



THE INFLUENCE OF HOME VARIABLES ON UPPER BASIC STUDENTS' MOTHER-TONGUE- ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

ABDULRAHMAN, Abdulwaheed Abiodun¹, RAHEEM Adebayo Lawal²

¹Department of Arts and Science Education

Faculty of Education, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria

abdulrahman.abdulwaheed@kwasu.edu.ng

²Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin.

bayolawal58@unilorin.edu.ng

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ABSTRACT

The Federal Government of Nigeria's (FGN) language of education policy emphasises simultaneous exposure to both the English language and Mother-Tongue (MT)/Language of the Immediate Environment (LoIE) from lower to Upper Basic school levels, so that by the end of Upper Basic school level, students would have become biliterate in MT/LoIE and English Language. However, Upper Basic students were observed to be unable to carry out literacy activities effectively in their MT and English languages, despite the Government's bi-literacy provisions in the National Policy on Education. This paper seeks to analyse the influence of home variables on the Upper Basic mother-tongue English bi-literacy achievement in Kwara State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research of a cross-sectional type was adopted for the study, using all the Upper Basic III students in Kwara State as the target population. The sample consisted of 384 respondents. An adapted achievement test and focus group discussion were used to gather data. The percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation, chi-square and One-Way ANOVA were used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. It was found out that all the variables of parents' age, parents' education and home language significantly influenced bi-literacy achievement in Kwara State. The study, therefore, recommends that parents should perform their foundation role by emphasising the use of the mother tongue at home to foster bi-literacy skills in their children.

Introduction

The linguistic situation in Nigeria is very complex, as evident in the number of indigenous languages across the different ethnic nationalities that make up the country. Inter-ethnic communication through the medium of an indigenous language becomes a great challenge. This is not only because natives of different languages do not understand one another's codes, but also because of language nationalism exhibited by language natives in favour of their different linguistic heritages. Being a foreign language, all the indigenous linguistic groups saw English as neutral, hence, embraced it as a unifying code for effective inter-ethnic communications.

At functional levels, the English language is used in situations where the indigenous languages cannot achieve the communication objective among the people. This presupposes that the English language co-exists with the indigenous languages. Subsequently, the prestige and honour enjoyed by the English language placed it on a higher status compared to the native languages, such that proficiency in it is considered synonymous with civilisation. The unintended consequence on the part of Nigerians, however, is that the indigenous languages appear less important and using them has become a symbol of low class, illiteracy, crudity and poverty. This further propelled the dominance of the English language over the indigenous languages.

In the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2014), English is considered a second language (L2), a national language and a Lingua Franca, while the indigenous languages are assigned the roles of mediums of instruction for the first four years and subjects across all levels of the Nigerian education. The hegemony of the English language over the indigenous languages has its downsides. Empirically, many of the indigenous languages have been relegated to the background, thereby resulting in the shift, extinction and eventual death of some of the indigenous languages as well as the indigenous knowledge buried in them (Ogunmodimu, 2015).

The Federal Government of Nigeria made provisions for the use of the indigenous languages, especially the three most recognised ones (Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo) in the National Policy on Education (NPE). This linguistic enactment is done in a way that not only compels the indigenous languages in the school children both as mediums for the display of literacy and literacy subjects at the basic level of Nigeria's education, but also make them as separate disciplines within the university curriculum. This is in addition to the continuous learning and usage of English Language. With this, one could assume that school children are expected to become bilingual and biliterate by being able to communicate in both the indigenous and the English languages without letting one negatively affect the other. This is a situation McCray (2015) refers to as additive bi-literacy. The opposite of it is the subtractive bi-literacy, which,

according to Soltero (2004), encourages the use of the L1 only for a short period of time—up to Basic 3, thereby giving preference to the L2 over the L1.

The term literacy can traditionally be defined as the ability to read, write and do some calculations. When these literacy skills (reading, writing and numeracy) are exhibited in more than one language, it is called bi-literacy. Bi-literacy is a step beyond bilingualism (AbdulRahman & Lawal, 2019). There has been scholarly agreement regarding the concept of bi-literacy. Scholars, such as Honberger (2004) and Cummins (2014) uphold the centrality of the higher-order skills of two languages in defining bi-literacy, although with little differences at the level of functionality. While linking bilingualism with bi-literacy, Cummins' (2014) submissions show that being biliterate can be attributed to academic language proficiency. According to the scholar, bilingual proficiency and fluency can be in three dimensions: discrete language skills, conversational fluency and academic proficiency. The author, therefore, defines bi-literacy as a crucial basis on which access to different and varied social and cultural worlds is guaranteed. More explicitly, Hornberger (2004) defines bi-literacy as all evidence of communication in two languages.

Underscoring the importance of the indigenous languages in enhancing literacy experience in schools, the FGN, in the NPE states that “every child shall be taught in the mother tongue or language of the immediate environment for the first four years of basic education....In addition, it is expected that every child shall learn one Nigerian language” (NPE, 2014: p. 4). This policy provision is an attempt to afford the Nigerian child continuous access to the indigenous and English languages by exposing them to literacy experience in both languages, thereby making them biliterate in English and one or more indigenous languages at certain times in their educational journey.

In spite of the positive colouration of the quoted part of the NPE, the language provisions are riddled with a number of inconsistencies in the way language of education is structured at the basic level of the Nigerian education system. This is in addition to the policy's complete silence on the language of evaluation and provisions for people with special abilities.

The display of bi-literacy by school children varies from child to child. And this may be the product of home-based factors. Such factors include: parents' age, parents' level of formal education and home language. Assessing how these factors influence the bi-literacy achievement of Upper Basic students is of both social and academic significance.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed at assessing the influence of parental variables on the Upper Basic students' mother-tongue-English bi-literacy achievement in Kwara State, Nigeria. The focus of the study specifically was to assess the general bi-literacy achievement and the influence of home variables such as parents' age, parents' educational level and home language on bi-literacy achievement.

Research Questions

This study aimed to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the general mother tongue-English bi-literacy achievement of Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. Do parents' age have any influence on the general bi-literacy achievements of Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria?
3. Does parents' educational level have any influence on the general bi-literacy achievements of Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria?
4. Does home language have any influence on the general bi-literacy achievements of Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference in the general bi-literacy achievements of Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria.
- H₀₂:** Parents' age does not have any significant influence on the general bi-literacy achievements of Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria.
- H₀₃:** Parents' educational level does not have any significant influence on the general bi-literacy achievements of Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria.
- H₀₄:** Home language has no significant influence on the general bi-literacy achievements of Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Methodology

A descriptive research of cross-sectional type was used in this study. All Basic students were the population for this study. The target population were the Upper Basic III students in Kwara State. Three hundred and eighty-four (384) respondents were selected using a proportionate sampling technique. An adapted achievement test and focus group discussion were used to gather data for this study. Four research questions and four hypotheses were answered and

tested using Mean and Standard Deviation, Percentage, and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Results

Demographic Information of the Students' Parents

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents in Kwara State

KWARA			
Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	(%)
Parents' Age	Young (20-40)	103	26.8
	Older (41-60)	196	51.0
	Oldest (60 & above)	85	22.1
	Total	384	100.0
Parents' Education	Low (SSCE)	111	28.9
	Medium (National Diploma)	192	50
	High (First Degree and above)	81	21.1
	Total	384	100.0
Home Language	Yoruba	73	19
	English	146	38
	Both Yoruba and English	140	36.5
	Other Language	25	6.5
	Total	384	100.0

The results, as displayed in Table 1 above, showed the sampled Upper Basic students' demographic distribution in Kwara State.

Based on parents' age, the Young parents (20-40 years old) were 103 (26%), the older parents (41-60 years old) were 196 (51%), and the oldest parents (61 years and above) were 85 (22.1%). On parents' educational level, the parents who were within low level (SSCE or its equivalent) were 111 (28.9%), those that were at the medium level (National Diploma or its Equivalent) were 192 (50%) and the ones within high level (First Degree or its equivalent) were 81 (21.1%),

Regarding home language, homes where Yoruba was used were 73 (19.0%), and the ones where English was the home language were 146 (38.0%). The homes where both English and Yoruba languages were combined for communication were 140 (36.5%), while homes where language(s) other than Yoruba and English were used were 25 (6.5%).

Research Question 1

What is the general mother tongue-English bi-literacy achievement of Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 2: General Mother tongue-English bi-literacy Achievement of Upper Basic Students in Kwara State, Nigeria

State	Characteristics	Mean	S.D.	Inference
Kwara	Yoruba-English Achievement	46.57	8.88	Basic
	General Literacy			

Table 2 indicates the general bi-literacy achievement of Upper Basic students in Yoruba and English from Kwara State. With the mean scores of 46.57, the general bi-literacy achievement level was "Basic" with S.D. 8.88.

Research Question 2

Does parents' age have any influence on the general bi-literacy achievements of Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 3: ANOVA Summary of the Difference in the General Bi-literacy Achievements of Upper Basic Students in Kwara, Nigeria, Based on Parents' Age. (N=384)

Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	Cal. F	P-Value	Decision
Between Groups	2471.515	2	1235.758			
Within Groups	27607.837	381	72.462	17.054	.000	HO Rejected
Total	30079.352	383				

*significance at $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 3, the F-value of 17.054 was obtained with the P-value of .000 calculated at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of .000 is less than the alpha level (0.05), Hypothesis three A was rejected. This implies that the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the general bi-literacy achievements of Upper Basic students in Kwara state, Nigeria based on Parents' Age is rejected. Therefore, Parents' Age significantly differentiated the general bi-literacy achievements among Upper Basic students in Kwara state, Nigeria. In order to determine the source of difference, Duncan Post-Hoc analysis was carried out as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Post-Hoc Analysis of Significant Influence of Parents' Age on General bi-literacy Achievements among Upper Basic Students in Kwara State, Nigeria(N=384)

Parents' Age	N	Subset for alpha=0.05	
		1	2
20-40 (Young)	103	42.43	
61 and above (Oldest)	85		47.39
41-60 (Older)	196		48.39

*significance @ 0.05

Table 4 shows that the young parents have a low mean score of 42.43 in subset 1, while the "Oldest" and "Older" parents with higher mean scores of 47.39 and 48.39 are in subset 2. The result proves that there was a significant difference among them, in favour of students of the "Older" and "Oldest" parents.

Research Question 3:

Does parents' educational level have any influence on the general bi-literacy achievements of Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 5: ANOVA Summary of the Difference in the General Literacy Achievements of Upper Basic Students in Kwara, Nigeria Based on Parents' Level of Education. (N=384).

Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cal. F	P-Value	Decision
Between Groups	2044.171	2	1022.085			
Within Groups	28029.277	380	73.761	13.857	.000	HO Rejected
Total	30073.447	382				

*significance at $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 5, the F-value of 13.857 was obtained with the P-value of .000 calculated at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of .000 is less than the alpha level (0.05), Hypothesis 2 was rejected. Therefore, Parents' Level of Education significantly differentiated the general bi-literacy achievements among Upper Basic students in Kwara state, Nigeria. In order to determine the source of the difference, Duncan's post hoc analysis was carried out as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Post-Hoc Analysis of Significant Influence of Parents' Level of Education on the General bi-literacy Achievements among Upper Basic Students in Kwara State, Nigeria(N=384)

Parents' Level of Education	N	Subset for alpha=0.05	
		1	2
Low (SSCE)	110	42.96	
High (First Degree)	81		47.44
Medium(National Diploma)	192		48.26

*significance @ 0.05

Table 6 shows that the parents with low qualifications had a low mean score of 42.9616, as seen in subset 1, while the parents with High and Medium qualifications had higher mean scores of 47.44 and 48.26, as seen in subset 2. The result proves that there was a significant

difference among them, first in favour of parents with “medium” and then those with “high” education.

Hypothesis Four: *No significant difference exists in the general bi-literacy achievements of Upper Basic students in Kwara States, Nigeria based on home language.*

Table 7: ANOVA Summary of the Difference in the General bi-literacy Achievements of Upper Basic Students in Kwara State, Nigeria Based on Home Language (N=384).

Groups	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	Cal. F	P-Value	Decision
Between Groups	5835.837	3	1945.279			
Within Groups	24023.611	379	63.951	30.42	.000	HO Rejected
Total	30073.447	382				

*significance at $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 7, the F-value of 30.42 was obtained with the P-value of .000 calculated at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of .000 is less than the alpha level (0.05), Hypothesis Four A is rejected. Therefore, home language significantly influenced the general bi-literacy achievements among Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria. In order to determine the source of the difference, Duncan's post hoc analysis was carried out as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Post-Hoc Analysis of Significant Influence of Home Language on General bi-literacy Achievements among Upper Basic Students in Kwara State, Nigeria (N=384)

Home Language	N	Subset for alpha=0.05
	1	2
Yoruba	72	38.57
English	146	47.63
Both English and Yoruba	140	49.07
Other Language	25	49.26

*significance @ 0.05

Table 8 shows that homes where Yoruba language is used appear under subset 1 while the three other language possibilities fall under subset 2. The result proved that English, both Yoruba and English and other languages have higher mean score compared to Yoruba which has the lowest mean score. Therefore, significant difference only existed between using Yoruba only and any other language/language combinations at home.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that the general bi-literacy achievement of the Upper Basic students in Kwara State, Nigeria, was still at the “basic” level. This is, however, far from what the National Language Policy promises. One can opine that a country like Nigeria that relies so much on English as a tool for intra- and international communications and seeks to reposition the indigenous language (Yoruba), perhaps because of its entrenched epistemologies, to a competitive standard, should not be at the ‘basic’ level of achievement in the two languages. This is not to mention the low score (40%) that qualified for the so-called ‘basic’ level. Bearing this in mind, the ‘basic’ achievement level in bi-literacy as recorded by the students from Kwara state could still be considered as less proficient.

The finding disagrees with Mba’s (2012) position that many Nigerian children have lost their indigenous languages completely due to overexposure to the English language at an early stage of their lives. The finding also disagrees with Ogunmodimmu (2015), who asserts that bi-literacy might not be feasible because many indigenous languages lack proper codification. Parents’ age, parents’ education, and home language significantly influenced bi-literacy achievement in Kwara.

This means that parents’ variables are important predictors for the children’s bi-literacy achievement. This finding agrees with Dooga (2012) who explains that home variables play significant roles in determining the survival of a language and its achievement. Also, the finding aligns with Guang-Lea(2020), who opines that effective language training is influenced by the learners’ parental age group, among other factors.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn in this study, the following recommendations are highlighted for effective bi-literacy achievement among secondary school students.

1. **Parents:** should emphasise the use of the mother tongue to foster bi-literacy skills within the home. This would help them perform their pivotal role in laying a solid foundation and complement the school's efforts towards raising bilingual and biliterate children.
2. **Teachers** should learn to appreciate the linguistic backgrounds of their students and explore the best approach towards making their students biliterate as projected in the National Policy on Education.
3. **Education Planners:** should review the content of the Language of Education Policy statement to reflect current linguistic realities across the different parts of Nigeria in such a way that would favour the Nigerian indigenous languages and help learners become biliterate seamlessly.

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