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A SURVEY OF LOWER-BASIC SCHOOL PUPILS' ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION TOWARDS THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN IKERE-EKITI, EKITI, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Significant among factors that constitute foreign language learning problems are affective variables such as attitudes; orientations, motivation, and anxiety. Out of these identified factors, learners' attitude and motivation are essential to successful second language learning and learning. The dignified role of English language in Nigeria calls for prompt attention to pupils' low proficiency/problems in English Language. These problems could originate from lower-basic school pupils' poor attitude and dearth of motivation towards the learning of English language account for their poor learning in the subject. This mini-research examines lower basic school pupils' attitude and motivation towards English language. Forty pupils between the ages of 11-15 years were drawn as respondents from sample schools. Questionnaire was used for the collection of data and descriptive statistics was used to analysis the data. The findings indicate that pupils with positive attitude and extrinsic motivation towards learning of English performed better in the language. Based on the findings, this study recommends that teachers of English language at the upper basic school level should employ appropriate teaching strategies to motivate learners and that learners of English language should have positive attitude towards the learning of the subject.

Introduction

Language is at the centre of human life. It is used for a number of functions; to achieve goals, to further careers, to gain simple pleasure, for personal enrichment and broadening of educational experiences and so on. Some people can do some or all of these in more than one language. Being able to use another language gives a number of opportunities: getting a job, a

chance to get educated, ability to take part in the life of the society, an expansion of one's political opinions or religious belief and so on (Ogunleye, 2009).

A second language (L2) affects people's careers and futures, their lives and identities. In a world where probably more people speak two languages than one, the acquisition and use of English Language as a second language are vital to everyday lives of millions.

English is a language spoken and written by billions of people around the world. In Nigeria, English is a second language. It is the language of instruction in Nigerian schools, colleges and universities. It is also the language of commerce, religions, and even national and international communication. To become proficient in English language is undoubtedly important and, this explains why Nigerian students must study hard to be well equipped in the subject.

The lower-basic school in Nigeria is the basic form of education and it has been structured in such a way by the Federal Ministry of Education to provide every young child with the necessary knowledge for secondary education.

According to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the core subjects taught in the lower-basic school include English Studies, Mathematics, Nigerian languages, Basic Science and Technology (BST), Religion and National Values (RNV), Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA), Arabic language, Pre-vocational studies.

As earlier pointed out, the official language in Nigeria is English and it is also the medium of instruction in schools, hence the reason why English is a core subject at the lower-basic school level (nigerianfact.com).

The National Policy of Education (NPE, 2013) allows schools to instruct pupils at this level of education in the English language (NERDC 2007).Having mentioned the prestigious position which English language occupies in Nigeria, Ogunleye (2009) posits that, examining those factors which can assist pupils to perform more effectively in English language is an important task for all educators.

The findings of researchers such as Lawal 2017; Akinwumi 2017; Ajayi 2016; and Ogunleye 2009 independently revealed that there is low proficiency in English language among Nigerian pupils and the failure rate in the subject is highly due to lack of positive attitudes and motivation of pupils towards learning of the subject. This study however observes that despite many studies on motivation and attitude towards the learning of English language, limited studies seem to have been directed towards lower-basic pupils' attitude and motivation towards the learning of the language. Thus this study focuses on the attitude and motivation of lower-basic school pupils towards learning of English language in Ikere-Ekiti metropolis.

Learning a second language is a process that requires a total commitment from the learner. The learner's success in the language depends on his physical, intellectual and emotional response. Ishaq (2016) in his findings opines that, language is inextricably bound up in virtually every aspect of human behavior and to attain success in second language learning, every component parts of second language learning and acquisition must be considered. He reaffirmed that there exists a diverse collection of cognitive and affective factors on L2 learning and learning.

Ishaq (2016) further affirmed that there have been many studies conducted

identifying the influence of these factors – cognitive, affective, and sociological on language learning. These factors influence pupils' interest, behavior and actions in the language classrooms, promoting or hindering their language learning learnings.

In the same vein, Shukainah and Yunus (2014) stress that the success in learning a second language depends upon many factors such as learning style, motivation and attitude towards the language while Abidin (2012) pointed out that achievement in a target language relies not only on intellectual capacity, but also in the learner's attitude towards language learning. Positive attitude will significantly contribute to the success of second language learning.

Moreover, Hashwani's (2008) finding revealed that the acquisition of second/foreign language is induced by various variables like motivation, attitudes, aptitude, intelligence, age, self-identities, personalities and so forth. This ideal relationship is further stressed by researchers. For instance, Thang, Ting and Jafre (2011) in their findings revealed that pupils with positive attitudes and high motivation are more successful compared with those with negative attitudes and low motivation.

Attitude and motivation towards language learning, according to Shukainah and Yunus (2014) are interconnected and co-exist in order to achieve a successful language learning experience.

Ogunleye's (2009) study on interrelationship among senior secondary school students' attitude to, motivation and learning in English Language in Kaduna, Nigeria similarly revealed that the two independent variables- attitude and motivation, significantly correlated with the academic learning of the students in English Language. This finding the researcher opined lends support to Thorndike's law of learning. The law implies that a person learns only when he is ready. Thus, it is presumed that pupils' attitudes and motivation towards the learning process are vital in determining how well they learn.

Motivation in this study refers to those affective characteristics which orientate learners to acquire elements of the second language, the desire a learner has to achieve the learning goals and the amount of efforts he or she expends in this direction. Motivation is broadly categorized as intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation entails responding to the needs that exist inside the learner, such as the desire to know; curiosity, and feelings of growth or competence (Liu 2014). Gardner (2010) opines that this type of motivation exists when an individual's actions are influenced by an inside desire to complete a task successfully. Consequently, learners with intrinsic motivation study by their personal initiative and often prefer fairly complex tasks (Ochsenfahrt, 2012). This has immense value for L2 learning as the inward interest helps learners in self-starting and maintains the motivational engine going for long (Liu, 2014).

Extrinsic motivation on the other hand refers to an outside force that powers the learning process (Liu, 2014). This force usually takes the form of praise, rewards, recognition and acknowledgement. As explained by Nathalie (2016), intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are two inseparable phenomena, and where language learning is concerned, they complement each other.

Motivation has been broadly viewed by scholars, researchers and teachers as one of the major variables that determine the level of success in second language learning (SLA). The motivation of learners greatly affects their willingness to take part in the process of learning (Liu, 2014). Learning therefore involves a mixture of the two types of motivation.

Nyamubi (2016), defines attitudes as either mental readiness or implicit predispositions that exert some general or consistent influence on a fairly large class of evaluative responses, which are usually directed towards some objects, events or persons.

Attitude and interest are closely related concepts. The broader term is attitude which subsumes interest. Attitude as an aspect of psycholinguistic is developed in the early childhood. Attitudes are acquired through experiences that have a pronounced affective (feeling) component. They are the result of parental and peer influences, contact with people who are different in many ways as well as in interacting affective factors in the human experiences. Such attitudes form a part of one's perception of self, of others, and of the culture in which one is living.

The effect of attitude on language learning has for a long time generated a lot of controversy among educationists and psychologists. Abiri (2010) opines that the kind of attitude a child has affects school work and learning. If he has positive attitudes about the school, the teachers and he likes the school work, it is almost inevitable that he will experience some success and through work reinforcement, will work more effectively and achieve more. In language learning, Nyamubi (2016) opines that attitudes seem to be very important in predicting learners' academic learning; as the learner's favourable attitude to the language he or she is learning would facilitate success in it. From the literature reviewed, it is obvious that attitudes and motivation are sometimes closely related. However, they differ as concepts. While attitude is a set of beliefs, motivation is a reason for doing something.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to find out lower-basic pupils attitude and motivation towards the learning of English language in Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti, Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to find out:

a. the attitude of lower-basic school pupils towards the learning of English language
b. the level of intrinsic motivation of lower-basic school pupils towards the learning of English language
c. the level of extrinsic motivation of lower-basic school pupils towards the learning of English language
d. the problems lower-basic school pupils encounter towards the learning of English language

Research Questions

The data collected were used in answering the following questions:

1. What is the effect of lower-basic school pupils' attitude and motivation on the learning of English language?
2. What is the level of lower basic school pupils' intrinsic motivation towards the learning of English language?
3. What is the level of lower basic school pupils' extrinsic motivation towards the learning of English?
4. What problems do lower-basic school pupils encounter towards the learning of English language?

Research Hypotheses

a. There is no significant relationship between the lower-basic school pupils' attitude and their learning in English language.
b. There is no significant relationship between the lower-basic school pupils' intrinsic motivation and their learning in English language.
c. There is no significant relationship between lower-basic school pupils' extrinsic motivation and their learning in English language.
d. There is no significant relationship between the problems lower-basic school pupils encounter and their learning in English language.

Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey research which was designed to determine attitude and motivation towards learning English language among lower-basic school pupils in Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

The population for the study consisted of all lower-basic school pupils in Ikere-Ekiti. Random sampling techniques was employed to select forty (40) pupils from four (4) lower-basic schools using purposive sampling techniques. Ten (10) pupils were selected from each participating school through random sampling techniques. The respondents whose ages range from 9-11 were chosen from lower-basic school class.

The instrument used for the study was questionnaire adapted from Gardener's (1985) Attitude and Motivation Test Battery AMTB. The questionnaire consisted of fourteen (14) items and was divided into five sections. Section one, was used to elicit personal information on the respondents. In section two, there were four (4) items which measured the pupils' attitude towards learning English language.

Section three contained four (4) items which measured the level of pupils' intrinsic motivation towards the learning of English language. Section four contained three (3) items which measured the level of the pupils' extrinsic motivation towards the learning of English language.

Section five contained three (3) items which measured the problems the pupils' encounter towards the learning of English language.

The responses to the items were in four (4) response option Likert scale type where 4 indicated strongly agree, 3 agree, 2 slightly disagree and 1 strongly disagree. The questionnaire was administered after the pupils' had been briefed on the purpose of the research. Data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed using frequency counts, which are converted to percentages and means.

Analysis and Results

The data collected from the respondents were used to answer the research questions and test the corresponding hypotheses using frequency counts, which are converted to percentages and means.

Table 1: Attitude towards English and learning the subject.

Items	Strongly Disagree %	Slightly Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
I do not pay much attention in English class.	27 (68)	7 (18)	6 (14)	-
I am happy learning English.	-	2 (4)	17 (43)	21 (53)
Learning English is interesting.	-	5 (12)	9 (23)	26 (65)
I dislike English.	32 (80)	8 (20)	-	-

In table one, four (4) items were prepared to answer the question. In the first item, 27 (68%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 7 (18%) slightly disagreed and 6 (14%) agreed while 0 (0.0%) strongly agreed. Therefore, 86% showed that lower-basic school pupils are not paying much attention towards the learning of English language and this constitutes a negative attitude towards the subject which in turn, affecting the pupils' learning.

In item 2 of the table, 0 (0%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 2 (4.0%)

slightly disagreed, 17 (43%) agreed and 21 (53%) strongly agreed that they were 'happy learning English language'. Only 2 (4%) of the respondents showed that they were not 'happy learning English'.

In item 3, 0 (0%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 5 (12%) slightly disagreed, 9 (23%) agreed and 26 (65%) strongly agreed. The results revealed that 35 (88%) affirmed that "learning English is very interesting" while 5 (12%) disagreed that 'learning English is not interesting'.

In item 4, 32 (80%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 8 (20%) slightly disagree, 0 (0%) agreed and 0 (0%) strongly agreed. On the whole, 100% of the respondents revealed that they dislike English language.

Table 2: Level of intrinsic motivation towards learning of English language

Items	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
I would like to speak many languages very well.	13 (32.5)	2 (5)	10 (25)	15 (37.5)	2.68
My favourite subject in school is English language.	5 (12.5)	15 (37.5)	4 (10)	16 (40)	2.78
I have a strong liking to learn English language.	-	3 (7.5)	20 (50)	17 (42.5)	3.35
I wish to be more fluent in English language.	1 (2.5)	3 (7.5)	6 (15)	30 (75)	3.63

In table 2, four (4) items were formulated to answer the question on the level of intrinsic motivation of the respondents toward learning of English language. The means of the four items range from 3. 63-2. 68 as follows:

'I wish to be more fluent in English language' shows 3.63 which is the highest mean. 'I have a strong liking to learning English language' with the mean of 3.35. My favorite subject in school is English language with the mean of 2.78; and I would like to speak many languages very well' with the mean of 2.68. Based on this, the intrinsic motivation focuses on the fact that the respondents wish to be more fluent in English language.

Table 3: Level of extrinsic motivation towards learning of English

Items	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
I like to attend English class because my teacher likes me.	3 (7.5)	8 (20)	7 (7.5)	22 (55)	3.20
I want to study English so as to become important in life.	2 (5)	1 (2.5)	6 (15)	31 (75.5)	3.65
I want to learn English so as to become perfect in it like my teacher.	1 (2.5)	7 (17.5)	16 (40)	16 (40)	3.18

In table 3, only three items were formulated to answer the question on the level of extrinsic motivation of the respondents towards learning of English language. The mean of the three items ranges from 3.65 – 3.18 as follow:

'I want to study English so as to become important in life', shows 3.65 which is the

highest means; followed by: 'I like to attend English so as to become perfect in it like my teacher' with the mean of 3.18. Based on these, the extrinsic motivation of the respondents is centered on the fact that, they want to study English so as to' become important in life'. The higher mean score for item 2, (table 3) shows that pupils are more extrinsically motivated by a strong desire to learn English for future importance as compared to slightly lower mean score of item 4 (table 2) of 3.63. Pupils however, seem less influenced by their teachers as shown by the slightly lower mean scores for items 1 and 3 (table 3).

Table 4: Problems in learning English language

Item	Strongly Disagree %	Slightly Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
I am nervous to speak English in English languages class.	7 (17.5)	4 (10)	25 (62.5)	4 (10)
In find the assignments in English given by my teacher rather difficult.	15 (37.5)	6 (15)	12 (30)	7 (17.5)
I am eager to complete my assignments in English on time.	4 (10)	7 (17.5)	9 (22.5)	20 (50)

In table 4, only three items were prepared to answer the question.

In item 1, 17 (5%) of the respondents showed strongly disagree, 4 (10%) slightly disagree, 25 (62.5%) agree and 4 (10%) strongly agree. Therefore, 29 (73%) of the respondents showed that they are nervous to speak English in English language classes while only 11 (27.5%) of the total respondents affirmed that they are not nervous to speak English in English language classes (disagreed).

In item 2 of the table, 15 (37.5%) of the total respondents strongly disagreed, 6 (15%) slightly disagreed, 12 (30%) agreed and 7 (17.5) strongly agreed. A total number of 21 (53%) of the respondents disagreed that they 'find the assignment in English language rather difficult' while 19 (47.5%) agreed that they 'find the assignments in English rather difficult'.

In item 3, 4 (10%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 7 (17.5) slightly disagreed, 9 (22.5) agreed and 20 (50%) strongly agreed that they are eager to complete their assignments in English language on time. A total number of 11 (27.5%) of the respondents (disagreed) showed that they are not eager to complete their assignments on time while 29 (72.5%) of the respondents showed that they are 'eager to complete' their assignments in English on time (agreed).

Discussion of the Findings

The results revealed that the lower-basic school pupils know the importance of English language and have the desire to learn the language but their negative attitudes towards the English language affect their learning. Thirty-four 34 (86%) out of forty respondents affirmed that they do not pay much attention in the English language class. These results is interterm with Melor and NurRushidah, (2011); Akinola (2010) and Adeyemi, (2010) findings on attitude and motivation of student to learning.

The results also show that the pupils' level of extrinsic motivation is higher than their level of intrinsic motivation. This finding supports the finding of Ajayi (2016) who

affirmed that pupils are more extrinsically motivated than intrinsically motivated.

The respondents' anxiety level could be a possible factor of fear of learning English language among lower-basic school pupils. This finding corroborated the findings of Victoria and Lockhurt (1995), Hashimah (2007), Abiri (2010), Hang and Zhony (2012) and Elaldi (2016) found out that language anxiety is experienced by learners, and that learners face great difficulty in expressing themselves in English. The anxiety could originate from the learners nervousness, inpatient, negative attitudes towards the language and motivational factors.

The researchers are of the opinion that, the pupils might have felt nervous due to the fact that most of their school subjects are being taught using the language of the environment. Therefore, forcing them speak English in English language class make them feel nervous (Oke, 2010). This view is expressed by Ishaq (2016) that 'a student with limited exposure to English would be less successful in language acquisition.

Implications

The findings of this study have some implications for the pupils, teachers and parents. For the pupils, having the awareness of the importance of English should motivate them to develop positive attitude towards the language. The importance should also motivate them to master the language perfectly.

The teachers on the other hand, need to improve in their teaching of English language in schools. They need to encourage their pupils to have positive attitudes towards the learning of English and be motivated to learn the language. Teachers should also create anxiety free environment in their English language classrooms by adopting or adapting appropriate strategies for the teaching of English language at the lower-basic school level..

Parents too, should encourage their children to have positive attitude to English language and should provide the required motivation needed by the pupils towards the subject.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, we come to the conclusion that if pupils have the right attitude towards English, they will be motivated to learn the language. To become successful language learners, pupils' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are both very important. Pupils need to put in enough efforts to help them in mastering the subject. Therefore pupils' positive attitude and motivation reinforced towards the learning of English language, will go a long way in making them successful and proficient English language learners.

Recommendations

a. The teachers of English at lower-basic school level should as a matter of necessity do all humanly possible to arouse the interest of the pupils through the use of appropriate teaching aids.
b. They should also think of and adopt suitable teacher-initiated and learner-oriented instructional strategies for the teaching English to motivate pupils to learn English language and remove anxiety from them.
c. They should endeaviour to have interest in English language, so as to have corresponding effect on their pupils.
d. The teaching of English language at this level should be pupils-centre rather than teacher- centre.
e. The pupils should see English language as simple and importance as that of the language of their

immediate environment and should be use as such.

f. Lower-basic school pupils should be engaged in English language activities to stir their interest and improve their attitude towards the learning of the subject.

g. All agents of education should ensure effective ways of facilitating pupils' towards positive attitude to learn English language and provide conducive environment to motivate them to learn the language.

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