A Study of the Effect of Home, School, and Personal Variables on Students' Reading Comprehension Achievement.

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Abstract
The study was designed to investigate the effect of specific home, school and personal variables on students' reading comprehension achievement, based on the frequency of secondary school students' poor performances in English Language examinations. Based on a sample of two hundred (200) students randomly selected from four senior secondary schools in Oyo East and Atiba Local Government Areas of Oyo State, the study sought answers to five research questions were generated for the study. A descriptive survey research was adopted and the instruments used were Students' Questionnaire and Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT). Results from the findings showed that although all the variables examined affected students' reading comprehension achievement, the home and school variables were significant while the personal variable was not. It was concluded that the variables, when taken together, would to a large extent predict reading comprehension achievement. It was recommended that parents and teachers have major roles to play in improving students' competence in reading comprehension.
Keywords: English Language; home; Nigeria; reading comprehension; school; self-concept.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is very important in the life of everyone and in every school system. Generally speaking, reading is a total integrative process, manifesting in the reader's affective, perceptual, and cognitive domains (Rubin, 2002). And as Douglas (2013) asserts, reading for pleasure is the most important index of a child's future success. In the school system, reading performs both integrative and instructional functions. One of the fundamental objectives of education is the production of a literate person. Being one of the study skills, reading is a cornerstone of literacy (Onukaogu, 2002) and a process in which a reader integrates a text's information with the knowledge he/she already possesses (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985).

 One of the basic skills of reading is the comprehension skill. An efficient and successful reader is one who comprehends what he or she has read. As such, many researchers view reading as being synonymous with decoding and comprehension (e.g. Gough & Tunmer, 1986). Specifically, reading comprehension involves the two basic processes of decoding printed text and understanding the language accessed through the process of decoding (Hogan, Bridges, Justice, & Cain, 2011). Thus, as it is with reading generally, skilled reading comprehension or "rapid and thorough assimilation of information from text" is fundamental to success in all aspects of modern life, including education, productivity in society, and the employment world (Hogan et al, 2011, p. 1).

Researchers are of the opinion that the majority of Nigerian secondary school students possess poor reading habits (e.g. Aina, Ogungbemi, Adigun, & Ogundipe, 2011). The poor academic performance of Nigerian students in English Language have been traced to, *inter alia*, teacher factors (e.g. Abiola, 2013), student factors (e.g. Fakeye, 2010), mother-tongue interference (e.g. Oluwole, 2008) or a combination of factors (e.g. home and school [Adekola, 2012]). Also, the poor performance of Nigerian students in English Language public examinations has been located, albeit partially, in their lack of competence in reading comprehension (Adekola, 2012). Thus, this study sought to investigate the effect of three variables–home, school, personal–on reading comprehension, an aspect of English Language competence, because reading has been found to be a cornerstone of literacy and success.

Much research has gone into how linguistic and non-linguistic variables contribute to underachievement in reading comprehension. Smith (1998) did an extensive study on the effects of home-school collaboration on the reading comprehension achievement of fourth grade students (in the US). She found, significantly, a positive relationship between the degree of homework involvement and reading achievement but a negative relationship between the level of parental support and reading achievement. Adekola (2012) investigated the effects of home and school factors on Nigerian students' performance in English comprehension and found both factors jointly predictive of the students' performance. He then opined that parents and teachers would have to develop positive attitudes to students' learning if students' competence in English Language comprehension was to be achieved.

Brunel (1991) stated that achievement in school language learning is connected with the network of social and cultural influences of home and school. According to him, the parents' ambitions for their children, which related to the resources and socio-economic situation of the home, affected reading comprehension achievement.

One of the difficulties which people experience in academics is the way they see themselves. Research has

pointed to the fact that students' beliefs about themselves, their perception of their reading ability, about language and language learning, and about the context in which they participate as language learners and language users can to some extent predict their performance (e.g. Horwitz, 2001; Pottebaum, Keith, & Ehly, 1986).

Attempts have been made to link self-concept with academic achievement. Notably, Horwitz (2001) submits that anxiety (including reading anxiety) is a cause of poor language learning in some individuals. However, Pottebaum et. al. (1986) found no causal relation between self-concept and achievement but rather found that a third but unknown variable may predominate over self-concept and achievement.

Comprehension passages, a major part of the English Language examination in Nigeria, are usually tough nuts to crack for Nigerian students. For example, Kolawole, Adepoju, and Adelore (2000) submit that students' problems and failures begin in English Language Paper 1 (of the West African Examination Council secondary examination) which covers essay writing, summary writing, and comprehension tasks; comprehension tasks constitute 33% of the total marks obtainable in the paper.

The foregoing background information brings into sharp focus the concern of the present study, an examination of the extent to which aspects of the variables of home (literacy resources and economic background), school (quality and characteristics of teachers as well as school resources), and personal (self-concept) affect students' reading comprehension and achievement in reading. It is our contention that a better understanding of the interactions among these variables, especially when taken together, would help in solving some of the problems of Nigerian students' poor performance in English Language examinations.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers have observed a decline in the academic performance of Nigerian students in the English Language usage and examinations in recent times (e.g. Abiola, 2013; Oluwole, 2008). The poor performance has been linked to many factors, of which poor reading comprehension is one (Adekola, 2012). The researchers' personal observations have revealed that, these days, Nigerian students across all strata of the educational structure, do less of reading and more of television watching, Internet browsing, and foreign football viewing. Even when they read. the students usually accompany the act with listening to music through earpieces, thereby finding it difficult to concentrate on what is being read. Given the second language status of English in Nigeria and the deterioration in the Nigerian students' performance levels in English language as a classroom subject, it is to be expected that students and all other stake-holders will devote more attention to a better grasp of the language. Thus, this study aimed at investigating some aspects of reading comprehension with a view to proposing some ways of achieving better competence in English Language for Nigerian secondary school students.

Research Questions

This study is based on the following research questions:
1. What are the factors that significantly affect reading comprehension and achievement?
2. Do school factors significantly affect reading comprehension achievement?
3. Do home factors significantly affect reading comprehension achievement?
4. Does self-concept significantly affect reading comprehension achievement?
5. To what extent would the factors (in 2, 3, and 4) jointly predict reading comprehension achievement?

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design of the survey type. As such, the descriptive statistical method was used to interpret the findings.

Population and Sampling Technique

The population of this study comprised senior secondary school year two (SSS II) students in Oyo East and Atiba Local Government Areas (LGAs). Since there are three LGAs in Oyo town, a sampling of two, we conjecture, makes a good representation of the town.

The research employed a simple random sampling technique in selecting two hundred students, one hundred from each LGA. Thus, twenty five students were randomly selected from each of the following public schools:
1.   Oyo East Local Government   Area
    i.   Olivet Baptist High School, Oyo.
    ii.   Durbar Grammar School, Oyo.
    iii.   St. Bernadine's Girls Grammar School, Oyo.
    iv.   Anglican Methodist Grammar School, Oyo.
2.   Atiba Local Government Area
    i.   Oranyan Grammar School, Oyo.
    ii.   Isale Oyo Community Grammar School, Oyo.

    iii.   Isale Oyo Commercial Secondary School, Oyo.
    iv.   Alaafin High School, Oyo.

Instrumentation
The following research instruments were used for this study:
    a.   A self-constructed questionnaire comprising twenty one items which was divided into three parts namely: (i) Home Background Questions (HBQ), (ii) School Background Questions (SBQ), and (iii) Self-Concept Questions (SCQ).
    b.   A Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT), adopted from Khajavi and Ketabi (2012).

Research Procedure
The researchers approached and obtained the verbal permission of the principals of the sampled schools. The principals then directed their vice-principals to liaise with the teachers of English to select the Senior Secondary School (SSS) III students whom they thought were intelligent enough for the research. After the researchers had explained the content of the Likert four-point scale questionnaire, each selected student was served a copy by the researchers. All the questionnaires, after having been duly filled by the sampled students, were collected by the researchers. Similarly, the test items were administered and collected by the researchers. The administration of the questionnaire and the test was done on the same day in each school. Thus, the data gathering was done visiting two schools per day. The research took place between October and November, 2013.

Data Analysis Method
Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data collected. All the responses (200) were coded, using Average Weighted Responses (AWR). The T-test statistics was employed for data analysis based on each research question. The research questions were also tested using chi-square (x^2) at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Results
In order to investigate the research questions, a number of descriptive statistics was run. The results are presented below:
Research Question One: What are the factors that significantly affect reading comprehension achievement?
Table 1: *Means, Standard Deviations and t-test analysis of factors that affect reading   comprehension achievement*.

Factors	N	Mean	SD	df	Sig.	Remark
Home, school and personal variables.	200	18.36	6.062	1.68	0.01	Significant

*Significant at p<.05

       This table shows that on items 1-21 of the questionnaire, the variables of home, school and learner's self-concept are factors directly responsible for student's poor reading comprehension achievement. Students' responses to items 1-7 (for home factors), showing the scores, 85%, 86.8%, 45%, 70%, 57.5%, 47% and 62.5% respectively, support the idea that the home background variable plays an important role in predicting reading success. The same thing is applicable to school factors (items number 8-14) and self-concept (items number 15–21) which show that students' agree to the statements with SA and A positive at an average of 60% and 65%, respectively.
Research Question 2: Do home background factors significantly affect students' performance in reading comprehension?
Table 2: *Mean, Standard Deviations and Weighted Average of Home Background variables as   factors   that affect reading comprehension achievement*.

Home Variables	Mean	SD
Items No 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7	18.97	6.070

Weighted Average $= \frac{(\Sigma x)}{N} = \frac{18.97}{7} = 2.71$

Students' responses to the home background variables on items number 1 – 7 are positive. The weighted average (WA) is above 2.5. This shows that home background factors are positive and they are significant factors to determine student's reading comprehension achievement.
Research Question 3: Do school factors significantly affect students' performance in reading comprehension?

Table 3: *Mean, Standard Deviations and Weighted Average of the effect of school variables on students' reading comprehension achievement.*

School Variables	Mean	SD
Items No 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14	17.89	6.052

Weighted Average = $\frac{(\Sigma x)}{N}$ = $\frac{17.89}{7}$ = 2.55

The Weighted Average is above 2.5. This shows that school factors significantly determine student's reading comprehension achievement.

Research Question 4: Does self-concept significantly affect students' performance in reading comprehension achievement?

Table 4: *Mean, Standard Deviations and Weighted Average of the effect of students' self-concept on reading comprehension achievement.*

Self Concept Variables	Mean	SD
Items No 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21.	16.96	5.070

Weighted Average = $\frac{(\Sigma x)}{N}$ = $\frac{16.96}{7}$ = 2.42

The Weighted Average is a little below 2.5. This shows that self-concept is not significant as a factor which affects reading comprehension achievement.

Research Question 5: To what extent would all the factors taken together affect students' reading comprehension achievement?

Table 5: *The extent of the effect of home, school, and self-concept on students' reading comprehension.*

No	FACTORS	STD REG WT (B)	SE (B)	Df	T.RATIO	P. LEVEL
1.	Parental Support	0.900	.260	1	6.749	0.05
2.	Parental Status	0.061	.957	1	2.626	0.05
3.	Home Language	0.184	.250	1	0.068	0.05
4.	Home Facilities	0.086	.227	1	0.156	0.05
5.	Teacher's Quality	0.540	.280	1	5.958	0.05
6.	School Facilities	0.510	.260	1	4.599	0.05
7.	Self-Concept	0.009	.202	1	2.061	N. S.

T Ratio significant at 0.05 level

Table 5 shows that the home, school, and self-concept factors affect students' reading comprehension in one way or the other. It shows the contributions of the factors each at 0.05 level of significance. Also, as the Table indicates, for each of the factors of home and school, the standardised regression weight (B), the standard error of estimate, the degree of freedom, and the T. ratio of the factors are significant at 0.05level. However, the response of self-concept to the statistical items (used to interpret the effect of home and school factors) is not significant.

The students' reading comprehension achievement was measured with a reading passage via multiple choice questions (with a reliability rating, 0.94–0.96). The comparison of the reading test scores suggests that individual differences in reading comprehension were considerable. For instance, it shows that students attending the older and usually better funded and equipped schools (Olivet Baptist High School and Oranyan Grammar School) had high scores in reading comprehension tasks. Also, a significant correlation was found between the social status of parents and student's level preparedness for reading tasks.

Discussion

The study's findings showed that all the factors, in one way or another, have effects on students' performance in reading comprehension. Table 2 revealed a strong correlation between home factors (including parents' socio-economic status, home language, and home facilities) and reading achievement. This is in support of the position that parents' education and parental support can influence achievement in school language learning (Adekola, 2012; Brunell, 1991; Elley & Mangubhai,1992).

Table 3 showed that school factors (e.g. quality of teachers, learning facilities) exert a strong effect on students' reading progress. This aligns with Brunel's (1991) submission that the school is of great importance to students' linguistic competence, for it is in school that students of all social and economic backgrounds are exposed to formal language instruction. As Table 4 revealed, self-concept does not have a significant impact on students' reading comprehension: this corroborates. Although the popular opinion is that there is a positive relationship between students' attitude and their academic achievement in English Language (Fakeye, 2010), this finding

shows that self-concept (an aspect of "attitude") has no significant on students' achievement in reading comprehension and therefore attunes with Pottebaum et al's (1986) position, that self-concept has no significant impact on students' academic achievement. The findings revealed by Table 5 indicate that although all the variables and factors impact on reading achievement, the levels of intensity differ. Notably, although self-concept has an effect on reading achievement, the effect is not significant.

Conclusion

The decline in the performance of Senior Secondary School students in English Language Examination has been linked to many factors including ineffective reading skills and poor reading comprehension. It can be maintained that not much has changed in the reading comprehension situation in the secondary schools as a result of the effect of factors within the school and those outside the school. For instance, the school factor is of great importance to students' linguistic progress and the student's home language background is significant, especially in an environment where the second language (i.e. English) dominates. Also, a student who has good expressive skills and cognitive perception will have a positive self-concept towards reading. The findings of this study show that school, home, and self-concept factors affect students' reading comprehension achievement, though with different levels of significance.

Recommendations

- The curriculum planners should include programmes that will bring about government involvement in language learning.
- Stakeholders in education should complement government efforts towards "Bring Back the Books" project by embracing it totally and devoting more time to it.
- Reading programmes in school should be developed to give students the opportunities to develop reading skills for effective use.
- The number of students per class should be suitable for teaching reading comprehension: large classes, common in Nigerian public schools, hamper an effective reading comprehension pedagogy.
- Students with limited English vocabulary need academic support at home. Parents should endeavour to create time and enabling environment for their children and wards at home. Specifically, parents should use their financial resources to provide books and encourage their children and wards to read them at home.
- Parents should instil in their children and wards the appropriate attitude to reading. The students should be made to believe they can comprehend all that they read if they can approach reading with the right mindset.
- Teachers should make parents to be aware of the fact that they (parents) are an important resource in their children's school work.
- Stake holders (governments and schools) should refurbish and stock existing language resource centres/libraries with good reading materials in all subject areas as well as with books for recreational or supportive reading.

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