English Vocabulary Instruction in Senior Secondary Schools in Okitipupa Local Government Area, Ondo State: Role of Cognitive Style and Locus of Control

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Absract

This examined the influence of cognitive style and locus of control on students' achievement in English vocabulary in Senior Secondary Schools in Okitipupa Local Government Area, Ondo State. The survey research design was adopted. Four schools were randomly selected for the study, 200 SSS 2 students (50 per school) participated in the study. The instruments that were used for data collection were English Vocabulary Achievement Test (r=0.85), Gift Embedded Figures Test (r=0.74), and Locus of Control of Control Scale (r=0.62). The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The findings revealed that:cognitive style had a significant influence on students' achievement in English vocabulary. Locus of control also had a significant influence on students' achievement in English vocabulary. Based on these findings, it was concluded that the study provided empirical evidence on the influence of cognitive style and locus of control on students' achievement in English vocabulary. It was recommended that teachers should take cognisance of these important learners' characteristics in their classrooms so as to adapt the teaching and learning process to suit each learners' style. Also, students should be presented with extensive vocabulary activities so that each student can choose an activity that is suitable to his/her cognitive style.

Keywords: Cognitive style, Locus of control, English vocabulary, secondary school students, Okititipupa

Introduction

The essence of language teaching in Nigerian schools is to improve the communicative competence of students in English language. It is therefore, expected of every student to be competent and proficient in English language usage. A student who is proficient in English language is deemed to be intelligent with high status and prestige. Enaibe and Imonivwerha (2007) stated the objectives that underlie the learning of English language in Nigeria. These objectives are: to produce Nigerian students whose spoken and written English is intelligible locally, nationally and internationally; to enable students to talk and write on prepared or impromptu topics with professional competence; to make students speak at normal speed with good pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation and to ensure high level of English skills with special emphasis on spoken forms. Based on these objectives, it is expected of every Nigerian student to achieve a high level of proficiency and intelligibility for them to be enlisted into the elite circle because English is the language of the elite.

In order for students to achieve high level of proficiency and intelligibility in English language, vocabulary language is needed. Vocabulary is important because it is the basis for learning language. Emenike and Odeyemi (2002) opined that vocabulary refers to words and their meanings. That is, the word stock of a language available to the users of that language. According to Yenny (2007), vocabulary is a stock of words in a language, written or spoken, with meaning considered as cultural meaning used by group or individual community. In essence, the amount of vocabulary(words) an individual possess in his linguistic repertoire determines how proficient he will be in using the language on every aspect such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Also, having adequate knowledge of vocabulary is considered as the most important factor in communication (Roever, 2001).

Vocabulary is a significant factor in English language teaching and learning since words play an important role in expression of feelings, emotions and ideas to others during the act of communication. Vocabulary is important because, it relates to the teaching and learning of all the skills of language such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Education research shows that vocabulary strongly relates to reading comprehension, intelligence and general ability. According to Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2002), a large vocabulary is the hallmark of an educated individual. A large vocabulary repertoire facilitates becoming an educated person to the extent that vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to reading proficiency in particular and school achievement in general. One of the aims of teaching English language vocabulary at secondary school level is to motivate, prepare and make students understand simple idiomatic expression while communicating with native and non-native speakers of English language (Ajiwoju, 2015). Therefore, to realize this aim, the areas such as common prefixes and suffixes, plurals, parts of speech, word recognition, root of words and homonyms should be given adequate attention by the teacher.

In spite of this aim, students' achievement in English language especially in vocabulary is

witnessing a downward slide. Statistics made available by the examination bodies such as the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) indicates a high failure rate in recent times. For instance, The Daily Trust of Thursday August 21st, 2014 reported that in 2009 only 25. 99% made five credits and above including Mathematics and English but in 2010 there was a decline to 23.36%. In 2011, the percentage pass of students in WAEC rose to 30.9% and fortunately continued to rise to 38.81% in 2012. However, in 2013, the performance declined to 36.57% and unfortunately continued to decline to 31.28% in 2014. A scenario where most students at the senior secondary level in schools are usually faced with the problem of fluent communication and expression of ideas in the target language may result to this rate of failure. This may be so largely because they lack enough vocabulary items in the target language to restate the ideas in the comprehension passages briefly using their own expressions. However, despite the importance of English language to students, a significant number of them cannot cope with the challenges of skills and technicalities in English language as a result of inadequate vocabulary. What then could be the cause of students' poor achievement in their examination and use of the English language in their everyday communicative purposes?

For effective teaching and learning to take place, it is high time teachers start looking beyond the traditional methods of teaching. One way this can be done is to humanize the classroom by adopting student-friendly/student-centred approaches; because to speak and write in the target language is a complex task that requires a lot of effort. It could be time consuming and demanding to internalize 'chunks' of vocabulary necessary for communication. Therefore, it is important that teachers vary their vocabulary teaching strategies to match students' cognitive style in order to make their vocabulary learning more effective. Onyekuru (2015) stresses that teachers should help the students by taking cognizance of the cognitive style of students with a view to matching their cognitive style with the teaching styles. Students' cognitive style should be understudied by the teachers in order to adapt their teaching strategies to align with the students' cognitive style.

Cognitive style has been found to be one of the important factors from among student's personal attributes that can affect learning purposes and students' academic achievement. Pitchers (2002) defined cognitive style as the relatively stable strategies, preferences and attitudes that determine an individual's typical modes of perceiving, remembering and problem solving. It refers to the ways in which students process and represent information. Students have different personal methods of transforming, encoding, storing, retrieving and using information. One's preferred method of processing information gives rise to one's uniqueness as information processor. Individual's cognitive style influences their intellectual abilities, skills, personalities, teaching, learning and performances. There are different cognitive styles for processing information that has influence on students' academic achievement.

Therefore, the cognitive style of students makes them prefer one method of teaching to another. Tianjero et al (2011) posit the most suitable teaching methods for field dependent and field independent students. According to them, field dependent students prefer teaching methods which are directive and supportive since they need external support and guidance to direct their attention towards the details, help them to work out the rules and store information in their working memory in an organized way to be able to retrieve them effectively from their long-term memory. In contrast, field independent students, who are more intrinsically motivated to develop their own strategies, seem to need minimum direction and prefer discovery methods which allow them to be more autonomous (Tianjero et al, 2011).

Closely related to students' cognitive style is locus of control. Studies had indicated that there is an awareness of the importance of the effect of locus of control on students' academic achievement. It is observed that most students experience poor performance in English language due to the effect and incidence of some locus of control factors incomprehensible to the students (Fakeye, 2011). In their view, Amadi (2010) and Araromi (2010) posit that both internal and external locus of control are important predictors of academic achievement. Araromi (2010) went further to divide locus of control into two non-dimensional units namely; internal locus of control and external locus of control. A learner who has an internal locus of control orientation believes that his or her behaviour is guided by his or her personal decisions and efforts while a learner with an external locus of control orientation believes that his or her behaviour is guided by fate, luck or external circumstances. Fakeye (2011) posits that students hold different beliefs about their success or failure in a foreign language programme. A student who has a poor performance in a foreign language programme may ascribe his failure to the difficulty of the language, the attitude of the foreign language instructor, inadequacy of teaching methods adopted by the foreign language instructor, etc. These beliefs

would invariably determine the locus of control of the student. Thus, the way students interpret the need for them to achieve in English language has a profound effect on their psychological well-being and achievement. Supporting this assertion, Tucker (2006) pointed out that successful learning is related to students' beliefs and perceptions towards their own learning. The studies carried out by Niroomand and Rostampour (2014) and Soozandehfar (2011) established the influence of cognitive style on second language learning and achievement. Their studies revealed a relationship between cognitive style and second language learning at lexical knowledge level and speaking performance respectively, with little focus on vocabulary achievement.

Statement of the Problem

There have been consistent reports of poor achievement in English language among Nigerian students over the years. The poor result in English language has continued to be stumbling-block in the realization of the educational and employment desire of many candidates. Also, failure in this subject has been attributed to the methods and strategies of teaching vocabulary which is an important area in English language. It has also been reported that students possess limited vocabulary in their speech repertoire. Previous report from the West African Examination Council's chief examiner noted that most candidates usually exhibited poor understanding by giving the surface meaning of the passage due to limited vocabulary. However, studies have been carried out on the influence of cognitive styleand locus of control on academic achievement. The studies carried out by Niroomand and Rostampour (2014) and Soozandehfar (2011) established the influence of cognitive style on second language learning and achievement. Their studies revealed a relationship between cognitive style and second language learning at lexical knowledge level and speaking performance respectively, with little focus on vocabulary achievement, especially in Okitipupa Local Government Area, Ondo State.

Objectives of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to ascertain the influence of cognitive style and locus of control on students' achievement in English language vocabulary. Specifically, the study set out to:

1. ascertain the influence of cognitive style on students' achievement in English language vocabulary.
2. ascertain the influence of locus of control on students' achievement in English language vocabulary.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at probability level of 0.05

There is no significant relationship between cognitive style and students' achievement in English language vocabulary.

There is no significant relationship between locus of control and students' achievement in English language vocabulary.

Scope of the Study

The study explored the relationship that existed between cognitive style, locus of control and achievement in English vocabulary. The study covered SS2 students in Okitipupa Local Government Area, Ondo state.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are expected to contribute theoretically and practically to the teaching and learning of English language vocabulary. Practically, the study would be of help to language teachers, students, educators, curriculum planners, policy makers, administrators, textbook writers, institutions of learning and the general public. The findings of the study would be of help to the English language teachers as it may make them become aware of students' cognitive style and learn more about the possible ways to help both groups improve their learning process. This may make them adapt their teaching approaches to the different needs of the learners more effectively. Also, when teachers are aware of what students attribute to their success or failure, they would help learners find the causes of success or failure in learning the English language vocabulary within themselves, and also avoid attributing their successes and failures to external factors, such as luck or task difficulty, over which they have little or no control

Literature Review

Niroomand and Rostampour (2014), carried out a study to know the impact of field dependence/independence cognitive style on lexical knowledge. The aim of the study was to determine if there is a credible relationship between field dependence/independence cognitive styles and vocabulary knowledge. The study involved some university undergraduate students in Iran. The subject consisted of 59 male and female students. A vocabulary size test was administered to divide the students into three groups of high, mid and low in

terms of their vocabulary level. Then the participants' cognitive style was measured through the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT). The findings of the study indicated that field dependence/independence cognitive styles had a significant correlation with vocabulary knowledge in the high and mid groups.

Elahi and Jayakaran (2012), examined the role of cognitive style in the collocational knowledge development of Iranian EFL learners through Input Flood Treatment. The study took place at a language centre in Mashhad, Iran. The participants of the study were 64 Iranian upper-intermediate adults studying English language. They were randomly assigned to the two groups of control and experimental. Before the beginning of the experiment, they were all asked to take the GEFT to identify where they would fall on the spectrum of field dependence/independence cognitive style. In order to minimize the possible effect of individual and methodological differences, both the experimental and control groups were taught by the same teacher within the time span. The teacher exposed both groups to the language input (audio, video and textual) and used the same course materials except for the materials that were used to expose the students in the experimental group to the target collocations. The results of the study showed a significant relationship between the learners' cognitive style of field dependence/independence and second language learning.

Soozandehfar (2011), examined the effects of field dependent/independent cognitive style on second language speaking performance. The study involved 53 students of English at Shiraz University, Iran. To measure the students' field dependence/field independence level, the Gift Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) was administered while the means of the students' scores on the two courses of Oral Reproduction 1 and 2 taken in the second year were used to represent their speaking test performance. The results of the study revealed a negatively insignificant correlation between the field dependent/field independent cognitive styles and the speaking performance. The interaction did not have a significant effect on the speaking performance.

Rezaeian (2012), conducted a research to study the possible relationship between field dependence/independence cognitive style and foreign language proficiency. The study involved 148 students studying at level ten at the Iran language institute. They were given the Group Embedded Figures Test to determine the cognitive style, and Oxford Placement Test to measure the proficiency of the students. The results indicated that field dependence/independence was a significant factor affecting the performance of the students on the proficiency test.

Fakeye (2011) conducted a study on locus of control as a correlate of achievement in English as a second language (ESL) in Nigeria. The study was conducted in Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria. The focus of the study was to find the relationship between students' locus of control and achievement in English language. The respondents were 300 senior secondary two (SS II) students. The locus of control scale and English language achievement test were the instruments used for data collection. The findings of the study revealed that the locus of control of students positively correlated with their English language achievement; but students with internal and external locus of control did not differ significantly in their language achievement.

Ali and Rouhollah (2014) conducted a study on the relationship between locus of control and vocabulary learning strategies. The study was conducted in the University of Kashan and Allameh Tabataba'I University, Iran. The purpose of the study was to explore the possible relationship between English as foreign language (EFL) students' psychological orientations in the dichotomous categorization of internal and external locus of control with the strategies they use for learning vocabulary. The subjects of the study consisted of 74 students studying English literature at University of Kashan and Allameh Tabataba'I University, Iran. Rotter's locus of control scale (1966) and a questionnaire adapted from vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire of Li (2004) were the instruments used to collect the data. The results of the study revealed that EFL students' locus of control and their use of vocabulary learning strategies were found to have an insignificant correlation with each other. That is, there was no significant relationship between EFL students' locus of control and their vocabulary learning strategies.

Nodoushan (2012), examined the impact of locus of control on language achievement. The study hypothesized that students' locus of control affects their language achievement. The subject consists of 298 English as foreign language (EFL) students. Rotter's (1966) locus of control scale was used to classify the students as either internal or external. The students took their ordinary courses and at the end of the semester, they were given their examination. Their semester-end cumulative grade point average (GPA) was compared to their previous semester GPA. The findings of the study revealed that locus of control is not a predictor of achievement. That is, students' locus of control has

no influence on their language achievement.

Zargham and Seyyed (2011), carried out a study on the relationship between locus of control and students' English score in the university entrance examination. The aim of the study was to explore the effect of locus of control on General English (GE) achievement in the entrance examination among three groups of students (Humanities, Sciences and Engineering). The study was conducted in Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. The respondents were 144 students from the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. Self-report questionnaires and students' English scores in the university entrance examination were used in the study. The results indicated that there was a significantly positive relationship between students' locus of control and their General English achievement in all the empirical studies reviewed so far are related to the present study because some of them are premised on vocabulary and other aspects of English language. Some are however, correlational while some are experimental. Most of these studies used university undergraduate students as subjects while the present study used secondary school students. Also, none of these studies was carried out in Nigeria. Consequently, the influence of cognitive style and locus of control on students' achievement in English vocabulary has not been established in Nigeria, especially in Okitipupa Local Government Area, Ondo State. Therefore, there is need to find out whether cognitive style and locus of control would have an influence on students' achievement in English vocabulary.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. This study was carried out in Okitipipa Local Government Area, Ondo State. The participants were 200 SS2 students randomly selected from four schools in the local government area. English Vocabulary Achievement Test (r=0.85), Locus of Control of Control Scale (r=0.74) and Group Embedded Figures Test (r=0.62) were the instruments used. Copies of the instruments will be administered to the 200 students randomly selected for the study. The English Vocabulary Achievement Test (EVAT) was administered first, followed by the Locus of Control of Behaviour Scale (LOCBS) and then the Gift Embedded Figures Test (GEFT). The data collected was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correction (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between cognitive style and students' achievement in English language vocabulary.

Table 1: Result of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient showing the Relationship between Students' Achievement in English Language Vocabulary and Cognitive Style

		Achievement	Cognitive Style
Achievement	Pearson Correlation	1	.737**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	200	200
Cognitive Style	Pearson Correlation	.737**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows the result of testing the hypothesis using Pearson correlation coefficient for the relationship between students' achievement in English language vocabulary and cognitive style. The calculated r-value was 0.73 and the critical value at 0.05 level of significance for 198 degrees of freedom was 0.00. Since the calculated r-value of 0.73 is greater than the table value 0.00, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant

relationship between cognitive style and students' achievement in English language vocabulary is rejected.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between locus of control and students' achievement in English language vocabulary.

Table 2: Result of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient showing the Relationship between students' achievement in English Language Vocabulary and Locus of Control

		Achievement	Locus of control
Achievement	Pearson Correlation	1	.982**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Locus of control	Pearson Correlation	.982**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

Table 2 shows the result of testing the hypothesis using Pearson correlation coefficient for the relationship between students' achievement in English vocabulary and locus of control. The calculated r-value was 0.98 and the critical value at 0.05 level of significance for 198 degrees of freedom was 0.00. Since the calculated r-value of 0.98 is greater than the table value of 0.00, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Influence of Cognitive Style on Students' Achievement in English Language Vocabulary.

The results of this study showed that cognitive style has an influence on students' achievement in English language vocabulary. This is in line with Pitchers (2002) who reported that field dependent individuals were more strongly influenced by the immediate social context and more inclined to attend to and learn about social aspects of their environment. The result of also agrees with the previous studies by Niroomand and Rostampour (2014), Elahiand Jayakaran (2012), Soozandehfar (2011) and Rezaeian (2012). These studies revealed that cognitive style has influence on students' achievement in English language vocabulary and other areas of the English language.

Influence of Locus of Control on Students Achievement in English Language Vocabulary.

The result of this study has shown that locus of control has a significant influence on students' achievement in English language vocabulary. The reason for this can be attributed to the fact that locus of control, either internal or external influences human attitude or behavior. This result agrees with the study of Fakeye (2011), which stated that the position of locus of control is significant because all things being equal, people will either see themselves as masters of their destiny or victims of circumstances. On the contrary, Cochran, McCallum and Bell (2010), stated that locus of control did not prove well in predicting foreign language learning.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between cognitive style and locus of control on students' achievement in English vocabulary.

Recommendations

The study recommended that:

1. Teachers should take cognizance of these important learners' characteristics in their classrooms so as to adapt the teaching and learning process to suit each learner's style.
2. Seminars, workshops, conferences and symposiums should be organized regularly in order to expose teachers to the various cognitive styles and locus of control students may possess.
3. Textbook writers should study and understand students' cognitive style and

locus of control so as to incorporate them into the subsequent textbooks.

4. Extensive vocabulary activities should be presented to students so that each student can choose an activity that is suitable to his/her cognitive style.
5. Curriculum planners should include the study of cognitive style and locus of control in teacher training programme in tertiary institutions. This will increase the awareness of the influence of cognitive style and locus of control in academic achievement. male and female students.

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