English Language, which came in the wake of the early missionary activities in Nigeria has today become deeply entrenched in the country's educational, social and political system. Bamgbose (1971) asserted its vital role in keeping records in the government, in business contracts, in newspapers, among others. Afolayan (1984) drawing inference from the 1979 constitution, postulated that English has become the cornerstone of the Nigerian nation. English has also gained universal recognition and thus serves as an international language for diplomatic communication and deliberations. Broughton (1980) asserted that there are over 300 million native speakers of English worldwide, while over 250 million people in every continent (Nigerians included) use English as a second language.

In Education, the English Language plays a vital role. It serves as a basic mode of instruction from the primary to the tertiary level following the National Policy on Education. The Use of English and Communication skills is a compulsory course for all students in the Polytechnic. Mishina and Iskandar (2019) assert that the Nigerian language policy accords the English language with the status of a sole official language as well as a language of instruction. They posit that this aids the elites' competence and attitude toward society at large.

According to the National Policy, the award of a university degree also depends on passing this course. The rationale behind this position is to enhance linguistic and communicative competence in the English Language. Coffey (1984) stresses that language is for the specific purpose of creating, adapting, or acquiring technology for one's peculiar needs in one's field of specialisation. Most technological and engineering reports, data and ideas are written in English. Therefore, English Language proficiency is imperative for students to comprehend and manipulate difficult intellectual material and scientific concepts. Language is also seen as a tool of power, civilisation creation and control (Basey, 2019).

The Problem and Purpose of the Research

The linguistic and communicative incompetence of technical graduates is now becoming a source of grave concern among people in society, scholars and researchers especially (Al-Khasawneh, 2018). Aborishade (1984) stressed that the West African Examination Council and the Higher Education Authorities are alarmed at the increasing failure rate and the declining language competence of students. He stated further that the situation is further aggravated when these students with a poor grasp of English Usage have to grapple with scientific usage. It has been observed by the present researcher that most technical and science graduates are grossly deficient in English communicative skills when serving as teachers in secondary schools. Doherty and Stephens (2021) observe a discrepancy between the graduate skills acquired in school and the sets of skills required in the workplace.

This pathetic ineptitude tends to hamper their ability to interpret and transfer technology in simple English to junior and senior secondary school students. This affects them in other professions and establishments e.g. as confidential secretaries, engineering consultants, planners, technical instructors, medical technologists, etc. This accounted for jumbled and incomprehensible feasibility or technical reports of engineering consultants, haphazardly written minutes of meetings and confusing reports written by confidential Secretaries who are graduates of Polytechnics.

The cause of this parlous condition is suspected to be the effect of some inter-related factors such as students' entry qualifications, attitudes to the Use of English courses, home environment, etc. Students are often admitted with low entry qualifications in English due to the "quota" system of admitting students. Adetuyibi and Osadahunsi (1984) reported that



technical students show apathy and indifference to the Use of English courses. Olowoyeye and Aladesusi (2022) assert that the varying entry qualifications of polytechnic students often serve as a bane because some are admitted through the pre – National Diploma course.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate the relationship, if any, that exists among Polytechnic students' entry qualification, their attitudes to, and achievement in the use of English course. The study specifically:

1. examined the general entry qualification in the English Language among the Polytechnic students;
2. determined the types of attitudes do the Polytechnic students have towards the Use of English course;
3. examined the general achievement of the Polytechnic students in the Use of English (UOE) course; and
4. investigated the relationship between the use of English entry qualification and attitude to the use of English course.

Research Method

The researcher made use of a researcher-designed questionnaire; the Schools' records of the students' entry qualifications in the English Language; and the students' cumulative performances in the Use of English course.

The 234 respondents were randomly sampled from the two Polytechnic, namely:

1. The Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State.
2. Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo-State.

They were male and female ND II students.

The main instrument designed for the study was an attitude questionnaire for ND II students from the four Schools in each polytechnic. There are twenty statements; ten of which are positive and the other ten negative, using a 5-point Likert Scale of A Strongly Agree, Agree, A Undecided A Disagree and A Strongly Disagree. Experts in Language Education and Curriculum Studies scrutinized the questionnaire to ascertain its content and face validity, while the test-retest method was used to ensure its reliability.

The test-retest coefficient calculated, using Parson Product Correlation was 0.81 which was considered a high-reliability index.

Other sources of data include: (1) the graded scores of the students' entry qualifications in the English Language as reflected in their certificates and (ii) the raw scores of the students in the Use of English tests.

Official permission was sought and obtained from the authorities of both institutions. They enlisted the assistance of the Directors of Schools, HODs, and Examination and Record officers, in questionnaire administration, supplying scores of UOE, and data on students' Entry qualifications (EQ) in English.

The responses to the questionnaires were rated on five points: SA (4), A (3), U (0), D (2), SD (1) respectively. The students' EQ and their scores in UOE were rated and graded respectively as (1) A - Excellent, (ii) B- Very Good, C- Credit, (iv) D-Pass, and (v) E-Fail.

Frequency count and percentage (%) were used to handle the descriptive aspect of the paper. The Multiple Regression Analysis was used to test all the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: General Entry Qualification of Polytechnic Students

Grade	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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	(No. of Students)	
A	0	0.0
B	21	8.97
C	97	41.45
D	116	49.57
E	0	0

Table 2: Attitudes of Polytechnic Students to UOE

Attitude	Frequency	Percentage Type
POSITIVE	215	91.9
AMBIVALENT	15	6.4
NEGATIVE	4	1.7
TOTAL	234	100%

Table 3: The Polytechnic students' Achievement in UOE

Grade	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A	3	1.3
B	45	19.2
C	95	40.2
D	82	35.0
E	9	3.9

Table 4: Correlation Coefficient (R) Table of Achievement in The Use Of English (Gns) Entry Qualification (Ceq) And Attitude To The Use Of English Course (Qus)

Correlations:	GNS	CEQ	QUS
GNS.	1.0000	-0.0106	0.0315
CEQ.	-0.0106	1.0000	0.0773
QUS.	0.0315	0.0773	1.0000

Table 5: Correlation Co-efficient of Relationship Between Entry-Qualification (CEQ) and Attitude (QUS)

Correlations	School of Business Studies	School of Engineering	School of Technology	School of Environmental Studies
R (CEQ) (QUS)	-0.0348	0.1978	0.0932	0.2075
R (GNS) (CEQ)	-0.0266	0.2634	-0.047	0.1842
R (GNS) (QUS)	0.1211	-0.0207	-0.0721	0.0228
ALFA LEVEL	0.05	0.05	0.5	0.5
R TABLE	0.25	0.25	0.23	0.27

NOS STUDENTS TOTAL= 234	OF	59	57	66	52 ⁱ
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Discussion of Results

Table 1 answers the first research question on the general entry qualification of Polytechnic students. 50.42% had good credit against 49.57 with passes in English. There were no distinctions, and no failure either. Therefore, Polytechnic students generally have a good entry. This corroborates Fabule (1983) whose empirical study revealed that most qualifications. Polytechnic students possess basic entry qualifications in English

The Polytechnic students' attitude to UOE is revealed in Table 2 where 91.9% were positively inclined, 1.7%, negative and 6.4%, ambivalent Table 3 presents the students' achievement in UOE 61.1% (A, B, C) scored high marks, 35.0% scored just pass marks while 3.9% have below pass mark Averagely, 96.1% passed the UOE.

Table 4 shows that there is no significant relationship between the Polytechnics students' entry qualification and their achievement in UOE Calculated r-value = -0.01, 1-value = 0.138 at 0.5 alpha level. This is a low correlation and not very significant This seems to lend credence to the view of Tiffen (1969) who postulated that a School Certificate credit in English does not necessarily imply that such a student has the linguistic equipment that is required at the higher level of learning Other researchers like Salau (2007), Ogbonanya, Okpuruka, Ihenacho, and Ndu (2014), Kapinga and Amani (2016) and Chathuranga (2016) had also reported a low correlation as found in this present research

Table 4 also indicates that there is no significant relationship between students' attitudes and their achievement in UOE The r-value = 0.32, t-value = 0.138 at 0.05 alpha level. This is a low positive correlation. This implies that achievement might not depend solely on attitude. Baumel and Bergen (1965) assert that pupils' performances are more related to intelligence (cognitive) than attitude. This corroborates the study of Solpuk (2017) that reveals that attitude has a medium-level effect on students' academic performance,

Likewise, Table 4 shows that there is no significant relationship between students' entry qualifications and their attitudes to UOE Ther-cal=0.08, 1-value-0.138 at 0.05 alpha level. This is a low positive correlation. Thus high entry qualifications might not induce positive attitudes and vice-versa. This finding tends to validate Adetuyibi and Oshundahunsi's (1984) study.

The result in Table 5 is used to answer the last three hypotheses It shows an insignificant relationship between students' entry qualification and their attitude to UOE across their areas of specialization/schools (ie. Business, Engineering Technology and Environmental Studies) Nevertheless, the low positive correlation implies that to some extent, entry qualification influences the student's attitude. This is supported by the research findings of Ukoh (1983)

The table also reveals that there is a low significant relationship between students' entry qualifications and achievement in UOE across their various schools. This implies that other factors contribute to the achievement and thus, entry qualification could not be the only determinant Momoh Olley's (1986) study attested to this. Likewise, Falua (1989) argued that most certificates today only possess face validity. Obioma and Salau (2007) discover that students' entry qualification and their performances in JAMB examinations has a low correlation with their performances in the final university examination.

Table 5 also shows the insignificant relationship between students' attitude and their achievement in the UOE across their schools/ specializations. This corroborates Entwistle's (1972) research findings that attitudes determine success.

Recommendations

Based on the findings this research, recommendations are made to parents, policymakers, curriculum planners, textbook writers, and so on.

1. Parents are encouraged to ensure a richer home environment through the provision of some essential supportive facilities like a family library, video, television, radio, and so on.
2. Policymakers are advised to ensure that English for Specific Purposes is taught in the polytechnics as against English for Academic Purposes being taught.
3. The Curriculum planners are to enhance the practical application and viability of English for specific purposes to be integrated into the school curriculum.
4. The NBTE should devise a means of assessing how far the course specifications are being executed in the polytechnics to life. The eclectic method of teaching should be preferred to the lecture method
5. Textbook writers and publishing companies should take up the challenge of the death of books in English for specific purposes. This will alleviate the ordeal of students and lecturers
6. Research institutes and Language Centers in the country should sponsor more conferences, seminars, and workshops for lecturers of the UOE course in higher institutions
7. The Polytechnic authorities should provide standard libraries, well-equipped and functioning language laboratories, modern teaching aids, etc. They should also encourage and sponsor lecturers for training and retraining in English for specific purposes.

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