

Full Length Research Paper

Effect of English Language proficiency on students' performance in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic - based library schools in Nigeria

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The study investigates the effect of English Language proficiency on student's performance in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria. This is against the background of the phobia the students have for cataloguing and classification. Descriptive survey method was adopted while a questionnaire, English Language proficiency test and cataloguing and classification test were used for data collection. Total enumeration technique was used to select all 1019 HND students from four purposively selected Nigerian polytechnics. Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The students' performance in the English language proficiency test is in the following order; Federal Polytechnic Offa (X=38.45); Federal Polytechnic Oko (X=37.15); Federal Polytechnic Kaduna (X=32.82); and Federal Polytechnic Nekede. Mean scores for cataloguing and classification test were: Federal Polytechnic, Kaduna (X=46.044); Federal Polytechnic, Nekede (X=45.432); Federal Polytechnic, Oko (X=44.229) and Federal Polytechnic Offa (X=42.625). The study revealed that English Language proficiency has a significant correlation with performance in cataloguing and classification courses. The study recommended that secondary school authorities in Nigeria should provide adequate resources for teaching English language so that the potential polytechnic students will have a good background in English language to enhance their performance in cataloguing and classification. The general studies programme in English in Nigerian polytechnics should be reviewed to make it more effective while the library schools should provide adequate resources for the teaching and learning cataloguing and classification for enhanced performance.

Key words: English Language proficiency, Student's performance, cataloguing and classification courses, polytechnic-based library schools, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Cataloguing and classification as a course of study occupies an important place in the field of librarianship. It

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is important to students' training in library schools because it is a vital process in providing adequate access to learning resources in libraries and information centres. Careers in librarianship are incomplete without a deep knowledge of cataloguing and classification. This view was supported by Luther (2010) who stated that cataloguing and classification have always held a prime position in the curricula of library schools. However, he explained that though concepts are changing with regard to the amount and nature of the study, some work in cataloguing and classification is still required of students following prescribed courses of study in library training. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the subject in the curricula of library schools in polytechnics. This is such that cataloguing and classification are offered at all levels of National Diploma and Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes. Acquisition of knowledge in cataloguing and classification by students will enable them to know the most efficient ways of offering quality service to library users in identifying and retrieving information materials relevant to their needs.

Cataloguing is the description of books and other information materials, showing the bibliographic details such as author, editor, publisher, series, tracing and other access points. It is the process through which a library catalogue is created in order to achieve easy retrieval of information. Cataloguing consists of two major aspects: Descriptive and subject cataloguing. Descriptive cataloguing highlights the important bibliographic features of the book while subject cataloguing identifies the subject treated by the book. Having identified the subject of the book, it is, thereafter, classified. Cataloguing groups related subject together and assign appropriate notation from a classification scheme for easy identification of an item as a member of the group. As related subjects are collocated by classification, the unrelated one are at the same time separated the group. Thus, cataloguing and classification are related activities in the organization of knowledge and this is also reflected in the curriculum of library and information science school.

Aina (2012) perceived cataloguing as a complex process used in providing access tools to materials in a collection so that users of such collections can access the materials in that collection. Cataloguing is a two phase activity that involves description of bibliographic details and identification of the subject in a book using a thesaurus. A search tool is, therefore, necessary for every collection to be meaningful. This explains why high premium is placed on cataloguing and classification in the librarianship curriculum. According to Edoka (2000), cataloguing is concerned with the correct and accurate description of the physical properties of a library document (print, non-print, audio, visual or both). It is a skillful art, subject to specific rules and guidelines, which the practitioner acquires through a period of professional training. A skill whose finesse and speed of application

takes time and experience to develop is used to describe cataloguing activities.

Descriptive cataloguing is an aspect of the library cataloguing process that is concerned with identifying and describing the physical and bibliographic characteristics of the item, and with determining the name(s) and title(s) to be used as access points in the catalogue, but not with assigning subject and form headings. The process includes making a physical description of a book including names of author or authors, the title of the material, the date and place of publication, the publisher, the pagination, illustration, price, format, and for rare books, details such as kind of paper, and binding. The tools for descriptive cataloguing include Anglo American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) and more recently, Resource Description and Access (RDA). Subject cataloguing, on the other hand, determines the subject of the information materials and purpose of classification. Subject heading lists are used in determining the common usage for easy access of terms and uniformity in cataloguing. The tools commonly used in subject cataloguing are the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and Sears List of Subject Headings (SLSH).

Classification is another important activity in organization of knowledge. Libraries and other information centers classify documents by grouping those with the same or related subjects together and assigning to them symbols or class marks. The symbol or class mark so assigned identifies a document as a member of a specific group (class) and aids the library or information centre in organising and retrieving its materials. The common practice in libraries and information centres is to assign class marks to documents based on a classification scheme. Aina (2004) posited that by far the most successful attribute for the classification of documents is the use of subject as the basis for classifying documents. He stated that the main attribute of bibliographic classification is to enable the classifier sort documents into classes or groups based on the subject content, as well as indicate relationships between documents in the same class. For bibliographic classification, every library either adopts an existing classification scheme or devises an in-house classification. Classification schemes, therefore, are indispensable in the life of every library.

Cataloguing and classification courses are offered by librarianship students in polytechnics and examined at the end of the semester. According to Ali (2009), the students' academic achievement plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates to become great leaders and sources of manpower development for a sustainable and social transformation leading to economic development of any nation. Academic achievement can be perceived as high, average or low. The level of students' academic performance is determined by several factors. Sommai (2008) identified

four causes of students' low academic achievement as insufficient basic knowledge, parents' inadequate income, helping work of family and strict control of parents over studies. In addition, too much assignment could also affect students' academic achievement and students' inability to adjust to life on their own. Factors like psychological, economic and environmental factors have been identified by previous studies to strongly influence students' academic achievement (Hussain, 2006; Amitava, 2010). However, due to the fact that a great deal of the rules and principles guiding cataloguing and classification are based on language rules, the study investigates the influence of proficiency in English Language on the academic performance of college student in cataloguing and classification.

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 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 acquired language. It argued that theories vary among pedagogues as to what constitutes proficiency.

The view expressed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (2008) exposes a line of demarcation between English Language proficiency and academic performance by the students. The ACTFL definition is a derivation of authority, accorded it, by United States Government which proclaimed that a limited English Language proficient student is one who comes from a non-English background and who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such an individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classroom where language of instruction is English or to participate fully in their society. The ACTFL contended that performance is a combination of all the three modes of communication, interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational.

People of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular are classified under the foreign speakers of English language and consequently, students could not but face some constraints in the use of English language. In this regard, librarianship students may not be exempted from these limitations. It is noteworthy that cataloguing and classification require full grasp of linguistic connotations which could affect the Nigerian students in understanding the courses. The effect of this is that the students' performance in cataloguing and classification courses will be adversely affected.

The findings of Orgunsiji (2009) supported the view that there is a significant impact of English Language proficiency on students' overall academic achievement and that English Language proficiency of the students has a significant positive relationship with their overall academic achievement.

Statement of the problem

The problem of this study is poor academic achievement among the Ordinary National Diploma and Higher National Diploma students in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria. This poor academic performance may be due to students' low English Language proficiency. Despite the emphasis placed on cataloguing and classification in library and information science curriculum in polytechnics, the students are known to generally record low achievement in the courses when compared to some other popular ones offered. This may be connected with the level of proficiency of the students in English Language. A great deal of the rules and principles governing cataloguing and classification are rooted in English Language usage.

Deficient English Language use skills could affect academic performance of students in a country like Nigeria where English Language is a second language. This may result in poor academic achievement of students in cataloguing and classification. Students who have low English Language use skills might find it difficult to comprehend cataloguing and classification rules taught and may also be unable to express themselves properly in written tests and examinations. Therefore, the study investigates the effect of the Higher National Diploma students' proficiency in English Language on their academic achievement in cataloguing and classification.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to examine the effect of English Language proficiency on the academic achievement of students in cataloguing and classification in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the level of English Language proficiency of students in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria;
2. Determine the performance of students in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic – based library schools in Nigeria; and
3. Determine the effect of the student's level of proficiency in English Language on achievement in cataloguing and classification courses.

Research questions

The study provides answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the level of English Language proficiency of students who are taking cataloguing and classification

courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria?
 2. What is the level of performance of students in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between level of English Language proficiency possessed and students' performance in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria.

Scope of the study

The study covers English Language proficiency skills such as reading skills, comprehension skills, and writing skills and students' performance in cataloguing and classification courses among all the National Diploma students in all Federal polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria. It covers four federal polytechnics.

Significance of the study

This study is important because the result of the study could help in identifying the major reasons why academic performance of diploma students in cataloguing and classification courses is relatively poor in comparison with other courses offered. The study could serve as a point of reference on how to sustain the interest of students learning cataloguing and classification courses. It is also expected to serve as catalyst for students learning cataloguing and classification to improve their reading, writing and comprehension skills.

The outcome of the study will encourage the library schools in Nigerian federal polytechnics and other colleges (in Nigeria) and other stakeholders in library and information science education in Nigeria to make and implement appropriate curriculum that will give increased attention to English Language proficiency for effectively learning of cataloguing and classification courses.

Review of related literature

Ajagbe (1994) opined that library science instruction evolved from the need to teach prospective student librarians use of library, sociology of library, and bibliometric instruction. Information literacy skills are conventional skills that library instructors usually employ as a stop-gap measure of imparting the skill of bibliometrics such as cataloguing, classification, indexing, abstracting, editing, and proof reading tasks in the library

on students of librarianship. This training should also include use of English Language to properly bridge the gap especially for cataloguing and classification courses.

Banjo (1987) contended that cataloguers and other practitioners of literacy oriented library tasks must be able to demonstrate high-level competence in the language skills of reading and writing in the performance of their various duties. He stressed further that the ability of the cataloguer is to assign subject headings solely on his ability to read the text for comprehension. He should similarly demonstrate his comprehension competence by selecting the subject heading and class mark that best describe the book out of several other similar subjects and class fields, and present the information creatively on the catalogue card. These skills must be properly taught at the student training level for better understanding of cataloguing and classification.

Williams et al. (2012) in their study investigated the use of English Language proficiency to predict the future academic success of English learner (EL) students. Their study revealed that English Language proficiency is a factor of prediction for future academic success. In a related study to this, Zangani and Maleki (2007) found out that one of the most serious problems that Iranian students face in their fields of study is their inability to communicate and handle English Language which will influence their academic success; they carried out a survey intended to examine the strength of the relationship between English Language proficiency and the academic achievement of Iranian students. Accordingly, the relation between English Language proficiency and academic achievement was examined in their study, and a significant connection was found between proficiency and grade point averages (GPA) of academic achievement. Similarly, the results revealed significant correlation between English Language proficiency and achievement in English speaking and writing subjects.

In another related study, Shahragerd et al. (2011) investigated the relationship between academic achievement and language proficiency of Iranian college students at Shiraz University in Iran; they revealed that there is a significant positive relation between language proficiency and academic achievement. Wille (2006) also examined the relationship between English Language proficiency and academic achievement of students at secondary level and found that there is a positive relation between these two variables which affirms the findings of previous studies. The findings of Orgunsi (2009) supported the view that there is a significant impact of English Language proficiency on students' overall academic achievement and that English Language proficiency of the students has a significant positive relationship with their overall academic achievement. The revelation from this present study also pointed towards the same direction like other previous study that English Language proficiency has a significant positive relation-

relationship with academic achievement in cataloguing and classification.

Research findings in different parts of the world reveal that students can be disadvantaged in their performance at school, college and university because of their poor proficiency level in English. To buttress this, a number of researchers have investigated the effects of English language proficiency on the academic performance of students. Suleiman (1983), for example, argues that inadequate mastery of the four language skills; namely listening, speaking, reading and writing hinders the progress of Arab students at university level. Zughoul (1987) agrees with Suleiman's point of view in questioning the linguistic competence of incoming freshmen students. Furthermore, Mukattash (1983) states that university students' are unable to use English Language correctly and appropriately both inside and outside the classroom when dealing with academic and everyday topics. Similarly, in a study conducted by Sivaraman et al. (2014) on students at a college in Oman, it was reported that the lack of proficiency in English does affect their performance in engineering courses. Other research findings at two tertiary institutions in Oman also show a strong, positive relationship between English Language performance and academic achievement (Roche and Harrington, 2013).

In addition, the results of a correlational study conducted by Sahragard and Baharloo (2009) on Iranian university students majoring in English Language and literature found that students who are more competent in English Language are more successful in their classes. Furthermore, in an attempt to determine whether there was a significant relationship between Iranian college students' language proficiency and their academic achievement, the results of a study conducted by Sahragard et al. (2011) indicated that the students who scored higher on the language proficiency test had better academic achievement scores. Other studies from Iran have reported similar findings. For example, Maleki and Zangani (2007) found a significant connection between proficiency and grade point averages of academic achievement of students majoring in English translation while Sadeghi et al. (2013) found that proficiency in English Language could significantly influence academic achievement of medical students.

Studies from Australia have also reported similar findings. For example, a study conducted on the impact of IELTS scores on performance at an Australian university has reported a significant and positive relationship between language proficiency of international university students and their overall academic performance as measured by their GPA (Feast, 2002). Along similar lines, students' achievement in school also depends upon their level of proficiency in the language of instruction (Wilkinson and Silliman, 2008). Research findings from school contexts have been reported. For instance, the results of a study conducted by Wilson and Komba

(2012) at a secondary school in Tanzania illustrated that the more proficient students are in English the better they are in academic subjects. This finding is in agreement with studies conducted on Nigerian students which revealed that there is a significant correlation between English Language proficiency and academic achievements of the subjects studied (Fakeye, 2014).

In other related studies, Feast (2002) and Graves (2001) found a significant and positive relationship between English Language proficiency and performance at university as measured by Grade Point Average (GPA). Ajibade (1993) also found a nexus and significant positive relationship between Proficiency in English Language and academic achievement in French among Nigeria Secondary School students. This study is an indication that proficiency in English Language does have a significant impact on senior secondary school students' academic achievement. This implies that the students with higher language proficiency had higher academic achievement scores in the core school subjects and vice-versa. These findings connect perfectly with that of Stern (1992)'s discovery that the weak overall language ability of Iranian undergraduate students affects drastically their academic success in the university semester examinations. In relation to this study, English Language proficiency is considered as an integral part of all other factors influencing academic achievement of students in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria.

There are many challenges facing administrators in the various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria today, but the most striking ones are concerned with low student academic performance. Every dedicated administrator and counselor wants all students to learn and perform at the highest possible level. Yet some students just do not reach their potentials. There is, therefore, the need for schools' leaders to understand the barriers to academic performance of some students and how to remove those barriers. According to Brophy (1993), the first factor which creates barriers to students' performance is students' attitude and beliefs. Students with low expectation for themselves become frustrated and give poor effort, a cycle called failure syndrome.

Cataloguing and classification of information materials is the responsibility of professional librarians. Considering the task involved in cataloguing and classification of library materials the students must be hardworking, intelligent and dedicated with positive attitude to cataloguing and classification courses. According to Aina (2012), the tasks of a cataloguer are multifarious. They need to possess technical knowledge and subject knowledge, which will enable them perform their own tasks. Transformation and positive development in library mostly depend on the positive attitude of its human element. The opinion of Aina in this regard, is relevant to the students undergoing training in library schools to develop positive attitude toward cataloguing and classification. If positive attitude is not developed at this

Table 1. Response rate to the questionnaire administered to the Higher National Diploma students (I and II).

S/N	Name of library school	Number of questionnaire administered	Number of questionnaire returned	Percentage
1	Federal Polytechnic, Kaduna State	150	135	90
2	Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Imo State	420	409	97.4
3	Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State	418	252	60.1
4	Federal polytechnic Oko, Anambra State	400	223	55.6
	Total	1388	1019	73.4

stage to cataloguing and classification, the implication is that the job will bring no desirable result. The students' attitude to cataloguing and classification also will affect their performance in cataloguing and classification courses.

The research finding on students' attitude toward cataloguing and classification by Dadzie (2008) revealed that among the courses suggested to be dropped by four-hundred level students of information studies is the theory and practice of classification. Nnadozie (2013) revealed that, most graduating students of library and information science performed poorly in cataloguing and classification because they perceived the course as being difficult and uninspiring. The implication is that students considered cataloguing and classification as problematic courses. This negative attitude toward cataloguing and classification must be corrected if we must increase the level of good performance among librarianship students.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study population consists of eight federal polytechnics in Nigeria offering library and information science in Nigeria, three thousand, two hundred and ten (3,210) students. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select four polytechnics that offer the HND programme. Using total enumeration technique, all the 1388 HND I and II students were included in the study. These categories of students were selected based on their fairly long period of interaction with the library schools and their familiarity with cataloguing and classification courses in the library schools.

The Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa, the Federal Polytechnic Iddah, and the Federal Polytechnic Ede, were not selected for the study because they do not have Higher National Diploma programmes in their respective library schools while the Federal Polytechnic Mubi was not selected due to Boko Haram insurgency in the North East region of the country. The selected library schools are as follows; Federal Polytechnic Offa; Federal Kaduna Polytechnic; Federal Polytechnic Nekede; and Federal Polytechnic Oko. The four Federal polytechnics selected were among the eight federal polytechnic offering library and information science as indicated by the Joint Admissions Matriculation Board (JAMB) brochure and list of accredited programmes by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). The instruments used for data collection include:

i. English Language proficiency test: The proficiency test, used to measure the performance of students in English Language was adopted from the Examination and Records Office of the Federal

Polytechnic Offa, and the Polytechnic Admissions Office on Post Unified Tertiary Admissions and Matriculation Examinations screening exercise (Post-UTME) for the Higher National Diploma students in Library and Information Science. The test contains twenty (20) objective English questions with optional answers A to D. Time allowed for the proficiency test was thirty (30) minutes.

ii. Cataloguing and classification achievement test: This was made up of fifty (50) objective questions in cataloguing and classification. Each question has optional answers, A to D. The test was validated through expert advice. Time allowed for the test was 30 min. The two tests were based on 100% each.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that out of 1388 copies of questionnaire administered to the Higher National Diploma students in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria, 1019 copies were returned and found valid for analysis. This represents a response rate of 73.4%.

Research question 1: What is the English Language proficiency of students taking cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria?

On the English Language proficiency level of the students, there were differential mean scores on performance of students in English Language. Students from the Federal Polytechnic, Offa had the highest performance ($x = 38.45$) (Table 2). This was followed by students at the Federal Polytechnic, Oko ($x = 37.15$), Federal Polytechnic, Kaduna ($x = 32.82$) and Federal Polytechnic, Nekede ($x = 31.29$), respectively.

Research question 2: What is the performance level of students in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria?

Table 3 reveals that there are differential mean scores on performance of students in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria. Students from the Federal Polytechnic, Kaduna had the highest performance ($x = 46.044$) in cataloguing and classification courses. This was followed by students at

Table 2. Proficiency level of the polytechnic students in English Language across the four polytechnics.

S/N	Name of library schools	Mean	N	Std. deviation
1	Federal Polytechnic Kaduna, Kaduna State	32.8296	135	13.76701
2	Federal polytechnic Offa, Kwara State	38.4529	223	16.20189
3	Federal polytechnic Oko, Anambra State	37.1516	409	15.48011
4	Federal polytechnic Nekede, Imo State	31.2937	252	13.27194
	Total	35.4049	1019	15.16147

Table 3. Performance level of students in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria.

Polytechnic	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error
Federal Polytechnic Kaduna	135	46.044	21.317	1.83474
Federal Polytechnic Offa	223	42.695	18.018	1.20664
Federal Polytechnic Oko	409	44.229	21.362	1.05630
Federal Polytechnic Nekede	252	45.432	18.628	1.17350
Total	1019	44.435	19.999	0.62620

Table 4. Relationship between level of English Language proficiency and students' performance in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria.

Variable	N	X	S D	Df	r	P	Remark
English language proficiency	1019	35.40	15.16	2036	0.096	<0.05	Significant
Cataloguing/ classification achievement	1019	44.43	19.99				

N = 1019, P < 0.05 (2-tailed test).

the Federal Polytechnic, Nekede ($x = 45.432$), Federal Polytechnic Oko ($x = 44.229$) and Federal Polytechnic, Offa ($x = 42.625$) respectively.

Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between the level of English Language proficiency possessed and students' performance in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria. Table 4 reveals that the correlation coefficient "r" between English Language proficiency and students' performance in cataloguing and classification is 0.096 and $P < 0.05$. This implies that there is significant relationship between English Language proficiency and students performance in cataloguing and classification courses among the polytechnic students in Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Summary of findings

The following are the findings of the study:

1. The study revealed that the performance of the HND students in Library and information science is below

average in English Language.

2. English Language proficiency contributed mostly to the academic achievement of students in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria.

3. There is a significant and positive relationship between English language proficiency and academic achievement of students in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria.

4. National diploma students achievement result in cataloguing and classification revealed a below average performance.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that English Language proficiency has significant and positive relationship with academic achievement of diploma students in cataloguing and classification courses in polytechnic-based library schools in Nigeria. Shahragerd et al. (2011) have also established a significant positive relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement of college students at Shiraz University in Iran. Similarly, Suleiman (1983) found out that inadequate mastery of language skills hinders the progress of Arab students at

university level. A study of Sivaramana et al. (2014) on college students in Oman concluded that lack of proficiency in English Language does affect the performance of the students in engineering studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Courses in the use of English language need to be improved on in the polytechnic-based library schools' curriculum in order to bring about a better academic achievement in cataloguing and classification.
2. Secondary school authorities should provide adequate resources for teaching English Language so that the potential polytechnic students will have a good background in English Language to enhance their performance.
3. There is a need for library schools in Nigeria to put in place better equipped cataloguing laboratories with a view to employing laboratory assistants or instructors to bring about a good achievement in cataloguing and classification courses.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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