

School Ownership Factor in the Reading Difficulties of Undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria

Wusu J. Apari Ph.D

*Department of English, Sikiru Adetona College of Education, Science and Technology, Omu-Ajose
apariwusu64@gmail.com*

Abstract

This paper investigated the influence of school ownership variable on the reading difficulties of undergraduates in southwest Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design in which questionnaires were administered on 834 students drawn from seven universities in southwest Nigeria. The data were analysed using ANOVA, multichoice Analysis, and t-Test. The students' response provided an insight into students reading difficulties on the basis of school ownership. It was revealed that students from federal university are mostly affected with reading difficulties with a mean score of 42.83 and standard deviation of 10.23, followed by state owned school with a mean score of 42.68 and standard deviation of 8.24, students from private school experienced the least difficulty with mean score of 40.39 and standard deviation of 9.09. The result also shows the significant difference of reading difficulties of undergraduates ($F_{(2832)} = 3,974$; P, L 0.005), and this implies that school type has effect on reading difficulties of undergraduates. However, a post hoc test was carried out to ascertain the source of the difference. The Scheffe post-hoc test revealed significant difference between state and private owned school ($P2027$), with a mean difference of 2.28. However, there were no difference between federal and state-owned schools. In conclusion, both undergraduates from federal and state-owned schools are affected with reading difficulties, while those in private school have least reading difficulties. It is recommended that undergraduates in federal and state-owned schools should be encouraged to read extensively, specifically literary works of all genres. Both conventional and e-library should be adequately provided and stocked with relevant and adequate books, where students should access easily on internet at any location. Every university should endeavor to establish reading clinic where undergraduates with reading difficulties can be diagnosed and remediated.

Key words: school ownership, reading difficulties, vocabulary, content analysis, reading flexibility, problem solving and method of reading.

Introduction

School ownership is all about the proprietorship of schools. The owners of schools' ranges from private individuals or organizations to government at all levels. The proprietors of universities are also called the visitors to the universities. The presidents and the governors are the visitors to the federal and state universities in that order. This is because they own the schools, fund the schools, design the mission and vision of the schools. Therefore, school ownership is a significant factor in the reading difficulties of undergraduates across school ownership. The reading achievement and reading difficulties of undergraduates vary across disciplines. Udoh (1991) reported the incidence of university of Ibadan undergraduates' rates of misunderstanding and misinterpretation, inability to comprehend details, word power of vocabulary and retention. Similar research by Apari and Okebukola (2021) shows that undergraduates in southwest Nigeria have difficulties in vocabulary and comprehension. So, vocabulary and comprehension become major reading difficulties amongst undergraduates. Acquisition of enough vocabulary is a prerequisite to reading comprehension. So, the learners need to "understand about 98% of words in order to understand the main idea" in a text.

Moreover, reading is not effective until the reader reads to collect information, facts and ideas and apply them to solve problems. That is why Apari (2018) defined reading as the prime instrument, as a well as, a systematic cognitive process of acquiring knowledge and other related skills from written and printed text products for application to future problems. The essence of comprehension is to apply the acquired facts to solving problems. Nevertheless, some students find it difficult to profit from their reading activities as a result of reading difficulties. However, school ownership is one of the causative factors of reading difficulties due to their selection criteria in their admission processes, their curriculum, vision and mission, as well as, administrative styles. Education is on the concurrent list of 1999 Nigerian constitution as amended, therefore, we have federal, state, and private universities. Their mission and vision vary, and are largely determined by the content in their university curriculum, as it is in their student handbooks. So, research into some selected university curricula is evident in their students' handbooks. and, it is necessary at this level to navigate through some selected university curricula in search of provision for reading contents in the curriculum contents. A good example of this is College of Humanities (CHU

111), Basic Skills in Reading and Writing and English departmental course (English 123), Listening and Reading Skills in Tai Solarin University of Education (Handbook, 2007-2011). The second broad area is Use of English or General Nigerian Studies (GNS) in English. Both courses are compulsory, and they cut across all disciplines. However, reading is a compulsory course in Humanities, and the course description of reading in Tai solarin University of Education (TASUED) is stated below:

The first part of this course deals with reading skills. Focus is on faults in reading. The second part of the course is designed to provide practice in writing skills. Emphasis is on formal and informal correspondences, reports, memoranda, essay writing of descriptive, argumentative, expository, and other types as well as comprehension and summary writing. Moreover, tertiary institution recognize reading as a skill and noted that faults in reading may hinder reading and reading comprehension. (Tassued Humanities Hand book, 2007—2011).

Hence, efforts are made by the universities to teach the students what reading faults are, and how to avoid them. For the purpose of knowledge, Reading faults include poor eye fixation, regression, inability to identify main ideas, inability to connect main ideas to supporting details, inability to read between the lines, Inability to read beyond the lines and inability to summarize what is read. Written Text product on various disciplines such as education, medicine, agriculture, commerce, economy among others is used to teach various types of reading. As a matter of fact, types of reading at macro level are skimming, scanning, study, reading, inferential reading, critical reading, and creative reading. The second part of the course is designed to provide practice in writing skill. There is a close relationship between reading skill and writing skill. First, readings is the first literacy language skill, while writing is the second and the last literacy language skill in the hierarchy. It is assumed that the conceptualization of the mechanics of reading could also lead to the understanding of such types of reading. For example, skimming is an act of looking quickly for information in a text product for specific pieces of information. Study reading is that reading that undergraduates engage themselves in for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and information needed to pass an examination. In doing this, students can apply different techniques such as keynote technique, Wusu Apari's SQR-SRR-U where S stands for survey, Q stands for question, R

stands for read, S for summary, R for review, R for recall and U for use or application to solving problems. Others are note making among others. In addition to all these, emphasis is required on formal and informal correspondences such as letter queries as well as report, memoranda and different writings such as descriptive, argumentative, expository, narrative as well as, comprehension and summary writing.

Moreso, the English 123 whose course title is Listening and reading skill has the course description below.

The course will expose students to what is listening to techniques, it involved cultivating good listening habit listening for information. listening to carry out directive, listening to academic talks-speeches, lectures. etc... Anticipatory listening comprehension, listening for entertainment. The second part of the course will develop basic reading skills in students' areas to be covered include: skimming for gist, scanning for specific information 's, reading for general impression, projection (viewing from personal and other perspective, implied meaning, evaluation /reappraisal appreciation and enjoyment (Handbook, 2007----2011)

From the above, it is evident that the undergraduate students are taught the concepts of listening, as well as, the listening enabling skills, such as functioning ears, concentration, ability to think along with the speaker, ability to anticipate what the speaker is about to say and the ability to know the important signposts that keep the listening activities going. Indeed, the functioning ear is the first pre-requisite to listening. This is concentration, which is the ability to be alert to what is being read. Effective listening is difficult in the midst of interruption, specifically when there is lack of interest in the topic and when the speaker speaks above listeners head by using difficult words. The third is the ability to think along with the speaker and anticipating what the speaker is about to say. This is possible when the mind of a listener does not go astray or when the listener put his attention on what the speaker is saying. Lastly, is the ability to pay attention to significant signposts such as firstly, secondly, lastly, how, next, where, when, who. This sign tells listener the important point the listener is making. Moreover, the second part of the 'course will develop basic reading for skills such as skimming for gist, scanning for specific information, reading for

general impression, projection, implied meaning, evaluation, appreciation and enjoyment'. Skimming is used to get general impression, overview, or gist of the reading materials, it acquires rapid reading which is often used when the reader wants to obtain ideas quickly. In other words, it is the fastest reading skills. Moreover, scanning is screening the passage very rapidly to locate important information within a large chunk of reading materials. In such a reading activity, the reader searches through the passage to locate the specific information.

The summary of reading in this course is to read to retrieve information. Academic life is full of different kind of information. Basically, the reader can break the word of information into three general segments thus, instruction, direction, and fact. Instruction are given inform of command, steps, procedures and process while directive is given inform of steps to be taken. Directions are vital information, and they place the reader in proper perspective regarding.

National Teachers Institute/National Open University (2015) noted that listening comprehension regards facts as a primary source of information. Moreso, reading in the university system is not limited to humanities as it is a methodology course in faculty of education. At that level, undergraduates are taught the theories and methods of teaching reading as a language skill. Since products from that level are pre-service teachers, they are trained to teach reading to primary and post-primary students. At primary school level, methods of teaching reading are: alphabet method, phonics methods, language experience methods, look and say method, as well as, remediation programs such as phonological awareness program (Apari 2010). At post primary school level and university level, we have individualized and programmed learning methods. The second broad area is use of English in General Nigerian Studies (GNS) in English Programme. This course is compulsory to all students in the university, regardless of their disciplines. Okebukola (2008) also noted that the general use of English course does not only serve as a developmental course, it is also meant to take care of the deficiencies carried over

from the secondary school level in order to meet demands made on the language as a medium of instruction at the tertiary level. She went on to include reading books, listening to lectures, note taking, tutorials and essays, all of which are use of English as a medium of expression. As a matter of fact, developmental purpose of use of English as a course is to 'raise the students' sophistication in the language to a level where they can gainfully engage in the activities of reading, attending lectures and tutorials as well as writing essays. Okebukola (2008) cited Olajide (1997) who noted that the prospective graduates should be able to give simple report, clear directions and instruction, explain a process, defend a point of view, read aloud and use visual materials to perform some of the above tasks. They went ahead to say that he must also be able to participate in discussion and take part in decision making and that, all these can only be done with competence in communication skills.

Moreover, use of English as a course in tertiary institutions, especially in Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU) is broken into the following sub-topics: the basic language skills, reading skills and strategies, outlining, note-taking and summary writing, the English sentence, word formation process in English language, hints involving good styles of writing, punctuation and effective writing, as well as, sourcing for materials for academic research and publication. Odungbami, Adebajo, Balogun, Adeyemi (2005, eds) Essentials of general studies is a book that presents detailed study materials as enunciated earlier about the reading outlines. The book focuses on the use of English and presents the nine chapters (4-12) in a systematic sequence of useful information needed by undergraduates who want to be equipped with the essentials of English language.

Nevertheless, inability to read effectively has led to ineffective communication skills. However, the period since 1980 (the last thirty years or so) has witnessed a significant decline in the following aspects of Nigeria's English language performance profile. First, is the level of competence that Nigerians display with regards to both spoken and written English. Next, is performance of Nigerian students in English language examination, and finally is the importance which Nigerians attach to good English, and to the acquisition of competence in the use of English (Akeredolu-Ale, 2007). Akeredolu Ale also gave vent to this assertion by presenting the effect of Britain; tighter immigration laws on the states of English language in Nigeria. In doing so, she describes a decline in the states of English language across three periods and shows that the periods up to about 1980 when Nigeria still obtained their entry visa to United Kingdom, Nigerians of all classes regarded English as a high

priority language. Nevertheless, the earlier face of tighter immigration control only permitted the upper class and the Nigerians youths into united kingdom and this made English a high priority language, but the period of 1991, immigration control has settled, all Nigerians of all classes have come to regard English as a low priority language. This led to the decline of the use of language. Okebukola (2008) carried out a study on the general studies English program and its impact on pre-service teachers on UBE faulty conference and the purpose of the study is to evaluate the general English program of Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education from the perspective of the students as recipients of the curriculum. The analysis of data collected in the pre-service teachers' rating of the content of GSE courses towards the achievement and objective for which they are designed and indicated that the following courses were rated highest. Lexis and structure, Reading, Study skill, Speech and listening skills.

In contrary, Akeredolu- Ale (2010) carried out a study on a percentage candidate different score-categories in one of the group: A, B, C and D which shows that the pre and pro test for the general English (use of English -GNS 101) at the federal university of agriculture. Abeokuta often show no significant difference in the performance of the students who have gone through the course. The non-significant difference shows that students who had pass mark in the pre-test sometimes do not perform well when they are subjected to post test. These crops of students only manage to have marginal passes at the end of the semester examination. However, in all cohorts the proportion of students scoring below fifty percent in the post exposure examination (end year 1 and end-year 2) was much higher than the proportion in that score category at the pre-exposure (entry-point) examination (Akeredolu – Ale (2006a). Akeredolu further noted that there could be significant improvement in English language performance since history has not come to an end and language is nothing, if it is not a means of communication. Unoh (1983) is of the believe that students in the tertiary institutions have not explored the interrelationship among the various oral and written communication skills. Olaofe (1983) has explained the cause of this phenomenon that the course outlines designed in our tertiary institutions are so clearly demarcated as if there is no relationship between speaking and reading or reading and writing. The relationship between speaking and reading, as well as, reading and writing is to achieve comprehension objectives among undergraduates. Every reading activity as it were, is geared towards reading comprehension and recall which are the main academic objectives in the university system.

National policy on education (NPE) 1981 stipulates that the teaching and research functions of

higher educational institutions have an important role to play in national development, particularly in development of high-level high power. In relation to this, Apari (2005) noted that such research involves an intensive and extensive reading in any given research area (see also, NPE 1981, sector 5). For the university system to achieve this laudable objective of national development, and their 'higher level manpower in the areas of education, medicine, banking and economy, agriculture, law, science and technology, the undergraduates must be on deck by educators to remove reading difficulties that hinder the achievement of these objectives.

Statement of Problem

Reading difficulties among undergraduates is a worrisome occurrence in their academic life. Over the years, there have been hues and cries over students' low achievement in examination, and their poor reading culture (Apari, 2018). This means that students are not reading to learn and this constitute a problem in academics. Okebukola, (2011) noted that this constitutes a problem which inhibits the way students acquire knowledge and seek information. Apari caps it all by submitting that, as a result, students end up as surface rather than deep learners. But there have been controversies over the reading difficulties rate across school ownership. It is on this premise that this study seeks to investigate school ownership factor in the reading difficulties of undergraduates in south west Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine reading difficulties of undergraduates on the basis of school ownership.
2. To determine reading difficulties of undergraduates on the basis of gender.

Research Questions

1. What are the reading difficulties of undergraduates on the basis of school ownership?
2. What are the reading difficulties of undergraduates on the basis of gender?

Hypotheses

H₀1 There is no significant difference in the student, reading difficulties on the basis of school ownership.
H₀2 There is no significant difference in the undergraduate, reading difficulties on the basis of gender.

Methodology

Research Design

A survey research design was employed to gather data. The survey investigates the reading difficulties

of the undergraduates on the basis of school ownership in southwest Nigeria, the questionnaires were incidentally administered and collected in situ.

Population

The population of the study was all 200 level undergraduates in both federal states and private universities in southwest Nigeria. The study covered only Faculties of Education, Arts and Social Science Education. From the states only seven universities were selected using stratified random techniques on the basis of ownership. All the universities were approved by the government to run undergraduates' courses in Faculties of Education, Arts and Social Science Education and co-educational. These universities were regulated by NUC.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study covers five states; Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Ekiti and Lagos state, which are predominantly Yoruba states in south west Nigeria. From the universities across school ownership in the region, only seven universities were selected using stratified random techniques on the basis of ownership. The faculties were also selected by stratified random sampling

Data Analysis

There is no significant difference in the students' reading difficulty on the basis of school ownership
Table 1a showing the descriptive statistics of school ownership on student reading difficulty.

N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
FEDERAL	175	42.8286	10.22754	.77313	41.3027	44.3545
STATE	522	42.6762	8.23506	.36044	41.9682	43.3843
PRIVATE	137	40.3942	9.08971	.77659	38.8584	41.9299
Total	834	42.3333	8.85994	.30679	41.7312	42.9355

Table 1a reveals that students from federal university are mostly prone to reading difficulty with a mean score of 42.83 and standard deviation of 10.23; followed by state owned school with mean

techniques. Subjects from the faculties were selected using incidental sampling technique by administering the instrument o the only available subjects. This led to eight hundred and thirty four subjectas: Federal:175,State:522,Private:137

Instrumentation

The research instrument that was used for the collection of the data is stated below:

1. School ownership reading difficulties questionnaires (SOR DQ). This questionnaire has 16 items which were distributed relevantly under sub-reading difficulties such as vocabulary, content analysis, reading flexibility and study method and problem-solving reading difficulties (with 4 Likert items). These were used to investigate reading difficulties of undergraduates on the basis of school ownership. The questionnaire was critically examined by experts for face and content validity. It was further validated using alpha statistical formula and a reliability test was established at 0.63.

score of 42.68 and standard deviation of 8.24; students from private schools experienced the least difficulty with mean score of 40.39 and standard deviation of 9.09.

Table 1b: One-Way ANOVA Test Showing the Difference in the Reading Difficulty of Undergraduates on the Basis of School Ownership

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	619.4752	30	9.738	3.974	.019
Within Groups	64769.858	831	77.942		
Total	65389.333	833			

Table 1b shows that there is significant difference in the undergraduate students reading difficulty on the basis of school ownership ($F_{(2,831)} = 3.974$; $p < 0.05$). Therefore, null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the

reading difficulty of undergraduates on the basis of school ownership is rejected. This implies that school type has effect on reading difficulty of students. A post-hoe test was carried out to ascertain the source of the difference.

Table 1c shows the Multiple Comparison Analysis of School Ownership on Reading Difficulty of Undergraduate students.

Dependent Variable: Reading Difficulty
Scheffe

(I)	(J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval
Ownership	Ownership	Lower	Upper	Bound	Bound
STATE	FEDERAL	.15233	.77117	.981	-1.7387 2.0434
STATE	PRIVATE	2.43441	1.00713	.054	-0352 4.9041
FEDERAL	PRIVATE	-.15233	.77117	.0981	-2.0434 1.7387
STATE	STATE	2.28208*	.84749	.027	.2039 4.3603
FEDERAL	FEDERAL	-2.43441	1.00713	.054	4.9041 .0352
PRIVATE	PRIVATE	-2.28208*	.84749	.027	-4.3603 -.2039

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 1c shows the Multiple Comparison Analysis of students reading difficulty on the basis of ownership, employing scheffe post-hoc test. It reveals significant differences between state and private owned schools (p = 027), with a mean

difference of 2.28. However, there were no difference between Federal and States owned schools (p = 981) with a mean difference of 152 and between state and federal schools (p = 054), with a mean difference of 2.43.

There is no significant difference in the students' reading difficulty on the basis of gender

Table 2a Shows the Descriptive Statistics of Students' Reading Difficulty on the Basis of Gender.

Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Reading Difficulty	MALE	350	42.3086	8.73170	.46673
	FEMALE	470	42.3426	8.77944	.40497

Table 2a shows that female students with a means of 42.34 have more difficulty in reading than the male student (42.31), although the difference in their reading difficulty in reading than the male student (42.31). although the difference in their reading difficulty was not statistically significant.

Table 2b shows the T-test of Students' Reading Difficulty Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	t-value
Male	350	42.31	8.73	818	.956	-.055
Female	470	42.34	8.78			

Table 2b shows that there is no significant difference in the reading difficulty of undergraduate based on gender (t = .055, df = 818, p = 956). Therefore, null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the reading difficulty of undergraduates based on gender is not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the findings in Table 1b shows that there is a significant difference among undergraduate students in federal, states and private universities in their reading difficulties (F_(2,831) = 3.97; p<0.05). Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the reading difficulties of undergraduates in south west Nigeria is rejected. Undergraduates in federal

institution have the highest number of difficulties mean score (42.83) followed by those in the state institutions (42.68) while those in private institutions have the lowest number of difficulties mean score (40.39). Undergraduates in private universities are from higher socio-economic parental homes where their parents and guardians have the financial wherewithal to produce reading materials in their family libraries. Not only that, they also have the

financial means to acquire mechanical and electronic materials that could aid reading and that is why their reading habits and reading culture are high, and their reading activities are devoid of reading difficulties. The undergraduates in the state universities also have second lowest reading difficulties, while those in federal university have the highest number of reading difficulties. This agrees with Connelly, Hasher and Zacks (2012) who compared passages of reading times and answers to probe comprehension questions for young and older adults for texts on internet that did not have material interposed amid target texts. The distracters consist of words, phrases, which are conceptually related to the content of the reading target text and rehearse often throughout the target reading text. The results show that the young adults not only read the distracted texts rapidly than older adults, but they also show greater comprehension of the target reading material. This submission was further challenged by Dywan and Murphy (2011) who modified the procedure to include a surprise word recognition, and test for the interposed material. They discover that the young adults have superior recognition memory for the distraction words, "as a result, it is difficult to explain if the young adults are assumed to have been successful at inhibiting processing of the distracters". Rather not satisfied with the foregoing research outcome, Burke on the internet carried out a study on the activation of word meanings and the election of ambiguity, provides no support for claims that older adults are deficient in suppressing information than young adults or that they retrieve more high frequency, dominant, or typing information than young adults. Despite working memory limitation, inhibitory deficits and strategy differences, many other adults comprehend spoken and written language proficiently in every life. However, the age -related deficits observed in language comprehension studies may be offset by the ability to fill in missing elements of the discourse with meaningful restriction based on background knowledge and everyday reasoning abilities. Generally, signs of comprehension difficulties include confusion about the meanings of words and structures, inability to connect ideas in a passage, omission of or glossing over details, difficulty distinguishing between significant information from minor details and lack of concentration during reading activities. Table 1c shows the Multiple Comparison Analysis of students reading difficulties on the basis of school ownership, employing scheffe post-hoc test. It reveals significant differences between state and private owned schools ($p = 027$), with a mean differences of 2.28. However, there were no differences Federal and State owned schools ($p= 981$) with a mean difference of 152 and between state and federal schools ($p = 054$), with a mean difference of 2.43.

The result of the findings in table 2b shows that there is no significant difference in the reading difficulty of undergraduates based on gender ($t = .055$, $df = 818$, $p = 956$). Therefore, null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the reading difficulty of undergraduates based on gender is not rejected. The studies agree with Abdul-Raheem (2012) who carried out a study on gender differences and students' academic achievement and retention in social studies among Junior Secondary School Students in Ekiti State, and reported that there was no significant difference in the mean score of male and female students. This also agrees with Apari, and Okebukola (2023) who researched into Gender Dichotomy in the reading difficulties of undergraduates in South-West Nigeria and discovered that there is no significant difference in the reading difficulties of undergraduates on the basis of gender. Mushtak and Khan (2012) in Apari, and Okebukola (2023) reported that gender has no significant relationship with academic performance of students. Brantmaier (2003) in Apari and Okebukola (2023), while collaborating with the foregoing findings noted that, while examining reading comprehension across multiple passages, male has no advantage over female and female has no advantage over male meaning that gender differences does not exist in comprehension. However, this belief of neurologists negates who pointed out clearly that there is a biological basis for female good performances in reading achievement test (Apari and Okebukola 2023). Apari (2005) repointed a research on how brain works and the results has shown that girls tended to be auditory learners and better communicators while boys are more visual kinetic learners.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study revealed that undergraduates from Federal and State universities are mostly affected by reading difficulties and that those from private universities have the least difficulties. It is also revealed that there was no different between federal and state in the statistics of the reading difficulties, but there was significant difference between state and private schools. This boils down to the fact that the federal owned schools are the most affected with reading difficulties, followed by the state-owned schools and later by private schools in that order. But the privately owned school were the least affected in reading difficulties. However, it is recommended that the public schools should stock their conventional and e-libraries with relevant and updated reading materials, specifically literature books of all genres and that Lecturers should engage students in several assignments, presentations, and that should form part of their continuous assessment. They should also be

encouraged to read these books extensively to overcome their reading difficulties. They should also cultivate the habit of reading newspapers, journals and periodicals in the serial section of the library every day. In sum, it is of paramount importance for every university and colleges of Education to establish reading clinics where undergraduates, primary and post-primary school pupils with reading difficulties are diagnosed and remediated.

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