



EFFECT OF SCHOOL LOCATION ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ESSAY WRITING IN LOKOJA

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of location on senior secondary school two (SSSII) students' achievement in essay writing. One research question and one hypothesis guided the study. The pre-test, post-test control quasi-experimental design was used for the study. The type was the non-equivalent control group, pretest, and post-test design. The population of the study consisted of 1,735 senior secondary school (SSSII) students from four co-educational secondary schools in Lokoja Education Zone of Kogi State, which was the area of the study. A purposive sampling technique was used to draw four schools out of these schools. The schools were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Intact classes of each of the four schools were drawn for the study giving a total of four intact classes. Students in the intact classes constituted the sample of 173 used for the study. Data were collected using the Narrative Essay English Language Achievement Test (NEELAT). The instrument was validated by experts from both the Arts and Science Education Departments, at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability index of 0.93 determined through Kendell's coefficient of concordance was obtained for the reliability of the instrument. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at a 0.05 level of significance. The results indicated that location had a significant impact on students' achievement in English Essay writing. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the study provided empirical evidence of the impact of location in enhancing students' achievement in English Essay writing

Keywords: English language, Essay writing School location, Academic achievement

Introduction

Learning English in secondary schools holds immense importance, as it equips students with the language skills necessary for academic success, professional advancement, and social integration in today's globalized world (Bamidele & Ali, 2023). Secondary education serves as a critical stage for language acquisition, providing students with a structured curriculum and dedicated instruction in English grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, and speaking skills (Iain, 2019). Research by Crowther and Briant, (2021) indicates that early exposure to English language learning in secondary schools fosters linguistic proficiency and lays the foundation for lifelong language development. By mastering English during their formative years, students gain a competitive edge in higher education and the workforce, where English proficiency is often a prerequisite for admission and employment opportunities (Güngör & Akyüz, 2020).

Furthermore, learning English in secondary schools facilitates cross-cultural communication and fosters intercultural competence among students. Exposure to the English language and literature exposes students to diverse perspectives, values, and cultural practices, broadening their worldview and nurturing respect for cultural diversity (Etim, 2019). Through engaging with English texts, media, and authentic communication tasks, students develop empathy and intercultural sensitivity, essential skills for navigating an interconnected world characterized by cultural pluralism and global interdependence (Dousay, & Trujillo, 2019). The indispensable roles played by the English language have made it necessary that students try as much as possible to record positive academic achievement in language learning by acquiring the four basic skills. These skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Writing, one of the four essential skills in language learning, warrants heightened attention due to its pivotal role in demonstrating learners' proficiency in the target language (TL). Nonetheless, mastering this skill presents a formidable challenge as it involves the concurrent execution of multiple processes (Nnamani & Akabogu, 2020). Hafecz (2021) asserts that

writing is inherently complex, as it necessitates cognitive effort, which inherently poses difficulty. The complexity further arises from the need for simultaneous execution of various tasks; a writer must formulate words, construct sentences, organize paragraphs, and craft extended compositions, all while ensuring proper spelling, punctuation, and coherence. Consequently, English as a Second Language (ESL) learners must dedicate significant effort to honing their writing skills for improvement and development (Iain, 2019).

From 2022 to 2023, the Chief Examiners' reports by the West African Examination Council stated that students' performance in English falls below anticipated standards. Issues flagged within these reports encompass a variety of deficiencies, notably students' unfamiliarity with grammatical manipulation, non-adherence to language conventions, and incoherence in idea organization. Among the observed shortcomings were erroneous sentence structures, misunderstanding of subject-verb agreement rules, improper word amalgamation, pluralization errors, and unfamiliarity with certain word forms. Additionally, students demonstrated deficiencies in spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary sophistication. The persistently poor outcomes over six years of post-primary English exposure, both as a medium of instruction and a core subject, underscore a cumulative inadequacy in language proficiency among candidates.

Subsequently, the achievement is the successful attainment of any task. It can also be characterized as the capacity of an individual to reach predetermined objectives through diligence, skill, or bravery (Akintunde & Angulu, 2020). Academic achievement, according to Idris (2019), is a reflection of the quality of education and serves as a gauge of the academic performance of an individual student or group. Similarly, Anidi, Obumneke-Okeke, Nwune, and Okwuduba (2022) described academic achievement as the acquisition of knowledge or the level of proficiency in school-related activities, often quantified through standardized tests and graded assessments. The evaluation of academic achievement commonly relies on continuous assessments and formal examinations. Notably, numerous factors, as

classified by Okika (2021) encompassing student, location of school, teacher, environmental, and economic aspects, influence students' academic performance. Specifically, students' attributes, such as conscientiousness, effort, motivation, intellectual capabilities, learning strategies, and awareness of academic objectives, significantly impact their academic success.

However, when evaluating students' academic performance, the location of a school becomes a significant factor. The term "school location" denotes the specific geographical placement of the institution where the teaching-learning process unfolds, whether in rural or urban settings. Disparities in school locations correlate with variations in students' demographic and socio-economic backgrounds (Abamba, 2021). Akintunde and Ohiare-Udebu (2021), confirm that students from rural areas perform significantly better than their urban counterparts in verbal aptitude, English Language, and total scores using the National Common Entrance as a base. However, Akabogu and Ajiwoju (2020) found that rural students performed better than urban students in all forms of achievement tests used. Özüdogru, (2020) reported that students in urban and rural locations performed similarly. Obioma (2019) indicated that most essay-writing-deficient learners were found in major urban centres rather than other locations. These controversies call for further investigation. The researchers, therefore, intend to find out the effectiveness or otherwise of school location on students' academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the significant strides in education, there exists a notable gap in understanding the influence of school location on secondary school students' achievement in English language essays within the context of Lokoja education zone, Kogi State. The study aims to address the lack of comprehensive research in this specific regional setting, seeking to investigate the potential disparities in academic performance and engagement between urban and rural students in the realm of English language essay writing at the secondary school level. The inability to proffer solutions to the school location will lead to poor performance in English essay writing. Identifying

and comprehending these location-related dynamics are crucial for implementing targeted educational interventions and fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Research Question

1. What are the mean achievement scores of rural and urban students in essay writing?

Research Hypothesis

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the achievement scores of rural and urban students in essay writing.

Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design. Specifically, it employed a pretest post-test non-equivalent control group design. This design was suitable for the study because there was no randomization of subjects rather intact classes were used as experimental and control groups. The area of the study was Lokoja Education Zone of Kogi State. Lokoja Education Zone comprises three (3) Local Government Areas. The subjects used for this study consisted of 173 SSS 2 students from four secondary schools in the Lokoja Education Zone of Kogi State in the 2022/2023 session.

The instrument used for data collection was the Narrative Essay in English Language Achievement Test (NEELAT) adopted by the researcher from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC, 2023) past question paper. The last question was chosen because the question was standardized (it had already been initially validated by test developers in the English Language). To establish the reliability of the instrument for this study, the researcher administered the instrument to 20 SS II students from Community Secondary School, Obollo-Afor in Udenu Local Government Area in Enugu State which is outside the researcher's area of the study. The scores obtained through this trial testing were used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument.

The NEELAT has two sections. Section A and Section B. Section A contains the students' data while Section B contains one narrative essay question – "write a story ending with words: I wish I had listened to my father". The students

were required to write about 450 words in line with WAEC English Language essay exam practice. The achievement test given to the students during the pretest was different from the one that was given to them during the posttest. The pre-test and post-test were scored over 50 marks based on the criteria used by WAEC for scoring essay writing in the English Language.

The researcher used mean and standard deviation to provide answers to the research questions because the mean is the most reliable measure of central tendency in a normal distribution. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Answer to Research Question: What are the mean achievement scores of rural and urban students in essay writing?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of achievement scores of urban and rural students in essay writing

Location	n	Pre-test		Post-test		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean gain
Urban	77	15.24	4.70	44.19	15.20	28.95
Rural	96	15.94	391	30.28	16.28	14.34

Table 1 reveals the mean achievement scores of urban and rural students in essay writing. It shows that urban students had a post-test mean achievement score of 44.19 with a standard deviation of 15.20 while their rural counterparts had a post-test mean achievement score of 30.28

with a standard deviation of 16.28. Mean gain scores of 28.95 and 14.34 for the urban and rural students respectively may have indicated that urban students achieved higher than their rural counterparts.

Testing of Hypothesis

Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of urban and rural students in essay writing.

Table 2

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	22072.897 ^a	4	5518.224	25.759	.000
Intercept	29826.337	1	29826.337	139.230	.000
Pre-test	929.853	1	929.853	4.341	.039
Group	347.548	1	347.548	1.622	.205
Location	16613.221	1	16613.221	77.551	.000
Group * Location	5489.671	1	5489.671	25.626	.000
Error	35989.473	168	214.223		
Total	344627.000	173			
Corrected total	58062.370	172			

a. R Square = .380 (Adjusted R Square = .365)

Table 2 reveals that the calculated value of F (77.551) for the influence of school location on students' achievement in essay writing had a probability value of 0.000. For the fact that the

probability value is less than the 0.05 level of significance ($p < .05$), the null hypothesis was rejected remaining that location has a significant influence on students' achievement in essay

writing in favour of the urban students.

Discussion of Results

The findings of this study regarding the achievement of students in urban and rural locations indicate that location had a significant influence on students' achievement in essay writing in favour of urban students. In other words, urban students achieved higher than their rural counterparts in essay writing. This finding is in line with that of Ozudogru (2020) and Bamidele & Ali (2023). The authors found out that urban students achieved significantly better than their rural counterparts in English essay writing. The reason for this might be that schools in the urban areas are staffed by experienced and qualified teachers who would like to serve there rather than in the rural areas.

However, this finding disagrees with that of Akintunde and Ohiare-Udebu, (2021), whose study revealed that location does not have any significant influence on students' academic achievement. It also disagrees with the findings of Akabogu and Ajiwoju (2020) who found out in the study they carried out in Ondo State that geographical location does not predict outcome in school performance.

Conclusion

The study on the effect of location on senior secondary school students' achievement in English language essay writing in Lokoja illuminates significant disparities. Location emerges as a crucial factor influencing students' performance in English language essay writing. Students residing in certain areas of Lokoja demonstrate higher proficiency levels compared to those in other locations. These findings underscore the importance of considering geographical context in educational assessments and interventions.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study;

1. The Ministry of Education should develop and implement intervention programs specifically tailored to address the needs of senior secondary school students in locations identified as having lower achievement levels

in English language essay writing in Lokoja. These programs could include additional tutoring sessions, writing workshops, and language enrichment activities aimed at improving students' writing skills.

2. The Ministry of Education to resources such as libraries, educational materials, and technology across all locations in Lokoja. This can help bridge the gap in achievement by providing students in underserved areas with the necessary tools and support to enhance their English language proficiency and essay-writing abilities.
3. Facilitate collaboration among educators and schools within Lokoja to share best practices and innovative teaching strategies for improving students' writing skills. Encouraging peer learning and professional development opportunities can contribute to a collective effort to elevate academic achievement across different locations.

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