

INFLUENCE OF LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH ON STUDENTS PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA.

AKINMUSIRE, ALIU PATRICK Ph.D
DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
ADEYEMI FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, ONDO,
ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

Abstract

The study investigated the influence of Literature-in-English on students' performance in English Language, with secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised English Language teachers, while the sample size of the study was Two hundred (200) respondents selected through a simple random sampling technique. A self-designed research instrument by the researcher titled, "Influence of Literature-in-English on students' performance in English Language, with secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria", fashioned on four likert rating scale: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The research instrument were validated by two experts in Test and measurement, while its reliability was determined through test retest at two weeks interval and 0.68 coefficient reliability was obtained. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (simple percentages frequency counts and mean). Based on the findings of the study conclusion were made that Literature plays a veritable role in the learning of English language. Students were able to develop literary competence through exposure to different literary texts and encounter different genres of Literature, which helps in the development of good English competence. The researcher therefore recommended, among others, that Literature-in-English should be fused as part of the English Language curriculum and Senior Secondary Certificate Examination and that students should be encouraged to read novels right away from Junior Secondary School classes, to boost their interest in literature, which can improve their performance in English language as well as other subjects.

Background to the Study

The politics which characterized the search for a national language favours the adoption of English Language over several indigenous language, thus, become a national language in Nigeria. Today, Nigeria, English language is the medium of instruction in schools, medium for government administration, mass media, commerce, law and politics. Apart from being a core subject in the school curriculum, the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (2004) has that all school instructions from upper primary (4-6) to tertiary level will be carried out in English language. Of all the subjects which senior secondary school students and candidates take in West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), English had remained a core subject both in junior and senior secondary classes. It is a subject which candidates must pass if their overall success in the examination is to have any value. Considering different universities department requirements, a candidate who has 'A' grade pass in all subjects he/she offered in WASSCE but, fails English language cannot gain admission into any university. A pass at credit level is an essential requirement for admission into any higher institution of learning irrespective of the course of study (JAMB 2011/2012 Brochure).

For a long period of time, the government, the University, the general public and the West African Examination Council have been expressing disappointment at the annual poor performance of candidates especially in English Language. According to Onukaogu (2003) over 40% of students that fail comprehension and summary sections score less than 10% because their inability to understand a passage makes it difficult for them to summarize

it. This is an indication that most of the students are not exposed to the written word. They were not only not well prepared, but have a very limited vocabulary and lacked the necessary techniques of answering comprehension questions. Also as a result of poor exposure to extensive reading, many students perform badly in vocabulary test. Reading is the bedrock of formal education and so, no one can neglect it and still find learning in a formal situation easy. In agreement with this view, Wilkins in Ogugua (2006) states that it is only through massive exposure to language that vocabulary meaning could be acquired and this acquisition, he believes, can probably be achieved only through reading.

Similarly, Chukwuma and Otagburugu (1997) also observe that the more one reads a material extensively; one becomes more proficient in the language. Being proficient in English language assumes that one could confidently and correctly manipulate the grammatical structures, use words adequately in speech and writing and above all, one's communication in English becomes more effective. For students at the senior secondary level, exposure to literary works through the study of literature in English language will enhance their proficiency in the English language. Creating a clearer picture of the role of literature in effective communication and information, Ossisonwa (2007) maintain that a creative prose writer has a number of tools at his disposal which include the use of lexical items, syntactic patterning, and semantic instruments, when properly formed in the mind of the readers, make them acquire proficiency both in oral and written speech.

Literature is vital for the all-round development of an individual. Williams (2010) asserts that "literature keeps us in touch with the ideas of great minds in our age and in previous ages. It assists people to know of past events, though some are mere fictions" Literature explains certain myths or phenomenon which ordinarily would not have an explanation. Rodrigo (2000) adds that literature provides authentic language as it promotes the communicative competence of individuals. Readers see language in use, understand it in context and are able to use it thereby increasing their active vocabulary.

To Lye (2008), literature captures the complexities of the human situation, illustrating (dramatically and completely) the grounds and the meaning of values, and the nuances of our experience. Through literature, one is able to imaginatively inhabit the lives, the experiences and the meaning of other people's lives and experiences. Via varying degrees of exposure to literature, one understands better the meaning of life and life experiences and then makes positive resolve. The importance of literature to the overall development and transformation is pivotal.

Literature provides entertainment and education. By being exposed to a large variety of literary work, readers learn the right attitude; how to make judgment and how to draw conclusions from situations which they find themselves at every moment. Literature is incorporated into every language learning programme as each of them reinforces the mastery of the other. In line with this, Thread (2008) states that the specific purpose for the study of literature in a second language is that it promotes language competence, creates awareness and understanding of contents, issues, cultures and develops creative and critical thinking skills.

English language as a second and foreign language has different skills and different cultural habits. It is only in literature in English that learners of English come in meaningful contact with the language in its real form. Little wonder why Ani (2007) identified literature as the manifestation of language in action; or as creative writing meant for use in developing reading interests, skills, enriching and extending cultural horizons of individual learners. Stressing the relevance of literature in language learning, Akwanya (2006), states that it is through literary work that we see dialogue or even the language of conversation as well as the one governed by rhythm, rhyme and measure. The study of literature in English enhances the mastery of the language. In view of this, Azikiwe (2007) also states that "to learn a language is to develop skills, to learn the literature in that language is to understand it." In learning English language, the students are taught different aspects of the language but in literature in English students see the language in use.

However, when a learner is competent in a language he/she reads and comprehends texts written in that language. Also to understand or comprehend easily entails having enough vocabulary of that language. Literature exposes the students to varieties of texts with words used in different contexts. Azikiwe (2007) speaking along this view said that literature provides the learner with the widest variety of syntax, the richest variation of vocabulary discrimination and language employed at its most effective, subtle and suggestive form. The language learner through literature develops ability to read independently, fluency and ability to read different literary texts that enables him express ideas and views effectively in conversation, comprehend written text and summarize it in his own words.

However, though literature contributes a lot to language learning, there are other variables that can influence the learning of English Language. One of such correlates is location of schools. Schools location refers to the site of the school, either in the urban centre or rural area. Differences in location of schools simply means existence of differences in the language environment and the school tone. Language environment here refers to where a language learner is surrounded by those who frequently speak and communicate with others using

appropriate language, in the opinion of Lawal (2001), the future of the child whether in urban or rural area is invariably linked to the quality of his or her environment. The environment of the learner determines what takes place in the learner. Environment refers to condition in which a person lives or operates/ in which a particular activity is carried on. The language environment of a learner has a lot to contribute because the learner learns from what he or she hears or sees. It has been observed that some schools in urban areas have some instructional materials such as television, radio, video players, standard library and computers. These are absent in rural schools.

According to Ezema (2002), electronic teaching aids are very facilitative in second language learning but they cannot be used in rural schools where there is no electricity. As a result, the differences in schools location result in differences in the level of acquisition of the skills of the second language by the students. Since language is a means of communication among members of any given society and literature reflects the customs, tradition, culture, religion and the norms of any given society, it is clear, therefore, that the interconnected-ness of these two subjects can never be over emphasized. The effective teaching and learning skills of language: as listening, speaking, reading and writing together with the various sub-skills which are all important in language learning and Literature-in-English are also emphasized. This will make the impact of teaching and learning the English language immensely felt. These sub-skills include: comprehension, vocabulary development, recognition, perception, oral reading, spelling, pronunciation, enunciation, visual and audio-visual perception and so on. The fact that intensifying the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English among the secondary school students could enhance their performance in the English language is an undisputable fact because the components of literature-in-English can impact the learner's competence in English. This reality, serves as a rationale and motivation for carrying the study by the researcher on influence of literature-in-English on students' performance in English Language.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the importance attached to English language in Nigeria, students are performing poorly in both internal and external examinations. Also there is no integration in the teaching of English language and literature even when the two are complementary.

Myriad of reasons have been advanced by scholars as factors responsible for the poor performance in English language among students. These include; educational setting, the educational system, teachers' status and motivation, the examination pattern, the learning environment, teacher preparation and language philosophy. The abysmal performance in English Language can be traced to the classroom because "the formal classroom practices provide by far the greatest avenue for the learning of the language". Also, teachers' low level of competence in the language skills, especially reading; unduly large classroom; too many periods per week; lack of incentive; and learners' unserious attitude" among others. Another classroom factor threatening effective acquisition of English Language is the method of teaching Literature which separates it from English Language. By this method, Literature classroom is different from that of English Language. Consequently, the resources of Literature, which have the potentialities of enhancing effective language learning, are denied the learners. This practice, no doubt, could be said to have inhibited effective teaching and learning of Literature and English Language in our schools and colleges in Nigeria. No wonder a good number of Nigerian secondary school students hardly express themselves sufficiently in English even after they had offered Literature and had a good grade in it.

It was against this background the study was conducted on the influence of Literature in English on students' performance in English Language in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was on the influence of Literature in English on students' performance in English Language, a case study of selected secondary schools in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study is set to:

- i. ascertain the need for integrating Literature in English and English Language.
- ii. assess the relevance of the teaching of Literature in English on academic performance in English Language.
- iii. assess the effect of different genres of Literature in English on English Language.
- iv. observe the promotion of intensive and extensive reading skills through Literature in English.
- v. ascertain the relationship between the teaching of Literature in English and communicative competence in the English language.

Research Questions

The researcher sought answers to the following questions:

- i. To what extent does the study of literature in English influence the performance of students in English language?
- ii. Is there the need for the integration of Literature in English and English Language curriculum?
- iii. Are there effect of the genres of literature in English on English language competence?
- iv. Does the understanding of literature in English bring about promotion of intensive and extensive skills?

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will be importance in the following ways to stakeholders in English Language education programme;

The findings from the study will be beneficial to students, teachers and the government. Firstly, the findings of the study will enable students to appreciate the need for reading literary texts, which offer a rich source of linguistic input and can help learners to practice the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing, in addition to exemplifying grammatical structures and presenting new vocabularies. Also, teachers, would see the need to teach literature in English effectively for better academic performance of students in English language. Moreover, curriculum planners and development will have a concrete fact on the need to integrate literature in English and English language based on the results of the study.

Lastly, the study will be of a good source to researcher in future. This will be made accessible to public through Open Educational Resource (OER).

Presentation of Results and Discussion of Findings

Presentation of Results

Research Question One: To what extent does the study of literature in English influence the performance of students in English Language?

Table 1: Showing the students' responses and analysis for research question 1

S/N	Influence of Literature-in-English on the performance of students in English language	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	SD	REMARK
1	Students taught in Literature-in-English perform better in English Language than students who are not taught	46	121	19	14	3.00	0.80	Accepted
2	Literature-in-English helps complement the achievement of students in English Language	61	118	10	11	3.15	0.85	Accepted
3	Literature-in-English add spice to the teaching and learning of English Language	59	117	12	12	3.12	0.83	Accepted
4	The knowledge of terms in Literature-in-English enhanced students' performance in English Language	61	113	16	10	3.13	0.81	Accepted
5	Students perform better in Literature-in-English than English Language	53	118	13	16	3.04	0.81	Accepted

From the table 1 above, Item 1 has SD = 0.80 and mean = 3.00, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that students that studied Literature-in-English perform better in English Language than students who do not. Item 2 has SD = 0.85 and mean = 3.15, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that Literature-in-English helps complement the achievement of students in English Language. Item 3 has SD = 0.83 and mean = 3.12, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that Literature-in-English add spice to the teaching and learning of English Language. Item 4 has SD = 0.81 and mean = 3.13, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. hence, it is accepted that the knowledge of terms in Literature-in-English enhanced students' performance in English Language. Item 5 has SD = 0.81 and mean = 3.04, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that students perform better in Literature-in-English than English Language.

Research Question Two: Is there need for the integration of Literature in English and English Language curriculum?

Table 2: Showing the students' responses and analysis for research question two

S/N	Need for the integration of Literature-in-English and English language curriculum	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	SD	REMARK
6	The integration of Literature-in-English and English language curriculum will add more beauty to the subject	54	119	14	13	3.07	0.82	Accepted
7	The integration of Literature-in-English and English Language curriculum will expose the students to a wealth of knowledge in the subject	52	126	9	13	3.09	0.87	Accepted
8	The integration of Literature-in-English and English Language curriculum should be embraced by curriculum planners	44	124	15	17	2.98	0.83	Accepted
9	Literature-in-English and English Language should not be combined as a single subject	65	112	11	12	3.15	0.83	Accepted

10	Literature-in-English and English Language are interwoven and complements each other	60	116	11	13	3.12	0.83	Accepted
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From the table 2 above, Item 6 has SD = 0.82 and mean = 3.07, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that students that integration of Literature-in-English and English language curriculum will add more beauty to the subject. Item 7 has SD = 0.87 and mean = 3.09, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that integration of Literature-in-English and English Language curriculum will expose the students to a wealth of knowledge in the subject. Item 8 has SD = 0.83 and mean = 2.98, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that the integration of Literature-in-English and English Language curriculum should be embraced by curriculum planners. Item 9 has SD = 0.83 and mean = 3.15, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that Literature-in-English and English Language should not be combined as a single subject. Item 10 has SD = 0.83 and mean = 3.12, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that Literature-in-English and English Language are interwoven and complements each other.

Research Question Three: Are there effect of Literature in English on English Language competence?

Table 3: Showing the students' responses and analysis for research question three

S/N	The effect if the genres of literature in English and English language competence	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	SD	REMARK
11	The competence of Literature-in-English have impact on the competence of learners in English Language than students that did not study Literature-in-English	70	89	25	16	3.07	0.70	Accepted
12	The genres of Literature-in-English enhances English Language competence	60	114	13	13	3.11	0.81	Accepted
13	Students taught Literature-in-English enhances their interpretative abilities than students who do not	60	109	17	14	3.08	0.77	Accepted
14	Literature-in-English instill in students good study habits and leads to English Language competence	51	120	14	15	3.04	0.82	Accepted
15	Literature texts helps the students in the good use of tenses and vocabularies	50	133	9	8	3.13	0.92	Accepted

From the table 3 above, Item 11 has SD = 0.70 and mean = 3.07, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that the competence of Literature-in-English have impact on the competence of learners in English Language than students that did not study Literature-in-English. Item 12 has SD = 0.81 and mean = 3.11, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that the genres of Literature-in-English enhances English Language competence. Item 13 has SD = 0.77 and mean = 3.08, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that students taught Literature-in-English enhances their interpretative abilities than students who do not. Item 14 has SD = 0.82 and mean = 3.04, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that Literature-in-English instill in students good study habits and leads to English Language competence. Item 15 has SD = 0.92 and mean = 3.13, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that Literature texts helps the students in the good use of tenses and vocabularies.

Research Question Four: Does the understanding of Literature in English bring about promotion of intensive and extansive reading skills?

Table 3: Showing the students' responses and analysis for research question four

S/N	Literature in English with intensive and extensive reading skills	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	SD	REMARK
16	The understanding of Literature-in-English boosts the mastery of the subject (English Language)	52	121	15	12	3.07	0.83	Accepted
17	Literature texts helps the reading habits of students in English Language	57	117	12	14	3.09	0.82	Accepted
18	Literature helps to develop the learners' linguistic performance because it arouses their zeal and keeps in them an ever-ready inclination to read	49	120	14	17	3.01	0.81	Accepted
19	The components of Literature-in-English impact the competence of learners in English Language than students not taught Literature-in-English	60	127	7	6	3.21	0.91	Accepted
20	Literature students' perform better in aspects of	67	110	11	12	3.16	0.82	Accepted

English like oral or written essay than their counterparts who are not taught							
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From the table 4 above, Item 16 has SD = 0.83 and mean = 3.07, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that the understanding of Literature-in-English boosts the mastery of the subject (English Language). Item 17 has SD = 0.82 and mean = 3.09, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that Literature texts helps the reading habits of students in English Language. Item 18 has SD = 0.81 and mean = 3.01, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that Literature helps to develop the learners' linguistic performance because it arouses their zeal and keeps in them an ever-ready inclination to read. Item 19 has SD = 0.91 and mean = 3.21, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that the components of Literature-in-English impact the competence of learners in English Language than students not taught Literature-in-English. Item 20 has SD = 0.82 and mean = 3.16, which is above the cut-point of 2.5. Hence, it is accepted that Literature students' perform better in aspects of English like oral or written essay than their counterparts who are not taught.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in this study clearly evinced that literature influences the development of language and vice-versa. Moreso, language is regarded as an important ingredient of literature. The study also further shows the interrelatedness of the two subjects. The relationship between language and literature is interwoven. Language is regarded as the conveyor of literature; and literature cannot exist independent of language. The English language can be enhanced through organized and systematic teaching of the three genres of literature. Also, the aspects of English: Speech, lexis and structure, comprehension and summary, and composition are already integrated in the teaching of literature. Obediat (2010) state that literature helps students acquire a native-like competence in English, express their ideas in good English, learn the features of modern English, learn how the English linguistic system is used for communication, see how idiomatic expressions are used, speak clearly, precisely, and concisely, and become more proficient in English, as well as become creative, critical, and analytical learners.

Custodio and Sutton (2008) explain that literature can open horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect, and explore. In sum, literature provides students with an incomparably rich source of authentic material over a wide range of registers. If students can gain access to this material by developing literary competence, then they can effectively internalize the language at a high level (Elliot, 2010). Especially, for students with verbal / linguistic intelligence, the language teacher's using literature in a foreign language class serves for creating a highly motivating, amusing and lively lesson. Literature is not only a tool for developing the written and oral skills of the students in the target language but also is a window opening into the culture of the target language, building up a cultural competence in students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, conclusions were made that Literature-in-English could enhance competence in the learning of English Language topics. Also, intensive and extensive reading skills could be promoted and that Literature in English should be embedded in integrated with English Language curriculum and so on.

Recommendations

On the basis of conclusions, the researcher recommended that:

- Students should be encourage to read novels right away from Junior Senior School classes, so that they will have interest in literature, which can improve their performance in English language as well as other subjects. They should develop interest in literature and offer it with English language at least up to the fifth year (Senior Secondary School 2) so as to improve their knowledge in English.
- Teachers should develop interest in the teaching of literature and see literature as an integral part of language. They should teach both subjects together not as separate subjects, and try to encourage students to develop interest in literature. For instance literary passages could be used for teaching reading comprehension vocabulary and grammar.
- Parents should actively encourage their wards to study literature. They should not only buy them the necessary texts needed, but also encourage them to read beyond prescribed texts.
- Policy makers should make literature a compulsory subject in the curriculum in the upper classes (Senior Secondary School 1 - 3) as being done in the Junior Secondary Schools. They should prescribe stimulating texts written by African and Non-African writer as well.

- Teacher in training school should be taught how to properly integrate both subjects in the classroom so that the reciprocal influence found between the two subjects could be gainfully used to enhance students' performance in both subjects.
- Literature-in-English should be fused as part of the English Language curriculum and Senior Secondary Certificate Examination

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