

Examination of correlates of English Language Learning among Adult Learners in Borno State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Language is an inevitable part of an individual's life. It is the medium through which successful communication is carried out. Language leaning could therefore take either formal, informal or non-formal means. Learners undertaking learning programmes put efforts to learn the language because it is the medium of instruction. However, several factors determine language learning which consequently affect the language skills of the speaker. This study is therefore an attempt to evaluate the factors associated with English Language Learning among Adult Learners in Borno State, Nigeria. Consequently, three objectives and hypotheses were formulated and tested respectively by the researcher. Of the 238 adult literacy centres in the State, 24 (12 male literacy centres and 12 female adult literacy centres) were randomly selected by lot with four centres representing each group selected. The sample consisted of 298 adult learners made up of 196 male learners and 102 female adult learners in the 24 literacy centres. Four research instruments were used to collect data for this study. These are: i) Learners Social Learning Environment Questionnaire ii) Mental Ability Test iii) Instructors Teaching and Centre's Quality Questionnaire and iv) Reading Ability Scale. The findings in this study revealed there was significant relationship between reading ability and each of the variables i.e. mental ability, center quality, social learning environment and instructors' teaching quality in the state. There was a significant relationship between English reading ability index and predictor variables. And there was no significant relationship between male and female English language literacy learners reading ability in the state. Based on the findings, appropriate recommendations were made.

Keywords: Correlates, Examination, English Language, Adult learners, Language, Gender

1. Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Linguists Rights (1996) endows the individual with certain inalienable personal rights in language matters. These include: 'the right to be recognised as a member of a language community, the right to the use of one's own language both in private and in public.... the right for the individual's language and culture to be taught, the right to interrelate and associate with other members of one's language community of origin, the right to an equitable presence of one's language and culture in the communications media and the right to receive attention in one's own language from government bodies and in socioeconomic relations'.

This is probably because language is an inevitable part of an individual's life. Through language, successful communication is carried out. Language which may be an official language or second language is most often desired to be learnt due to its instrumentality in social interaction, integration. Children and adults alike often seek to learn a particular language so that they could not experience exclusion from the events of daily life. The fact that most Nigerians adults have their first language literacy in their mother tongue; a lot at the inception of the mass literacy campaign enrolled to be literate in the local language (Aderinoye 1997). The National mass literacy commission added to three first local languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) some other languages such as Gwari, Fulfulde, Itsekiri Igala, Nupe, Tiv and Urhobo making ten adult literacy programme in Nigeria (Oyinlola in Aderinoye, 1997). Today there is an increasing desire by adults to enroll into adult literacy classes to acquire English language skills for different purposes. This is perhaps one of the reasons for the establishment of adult literacy centers offering what in the Nigerian context is referred to as post literacy programme. In post-literacy classes in Nigeria, adult persons are taught literacy in English language which is believed to be instrumental in integrating such adults in to national life. Language learning could take either formal, informal or non-formal means. In Nigeria for instance where the second language is English language, acquiring skills of English language is seen to be a necessity by children and adults alike as it enables them to participate and have voice in the wider society (Robinson 2006).

As such efforts are put by learners undertaking learning programmes to learn the language because it is the language of instruction. However, several factors influence language learning which consequently affects the language skills of the speaker. As such, Emenanjo (2000) proposed that researches carried out in the area of language evaluation should address, among others: goals, objectives and content of language education, context, materials, learner's attitude, aptitude, cognitive style and socio-economic status; teachers' professional training, competence and attitudes and gains from instruction. It is against this background that this paper determines relationship between English language reading ability, mental ability, centre quality, social learning environment and instructors teaching quality for language learning amongst adult learners in Borno State, Nigeria.

2. Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were formulated by the researcher to guide the study:

- i) To determine the relationship between adult literacy learners reading ability in English language and social learning environment, learner's mental ability, instructors teaching.
- ii) To determine the relationship between English reading ability index and the predictor variables. (mental ability, centre quality, social learning Environment, instructors teaching quality)
- iii) To determine whether male and female adult literacy learners differ significantly in English language reading ability.

2.1 Hypotheses

The study formulated and tested the following hypotheses:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between adult literacy learners reading ability in English language and social learning environment, learner's mental ability, instructors teaching.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between English reading ability index and the predictor variables. (mental ability, centre quality, social learning Environment, instructors teaching quality)

Ho₃: Male and female adult literacy learners do not differ significantly in English language reading ability.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational design relating the specific variables to reading ability indices in English. The population comprised all adult literacy learners in all literacy centres in Maiduguri metropolis of Borno State, Nigeria. There were 288 literacy centres in the metropolis with a total of 2,052 literacy learners. Out of this number, 1,112 were males while 940 were females (Borno State Agency for Mass Literacy, 2001). Of the 238 adult literacy centres, 24 (12 male literacy centres and 12 female adult literacy centres) were randomly selected by lot with four centres representing each group selected. The twenty four centres enrolled 298 adult learners made up of 196 male learners in 12 literacy centres and 102 female adult learners in the 12 centres. Four research instruments were used to collect data for this study. These are: i) Learners Social Learning Environment Questionnaire ii) Mental Ability Test iii) Instructors Teaching and Centre's Quality Questionnaire and iv) Reading Ability Scale. The researcher with the help of well trained research assistants administered the research instruments within a period of 72 days in all the selected literacy centres. Multiple correlational analyses and step wise regression and t-test of independent means were used to analyze the data collected.

Results and Discussion

Below is the presentation of the analyses made from the data collected from the field.

HO₁ there are no significant relationship between adult literacy learners reading ability in English language and social learning environment, learner's mental ability, instructors teaching quality and learning centre quality.

1 Relationship between English language reading ability and mental ability, centre quality, social learning environment and instructors teaching quality.

In testing the hypotheses, multiple correlation analysis and step-wise regression analysis were applied. The results are presented in table 1 and 2

Table 1

Table 1 revealed that there was significant relationship between reading ability and of the mental ability, centre quality, social learning environment and instructors teaching quality but the relationship between mental ability and centre quality, social learning environment and instructors centre quality were not significant.

Table 2: Results of English Reading Ability index and the predictor variables. (Mental ability, centre e quality, social learning Environment, instructors teaching quality)

Table 2

The result of step –wise regression analysis in which the dependent variable of English reading ability was regression on the independent variable of mental ability, centre quality, social learning environment and instructors teaching quality is presented in table 2. The analysis showed that mental ability was the most important predictor of reading ability in English language. It accounted for 44.5 percent of variance in English reading ability. The addition of social learning environment, centre quality and instructors teaching quality boosted the explanatory power to 51.1. The power of the four was found to be statistically significant, because the F-ratio of 5. 115 obtained were higher than the critical value of 4. 31 at $p < 0.05$.

Sex Differences in Adult Literacy centers by the variables

Ho₃: Male and female adult literacy learners do not differ significantly in English language reading ability. A t-test of independent means was used in testing the hypothesis. The result are presented in table 3

Table 3

Table 3 shows the means values for dependent variable of reading ability in English language and for the four independent variable of learner’s mental ability, social learning environment, instructors teaching quality and learning centers quality with reference to gender. The t- values for each comparison by variable were not statistically significant.

Findings

The major findings of this study are presented as follows:

1. The relationships between adult literacy learner’s ability in English language and each of the variables of learner’s mental ability, social learning environment, centre quality and instructors teaching quality were found to be statistically significant.
2. There were no significant differences between male and female adult literacy learners in English language reading ability indices.
3. Male and female adult literacy learners do not differ significantly in English language reading ability.

Discussion

From the result of the findings on the relationship between reading ability and mental ability of the participants, it was revealed that reading ability tend to have moderate relationship with mental ability, center quality, social learning environment and instructors teaching quality by a statistical result of 0.495, 0.667, 0.375 and 0.370 respectively. Close observation however unveils mental ability to have a weak relationship with center quality, social learning environment and instructors teaching quality with a result 0.43, 0.121 and 0.089 respectively. Center quality’s relationship with social learning environment and teacher’s teaching quality was found weak, this was expressed through a statistical result of 0.206 and 0.386 respectively. Based on the above results, the null hypothesis for this study is rejected since there was no significant relationship between adult learners’ reading ability in English language and social learning environment, learners’ mental ability, instructors’ teaching quality and learning center quality in the state. This finding agreed with that of Burt and Peyton in VAELA (2012) that some internal and external factors contribute to the speed and ease in acquiring second language literacy (English language) among Adults migrants in the USA. The finding which agrees with assertion by Burt and Peyton (2003) that the factors associated with English language learning by adult persons are classified into what they called internal and external factors. The internal factors has to do with the learners while the external factors covers the learning environment, instructional materials, policies, curriculum, learners experiences etc. these agreed with the findings of other scholars in education who believed that if the above list are positively disposed could yield good result in literacy programme but if negatively dispose will hinder effective learning.

The relationship between English reading ability and mental ability, center quality, social learning environment and instructors teaching quality in Borno state, each of the predictor variables, was mental ability -44.5% and instructors teaching quality 51.9%. The F – ratio value was 4.31; this value is higher than the critical value of 4.31 at $P < 0.05$. Hence, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis since the calculated value is greater than the critical value. The researcher made comparison between the male and female adult literacy centers by variables; to ascertain the null hypothesis. Male and female adult literacy learners do not differ significantly in English language reading ability. A T-test result for English reading ability, mental ability, social learning environment, center quality and instructors teaching quality was found as follows 0.843, 0.765, 0.304, 0.013 and 1.06 respectively. Thus, for all of the result of the above mentioned variable it is resolved that there is no significant statistical relationship between the variables among males and females in adult literacy centers in Borno state. This finding contradicts Oromo (2012) research in Mombasa Kenya who found that, girls performed better in English language at KCSE level for the four years studied. This was seen in the T-test result conducted at 0.05 significant level 1.171 at

between -1.96 and +1.96, which could be said to be very high.

Conclusion

Literacy in English language in centers in Borno state was found not significantly different from the happenings around the world. The relationships between adult literacy learner's ability in English language and each of the variables of learner's mental ability, social learning environment, centre quality and instructors teaching quality were found to be statistically significant. Thus there is a significant relationship between the variables under investigation in the light of hypothesis number one. There were no significant differences between male and female adult literacy learners in English language reading ability indices in the centers in Borno state.

Recommendations

This paper made recommendations as follows:

1. The Borno State Agency for Mass Literacy should ensure securing conducive learning-environment for adult learners across the state for successful adult learning in English language.
2. There should adequate training and refresher trainings for Post literacy adult instructors whose knowledge of the subject matter is inadequate due to their low level of education attained in life for the job assign for them in the Nigeria context.
3. A study should be conducted to assess the extent of relationship between reading ability in English language among rural and urban adult learners in Nigeria to help identify the gap so as to bridge the gap.

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Table 1 Relationship between reading ability and mental ability, centre quality social learning environment and instructors teaching quality

N =24

Variable	Reading ability	Mental ability	Centre quality	Social learning environment	Instructors teaching quality
Reading ability	-	0.495*	0.667*	0.375*	0.370*
Mental ability			0.43*	0.121	0.089
Centre quality		-	0.206*		0.270*
Social learning environment					0.386*
Instructors teaching quality					

*Significant = $p < 0.05$

Table 2: Results of English Reading Ability index and the predictor variables. (Mental ability, centre e quality, social learning Environment, instructors teaching quality)

S/N	Variable	R	R ²	%OF Variable of contribution	F Ratio
1	Mental ability	0.667	0.445	44.5%	
2	Social learning environment	0.709	0.503	50.3%	
3	Centre quality	0.719	0.517	51.7%	
4	Instructors teaching quality	0.720	0.519	51.9%	4.31*

*Significant, F (1, 23) =4.31 at $p < 0.05$

Table 3: comparison of reading ability in English language, mental, ability, social learning environment , center quality, instructors teaching quality between male and female adult literacy centers

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	t.value
English reading ability	Male	12	32.83	4.28	0.843
	Female	12	31.42	3.94	
Mental ability	Male	12	42.25	9.32	0.765
	Female	12	45.42	10.89	
Social learning environment	Male	12	46.67	5.02	0.304
	Female	12	47.25	4.37	
Centre quality	Male	12	103.75	8.57	0.013
	Female	12	105.75	8.37	
Instructors quality	Male	12	82.75	7.55	1.06
	female	12	79.25	8.59	

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