

A Comparative study of secondary school students' performance in English and Social Studies in Junior Secondary Schools in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study sought to ascertain the relationship between the performance of students in English language and Social Studies. This was with a view of ensuring better performance in the two subjects. The study employed the survey research design. The population for the study consisted of all the Junior Senior Secondary School Students in Osun State, Nigeria. Stratified sampling technique was employed in selecting 800 students that were purposively selected in five local governments in Osun State using school types i.e. public and private schools, school locations i.e. rural and urban and gender i.e. male and female as stratum. Two instruments were used to collect data for the study. They are: English Achievement Test (EAT) and Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT). The reliability of the instruments yielded 0.74 and 0.86 respectively using Cronbach alpha. The instruments were analyzed using descriptive and t-test statistics. The results showed that there is a significant difference in students' performance in English and Social Studies ($t=13.809$, $P<0.05$). Also, there is a significant difference in the performance in English and Social Studies across the 10 schools. (English $X = 25.36$, $SD= 10.699$; Social Studies $X = 32.21$, $SD= 9.969$). However, other variables in the study were found not to be significant. It is therefore recommended among others that there should be consistent training and retraining of teachers for functional educational system in Nigeria. Opportunities should be given to teachers for professional training on their subject disciplines, teaching techniques and organizational techniques which could be achieved through workshops, seminars, internet browsing and extensive reading for personal development.

Keywords: students' performance, English Language, Social Studies.

Introduction

There is no doubt that both Social Studies and English Language have found their ways into the Nigerian School System. These have come to be accepted as school subjects with the primary responsibility of inculcating desirable values and civic responsibility in the learners. Consequently, schools are mandated to use English Language in teaching Social Studies as a means of developing in the learners the skills of Citizenship Education. It follows that the students need a reasonable mastering of English Language to be able to read, listen, grasp teachers' explanation, express what they learnt accurately and understand Social Studies texts and workbooks. English is spoken as a first language by less than ten percent of the population and is the language of business and government. It is also one of the media of instruction usually used in schools although it is not the most widely spoken language at home. Learners' ability to use English well will help in their performance in both Social Studies and English Language itself.

English is widely learnt as a second language. Both literate and illiterate parents alike want their children or wards to be knowledgeable in the language. English has become and will continue to be the mark of literacy in Nigeria for many years to come. This means that we cannot claim to be ignorant of the enormous role of English in Nigeria. It is much more prominent in the Education sector than in all other sectors in Nigeria. The reason being that, it is studied in Nigeria as a Second Language and the school provides the only viable formal settings in which it could be studied. Considering the status of English in the Education Sector, Afolayan (1977) remark that:

“There cannot be any preference at formal education where English cannot be used as the medium of instruction or at least taught as a subject. In certain places primary education begins with English as a medium of instruction and remains English medium throughout. In some others, primary education which begins in the first two or three years in a local language, is fully developed, completed and examined only in the English language. Secondary education is given and examined throughout in English. As would be expected, University Education is given and examined in the English language alone. This depicts the importance of English in Nigerian Schools today.” (p.14.)

According to Kenji (1996) English is the major language of news and information in the world. It is the language of business and government even in some countries where it is a minority language. However, it has been observed that some Nigerians demonstrate a very high level of proficiency and intelligibility in their spoken English while majority of them fall short of the required standard.

Social Studies and English Language instructions aimed at bringing about change in the behaviour of learners. The extent of the achievement of this aim will depend on the teachers' ability as the facilitator of knowledge, the material he uses and the method he adopts to pass across his teaching. Aside from the method of teaching, the intellectual capability of the learner will equally be improved. In spite of the uniqueness of the knowledge of English in Social Studies, there is the need to examine other variables in terms of gender, school location, school type as they affect students' performance in English and Social Studies. Based on the above highlight, the research study is aimed at comparing the performance of students in English language and Social Studies.

Statement of the Problems

Low level of academic performance of students over the years has been the concern of stakeholders and researchers in education. At Junior Secondary Schools level, students' poor performance cut across almost all the compulsory subjects in which English and Social Studies are inclusive. It is therefore necessary to examine school variables such as school location, school type and gender as they affect students' performance in the two key subjects. The study therefore sought to compare students' performance in English and Social Studies based on the identified variables.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested

1. There is no significant difference in students' performance in English and Social Studies
2. There is no significant difference in performance in English and Social Studies of students across schools.
- 3a. There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students in English
- 3b. There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students in Social Studies
- 4a. There is no significant difference in the students' performance in English on the basis of school location
- 4b. There is no significant difference in the students' performance in Social Studies on the basis of school location
- 5a. There is no significant difference in the school types of students and their performance in English
- 5b. There is no significant difference in the school types of students and their performance in Social Studies

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The population for the study consisted of all the Junior Secondary Schools in Osun State. Stratified sampling technique was employed in selecting 800 students that were purposively selected in five local governments in Osun State using school types i.e. public and private schools, school locations i.e. rural and urban and gender i.e. male and female as stratum. In all 10 schools were used for the study. It is believed that these schools represent the entire population. The schools are:

- A. Oduduwa College Ile-Ife.
- B. Adventist High School, Ile-Ife.
- C. A.D.S. Grammar School, Ile-Ife
- D. Faith Standard Cephalo Model College, Ile-Ife.
- E. Fakunle Comprehensive High School, Osogbo
- F. Grace and Glory Secondary School, Osogbo
- G. C.A.C. Grammar School, Ilesa.
- H. Ultimate Group of Schools, Ilesa.
- I. Adventist Grammar School, Ede.
- J. Zion High School, Ede.

The schools in the sample were represented in alphabet A to J respectively. The subjects consisted of 800 of JSS 3 Classes, 80 students were taken from each school. Two instruments were used to collect data for the study. They are: English Achievement Test (EAT) and Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT). The instruments were scrutinized and validated before use. The reliability of the instruments yielded 0.74 and 0.86 respectively using Cronbach alpha. The instruments were analyzed using descriptive and t-test statistics.

Results

1. There is no significant difference in students' performance in English and Social Studies

Table 1: Comparison on the means of students in English and Social Studies

Variables	n	\bar{X}	SD	df	t	P
English	800	25.36	10.699	799	13.809	<0.05
Social Studies	800	32.21	9.969			

The above table shows that calculated p-value is greater than tabulated t at 0.05 level of significant ($t=13.809$, $P<0.05$). This reveals that there is a significant difference in students' performance in English and Social Studies. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

2. There is no significant difference in performance in English and Social Studies of students across schools.

Table 2: Comparison of the means of the 10 Schools in English Studies and Social Studies

Schools	ENGLISH			SOCIAL STUDIES		
	N	\bar{X}	SD	N	X	SD
A	80	24.55	9.483	80	32.51	10.063
B	80	24.55	9.483	80	32.51	10.063
C	80	24.55	9.483	80	32.51	10.063
D	80	24.55	9.483	80	32.51	10.063
E	80	26.13	10.970	80	32.32	10.157
F	80	24.89	11.887	80	31.74	9.796
G	80	27.98	11.137	80	32.31	10.143
H	80	25.24	11.401	80	31.60	9.727
I	80	24.41	12.103	80	31.66	9.887
J	80	26.80	11.072	80	32.44	10.214
Total	800	25.36	10.699	800	32.21	9.969

The above table reveals a significant difference in students' performance in English and Social Studies in the 10 schools (English $\bar{X} = 25.36$, $SD = 10.699$; Social Studies $\bar{X} = 32.21$, $SD = 9.969$). The average mean performance in Social Studies is higher than that of English. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

3a. There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students in English

Table 3a: Difference in Performance of Male and Female Students in English Language

Variables	Sex	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t	p
English	Male	370	25.76	10.254	798	0.970	>0.05
	Female	430	25.02	11.069			

The above table shows that the calculated t is less than tabulated t i.e. $t_{cal} < t_{tab}$. It then implies ($t=0.970$, $p>0.05$), this reveals that there is no significant difference in performance of male and female students in English. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

3b. There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students in Social Studies

Table 3b: Difference in Performance of Male and Female Students in Social Studies

Variables	Sex	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t	p
Social Studies	Male	370	32.61	10.004	798	1.048	>0.05
	Female	430	31.87	9.938			

The above table shows that the calculated t is less than tabulated t i.e. $t_{cal} < t_{tab}$. It then implies ($t=1.048$, $p>0.05$), this reveals that there is no significant difference in performance of male and female students in Social Studies. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

4a. There is no significant difference in the students' performance in English on the basis of school location

Table 4a: Difference in Performance in English based on school location

Variables	School location	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t	p
English	Rural	290	25.35	10.306	798	0.31	>0.05
	Urban	510	25.37	10.927			

The above table shows that the calculated t is less than tabulated t i.e. $t_{cal} < t_{tab}$. It then implies ($t=0.31$, $p>0.05$), this reveals that there is no significant difference in students' performance in English based on school location. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

4b. There is no significant difference in the students' performance in Social Studies on the basis of school location

Table 4b: Difference in Performance in Social Studies based on school location

Variables	School location	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t	p
Social Studies	Rural	290	32.10	10.127	798	0.233	>0.05
	Urban	510	32.27	9.887			

The above table shows that the calculated t is less than tabulated t i.e. $t_{cal} < t_{tab}$. It then implies ($t=0.233$, $p>0.05$), this reveals that there is no significant difference in students' performance in Social Studies based on school location. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

5a. There is no significant difference in the school types of students and their performance in English

Table 5a: Difference in Performance in English based on School Types

Variables	School Types	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t	p
English	Public	493	24.82	10.302	798	1.840	>0.05
	Private	307	26.24	11.270			

The above table shows that the calculated t is less than tabulated t i.e. $t_{cal} < t_{tab}$. It then implies ($t=1.840$, $p>0.05$), this reveals that there is no significant difference in students' performance in English based on school type. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

5b. There is no significant difference in the school types of students and their performance in Social Studies

Table 5b: Difference in Performance in Social Studies based on School Types

Variables	School Types	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t	p
Social Studies	Public	493	32.43	9.975	798	0.767	>0.05
	Private	307	31.87	9.965			

The above table shows that the calculated t is less than tabulated t i.e. $t_{cal} < t_{tab}$. It then implies ($t=0.767$, $p>0.05$), this reveals that there is no significant difference in students' performance in Social Studies based on school types. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

Discussion

The results reveal that there is significant difference in students' performance in English and Social Studies. There is also significant difference in the performance of English and Social Studies across the 10 schools of studies. However, other variables such as school locations, school types, and gender of students have no significant influence on students' performance in English and Social Studies. Based on the findings, the results

indicated that the performance in Social Studies was significantly higher than performance in English in all the cases studied. This implies that the performance in English language did not influence the performance in Social Studies significantly. This probably implies that other factors other than English language, a medium of expression for teaching and studying of Social Studies may be important and relevant to the understanding of this subject and therefore influence their performance in the subject. This result corroborated the view of Kolawole (2006) who found that the teaching of English Language is bedeviled with many problems such as inadequate teaching and lack of adequate and useful resources. Also, Adeyemi (2009) was of the view that teachers' competence and teachers' attitude to the utilization of media types in the teaching of English will go a long way in enhancing students' performance in English language. Also, as regards the performance in Social Studies, Adeyemi (2008) was of the view that appropriate teaching methods in Social Studies will enhance students' better performance in Social Studies. The results were also in line with the position of Odinko and Iroegbu (2005) who were of the view that gender and school location do not have significant influence on the students' performance.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that students performed better in Social Studies than in English language. This may be due to the difference in teaching methods, teaching aids and the nature of the curriculum for the two subjects. Since Social Studies is a subject that relates with one's immediate environment, hence its learning becomes easier for students.

Recommendations

1. There should be consistent training and retraining of teachers for functioning educational system in Nigeria. Opportunities should be given to teachers for professional training on knowledge of the subject disciplines, teaching techniques and organizational technique which could be brilliantly achieved through workshops, seminars, internet browsing and extensive reading for personal development.
2. An opportunity should be created for students for self development through the readings of literature that would facilitate their competency in English.
3. Government as a matter of urgency should ensure that adequate provisions in terms of facilities are provided in schools to aid students' learning.

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