

Implication of Teaching English Language and Literature as Two Separate Subjects in Senior Secondary schools in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study sought to establish the implication of teaching English Language and Literature as two separate subjects in Senior Secondary schools in Nigeria using the descriptive design. A total of 100 students from each of the three sampled schools constituted the sample: seventy students who never offered literature in English and thirty students who offered Literature in English constituted the sample. Therefore, the total sample was 300 students. Data was treated through t-test to determine the differences in English Language achievement according to various categories of respondents. The study concludes that regardless of gender and type of school differences, students who offered Literature and English language did not perform better in English Language than their counterpart who did not offer Literature in English. Therefore, the offering of literature subject did not affect the performance in English Language subject. Based on the recommendations from previous studies that English and Literature in English are similar subjects and there is no need to separate them, it is recommended that schools that do not offer the Literature subject should consider having the subject as part of curriculum so as to enhance the quality of English language achievement. Much as Literature may be an optional subject in schools under investigation, there is a need to encourage learners to take the subject in order for them to improve the quality of English language achievement.

Keywords: Achievements; English Language; Literature in English; achievement.

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Introduction

Most students in Nigeria today cannot make a full blown conversation in English language without speaking one or two words of their mother tongue or Pidgin English. This is done as a way of covering up their inability to express themselves very well in the Language and this is usually as result of their poor performance in school in English language. Olanipekun (2015) had earlier revealed categorically that students' academic performance in English studies is poor.

The popular saying "there is no smoke without fire" is applicable in the case of poor performance of students in English language. Sa'ad and Usman (2014) enumerated some factors as the causes of poor performance of students in English language. The factors listed included dominance of mother tongue, inadequate qualified teachers of English language, negative attitudes of students towards English language, improper methods in teaching English language, inadequate instructional media and facilities and lack of language laboratory for teaching. On the other hand, Elvis Saayoi (2017) observed that approaches used in teaching English, school resources, class size, quality of teachers, attitude of teachers, poor teaching methods are factors that contribute to poor performance in English Language among learners with mental challenges in regular schools.

This study was prompted by the fact that English language is a Lingua Franca in Nigeria. It has remained and will remain the unifying national language and therefore a necessity for educational advancement. It is the language of academic and intellectual expressions and interactions among students (Adejimola & Ojulape, 2013). As such, it is a key medium of communication. It is a core subject in the curriculum of Nigerian secondary schools and must be passed at credit level in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) before one gets admission into Nigerian Universities at the undergraduate level. Furthermore, English language is one of the most common languages used on earth today.

Language is a vital part of human connection and it is the basis of human civilization. It makes it possible for culture to be transmitted from one generation to another generation and it enables people to share ideas, thoughts and feelings with others. Language also enables one to command and give directives. To learn a language means to

master words, structure and grammar to communicate with others. The ability of a child to learn a second language in school is indicative of their level of development (Unknown author, 2022). The unknown Author further stated that Language changes with culture. The Study Lecture Notes (2022) supports this by stating that languages change and die and it grows and expands just like other human institutions. Language is an element of culture.

Omotoyinbo (2020) posited that literature is the expression of cultural experience of a people. What then is Literature? Literature has been variously defined by different scholars. According to Ihejirika (2014), the concept literature could be seen as any written material on a subject. It can also be used to refer to a subject of study. According to Onuekwusi (2013), literature can be oral or written and it is made up of words. It can be used to entertain, educate and pass information. Omotoyinbo (2020) defined literature as an expression of cultural experience of a people. He continued by saying that Literature is an art of language. Banda and Kakoma (2020) posited that Literature in English imparts analytical skills coupled with poetry and drama. Literature is made of words and words come from language. Literature is therefore an agent of Language development. It is rooted in languages and language gets life through literature. Literature is written in words and therefore words are the basis of literature.

Adejimola and Ojulape (2013) posited that words are essential ingredients of language. According to Ihejirika (2014), studying Language without literature being involved or literature without Language being in the forefront is an anomaly. Literature is an art of language and words are essential ingredients of language. Therefore, Literature in English and the English Language are tools in the hands of each other. While language makes literature, literature enables language to propagate itself (Adejimola & Ojulape, 2013). It is inconceivable to discuss literature without reference to language. Oni (2011) stated that the more one reads

literary works, the better the person's literary skills. Similarly, Chukwuma and Otagburuagu (1997) observed that verse reading increases proficiency in a Language. Azikiwe (2007) supports this by stating that to learn a language is to develop skills and to learn literature in that language is to understand it.

Banda and Kakoma (2020) stated that English and Literature in English are similar subjects and there is no need to separate them. They stressed that separating the two subjects diminishes the quality of the subjects. Language and Literature should therefore not be separated. Therefore language is important to make literature. Without understanding language, we cannot make literature. To read English Literature, one should understand the language. Therefore, language learning should not be separated from learning the patterns and values of the culture of which it is a part (Azikiwe, 2007). Azikiwe continued by stating that language helps to store cultural experiences in the form of literature and other written records for posterity. According to Ihejirika (2014), Literature and English Language are taught as two different subjects by two different teachers at senior secondary school level. This study therefore, assessed the implication of teaching English language and Literature as two separate subjects at senior secondary schools in Jalingo, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted an Ex-post facto research design. This is a research design that seeks to find cause-effect relationships. According to Nworgu (2006), a researcher has no control over variables, rather the cause-effect relationship is determined by examining already existing information or data.

Population of the Study

The population in this study was 7047 Senior Secondary school III students from both State and Federal Government Schools in Jalingo. Most students from the State Government Schools were from average and low level social class families. Most of their parents were uneducated farmers and traders while parents of most students from Federal Government Schools were from educated and at least average or middle social class families. Two State Government Schools and one Federal Government School were sampled. A total of 100 students from each sampled schools constituted the sample: seventy students who never offered literature in English and thirty students who offered Literature in English constituted the sample. A lesser number of students who offered literature in English was included because not many of the students offered the subject.

Data Collection and Treatment

End of term results in English language study of the students from first term SSS I to first term SSS III were compiled and the mean scores of students who offered Literature in English and that of their counterpart who never offered Literature in English were separately calculated. Data was summarized to percentage score and hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05% level of confidence.

Results and Discussion

Research question 1: What is the achievement in English Language study of students who offered Literature in English (OLE) and their counterpart who did not offer Literature in English (DOLE)?

Table 1: Achievement of the Senior Secondary School III Students in English Language

Student Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev	T Value	df	p-value
Offered Literature	90	43.71	12.48			
Never offered Literature	210	46.45	15.36	-1.483	298	0.139

Table 2: Achievement of State School Students

Student Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev	T Value	df	p-value
Offered Literature	60	39.52	12.82			
Never offered Literature	140	42.11	16.22	-1.205	139.723	0.230

Schools under investigation taught the two subjects separately. Some of the learners took both Literature and English Language while others took only English Language without literature. This is against the observation of Ihejirika (2014) that studying Language without literature being involved or literature without Language being in the

forefront is an anomaly. This is also contrary to the suggestion of Banda and Kakoma (2020) that English Language and Literature in English are similar subjects and should not be separated because doing so is to diminish the quality of the subjects.

In table 1, the mean score for students who did not offer literature is 46.45% while the mean score for those who offered literature is 43.71. The p-value is 0.139 which is greater than the critical value (0.05) signifying that the mean difference is not statistically significance. This shows that both groups, the Senior Secondary School III students who did not offer literature in English and those who offered Literature did not have any significant difference in their performance mean scores in English Language. This is in harmony with what Ihejirika (2014) established that the symbiotic relationship between language and literature does not enhance effective learning of English Language when the two subjects are taught as two separate subjects.

Research Question 2: What is the achievement in English Language Study of students of State and Federal government schools who did not offer Literature in English and their counterpart who offered Literature?

State Schools

Table 2 shows the achievement of the Senior Secondary School III students from State Schools in English Language. Sixty students who offered literature scored the mean of 39.52 while the 140 students who did not offer literature scored the mean of 42.11.

The p-value of 0.230 is greater than the critical value (0.05) signifying that the mean difference is not statistically significance. This implies that the Senior Secondary School III students in State Government Schools who offered the English language and Literature as two separate subjects did not have a better achievement in the English Language compared to their counterparts who did not offer the Literature.

Federal Schools

Table 3 reveals the achievement of the Senior Secondary School III students in Federal Government Schools in English Language. Thirty students who offered literature scored the mean of 52.10 while 70 students who did not offer literature scored the mean of 55.27.

Table 3: Achievement of Federal Government School Students in English Language

Student Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev	T Value	df	p-value
Offered Literature	30	52.10	7.86			
Never offered Literature	70	55.27	7.91	-1.841	98	0.069

Table 4: Achievement by Male Students

Student Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev	T Value	df	p-value
Offered Literature	40	43.17	19.70			
Never offered Literature	100	45.64	13.51	0.516	126.21	0.608

Table 5: Achievement by Female Students

Student Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev	T Value	df	p-value
Offered Literature	50	42.37	17.54			
Never offered Literature	110	45.94	15.01	0.773	147.71	0.443

The p-value of 0.069 is greater than the critical value (0.05) signifying that the mean difference is not statistically significance. This implies that Senior Secondary School III students of Federal Government Schools who offered the English Language and Literature as two separate subjects did not perform better in English language compared to their counterparts who did not offer Literature.

Research Question 3: What is the achievement in English Language Study by gender for students who

did not offer Literature in English and their counterpart who offered Literature in English?

Male Students

Table 2 shows the achievement of Senior Secondary School III male students in English Language. Forty students who offered literature scored the mean of 43.17 while the 100 students who did not offer literature scored the mean of 45.64.

The p-value of 0.608 which is greater than the critical value (0.05) signifying that the mean

difference is not statistically significance. This implies that there is no significant difference in the achievement in English language between male students who offered Literature and those who did not offer literature.

Female Students

Table 3 reveals the achievement of Senior Secondary School III female students in English Language. Fifty students who offered literature scored the mean of 42.37 while the 110 students who did not offer literature scored the mean of 45.94.

The p-value of 0.443 is greater than the critical value (0.05) signifying that the mean difference is not statistically significance. This implies that there is no significant difference in the achievement in English language between female students who offered literature and those who did not in Senior Secondary Schools.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that regardless of gender and type of school differences, students who offered Literature and English language in Senior Secondary Schools did not perform better in English Language than their counterpart who did not offer Literature in English. Therefore, the offering of literature subject did not affect the performance in English Language subject. However, the finding is contrary to previous literature and study findings that studying Language without literature being involved or literature without Language being in the forefront is an anomaly (Ihejirika, 2014) and that Literature in English and the English Language are tools in the hands of each other. While language makes literature, literature enables language to propagate itself (Adejimola & Ojulape, 2013).

Based on the recommendations of Banda and Kakoma (2020) that English and Literature in English are similar subjects and there is no need to separate them since separating the two diminishes the quality of the subjects, it is recommended that schools that do not offer the Literature subject should consider having the subject as part of curriculum so as to enhance the quality of English language achievement. Much as Literature may be an optional subject, there is a need to encourage learners to take the subject in order for them to improve the quality of English language achievement.

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