

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Comparative study of Kwara state secondary school students' study habits in English language: implication for counselling**

**Dr. O. E. Abdullahi**

Reader in the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. E-mail: [abdullahi@unilorin.edu.ng](mailto:abdullahi@unilorin.edu.ng)

Accepted 05 July, 2010

**The thrust of the study was to compare Kwara State Secondary School Students' study habits in English using some variables in their home - background and personal factors, so as to examine the implication for counselling purposes. 200 male and female students aged between 15 and 20 years were involved in the study. Results from students't-test statistical procedure revealed that there is significant difference between the various categories of students in the study habits variables of home-work and assignment, time allocation to study, reading and note-taking, concentration and teacher consultations. The counselling implications were examined and suggestions were made to these effects.**

**Keywords:** Study habits; comparative study; English language, students

## **INTRODUCTION**

English Language is a major school subject in the Nigerian education system. It is not only a medium of instruction at all levels of education in Nigeria, but a pre-requisite to entering into post-secondary institutions. Problems of secondary school students performance in English language have claimed the attention of many scholars such as Adebisi (2006); Adebule (2004); Marburger (2009); Olaloye and Ajiloye (2004); Awotola (2007); Christopher (2007); Kolawole and Ajayi (2000); Makekoye (2007); Oladunjoye (2005); Omolewa (1975); Abdullahi (1989) and Etim (1982) among others. Omolewa (1975) observed that the importance of the English Language in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era. The original British aim for teaching English in Nigeria was reinforced by the Christian education which employed the English Language in school in teaching the pupils Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. In 1982, the education code made the use of English Language imperative at all school levels in Nigeria and since then English Language is the medium through which candidates are taught and examined.

Lack of the knowledge of spoken and written English Language in the Nigerian children may mean that such individuals are maimed or disqualified linguistically to play a full part in the national affairs and society. "Such individuals are effectively banned from undertaking future education Proficiency in English therefore, has a generic

effect and implications for further educational aspiration of the Nigerian child and the acquisition of the knowledge of English has a wide role to play-in social and economic development in Nigeria.

It is unpleasant, at least academically, to note that the performance at the school certificate level of the Nigerian secondary school students has progressively decreased. For instance, of all secondary school students who registered for English at West African School Certificate Examination in 1984, only 14.5% passed at the credit level, and in 1985, only 5% passed at the credit level, while in 1986, only 11% passed at the credit level (Ukwijie, 1988). These results indicated that over three years the failure rate ranged from 85% to 94%. The implication of this mass failure in English Language may be that thousands of secondary school students leave school convinced that they are bad in English and certainly are not able to use their mother tongue with confidence outside the limited purpose of their immediate social group.

Several empirical studies have been done on factors affecting students' achievement in English Language by several scholars such as Lado (1967); Adeyanju (1970); Grayshon (1980); Adelusi (1982); Adebisi (2006); Christopher (2009); Marburger (2009); and Etim (1982). Factors identified by these scholars as being responsible included among others, lack of comprehensive ability by

students, lack of adequate vocabulary; restricted use of English Language, ignorance of the experience about what students are supposed to write, poor teaching method, inadequate English teaching facilities and effects of metalinguistic problems. In an extensive study carried out on poor performance in English Language by Etim (1982), he recommended that:

.....qualitative teachers at the secondary school level, encouraging extensive reading habits, in students, developing material according to the Levels and entry behaviour.....engaging in extensive development at state and school levels and encouraging in-service courses for English teachers (p 285).

It is not out of the area of counselling psychologists to examine the study habits of secondary school students in an attempt to contribute to the dire need of improving the quality of the teaching and learning of English Language. The significance of the study, therefore, is to identify the factors of poor achievement in English language, more precisely in Kwara State Secondary School students' study habits in English Language. The findings will be of immense use in the counselling programme even for brilliant students to improve on their standard.

### Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study are in six (6) folds namely:

1. To examine the pattern of Kwara State Secondary School Students' study habits in English.
2. To examine the differences between literate and illiterate home background of Kwara State Secondary School Students' study habits in English.
3. To examine the difference between high and low socio-economic status home background of the students' study habits in English.
4. To examine the differences between unsuccessful and successful students of Kwara State Secondary School Students' study habits in English.
5. To examine the differences between day and boarding students' study habits in English.
6. To examine the implication of these differences for the secondary school counsellors.

### METHODOLOGY

The research was an Expos-Factor causal comparative study. The researcher investigated Kwara State Secondary -School Students' study habits in English language. Study Habit Inventory, a standardized psychological instrument designed by C. G. M. Bakare was used. A well tested socio-economic status questionnaire that has socio-metric values of an internal consistence of an alpha of

6.67 ( $n = 32$ ,  $S^2 = 157.67$ ,  $\bar{X} = 49.94$ ) and a reliability coefficient of 0.96 and the Z computed of 16.10  $p < =01$ , was adopted and used to measure the socio-economic status. The students English test scores at the Mock Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) was used and these scores were first transformed into Z scores. 200 male and female secondary school students were involved in the study. 50 students were selected from each of the four randomly selected secondary schools. The respondents' age ranges from 15 to 20 years, a mode of 18 years, and a mean of 17.18 years, with a standard deviation of 1.51. Student t-test statistical procedures were used to analyse the data. The categorisation of the subject into high and low-socio-economic status groupings and successful was done by using the modal scores in each of the two variables (i.e. those above modal scores in socio-economic status variable and English test scores respectively were considered as high socio-economic status and successful students while those below modal scores in each variable were considered low socio-economic status and unsuccessful students respectively.

### RESULTS

The results presented below were processed at the University of Ilorin Computer Centre on 30th March, 1993. The pattern of the students' study habits was first reported.

Results in Table 1 reveals that Teacher consultation (x8) has the lowest mode, mean and standard deviation while study period procedure (x4) has the highest mode and mean. The mode ranges from 6 to 30.00, while the mean score ranges from 6.08 to 28.62 in the study habits. The English test scores have a mean of 53.53, a mode of 50.00 and a standard deviation of 12.37. To reinforce our view of the pattern of students study habits, the results of zero study correlation coefficients were examined. The English test score was used as the dependent variable while the variables of study habit inventory were used as independent variables.

Results in Table 2 above revealed that the correlation coefficient between x2, the variable of Time allocation and x1, the variable of Homework and assignment to 0.131 (being the correlation coefficient between x4, the variable of study period procedure and x2, the variable of Time allocation). On a general note, the pattern of the students' study habits tends negative because most of the correlation coefficients (61%) have negative values. Even the cumulative scores of study habit inventory (SHI) x 9 revealed very low coefficients ranging from -0.004 (being the coefficient of x4 and x9) to 0.121 (being the coefficient of x5 and x9). Using the study habit inventory, x9 as independent variable still revealed that 63% of the coefficients have negative values.

**Table 1.** Pattern of Students' Study Habits

Variables	Mode	Mean	Standard Deviation
x1	22.00	21.77	4.24
x2	19.00	20.21	3.88
x3	26.00	28.62	6.07
x4	30.00	28.43	5.03*
x5	11.00	10.41	2.89
x6	16.00	15.03	3.19
x7	24.00	24.88	5.12
x8	6.00	6.08	1.60*
x9	50.00	53.53	12.37

**Key:**

X1 = Homework and assignment

X2 = Time allocation

X3 = Reading and Note taking

X4 = Study period procedure

X5 = Concentration

X6 = Written work

X7 = Examinations

X8 = Teacher consultation

X9 = English Test score

\* = Lowest mean and mode

\*\* = Highest mean and mode

**Table 2.** Cross Tabulation of the Zero Order Correlation Coefficients of the Study Habits

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9
X1	1.000								
X2	-0.531	1.000							
X3	0.054	-0.450	1.000						
X4	-0.109	0.131	-0.450	1.000					
X5	-0.041	0.114	0.051	-0.440	1.000				
X6	-0.108	-0.008	-0.133	0.059	-0.026	1.000			
X7	0.122	0.030	-0.040	-0.040	-0.022	-0.123	1.000		
X8	0.009	-0.056	-0.046	0.120	0.026	-0.320	-0.048	1.000	
X9	0.110	-0.026	-0.006	-0.004	0.121	0.119	-0.095	0.054	1.000

Key: x9 = Study Habit inventory (SHI)

The results of students't-test were used to examine the various null hypotheses generated in the study.

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between the day and boarding students' study habits in English Language. Boarding students' study Habits.

Results in Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference only in Reading and Note taking (variable x3) at an alpha level of .05 (p<031). The null hypothesis is, therefore, rejected and restated that:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is significant difference in Reading and Note taking between Day and Boarding students' study habits. It was also observed from the results in Table 3 that even when there is no significant difference between Day and Boarding students' achievement in English test scores,

the Boarding students out-performed the Day students.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference between the literate and illiterate home background students' in study habits.

Results in Table 4 below shows that there are significant difference between illiterate and literate home background of students' study habits in the variables of Time allocation (x2); study period procedure (x4) and concentration (x5). These significant differences are at an alpha level of 0.5. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected and restated that:

H<sub>2</sub>: There is significant difference between illiterate and literate home background of students' study habits in the variables of time allocation of study, study period

**Table 3.** Summary of the Student's t-test on the Differences Between Day and Boarding Students' Habits

Variable	Day			N	X	SD	Df	t	Prob
	N	K	SD						
x1	133	21.57	4.11	67	22.17	4.56	198	.95	.541
x2	133	20.28	4.10	67	20.07	3.44	198	.36	.718
x3	133	27.98	6.07	67	29.92	5.89	198	2.18	.031
x4	133	28.64	5.10	67	28.00	5.68	198	0.81	.417
x5	133	10.50	2.98	67	10.22	2.71	198	.64	.620
x6	133	14.84	3.33	67	15.41	2.88	198	-1.20	.230
x7	133	24.67	5.20	67	25.50	4.94	198	-1.22	.224
x8	133	5.97	1.37	67	6.28	1.98	198	-1.27	.205
x9	133	52.34	13.34	67	55.76	9.88	198	-1.82	.070

**Table 4.** Summary of Students' t-test on the Differences Between Literate and Illiterate Home Background of Students in Study Habits.

Variable	Literate			Illiterate			DF	t	Prob
	N	X	SD	N	X	SD			
x1	162	21.67	4.10	38	22.18	4.84	198	.66	.511
x2	162	19.91	3.92	38	21.47	3.57	198	2.24	.026
x3	162	28.61	6.31	38	28.65	4.99	198	.04	.996
x4	162	27.95	9.27	38	30.41	4.97	198	2.65	.009
x5	162	10.20	2.84	38	11.26	2.97	198	2.03	.043
x6	162	14.94	3.25	38	15.42	3.02	198	0.83	.409
x7	162	24.70	5.10	38	25.63	5.23	198	1.09	.320
x8	162	6.07	1.65	38	8.10	1.41	198	0.11	.915
x9	162	53.56	12.00	38	53.34	14.0	198	0.10	.920

\* Significant,  $p \leq .05$ 

procedure and concentration.

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant difference between the high socio-economic status and low socio-economic status background of students in study habits.

Results in Table 5 below shows that there are significant different between High and Low socio-economic status backgrounds of students in the study habits variable. Homework and assignment (x1) written work (x6) and achievement in English test score (x9) and these differences are significant at an alpha level of .05. On the basis of these significant differences, the null hypothesis is, therefore, rejected and restated that:

H<sub>3</sub>: There are significant differences between high and low socio-economic status background of students in study habits and achievement in English test scores.

Ho<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant difference between the unsuccessful and successful secondary school students' study habits.

Result in Table 6 below shows that there is significant different between the unsuccessful and successful students study habits variable of concentration (x5) and

the difference is significant at an alpha level of .05. On the basis of this result, the null hypothesis is therefore, rejected and restated that:

H<sub>4</sub>: There is significant difference between unsuccessful and successful students in study habits variable of concentration.

## DISCUSSION

The thrust of the study was to compare Kwara State secondary school students' study habits in English test scores and examine the implication for counselling in schools. In doing this, we first examined the pattern of the students' study habits using the mean, mode and standard deviation. The impression gotten from the results is that the students have negative pattern of study habits. The results of zero order correlation coefficients between the students' English test scores and the study habits showed that as much as 61 % of the coefficient has negative values. Even the students' English test

**Table 5.** Summary of Students' t-test on the differences between High and Low socio-Economic Status Backgrounds of Students in Study Habits.

Variable	L SES			H SES			Df	t	prob
	N	X	SD	N	X	SD			
x1	98	10.83	4.22	102	22.67	4.09	198	-3.13	.002*
x2	98	20.23	3.51	102	20.16	4.23	198	0.18	.858
x3	98	-27.90	5.18	102	29.30	6.78	198	-1.63	.104
x4	98	28.53	4.86	102	28.33	5.68	198	0.26	.793
x5	98	10.44	2.87	102	10.37	2.93	198	0.19	.853
x6	98	14.51	3.17	102	15.53	3.15	198	-2.30	.020*
x7	98	24.76	4.92	102	25.00	5.33	198	0.32	.747
x8	98	5.86	1.36	102	6.28	1.79	198	-1.84	.067
x9	88	43.47	8.52	102	63.24	6.24	198	18.62	.000*

\* significant,  $p \leq .05$

**Key:**

L S E S: Low socio-economic status students

H S E S: High socio-economic status students

**Table 6.** Summary of students't-test on the difference between the Unsuccessful and Successful students in study habits.

Variable	UNSUCCESSFUL			SUCCESSFUL			Df	t	prob
	N	X	SD	N	X	SD			
x1	145	21.44	4.29	55	22.63	4.03	198	-1.78	.077
X2	145	19.89	3.97	55	21.05	3.55	188	-1.89	.060
x3	145	28.68	6.26	55	28.43	5.36	198	0.26	.783
X4	145	28.16	6.14	55	29.12	5.68	193	-1.15	.253
X5	145	10.16	2.80	55	11.05	3.05	198	-1.56	.050*
X6	145	14.85	3.27	55	15.50	2.86	198	-1.29	.197
X7	145	24.72	5.02	55	25.30	5.41	198	-0.72	.473
X8	145	6.06	1.66	55	6.12	1.46	198	-0.26	.799
X9	145	53.17	12.20	55	54.45	12.88	198	-0.65	.514

\* Significant  $p \leq .05$

scores have a mean of 53.53, mode of 50.00 and large standard deviation of 12.37. This pattern of results cannot be considered impressive, because of the implications English test scores have on secondary school students' future educational aspirations.

An interesting piece of information in the pattern of students' is that, the variable of Reading and Note taking has second highest value only to the variable of study period procedure (x3 & x4 respectively). Variable x3, Reading and Note taking has a mean of 26, mode of 28 with a standard deviation of 6.07. But it (x3) has negative correlation coefficient (-0.006) with the student's English test score (x9). It implies that extensive reading and note taking had no positive effect on students' test achievement. This may be further explained that if students have no adequate consultation with their teachers, no matter the level of reading and note taking at secondary school level, the students will achieve poorly. Casual observations in most secondary schools in Nigeria, particularly Kwara State, revealed that many

teachers usually engage in giving extensive notes to students that are very often not explained. In an era of frequent workers strike, teachers have limited time to cover their syllabi, sometimes teachers resort to giving notes to students at least to justify their claims that the syllabus is covered. This result has testified to the universal claim by scholars that note giving cannot be a substitute to classroom teaching and this should claim the attention of school counsellors to educate the teachers very strongly on this issue.

The second area of concern was the comparison of the subjects of the study on various sub-sets. The results of students't-test were used for this purpose. The results in Table 3 reveals that there is significant difference between day and boarding secondary school students in the variables of Reading and Note taking (x3) and the boarding students out-performed the day students ( $P < .05$ ). Specifically speaking, with the introduction of day system at the secondary school level in the early 1980's, in Kwara State, many students were put in a

disadvantaged position. In the area of home background conditions, a greater percentage of the secondary school students' home background cannot support profitable reading nor encourage good study habits. Such homes are either not academically stimulating or lacking basic reading facilities such as steady supply of electricity, table and chairs and a study room separate from the main sitting or living rooms. Even students that have access to these basic facilities may still be disadvantaged because of poor peer groups, and poor social climate such as noise in the environment, and visitor, interruption. These may impede good study habits.

These adverse home environment, compared very unfavourably with the school environment where the boarders have schedule planned by the school authorities and where available; these schedules are supervised by the school counsellor or master on duty. Thus, boarders have the advantage of being supervised and encouraged to form good study habits. These are some of the conditions that may have helped boarders to excel in the variable of reading and note taking over and above the day students that were involved in this study and it should be of interest to counsellors.

Issues concerning the students' home background encouraged the researcher to examine the differential influence of influence and illiterate home background on students' study habits. The results in Tables 4 reveals that there are significant differences in the variable of time allocation ( $x_2$ ,  $P \leq .02$ ), study period procedure ( $x_4$ ,  $p \leq .009$ ), concentration ( $x_5$ ,  $p \leq .04$ ), and in all these variables those from literate homes out-performed those from illiterate home background. Of noteworthy is that the moderator variable of literate and illiterate home background differentiated students' study habits most. These significant differences may least be surprising because in illiterate home background, and especially if the students are day students, the time allocation for study will be minimal as there may be no adequate home support for good study habits. The same is true for study period procedure and concentration. If the home environment is not productive for study, there can be no concentration even when the student is willing. The significant differences observed in this regard, only confirm the views that those from literate homes are over and above the students from illiterate home background. This is also an area of concern for the Nigerian School counsellors, and the issue could form an item of discussion during the Parent Teacher Association meetings.

In an attempt to further justify the claims in this research, efforts were made to examine the influence of socio-economic status of students on their study habits. Results in Table 5 reveals that there are significant differences between the two sets of students in the variable of written work ( $x_6$ ,  $P \leq .02$ ) and in English test scores ( $x_9$ ,  $P \leq .000$ ).

One of the controversial points in educational research

is the relationship between socio-economic status variables and educational achievement variables.

Scholars like Henderson and Mecritt (1966); Bloom (1976) and Dubey (1984) concluded that the strength of the relationships found in industrialised countries between academic achievement and socio-economic status may not prevail in societies of less industrialised countries. Contrary to these claims, Ipaye (1976); Abdullahi (1989); observed that socio-economic status measured by the students' educational level occupation, income, attendance at nursery education, index of crowding and facilities home, have a strong causal connection with student's educational outcome. This result, therefore, lends more credence to the socio-economic status in the Nigerian environment has measure of relationship with students' academic achievement. With respect to this study, student's socio-economic status, that was involved in this study, therefore, student's socio-economic status, has significant influence on the students' home-work and assignment; written work, as well as achievement in English test scores.

In view of the general decline in the performance of students at the terminal level of secondary school education; efforts were made to examine the difference in study habits and achievements in English between the unsuccessful students. Results in Table 6 reveals that there is significant difference only in the variable of concentration ( $x_5$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) between the unsuccessful and successful students and the successful students out-performed the unsuccessful students. This finding is least surprising. More important is, of course, the non-significant difference in English test achievement between the unsuccessful and successful students.

The mean score even for the passing students is slightly above average; (53.55) with a large standard deviation of 12.37. This result only confirmed the steady decline in secondary school students' performance in public examination currently in Nigeria. The failure rate, particularly in English language at the terminal level of secondary education between 1984 and 1986 range between 85% and 94% and this decline in students' achievement in English has persisted over the years. The non-significant difference reported in other variables of study habits and English test achievement, therefore, should not be a surprise.

### Implication for Counselling

As the third arm of educational programme (i.e. instruction, administration and guidance) the role of counselling in the Nigerian education system has become a reality. One point of note is that, counselling, psychologists should give considerable research attention to the importance role of students' personal factors in the students' academic achievement. With particular

reference to this study, school counsellor in the area research should give cognisance to students' study habits, in terms of homework and assignment, time allocated to study, reading and note taking, concentration and teacher consultation. Concerning the academic achievement of students that were involved in this study, they should be involved in a lot of extra-curricular reading activities. Using the views of Lyle-Tossing's rules for effective study may be a good way to improving students' study habits.

## Conclusion

In an attempt to assist the secondary school students improve on their academic achievement particularly in English Language, it is important that counselling psychologists give adequate research considerations to students' study habits.

## REFERENCES

- Abdullahi OE (1989). Prevalence of adolescent's problems among Ebara secondary school students in Kwara State: It implications for counselling. Unpublished M. Ed. project, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Adebiyi DA (2006). Effect of motivation on junior secondary school students' performance in reading comprehension in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. Unpublished M.Ed project, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Adebule SO (2004). Gender differences on a locally standardized anxiety reading scale in Mathematics for Nigerian secondary schools. Niger. J. Couns. Appl. Psychol.
- Adelusi IO (1982). Relationship between selected variables in achievement in English as a second language, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Adeyanju T. (1976). The effects of teachers' attitude on the teaching of English as a second language. West Afr. J. Educ. 20 (3):400.
- Apple WM (1982). Cultural and economic reproduction in education: Essays on class, Ideology and the state. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Awotala AOA (2007). Women and learning in Mathematics. Afr. J. Hist. Sci. Educ. 3(1):195-213.
- Bloom BS (1976). Human characteristics and school learning. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Chief Examiners' Report (1970). English language paper I. Lagos, WAEC.
- Christopher N (2007). Literacy development with books. Books of Abstract. Pp. 241-252.
- Dubey DC (1973). Schooling, status and success attitudes towards achievement with implication for childhood education. Early Child. Educ. 15:14-150.
- Etim SJ (1982):Teaching English in secondary school in Nigeria: Problems and possible solutions. J. Niger. Educ. Res. 2(1):121-120.
- Kolawole COO, Ajayi HO (2000). Home psychological environment as correlates of child's reading proficiency. J. Early Child. Assoc. Niger. 1 (2) 109-117.
- Mabekoye O (2007). Effects of cooperative and cooperative goal structures on undergraduate students' learning outcomes in English Language. J. Stud. Humanit. 2(1):115-128.
- Marburger DR (2005). Comparing students' performance using cooperative learning. Int. Rev. Econ. Educ. 4 (11) 46-57.
- Oladunjoye OO (2005). Learning strategy, gender achievement in verbal communication in English Language. Ibadan J. Educ. Stud. 3:11-15.
- Olaloye FA, Ajileye LJI (2004). Gender disparities in educational opportunities in Nigeria. J. Contemp. Issues Educ. 2 (1):201-204.