
**Literature in English as an Aid to Performance in English
Language at the Senior Secondary School Certificate
Examination in Kaduna State - Nigeria.**

By

DR. KWASAU A. AYUBA
*Department of General Studies,
Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA),
Kaduna - Nigeria.*

Abstract

Literature and language are both forms of linguistic knowledge. Language gives man his thinking form, sequence and coherence. Language produces culture, while literature serves as the store house of culture (Awuzie, T. 2010:05). Adeniyi, 2010:20 points out that relatively few studies seem to focus on literature as an aid to language learning. The concern of this investigation therefore, is with the latter. That is, it asks the question "Does the study of Literature in English aid performance in English Language at the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination in Kaduna State?" It is hoped that the result of the study of factors affecting attainment in English Language in Kaduna State and the recommendations may provide a working tool for teachers and government currently and publicly expressing concern and disappointment about the poor performance of students in English Language at the Secondary School level of the educational system.

This paper is essentially concerned with English Language in the school Curriculum as it is affected by literature. Many linguists and language theorists have frequently placed high premium on actual familiarization with the grammatical structures and composition of language, if certain standards must be attained in it.

On the other hand, literary theorists and critics, however, often put forward a purely literary answer to the question of learning language. For them, attainment in language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing depends to a large extent, on skilled and proficient training in literature (Adonis 1974). Agreeing

with Moody (1997) also, Olatunde, (2010:56-64) advanced this literary position when he stated that "literature consists of certain specialized forms, selections, and collections of language... (and as such), the study of literature is fundamentally a study of language. While the record of research is vast with discussions on, and studies relating to the linguistic point of view, relatively few studies seem to focus on the literary view point. The concern of this investigation therefore is with the latter. That is, it asks the question "Does the study of English Literature aid successful attainment in English Language at the Senior Secondary School Examination in Kaduna State? It is hoped that the outcome of such a study of factors affecting attainment in English language may provide a working tool for Kaduna State candidates in SSCE O-Level Examinations and in English language in particular.

Methodology

Research Design

The West African Examination Council does not, as its policy divulge raw scores gained by candidates at the SSCE Examination, As such, the design of the research classified into two categories of passes, 'credit and above' and 'ordinary pass' grade. These were used as statistical criteria for judging attainment in English Language.

Thus, the design of the study compared separately the percentage of 'credit and above' grade and of 'ordinary pass' grade in English Language and English Literature papers (Lang). Glass and Stanley, (1970) T-test statistic was used to test the significance of differences between the two groups. The use of T-test was necessary because it was two groups that were compared.

Area of Study

The area for this study was Kaduna State. In Kaduna State, there are both government and private schools. However, the performance of students in the public schools is the one mostly used by government for planning. Therefore, all the schools covered in this study are public schools. The necessity for the coverage of the research in taking this pattern was informed by the poor outing of most public schools in the state at both NECO and SSCE in recent years.

Population

The population for this study were 1255 students from twenty five secondary schools in Kaduna State who took the SSCE examination of June 2010. There were twelve co-educational schools, eight boys' schools and five girls' schools. Out of this 1255 students, 770 students sat for both English Language and English Literature Papers and 485 students sat for only English Language. This population is so chosen because it is at this level that any course that is aimed at enhancing the language proficiency and study skills of the students can best be measured. Secondly, it is at this

level the students are expected to have had enough exposure in English which is expected to give them sound linguistic competence and so can be offered admission to higher institutions where they dabble into complex studies in English Language.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study was secondary school candidates who sat for the 2010 SSCE examination. To ensure homogeneity, all the 1255 students from twenty five secondary schools in Kaduna State who took the SSCE in English Language and Literature were considered for the study. Here, the technique of purposeful sampling as advocated by Alemmal (1986) was adopted. In picking the sample, the investigator gave every student a chance. This technique ensures effective comparison without possible bias. The same method was used in grouping those who sat for English Language only and those who sat for both English Language and Literature.

Instruments for Data Collection

Two instruments were used in this investigation.

1. The students' SSCE 2010 results in both English Language and English Literature from the result broadsheet sent to Educational Resource Centre (ERC).
2. The Observation Checklist.

The observation checklist was used to ensure that every result belonged to the right candidate and that the actual number that sat for the examination had their results with the appropriate subject title against their names. This was to avoid investigating the wrong subject.

Validation of Instrument

To ensure the validity of the instrument used, the broad score sheet obtained from ERC was compared with the ones in the affected schools of study and also the state Ministry of Education. There was also the confirmation of this result from the internet. The validity of the instrument used was therefore ascertained as the most correct and most relevant as there were no discrepancies discovered.

Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of this instrument is not in doubt because all the sampled students whose results were on the broad result sheet had the opportunity to learn what was tested which brought about the result under study.

Method of Data Collection

A formal letter of request to Educational Resource Centre and the Ministry of Education for the result sheet of all those who sat for English Language alone and for

those who sat for both English and Literature during the 2010 SSCE examination in the affected 25 schools was written and presented. The result sheets were collected and compared with what was available in the internet.

In each of the pairs compared, the DF was 49 and 2. Consequently, the expected F value was 62.5 for the calculated F values for the pairs compared were each less than 2. This means that the groups were homogenous.

Method of Data Analysis

The West African Examination Council does not, as its policy, divulge raw scores gained by candidates at the SSCE examination. As such, the details from the result broadsheet collected were classified into two categories of passes, credit and above grade and 'ordinary pass' grade. These were used as statistical data for judging attainment in English language alone and in both English Language and Literature. The T-test with its z-values was used to find various levels of significance. The descriptive method was also used as a technique for analysis and explanation,

Results

Table 1: Credit and Above' Grade in English Language by Type of Candidate

Category	Lang/Lit		Lang	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Credit & Above	66	72	42	31
Ordinary	95	51	155	21
Difference in Scores(d)	29-25		113- 10	
Z	-0.0303	-1.4047	3.3652	-1.6068
Z _{5%}	1.65			

Z₁, Z₂, Z₄ < Z_{5%} => not sig = ordinary pass not greater than credit.

Z₃, Z_{5%} => sign ordinary pass greater than credit.

$$\text{Since } Z = \frac{d-\bar{d}}{s_d}, \bar{d} = \frac{\sum d}{n} = 29.75, n = 4.$$

$$S_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(d-\bar{d})^2}{n(n-1)}} = 24.7382.$$

The Table of Z-values is also presented for confirmation of level of significance. In table I above are presented the distribution of 'credit and above' grade in English Language as 458 representing 66% for boys and 72% for girls respectively who sat for both English Language and English Literature papers, and 42% representing boys and 31% representing girls respectively who sat for only the English Language paper.

It will be recalled that two categories of passes, 'credit and above' and 'ordinary pass' grades, were employed as criteria for performance in English Language. The analyses and results are presented separately for each of these criteria as shown in the table.

Table 2: Z-values for Comparing Candidates Who Obtained 'Credit and Above' Grade in English Language and Literature

Category	Lang/Lit	Lang
Boys	161	197
Girls	127	52
Difference in Scores(d)	34	145
Z	-1.0	1.0

$$\bar{d} = 89.5, \quad n = 2 \quad S_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(d - \bar{d})^2}{n(n-1)}} = 55.5$$

$$Z_1 = -1.0 < Z_{5\%} = 1.65$$

$$Z_2 = 1.0 < Z_{5\%}$$

Boys are not better than girls.

Lang: Boys had significantly higher proportion of 'Credit and above' grade in English Language than Lang/Lit: Boys ($Z = -0.03$, $p < .01$). Also, Lang/Lit: Girls had a proportion of 'Credit and above' Grade in English Language that differed significantly from that of Lang: Boys ($Z = 3.36$, $p < 0.1$). Other comparisons were found to be insignificant.

Table 3 Z-values for Comparing Candidates who obtained 'Ordinary Pass' Grade in English Language

Category	Lang/Lit	Lang
LangB	66	42
LangG	76	31
Difference in Scores(d)	10	11
Z	-1	1

$$\bar{d} = 10.5, \quad n = 2 \quad S_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(d - \bar{d})^2}{n(n-1)}} = 0.5$$

$$Z_1 = \frac{0.5}{0.5} = -1 < Z_{5\%}$$

$$Z_2 = \frac{0.5}{0.5} = 1 < Z_{5\%}$$

The Girls are not greater than the Boys.

Table 3 presents the Z-values resulting from comparison of scores of candidates in Lang/Lit versus Lang, who obtained 'Ordinary Pass' Grade in English Language. However, two of the comparisons were significant.

Lang: Boys had highly significant proportion of ('Ordinary Pass' Grade) in English Language than Lang/Lit: Boys ($Z = 6.80, p < .01$) and as well as than Lang/Lit: Girls ($Z = 3.95, p < .01$). The remaining comparisons failed to reach significant levels.

Discussion of Findings

Analysis revealed that three things seem apparent from these data. Firstly, the proportion of female candidates who reached at least an Ordinary Pass Grade in English Language at the SSCE Examination is higher than that of male candidates, irrespective of whether or not the candidates offer English Literature as well.

Labor (1973) corroborated by Binda S.I. (2010:15), compared the attainment in Mathematics of students in single-sex and co-educational schools. He attributed this difference to the "popular myth" concerning the inferiority of females in Mathematics and in this study it might be said to reflect the popular myth about the superiority of females in the arts subjects, among which is English Language.

Secondly, the results seem to indicate that at least 40 percent of Kaduna State candidates obtain failing grades in English Language at the SSCE

Examination. This seems a deplorable state of affairs, as previous investigators have noted, since a pass in English Language is necessary for obtaining a full certificate while a credit is entry requirement to the University in Nigeria. This implies, therefore, that such candidates can hardly secure entry to the University. This adds to social problems when they observe that expressive ability does not necessarily indicate their knowledge of language.

Thirdly, the result of the statistical analysis seems to suggest that the study of English Literature does not necessarily or significantly influence the student's competence in English Language. This result should cause concern to people engaged in teaching Language and Literature in our secondary schools. This seems to agree with Geoffrey (2002:33).

At a conference for teachers of English which was held at the University of Benin in October 2011, the Literature working party called for the integration of teaching of English Language and English Literature in the school curriculum. It was felt that this would not only improve the pupil's ability to comprehend and integrate but would also aid his attempt at achieving fluency in English Language usage. The implication here is that English Language and English Literature ought to complement each other. That these results do not bear out this theory may be due to several factors.

We would agree that a student's cultural background, his environment and intellectual capabilities significantly influence his performance in all areas of study. Joyce (2001:18) agreed that some students come to the subject equipped with a high degree of critical awareness while others do not. Some come from environments where they have never been encouraged to express an original thought. These are some of the problems that teachers of English Language and English Literature have to grapple with. Tom (2008:19) observed that success would mean that the student would develop confidence to express a legitimate opinion, enter imaginatively into the experiences of others and thus gain practice in using the language which should lead to greater skill in handling the written word.

We must also consider the requirements of the SSCE Literature paper in which the students are expected to show detailed knowledge of a limited number of texts which they have read before. Here students have to struggle to grasp facts and the language of literature in context.

Conclusion

This research investigated whether the study of English Literature influences student's competence in English Language. The reversed Stanine Grades in English Language O-Level, available from the SSCE 2010 result broadsheet of 770

students who sat for both English Language and English Literature papers were compared with those of 485 students who sat for only the English Language paper.

Within the limitations of the study, the results indicated that the study of English Literature does not aid the study of English Language. However, Professorial and strong view is that the study of English Language and English Literature ought to complement each other. Certain factors that seem to contribute to this disparity between theory and results are high-lighted for further research.

Recommendations

It is generally accepted that Literature should not be divorced from real life and as such the scope and choice of Literature texts should be considerably widened.

For example, it could include Literature which deals with contemporary problems, Literature that is sufficiently close to the student's experience that would generate interest in the subject. By this, we do not mean a substitution of Nigerian names for English names with no attempt at making the experiences described relevant to our situation; neither do we mean the exclusion of Shakespeare from the syllabus. Rather, we would like to see Shakespeare studied not merely in the historical context as an exercise in textual analysis, but from the point of view of contemporary times.

Such an approach would encourage students to form opinions which they can express rather than memorize views of other people. Also, if the scope is widened, the students should be motivated to read outside the classroom, thus improve their vocabulary and help them gain familiarity with the structures of the Language.

Quite often, questions asked in the SSCE paper attempt to test the student's ability both to memorize and to understand facts at a literal level. Very little emphasis is placed on analysis and response to these facts. It is clear that it is in these areas that the student would formulate his own ideas, express them and thus demonstrate his competence in the Language. With a shift in emphasis, we might well see an end to lines memorized from texts, irrelevantly quoted memorized model answers and paragraphs lifted out of ill-digested criticisms by other people. Literature should be encouraged because it reinforces Language habits, as Language ceases to be approached as a system of symbols to be acquired purely for passing 'English Papers I and II,' but as a tool for appreciating and expressing the whole range of human thought. There can be no doubt that in Kaduna State where the environment does not foster the student's familiarity with the Language; the student of Literature has no choice but to look mainly to the Literature for the much needed exposure to the Language. Both the teacher of English Literature and the West African

Examination Council should be aware of this and tailor their efforts to fulfill the needs of the student. Furthermore, it seems clear that unless considerable thought is given to the methods of teaching and evaluation of both English Language and English Literature, we cannot use performance at SSCE as a valid measure of the student's ability to use the English Language.

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