

IMPACT OF SCHOOL LOCATION AND METHODOLOGY ON STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH ESSAY WRITING

Eneh, Ngozi Anthonia

Department of Arts Education, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, Nigeria.

enehngoibe@gmail.com

Phone: +2347062118912

Igiligi Emmanuel (Ph.D)

Supervisor, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, Nigeria

Abstract: *This study was designed to investigate the impact of school location and methodology on students' achievement in English essay writing. The study examined the effect of school location and methodology on the achievement of students when taught using project-based method. The interaction effect of teaching methods and school location were examined. The study was quasi-experimental study involving a non-randomized control group pretest, posttest design. Intact classes were used. The study was carried out in Awgu Education Zone of Enugu State. The population of the study comprised all the senior secondary school II students in Awgu Education zone. The sample consisted of 300 students stratified according to school locations. The instrument used for data collection was English language essay writing. The instrument was validated by three specialists from Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. The reliability of the instrument was 0.77 using Kendall Coefficient of Concordance. The data collected was analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Analysis of co- variance (ANCOVA). The result of the study shows that students in urban areas perform better than their counterparts in rural areas. There was also no significant interaction effect of teaching method and school location on student's mean achievement in English essay writing in secondary schools. Based on these findings, it was recommended that teachers should endeavour to introduce activity-based method in teaching English essay writing.*

INTRODUCTION

English or the English language is a West Germanic language that arose in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of England. It then spread into what was to become southeast Scotland, under the influence of the Anglian Medieval Kingdom of Northumbria (Boeree, 2014). Owing to economic, political, military, scientific, cultural and colonial influence of Great Britain and the United Kingdom from the 18th Century through the British Empire, English has been widely

dispersed around the world. It has also become the leading language of international discourse in many regions, Nigeria inclusive. The language is widely learned as a second language and used as an official language of the European Union and many Common Wealth countries as well as in many world organizations. Historically, English originated from the fusion of languages and dialects, now collectively termed old English. These were brought to the eastern coast of great Britain by Germanic (Anglo-Saxon) settlers with

Eneh, Ngozi Anthonia and Igiligi Emmanuel (Ph.D)

the word “English” being derived from the name Angles (Serdechny, 2011). A significant number of English words were constructed based on roots from Latin, because Latin in some form was the lingua franca of the Christian church and European intellectual life.

Serdechny described English as, the “tool of tools” in learning and all human experience. He argued that English language acts as the true mechanical go-between to convey observations and ideas that have prior and independent existence. The English language is without any doubt the most important legacy of the British colonial masters to Nigeria. The implantation, acceptance and role of English in the body politic of Nigeria started with it being adopted as the channel of instruction. With growing importance of English language, many countries around the world today use it as first and second language. It has become almost the world’s lingua franca of education, aviation, tourism, diplomacy, science, technology, commerce and industry. In Nigeria, English language is a compulsory subject in primary and post primary schools (Ukwuegbu, 2014). Examination bodies like Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the West African Examination Council (WAEC), the National Examination Council (NECO) to name but the three made English language compulsory in their examinations. English language to Nigeria is a stepping-stone to the technological giants of the world. The ability to write good essay in English language is therefore, required of all students in Nigeria.

Among the four language skills, writing is one. The others are listening, speaking and reading, but writing is the most difficult to be accomplished. It is easier to convey thought through speech, which is a common mode of communication than through writing (Beare, 2010). Listening can easily be done, even by a child when the interest is drawn, while reading is usually faster and easier to learn than writing.

Essay writing is very important, not only for learning the English language, but in the over-all molding of the students. Other subjects in the secondary school are evaluated using essay-type questions, among others. The importance of essay writing is recognized in every institution, even in primary schools where it is called composition. Essay writing ability helps students to perform well in other subjects. Grayson (2010) observed that in any examination where students are required to write essay type, any student who has the points to write on, is sure of success. Recent developments concerning English language studies like reading and essay competitions indicate renewed interest in this aspect of English language studies. Douglass (2014) stated that even if a test is dominated by low-level thinking skills and questions, and questions are posed in a multiple-choice format, the best preparation is not mindless testing drills, but extensive student writing, accompanied by thinking, analysis and reasoning.

The extensive writing can be seen in the different types of essays, which are: the descriptive, expository, argumentative and narrative essays. Descriptive writing is used in all modes of writing (expository, narrative and persuasive), to create a vivid and lasting impression of the person, place or thing (Okoro, Idris, Okebukola&Owokade, 2014). Narrative essay includes many vivid sensory details that paint a picture and appeal to all of the reader’s senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. Descriptive writing can also paint pictures of the feelings that are being described. It makes use of figurative expressions or devices such as analogies, similes and metaphor to help paint the picture in the reader’s mind. Descriptive writing uses precise language, and specific adjectives and nouns, including strong action verbs to give life to the picture one is painting in the reader’s mind. Students can make use of prompts, to paint

better pictures. Descriptive prompts that can be used are: describe your favorite toy, describe your favorite food, describe a place you always wanted to visit, describe a perfect teacher, etc. Writing a descriptive paragraph can be broken down into manageable chunks for students. This will help them write interesting essays. Descriptive essay is an embodiment of different types of imagery. This is because descriptive essay should contain enough details to help the reader form mental images of the subject. For instance, writing a descriptive essay on “how the storm blew in” evokes the sense of sound, describing “sunset” to a blind man evokes the sense of sight, describing an “aroma of coffee” evokes the sense of taste, and “describing the feel of a baby’s skin” evokes the sense of touch (Schneider, 2011).

The WAEC Chief Examiners' reports from 2015-2019 confirm that students' performance in English language is below expectation. Issues highlighted in the reports include students' ignorance in the manipulation of grammatical structures, language convention and organization of ideas. Students displayed wrong sentence construction, lack of understanding of rules of agreement of subject and verb, wrong amalgamation of words, errors in plural formations, ignorance of verbs and noun forms of certain words. They also exhibited poor spelling, improper punctuation and immature vocabulary. The poor end result of candidates after six years of post-primary school exposure to English, both as a language of instruction and as a school subject, is a clear indication of serious cumulative inadequacies of the language performance through which the candidates passed.

The location of a school is a factor to be considered when accessing students' academic achievement. School location can be referred to the place where school is situated. It is where teaching- learning process takes place. It can

either be rural or urban location. Differences in school location imply the existence of differences in demographic and socio-economic parameters of the students (Ezema, 2012). In his view, Owuoye (2012), opines that urban students perform better than their rural counterparts in all forms of achievement test. Axtel and Bowers (2019), 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, Owuoye (2012) found that urban students performed better than rural students in all forms of achievement test used. Kissau (2016) reported that students in urban and rural location performed in a similar manner. Obioma (2019) indicated that most essay writing deficient learners were found in major urban centres rather than other locations. Igboegwu and Okonkwo's (2012) study indicate a significant difference in students' achievement with respect to location of school and education zones. The study showed that urban schools achieved significantly better than students in the rural schools did. These controversies call for further investigation. The researcher, therefore, intends to find out the effectiveness or otherwise of school location on students' academic achievement.

Purpose of the study

The general purpose of this study is to determine the effect of project-based method on students' achievement in English essay writing in public secondary schools in Awgu Education Zone. Specifically the study ascertained the:

1. mean achievement scores of rural and urban students taught English essay writing
2. interaction effects of method and location on students' achievement in English essay writing

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the mean achievement scores of rural and urban students taught English essay writing?
2. What are the interaction effects of method and location on students' achievement in English essay writing?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of rural and urban students taught English essay
2. There is no significant interaction effect of methodology and location on students' achievement scores in English essay writing.

Influence of School Location on Academic Achievement

School location refers to the place, in relation to other areas in the physical environment (rural or urban), where the school is sited. In Nigeria, rural life is uniform, homogenous, and less complex than that of urban centers, with cultural diversity, which often is suspected to affect students' academic achievement. This is because urban centers are better favored with respect to distribution of social amenities such as pipe borne water, electricity, healthcare facilities while the rural areas are less favored. This is also true in the distribution of educational facilities and teachers. These prevailing conditions imply that learning opportunities in Nigerian schools differ from school to school. It would appear therefore that students in Nigerian urban schools have more educational opportunities than their counterparts in rural schools have. While some studies have shown positive influence, others have shown negative influence of school location on the students' learning outcome or achievement. As a result of its importance in

language teaching and learning, literatures on the effects of school location on students' academic achievement abound. Different scholars in the field of language have come out with different views of school location. Some researchers believe that students from good socio-economic background and urban area perform better than those from poor socio-economic background and rural area in their academic achievement. Consequently, school location can be referred to the place where school is situated. It is where teaching and learning process takes place either rural or urban area.

Urban environment is a place that has high population density containing a high variety of social amenities and has beautiful environment (Ezike, 2017). On the other hand, Ezike (2017) defines rural environment as a place that has low population density containing a low variety of social amenities and has isolated environment. In other words, school location can be in rural areas where facilities such as qualified teachers, laboratories, conducive learning environment and social amenities are not available. It can also be in urban areas where qualified teacher, laboratories, conducive learning environment and social amenities are available. However, location in this context refers to the geographical position of the school which can be rural or urban areas. Different location implies existence of differences in demographic and socio-economic parameters of the school (Ezema, 2012). Nevertheless, the differences in rural and urban areas indicate the differences in the academic achievement of students in language learning. Because location is an important issue in second language teaching and learning, it has received some important attentions from different scholars in second language teaching. Lackney (2014) stressed that students in rural schools achieved better than students in urban schools. The researcher explained further that this could be attributed to the fact that in the rural schools,

classes were not as large as those in urban schools. However, Igbeyin (2012) stated that students in urban schools obtained higher scores than those in rural schools. This achievement could be as a result of conducive learning environment, qualified teachers, laboratories and social amenities. Nevertheless, these different views by different scholars have shown the existing differences in language achievement between schools in rural areas and those in urban areas.

Design of the Study

A quasi-experimental design, specifically non-equivalent control group design was employed. The design is considered appropriate for the study because intact classes were used to avoid disruption of normal class lesson.

Area of the Study

This study was carried out in Awgu Education Zone of Enugu State. Awgu Education Zone is located in the eastern part of Enugu State. It shares common boundaries with Imo, Anambra and Abia States. Awgu Education Zone is made up of three local government areas: Awgu, Aninriand Oji River Local Government Areas. There are 55 government owned senior secondary schools in the zone

Population of the Study

The population of this study consists of one thousand seven hundred and forty-six (1,746) SSII students in Awgu Education Zone.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the study was three hundred (300) respondents. Through purposive sampling, four schools were selected from the co-education schools. Two of the schools are located in the urban areas while the other two are in the rural area. One of the urban schools had intact classes of 85 students and one of the rural schools have 70 students. The second urban school had 80 students and the rural school has 65 students. The schools assigned to treatment and control conditions were selected by simple balloting.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection is Essay Writing Achievement Test (EWAT). Achievement tests are written to ascertain students' level of learning within a course, in a major, or across their entire undergraduate education or for an experimental analysis. This was adapted from 2017 past WAEC English essay writing questions. The essay is to test students' ability to communicate effectively in writing, their competence to express themselves clearly and coherently in a manner that is suitable to the audience, purpose, topic and context. The researchers used the standard marking scheme for Senior School Certificate Examination on essay by WAEC. The question had 50 marks allocated to it; content – 10marks, organization - 10marks, expression– 20marks, and mechanical accuracy – 10marks. The minimum length of the essay was 450 words.

Validation of the Instrument

The essay topic and the marking scheme were subjected to face validation by three specialists. One from the Department of Language Education, another from the Department of Science Education and an experienced teacher of English language with a degree in Education/English. They are all WAEC examiners. The reports from these specialists were that the topic of the essay was in line with the scheme of work of SS II students and thus suitable for their class. They also confirmed that the marking scheme was appropriate and clear.

Reliability of the Instrument

A trial testing was done on the topic of the essay. The data collected was used to estimate the reliability of the coefficient of the instrument. The researcher discussed with the two different scorers who marked the answer scripts. Scorer reliability of the instrument was pursued. The scores were correlated using Kendall Coefficient

of Concordance. This yielded a co-efficient of .771 which approximately equals to 0.77. This value is high and hence ensures the reliability of the instrument. This also falls in line with the general reliability from the WAEC which is .781.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics; mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions. For testing the null hypothesis formulated for the study, the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected in line with the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Research Question One: What is the difference in the mean achievement scores of rural and urban students taught English essay writing?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of scores of rural and urban students taught English essay writing

Location	N	Pre-test	
		\bar{X}	Sd
Rural	135	12.55	6.80
Urban	165	11.04	3.20

Table 1 reveals the mean scores of rural and urban students taught English essay writing. It shows that rural students had post-test mean score of 41.16 with a standard deviation of 21.81 while their urban counterparts had post-test mean score of 47.22 with a standard deviation of 36.18. Mean gain scores of 28.61 and 36.18 for the rural and urban students respectively indicated that urban students achieved higher than their rural counterparts.

Research Question 2: What is the interaction effect of method and school location on students' mean achievement scores in English essay writing?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of students according to method and school

location on students' scores in English essay writing.

Method	School location	\bar{X}	Sd
Lecture method	Urban	22.78	9.63
	Rural	20.71	9.47
Project-based method	Urban	27.06	10.65
	Rural	26.74	10.03

Table 2 shows that in the lecture group, both the urban and rural mean scores were different (22.78 and 20.71) for urban and rural students respectively. Their standard deviation also differed slightly from each other. The results also show that in the project groups, students in urban schools had a mean score of 27.06 with a standard deviation of 10.65 while their rural counterparts scored 26.74 with a standard deviation of 10.05. This indicates that students in urban schools scored higher in English essay writing when taught using lecture or project-based method. The values of the standard deviation further showed that the scores of the students in urban schools were less homogenous when compared to standard deviation of the rural school counterparts.

Test of Hypothesis

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of rural and urban students taught English essay writing with project-based method.

Table 3: Analysis of Covariance of the effect of project-based method on rural and urban students' achievement in English essay writing

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
Corrected Model	1800.645 ^a	2	900.323	1.782	.174
Intercept	34878.081	1	34878.081	69.024	.000
PRETEST	1237.244	1	1237.244	2.449	.121
LOCATION	269.710	1	269.710	.534	.467
Error	49014.105	106	505.300		
Total	266575.000	193			

Corrected
Total

50814.750

299

a. R Squared = .035 (Adjusted R Squared = .016)

Table 3 shows that the probability associated with the calculated value of f (.534) for the mean achievement scores of the rural and urban students taught English essay writing with project-based method is 0.467. Since the probability value of 0.386 is greater than 0.05 level of significance ($p > .05$), the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, school location has significant influence on the achievement of students in English essay writing.

Ho₄: There is no significant interaction effect of method and school location (urban and rural) on mean achievement scores of students in English essay writing.

Table 4: ANCOVA of interaction effect of method and school location on the mean achievement scores of students in English essay writing.

Source	Type II sum of squares	df	Mean Square	f	Sig
Corrected	6964.90	4	1733.91	20.71	0.00
Intercept	16115.93	1	16370.15	195.49	0.00
Pretest	4636.80	1	4854.40	57.97	0.00
Location	10.73	1	1997.91	23.85	0.00
Method	1601.57	1	71.09	0.85	0.36
Error	24673.77	295	83.74		
Total	211224.00	300			
Corrected total	31638.67	299			

The results of table 8 show that the probability value for the calculated f (0.82) is 0.37. The probability value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted this implies that there is no significant interaction effect of method and school location on students' achievement in English essay writing.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings was organized under the specific purposes of the study as follows:

- effect of school location on students' achievement in essay writing
- The interaction effect of method and school location on students' mean achievement in essay writing.

Effect of School Location on Students' Achievement in Essay Writing

The result of the study show that in the lecture group, students in urban schools achieved higher than their rural counterparts. Also in the project group students in urban schools had a higher mean score than those students in rural schools. The ANCOVA test however showed that there is significant effect of school location on students' mean achievement in English essay writing.

The present finding of significant effect of school location on students' mean achievement in essay writing is in line to the finding by Chukwudebelu (2012) who found that school location had great influence on students mean achievement in English spelling, indicating that students in urban schools performed much better than those students from schools in rural locations.

Interaction effects of Method and School Location on Students' Achievement in Essay Writing

The findings of this study showed that there is no significant interaction effect of method and school location on the mean achievement scores of students in English essay writing at the senior secondary school level. These findings of the study suggest that the project-based method of teaching English essay enhances the achievement of students in both rural and urban areas. The result of no interaction effect of method and school location on students' achievement is in consonance with the findings of Agu (2014) and Omeje (2017) who reported that no significant interaction effect existed between instructional approach and school location on students' achievement.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study.

1. More qualified English language teachers should be added to the rural areas to strengthen students' performance in rural areas.
2. Schools in rural areas should ensure that they adopt the good teaching method for teaching essay writing.
3. The English language educators and curriculum planners should incorporate activity-based method in teacher education programmes.

Conclusion

This study was designed to investigate the effects of school location on students' achievement in English essay writing. The study examined the effect of school location and methodology on the achievement of students when taught using project-based method. The interaction effect of teaching methods and school location were examined. The study was quasi-experimental study involving a non-randomized control group pretest, posttest design. Intact classes were used. The study was carried out in Awgu Education Zone of Enugu State. The population of the study comprised all the senior secondary school II students in Awgu Education zone. The sample consisted of 300 students stratified according to school locations. The instrument used for data collection was English language essay writing. The instrument was validated by three specialists made up of an English language teacher, a professional language educationist and an expert in Science Education from Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. The reliability of the instrument was 0.77 using Kendall Coefficient of Concordance. The data collected was analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Analysis of co- variance (ANCOVA). The result of the study shows that students in urban areas perform better than their counterparts in rural areas. There was also no significant interaction effect of

teaching method and school location on student's mean achievement in English essay writing in secondary schools. Based on these findings, it was recommended that teachers should endeavour to introduce activity-based method in teaching English essay writing.

References

- Agu, V. (2014). The English Language in Second Language Context: The English Language in Nigeria. In O. Obafemi (Ed.), *New Introduction to English Language*. Associated Books.
- Axtell, B. & Bowers J. (2012). Rural Urban Effects on the Common Entrance Examination. *TEDRO RP*, 104
- Beare, D.R. (2010). *Educational: English language: Reading and writing Skills*. Retrieved January 7, 2021 from amazon.com <http://www.amazon.com/s>
- Boeree, G. (2014). *Evolution of English*. University of Shippensburg.
- Chukwudebelu, I.E. (2012). *Analysis of senior secondary school students' spelling errors in written English* (Unpublished Master's Thesis). University of Nigeria.
- Douglass, R. (2014). *State test- taking: Strategies*. Prentice Hall.
- Ezema, P.A. (2011). Improving the teaching and learning of English Language in the rural areas in Nigeria. *Journal of the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI) Nigeria Chapter*, 3 (2), 28-33.
- Grayson, G.A. (2010). Safe Environmental Programs. County Government Environmental Programs in Grayson Kentucky. Kentucky.4ra.in/Kentucky/Grayson/co.
- Green, K. (2011). *Essay Examples*. Retrieved January 7, 2021 from

<http://www.examples.yourdictionary.com/essay-e>

- Igbeyin, H. (2006). "Syntactic Innovation Processes: Nigeria English (Linguistics). StudiaAnglicaPosnaniensia: International Review of English Studies.
- Igboegwu, E. N., & Okonkwo, I. G. A. (2012). Influence of gender and location of school on students' achievement in chemistry. *Journal of Research in Education*, 1(1), 1-14.
- Kissau, S. (2016). Gender difference in motivation to learn French. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 62(3), 65-96.
- Lackney, J.A (2014). Educational facilities: The impact and role of the physical environment of school on teaching. University of Wisconsin. Milwaukee Centre for Architectural and urban planning. *Research Monograph Series Report P,94*.
- Obioma, G. (2019). The development and validation of a diagnostic mathematics achievement test for Nigerian secondary school students. *The Journal of Mathematics Association of Nigeria*, 19(1), 41-46.
- Okoro, O., Idris, A., Okebukola, F. and Owokade, C. (2014). *Catch-up English language for SSCE/UME*. Heinemann Educational Books(Nigeria) Plc.
- Omeje H. O. (2017). Effects of project-based method on academic achievement and attitude of low ability students in carpentry and joinery. *Institute of education Journal, University of Nigeria, Nsukka*, 18 (1), 22-33.
- Owoeye, J. S. (2012). *The effect of integration of location, facilities and class size on academic achievement of secondary school students in Ekiti state*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Ibadan.
- Schneider, B. (2011). *How to Write Descriptive Essay*. Penguin. pp. 341-343.
- Serdechny, G. (2011). *Origin of English*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Ukwuegbu, C. (2014). The identification of standard Nigerian English usage. In Dadzie, A. and Awonusi, S. (eds): *Nigeria English: Influences and characteristics*. Concept Publication. 158-178.
- Uzoegwu, P.N. (2014). The effects of cooperative learning methods on students' achievement in English essay writing. *Unpublished Ph.D Thesis*, University of Nigeria.
- West African Examination Council (2015). *Chief Examiners report* (Nigeria): WAEC.
- West African Examination Council (2016). *Chief Examiners report* (Nigeria): WAEC.
- West African Examination Council (2017). *Chief Examiners report* (Nigeria): WAEC.