Vocabulary Knowledge and Class Size: Influence on Summary Writing Instruction in Iwo Local Government Area, Osun State

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Abstract
This studyinvestigated the extent to which vocabulary knowledge and class size would predict students' achievement in summary writing in Iwo Local government Area of Osun state. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design of the correlative type. The participants were 507 SS2 students from nine randomly selected senior secondary schools in Iwo Local Government area. Purposive sampling was used to select three schools with medium, low and large class size each. The instruments used for data collection were Achievement Test in Summary (r=0.87) and Vocabulary Knowledge Test(r=0.74). Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple regression. Results showed that vocabulary knowledge (r=0.242) and class size r=0.305) had positive relationships with students' achievement in English summary writing. The composite contribution of the two variables($F_{(2,504)} = 38.380$; $P<0.05$) was significant. Vocabulary knowledge($\beta = .200$) and class size($\beta = .275$) also made relative contributions to the dependent variable. Based on the findings, it is recommended that government should build more classrooms so as to make the implementation of smaller class size possible in schools, while teachers should encourage students to develop their vocabulary knowledge making them read supplementary readers.

Keywords: Vocabulary, Class size, Summary writing, Achievement

Introduction

English language is a core subject in the school curriculum having different aspects like comprehension, Essay writing, Grammar, oral aspect and so on, of all these aspects, the area where students have problem is summary writing. Summary writing is so important to everybody due to the fact that it is useful in so many ways, for example students need summary writing skills to take note in the classroom, writing examinations requires summary writing skills, as important as this aspect is, students perform woefully in English language and eventually resulted in their poor performance can be traced to the fact that the marks that is allotted to this aspect and comprehension in language is 30 and 20 marks respectively, considering the fact that 50 marks is an average mark out of 100 marks which is the total marks, failure in the summary aspect results in the failure of students in English language generally. Due to this problem, researchers have worked in recent years on how to improve the performance of students in this aspect but the situation remains the same.This may be as a result of students' inability to summarise which is giving a brief accounts of what has been read or heard (Akano, 2002).

In Nigeria, English language is so important that no student can proceed to the higher institution without at least a credit pass in the subject but student's general performance in the subject is very poor. Failure of students in English language generally may be as a result of their failure in the paper one aspect of the subject, paper one carries 100 marks and out of 100 marks, 50 marks is allotted to comprehension and summary aspect seeing the fact that 50 marks is the average mark, failure in these aspects results in the failure of students in English language generally. Due to this problem, researchers have worked in recent years on how to improve the performance of students in these aspects but the situation remains the same. This may be as a result of the student's inability to summarise which is giving a brief account of what has been read of heard (Akano, 2002). This is very important if students will perform well in English language.

Summary is so important that students cannot afford to perform woefully in this aspect of the English language because, it improves reading skills as students pick out the main ideas of reading, it is useful for students throughout their academic careers, it help the vocabulary skills as students paraphrase a reading altering the vocabulary and grammar as they do so, critical thinking skills are improved as students decide on the main ideas of the reading to include in the summary, writing and editing skills are improved as students draft and edit the summary, summary is an aspect of English that is useful throughout ones lifetime. Students' learning of summary is of great concern for secondary school teachers. English language learners and their teachers, therefore, face a particular challenge in this regard.

After all, the ability to appropriate summary skills will determine the success of learners in English language paper one, yet English language learners face challenges in recording any great achievement in the summary aspect of English language. The inability of the students to read and understand the passage as well as lack of skills to paraphrase make them to fall short of public examination standard for example, WAEC, NECO and JAMB. Therefore, teachers must recognise that students cannot summarize effectively without understanding the passage and with the lack of the knowledge of the skills to paraphrase.

As important as English language is in Nigeria, students' performance in it at public examinations has been on a decline. This is revealed in the performance of students in English language in the West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination. 2006 WAEC Chief Examiners Report stated that the passage set here was quite easy and answers were also easy to identify. However, the candidates found it difficult to summarize. All they did was to give the details back to the examiners as if they were answering comprehension questions. Thus, they perform woefully; candidates need to be reminded that summary is an advanced comprehension which requires deep understanding of the passage and the skill to paraphrase.

Furthermore, the WAEC Chief Examiner's report for May/June 2007 stated that candidates' still find summary difficult. Many of them performed poorly in this section. They engage in mindless lifting or copying of portions from the passage. Many of the candidates could not interpret the question appropriately. They ended up writing twelve sentences instead of six sentences as the question demanded.There was the recommendation that teachers should pay attention to this aspect of English. If the students are not adequately exposed to the skills of summary writing they will continue to have problems with

summary questions. The students should also be taught to follow the rubrics of any examination paper.

In an attempt to deal with these issues, many previous studies have focused on methods and strategies of teaching summary writing while there are issues relating to students and school but adequate attention has not been given to these factors, there is the need to pay urgent attention to the summary aspect of English language so that failure in this aspect will be at the minimal level. The researchers have advocated a shift of research focus from teaching strategies to student and school factor that could affect students' achievement in summary writing. Among the students' factors documented in Literature are motivation, maturation, physical and mental development, attitude, gender, verbal ability, self efficacy, vocabulary knowledge and so on. While the school factors documented in literature are school location, physical facility, peer influence, class size and so on. This research will focus on only students' vocabulary knowledge as a student factor and class size as a school factor. This is because the areas have not enjoyed much attention especially in Iwo local government area of Osun state.

Students' vocabulary knowledge is one of the factors that affects the poor performance of students in summary writing in particular and English language in general. Vocabulary knowledge is defined as the ability to go from the printed form of a word to its meaning, Shanker and Cockrum(2010). It includes word comprehension and comprehension of relationships among words. According to Bors and Stokes (1999), students with better vocabulary can express themselves better, and therefore produce better quality writing in their assignments and tests/exams. Nash and Snowling (2006) describe vocabulary as the knowledge of words and the ability to use these words in the generation of meaning and understanding of sentences. In the research literature, vocabulary knowledge is recognized as a multifaceted part of a learner's language ability, resulting in different ways of operationalizing the construct when attempting to assess learners' vocabulary knowledge (Iguabor, 2014).

According to Iyamu (2005), vocabulary knowledge is a necessity of a child is to learn, in school. He also reasons that pupils' deficiency in the range and control of language is an important contributor to educational failure in that this deficit generates a vicious circle of difficulties increasing in magnitudes as school life progresses. According to Bors and Stokes(1999), vocabulary size correlated highly with global assessment of writing quality and with general proficiency scores. One should not confuse better vocabulary" to mean that one needs to use longer, more bombastic words. One needs to know when it is best to use a particular word; often the shorter word is better at conveying meaning than the longer, more difficult to understand word. Students with better vocabulary have a greater choice of words and can choose the most appropriate ones to communicate their thoughts in the most effective ways. They conclude that in order to achieve one's goal of better academic performance, one should make vocabulary expansion a top priority.

A number of researchers have, however, identified certain common key dimensions of vocabulary knowledge. These include breadth (size) and depth dimension (Nation, 2001; Quain, 2002; Daller, Milton and Dallar, 2007) and passive/receptive or active/productive vocabulary knowledge. Breadth or size refers to how many vocabulary items a learner knows; depth is understood as how well said a learner knows them (Paribakht and Wesche, 1996;Quain, 2002). For a learner to truly know a word, he/she must know many things about it such as spellings, morphology, acceptable inflectional use, word class and others. According to Iguabor (2015), depth vocabulary knowledge includes knowledge of phonemic graphemic, morphemic, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and collocational features of a word.

Receptive vocabulary knowledge involves knowledge required to decode the meaning of a word form encountered while listening or reading, while productive vocabulary involves decoding meaning in appropriate word form while speaking or writing (Nation, 2001). It is generally believed that words are known receptively first and only after intentional or incidental learning become available for productive use. Therefore, vocabulary knowledge should be regarded as a continuum on which a word grows from receptive to productive status. Even though, little is known till now about the transfer of receptive to productive mastery, it is generally believed that learners' receptive size is much larger than their productive vocabulary size (Zhou, 2010).

Research highlights the importance of vocabulary knowledge for L_2 learners in the four language skills reading (Iguabor, 2014) speaking (Joe, 1998; Iguabor, 2014) speaking (Joe, 1998; Igubor, 2014), listening (Elley, 1998; Ellis, 1994), and writing (Lee, 2003). Schmitt (2001) notes that L_2 learners need approximately 2000 words to maintain conversations, 3000 words families to read authentic texts, and as many as 10,000 words to comprehend challenging academic texts. It is not surprising that learners see vocabulary acquisition as their greatest language problem. (Green and Meara, 1995) and express a strong desire for explicit vocabulary instruction (Iguabor, 2014) the study by (e.g.DallerVan Hout and Treffers – Daller, 2003) have clearly revealed vocabulary knowledge as one of the major aspects of second and foreign language proficiency.

From the studies mentioned so far, one can infer that most of the previous studies on vocabulary knowledge have been located outside Nigeria. Besides, the extent to which the variable could predict students' achievement in summary writing has not enjoyed much research attention in Iwo local government Area of Osun state. This study therefore is aimed at investigating if students' vocabulary knowledge can predict their achievement in summary writing, particularly in Iwo local government.

Another factor that has the possibility of influencing students' performance in summary writing is the class size. This refers to the number of students allocated to a classroom. It is very important for us to consider the role class size can play in determining students' success. Many researchers have worked in this area and research evidence is very clear on this issue. Spyros (2000) posits in his study that small class size had positive effects on students' achievement. In Kristy (2012), study on class size, the study showed that reading achievement and mathematics achievement both had positive correlation with class size due to the fact that teachers are able to provide more individualized instruction and have less classroom management issues.

Michael (2014), in his own study, on class size points out that class size reduction as a policy is exceptionally costly therefore classes should be assigned to teachers based on their classroom effectiveness. In essence, larger classes should be assigned to the strongest teachers in order to optimize students learning in the face of differential teacher effectiveness. The rationale is straight forward: Larger classes for the best teachers benefit pupils who are reassigned to them, they also help the less effective teachers improve their instruction by enabling them to concentrate on fewer students.

Toth, (2002) in his study, eight studies were examined, six were quantitative and two were qualitative, it was shown according to the research that research on class size and achievement in higher education remains in conclusive. According to the result, two studies show no relationship between class size and achievement, three indicating a negative relationship, two showing mixed results, and another reporting a positive relationship between two variables.

Some studies have been carried out in relation to problems of students' poor performance in English language particularly in summary. For instance, Manda (2013) found that the poor performance of students in summary has resulted in the teaching strategies that pupils are subjected to in their learning of summary, the teaching and learning materials and the teachers' and pupils' attitudes towards summary. Krutus (2012) reported that students get poor grades generally in the school due to the difficult of the subject matter and some other factors.

Despite the significance contributions of all these researchers to the teaching and learning of different aspects of English language, the level of students' performance in the subject has not remarkably improved. Factors like the vocabulary, knowledge and class size among others need to be investigated.

Statement of the Problem

Summary writing is an important aspect of English Language but reports on yearly basis from public examination bodies reveals that students are not doing well in English language. This has been traced to their poor performance in the summary writing aspect of English language paper one. Efforts to address this problem had led researchers to experiments with approaches and methods of teaching English language such as co-operative learning strategy, Directed-Reading Thinking Activity Strategy, Reciprocal Teaching, Anticipation Guide and so on but the situation remains the same, therefore, scholars have shifted their focus to students and school related factors such as vocabulary knowledge and class size respectively. Studies have shown that these factors were strongly correlated to student's academic success in the aspects of English language like comprehension, essay writing, vocabulary development with little emphasis on summary writing especially in Iwo, Osun state. This study, therefore, investigated the extent to which these factors would predict students' achievement in summary writing in Iwo Local Government Area, Osun State.

Research Questions

1. What relationship exists between vocabulary knowledge, class size and students achievement in summary writing?
2. What is the joint contribution of vocabulary knowledge and class size to student's achievement in summary writing?
3. What is the relative contribution of vocabulary knowledge and class size to student achievement in summary writing?

Scope of the Study

This study investigated the extent to which vocabulary knowledge and class size correlated with students' achievement in summary writing. The study covered SStwo students from nine senior secondary schools in Iwo Local Government Area, Osun State.

Significance of the Study

This study examined the extent to which vocabulary knowledge and class size correlatedwith students' achievement in summary writing. The study has revealed that vocabulary knowledge and class size played important roles in summary writing instruction. It has also added to the pool of research on ways of addressing the lingering problem of students' poor performance in summary writing in particular and English language in general.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey researchdesign of the correlative type. The participants were 507 SS2 students from nine randomly selected senior secondary schools in Iwo Local Government area. Purposive sampling was used to select three schools with medium, low and large class size each. The instruments used for data collection were Achievement Test in Summary (r=0.87) and Vocabulary Knowledge Test(r=0.74). Three research questions were answered. Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple regression at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One : What is the relationship between independent variables (class size and vocabulary knowledge) on students' achievement?

Table 1: Correlation Matrix of independent variables on students' achievement

Constructs	Achievement	Class size	Vocabulary Knowledge
Achievement	1.000		
Class size	.242 .000*	1.000	
Vocabulary Knowledge	.305 .000*	.448*	1.000
Mean	6.300	1.813	14.183
Std. Deviation	4.964	.792	5.730

*Denotes correlation at 0.05 level of significance

Table 1 shows that there is positive, weak significant correlation between students' achievement and class size (r=0.242; P<0.05). It implies that, class size is related to students' achievement. Vocabulary Knowledge correlates significantly with students' achievement and the correlation is positively weak(r=0.305; P<0.05). This implies that students' achievement is related to students' achievement, that is as students' vocabulary Knowledge improves, students achievement also improves.

Research Question Two: What is the composite contribution of independent variables (class size and vocabulary knowledge) to students' achievement?

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis on Composite Contributions of independent variables (class size and vocabulary knowledge) to Students' Achievement

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Means Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1647.712	2	823.856	38.380	.000*
Residual	10818.718	504	21.466		
Total	12466.430	506			
R = .364					
R^2 = .132					
Adjusted R^2 = .129					
Std. Error of the Estimate = 4.63311					

*Denotes significant relationship at 0.05 significance level.

Table 2 shows that the composite contribution of independent variables of class size and vocabulary knowledge on students' achievement was significant.

The F value ratio of the result ($F_{(2,504)}$ = 38.380; P<0.05) shows that there is composite contribution. Table 2 also reveals a multiple regression adjusted (R^2) of 0.132. This implies that 13.2% of the total variation in students' achievement is attributable to the composite contributions of independent variables of class size and vocabulary knowledge.

Research Question Three: What is the relative contribution of independent variables (class size and vocabulary knowledge) to students' achievement?

Table 3: Summary of Multiple Regressions showing Relative Contribution of Independent Variables to Students' Achievement

Model	Understandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficient		Rank	T	Sig.
	Beta (β)	Std. Error	Beta (β)			
1(Constant)	.659	.678			.971	.332
Class size	1.251	.263	.200	2nd	4.753	.000
Vocabulary knowledge	.238	.036	.275	1st	6.536	.000

*Denotes significant at P<0.05

Table 3 reveals the relative contributions of each of the independent variables to students' achievement. The relative contributions of class size to students' achievement was significant (β = .200; t = 4.753; P<0.05).Vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement was also significant (β= .275; t = 6.536; P<0.05). Thus, all the independent variables were significant on students' achievement.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the study showed that there was a positive, weak significant correlation between students' achievement and class size in summary writing. The finding corroborates the findings of Michael Kornfield (2010), Kristy Chandler, (2012) and Michael Hansen, (2014) that class size has a positive impact on students achievement. It is consistent with the findings of Nye, B.A; Achielles C.M, Zaharias J.B Fulton, B.D., (2001) that there is a positive effects of small classes on students achievement. According to class size matters(2002) smaller classes are seen as the most effective way to increase the quality of instruction.

The result further showed a positive weak significant relationship between vocabulary knowledge and achievement in summary writing. It corroborates the findings of Golkar and Yamini, (2007) that there was a positive correlation between the learners' vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension ability. This corroborates the findings of Kendall K. Lutham, (2011) and Peter Tze-Ming Chov, (2011) that vocabulary knowledge is beneficial in enhancing word learning in their content area. Mostafa Zamanian, (2014) also found that vocabulary knowledge can help the learner to comprehend written texts hence vocabulary knowledge is important. Akinsulure, (2014) found that the more knowledge of words a learner has the easier the learner would find it to access text because what the learner already knows will provide a background knowledge for easy learning.

The Composite Contribution of the independent variables (class size and vocabulary knowledge) to students achievement in summary writing was significant. This is in agreement with Akinsulure, (2014). It also supports the findings of Golkar and Yamini (2007) and Kendall K.

Latham (2011) who reported that there existed a significant effect of vocabulary achievement and reading comprehension of the second language.

The result of the study further showed that the two variable made relative contributions to students' achievement was significant. This supports the findings of Yuthan Man and Wen-ying Hen(2015) that English Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension are correlated. This is further corroborated by the reports of Oyelakin (2015) and Okunade (2015) that vocabulary knowledge contributes to achievement. Vocabulary knowledge is said to contribute to students achievement. Katherine Pearl Anne (2012). It further supports the findings of Ogunyemi (2014) Fakeye and Fakeye (2009) and Adedipe(2006) that class size contributes to achievement. This is further corroborated by the report of Michael Kornfield (2010) and Michael Hansen (2014) that class size contributed to achievement.

Conclusion

The study revealed that when students have prior knowledge in vocabulary, it helps them to comprehend the written text which in turn enhance better performance in summary writing. Also, smaller class sizes enhanced effective teaching of students since it is easier to individualized instruction, it is easier to use group activities and it is easier to manage behaviour. It can be concluded that vocabulary knowledge and class size enhance the better performance of students' in summary writing.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that;

1. Teachers should be definite in the teaching of vocabulary.
2. The government should invest in education by employing more teachers of English Language and by building more classrooms so as to make the implementation smaller class size possible in schools.
3. Teachers should encourage students to develop their vocabulary knowledge by giving them assignments on vocabulary.

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