Relationship between Students' Proficiency in General English and Academic Achievement in Selected Education Courses in Colleges of Education in Kwara State

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ABSTRACT
This study was an investigation on students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in selected Education courses in Colleges of Education in Kwara State. The study was a descriptive survey type involving 180 students drawn from Kwara State Colleges of Education. The instrument for the study was pro foma. The data collected was subjected to Pearson Moment Correlation and Descriptive Statistic in order to test the research hypotheses in this study. The finding revealed that there was correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in selected Education courses (other disciplines) in Colleges of Education in Kwara State. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that good language proficiency and good language command in General English could affect students' academic achievement in other disciplines. It was recommended among others that lecturers of General English should create in their students the curiosity needed in learning the English language so as to become proficient in it.
Keywords: Academic Achievement, General English, Proficiency and Education Courses

I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

English by virtue of the political power of its native speakers has become the world's international language per excellence. It is the world's predominant language of information, dissemination, diplomacy, trade, interaction and so on. In countries like Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia; the language has become their lingua franca. Thus, it is acknowledged as the most recognised official language of communication. In many African countries, English language has become the language of education, politics, religious and science. In a country like Nigeria, English language is a pre-requisite for admission into any tertiary institution. Thus, without a credit pass in the English language at Senior Secondary School level, no student will be offered admission.

In view of the aforementioned, National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) upon its establishment by Degree (now Act) 13th of 17th January, 1989 (Amended Act 12 of 1993), makes General English courses mandatory for all students irrespective of their areas of specialisation in the various Colleges of Education in Nigeria even after students must have gained admission since proficiency in General English is a major variable in the determination of good academic achievement in other courses. Thus, the knowledge of the contents of College courses is transferred to the students at all levels of NCE via the English language medium. It therefore follows that how well students would fare in academic achievement depends largely on their level of proficiency in General English which is the medium of instruction.

According to American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL, 2008), language proficiency or linguistic proficiency is the ability of an individual to speak or perform in an

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acquired language. Yet, it argued that theories vary among pedagogues as to what constitutes proficiency. Again, English language proficiency refers to the ability of students or learners to be able to possess writing skills, listening skills, reading skills and speaking skills in English Language. According to Blagojevich, Ruiz and Dunn (2004), English language proficiency is an indication of how English language learners' communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Social Studies.

However, Kong, Sonya, Laura and Natasha (2012) had earlier opined that low language proficiency has been considered a barrier to learning and academic success at the post-secondary school level. This then posits that deficient English language use skills could affect academic achievement of students in a country like Nigeria where the English language is a second language. To this effect, low proficiency in General English may result in poor academic achievement of students in other courses also within the College of Education system. This is because students who have low proficiency in General English might find it difficult to comprehend ideas and courses taught in English and may also be unable to express themselves properly in written tests and examinations. On this note, several studies have evaluated the predictive power of language proficiency on students' academic achievement.

Another concept central to this research is academic achievement. Academic achievement is the outcome of education and/or the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals (Wikipedia, 2012). In other words, academic achievement represents the overall outcome of students' academic performance. This, to a large extent indicates how a student has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environment, most especially in school, college, or university.

Thus, the research of Ogunsiji (2009) revealed that the English language proficiency of the students has a significant positive relationship with their overall academic achievement. Robelle and Ronald (2016) also claimed that the more the students are proficient in the English language, the more they are likely to perform well in other academic subjects. In this sense, various empirical studies have further suggested the relationship between students' English proficiency and their academic achievement (Huong, 2001 & Woodrow, 2006). Upon this disposition, the relationship between students' academic achievement in education courses and students' proficiency in

General English will be the focus of this research. In view of this, this present study is an attempt to investigate the relationship between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in Education courses.

Students' Proficiency in General English and Academic Achievement

The role of English in Nigeria education system could not be over-emphasised. This is because apart from being the national and official language, when the educational system in the country took off, English was, and still, the official mean of communication (Medubi 1999; Saleeman 2000). Olanipekun (2013) also affirmed that the language has afforded the country a great deal of having contact with the international world. More importantly, it is through the vehicle of English that students assess knowledge in other subject areas. To this extent, proficiency in English is essential for students' academic achievement.

Academic achievement has long been recognised as one of the important goals of education the world over. It is seen as measurable behaviour in a standardised series of tests. It is usually constructed and standardised to measure proficiency in school subjects (Olanipekun, Onabanjo & Bamidele, 2019). Many scholars and researchers across the globe have conducted scholarly studies in order to demonstrate that there are many factors (such as self-concept, motivation, environment etc.) that could influence students' academic achievement. However, this present research seeks to investigate whether linguistic proficiency as a factor could influence academic achievement especially among students in Colleges of Education.

Banga (2016) on the study of Tanzanian students on their mastery of language of instruction and its influence on their academic achievement revealed that limited proficiency of Tanzanian students in the English language is connected to their poor academic achievement. Areepattamannil and Freeman (2008) reiterated that linguistic proficiency among other factors could influence students' academic achievement in Canada. This means that language proficiency is a strong predictor of academic success. Similarly, Jadie, Sonya, Laura and Natasha (2012) averred that low proficiency has been considered a barrier to academic success at the post-secondary school level and this is because English learners often lack the language proficiency necessary to understand the test content and academic work.

Some studies are at variance with the above findings. For instance, Cekiso, Tshotsho and

Masha (2015) had also investigated the impact of English language proficiency on learners' academic achievement in Mathematics, Economics, Management Science (EMS) and Natural Science. The relationship the study established was between the English language proficiency and learners' academic achievement in Natural Science and it was not significant. Adewole, Akinsowon, and Sabitu (2019) further revealed that competence in English had no influence on students' performance in Mathematics. In view of this, the study recommended that there should be less emphasis on the use of English language as a medium of instruction for all subjects in the school curriculum. This therefore means that students' academic success based on English proficiency varies.

Statement of the Problem
Itsuokor (1987) proved that competency in English significantly determined performances in intelligence or academic tests. This revelation seems to suggest that proficiency in General English is very importance even in students' academic achievement in intelligence tests and other disciplines. On the other hand, Adewole, Akinsowon, and Sabitu (2019) revealed that competence in English had no influence on students' performance in Mathematics. They discovered that language test data were not very useful in predicting academic achievement in other courses.

It is in view of the above that this research will investigate the relationship between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in Education courses in three State Colleges of Education in Kwara State.

Purpose of the Study
The general purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in selected Education courses in at least three State own Colleges of Education in Kwara State. The study will specifically find out:
-The relationship between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in selected Education courses;

Research Questions
1. Is there any significant correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in Philosophy of Education?
2. Is there any significant correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in Micro-Teaching Theory?
3. Is there any significant correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in Introduction to Theory and Practice of Guidance and Counseling?

Research Hypotheses
The following research hypotheses guided the study:
1. There is no significant correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in Philosophy of Education;
2. There is no significant correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in Micro-Teaching: Theory;
3. There is no significant correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in Introduction to Theory and Practice of Guidance and Counseling.

Scope of the Study
The study will only investigate the correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in some Education courses in the three State Colleges of Education in Kwara State. The study will also concern itself with General English courses in Colleges of Education only and selected Education courses based on what is obtainable in the Minimum Standard for General Education, National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).

Research methodology
The study adopted descriptive survey method where two hundred and six students' scores in General English and selected Education courses respectively, would be collected and analysed for the purpose of this research. These are the graduating NCE students of 2018/2019 academic session in the State own Colleges of Education in Kwara State. All final year students of the academic session formed the population and the sample population of the study. The instruments for this study are scores of students in General English and selected courses in Education. The instrument needs no validation because both the results and the scripts have been moderated by experts in those fields before being released.

Statistically, instruments found suitable for this research work are Pearson Product Moment

Correlation Coefficient and descriptive statistics because they are used to determine the degree of two variables (Okoro, 2002) and this could also be supported by (Owie, 1996) that correlation co-efficient is used to compute the strength of association between two variables. Descriptive statistic summarises a relatively large array of data into meaningful forms such that they could be more easily interpreted (Nkemakolam, 2002).

II. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSES

Research Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in Philosophy of Education.

Table 1
Correlation between General English (GSE 121) and Philosophy of Education

	General English (GSE 121)	Philosophy of Education
General English (GSE 121)	1	.378
N	180	180
Philosophy of Education	.378	1
N	180	180

Significant at 0.05

One possible inference that could be drawn from Table 1 is that, correlation coefficient is 0.378, significant at 0.05. Critical value at df =179 was 0.140. The calculated r was greater than table r ($r_{cal} > r_{tab}$) therefore the null hypothesis for research hypothesis one is hereby rejected. This means that there is correlation between students'

proficiency in General English II and students' achievement in Philosophy of Education.

Research Hypothesis 2:
There is no significant correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in Micro-Teaching: Theory.

Table 2
Correlation between General English (GSE 211) and Micro-Teaching Theory

	General English (GSE 211)	Micro-Teaching Theory
General English (GSE 211)	1	.347
N	180	180
Philosophy of Education	.347	1
N	180	180

Significant at 0.05

From table 2 the correlation coefficient is 0.347, significant at 0.05. Critical value at df =179 was 0.140. The calculated r was greater than table r ($r_{cal} > r_{tab}$) therefore the null hypothesis for research hypothesis two is hereby rejected. It is therefore safe to reveal that that there is correlation between students' proficiency in General English

III and students' achievement in Micro-Teaching Theory.

Research Hypothesis 3:
There is no significant correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in Introduction to Theory and Practice of Guidance and Counselling.

Table 3
Correlation between General English (GSE 321) and Introduction to Theory and Practice of Guidance and Counselling

	General English (GSE 321)	Guidance and Counselling
General English (GSE 321)	1	.373
N	180	180
Philosophy of Education	.373	1
N	180	180

Significant at 0.05

Table 3 indicates that correlation coefficient is 0.373, significant at 0.05. Critical value at df=179 was 0.140. The calculated r was greater than table r ($r_{cal} > r_{tab}$) therefore the null hypothesis for research hypothesis two is hereby rejected. This further means that there is correlation between students' proficiency in General English IV and students' achievement in Guidance and Counselling.

III. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

One possible inference that could be drawn from Table 1 is that, correlation coefficient is 0.378, significant at 0.05. Critical value at df =179 was 0.140. The calculated r was greater than table r ($r_{cal} > r_{tab}$) therefore the null hypothesis for research hypothesis one is hereby rejected.

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Based on this analysis, there is significant relationship between students' academic performance in General English and selected courses in Education, respectively. The implication is that students who performed well in General English will equally perform well in General Education courses and students who failed in General English may not do well in their General Education courses.

The findings of this work agreed with the findings of Maleki and Zangani (2007) that discovered that students' weakness in connection with less language proficient in General English can cause a drastic impact on students' academic success. In a similar vein, Rudd and Honkiss (2020)'s findings revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between proficiency in English language and academic performance (r = 0.499; p <.05). The positive relationship implied that the greater the students' English language proficiency, the higher the level of overall academic performance.

The aforementioned confirms Iliyas (2011)'s proposition who had revealed that a lack of adequate mastery of English language (language of instruction) is a major problem relating to inadequate understanding of the teacher's speech (listening problem) that resulted from poor vocabulary and syntactic knowledge (note-taking problem) and deficient language background which in turn affect students' academic achievement in other disciplines such as in Education. He further traced this poor language of instruction challenge to attitudinal problem among students and between students and lecturers of other disciplines.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The researchers in this study find out that there is a correlation between students' proficiency in General English and academic achievement in selected Education courses in Colleges of Education in Kwara State. Based on this, it was discovered that good language proficiency and good language command of General English could affect students' academic achievement in other disciplines. It is therefore possible to safely offer that there is tendency for language proficiency to enhance students' academic achievement.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was carried out with the aim that the insight gained from this study would benefit lecturers, students, curriculum planners, government and other stakeholders such as the parents and institution administrators. Based on the

findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. English language no doubt has become the language of instruction and language of all textbooks at all levels of education in Nigeria. In this sense, lecturers of English at all levels should endeavour to create in students the interest and the necessary curiosity in learning English language or General English as the case may be.

2. Students should be encouraged to imbibe the culture of reading, generally, which could enhance their English language proficiency and their performance in other Education courses.

3. Curriculum planners of General English for Colleges of Education should further evaluate the contents of General English at all levels together with the teaching and learning materials across the country. This will help the curriculum planners to know whether or not to further adjust contents of General English courses and materials and the allotted time for teaching each of these English courses.

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