Perception of the Prescribed Prose Text and Secondary Students' Achievements in Prose Literature in Akinyele Local Government Area Ibadan

Azeez Fatimah Opeyemi and Dr. Joy. I. Anthony
Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigated students' perception of the prescribed prose text and their achievements in prose literature in Akinyele Local Government Area Ibadan. The study adopted the survey design. Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) pubic senior secondary schools in Akinyele Local Government Area, Ibadan, Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 SSII Literature -in English students per school making a total of 300 students in the study. The instruments used were Students' Perception of the Prescribed Prose Questionnaire(r=0.78) and Achievements Test in Prose Literature (r=0.75). The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that students had a positive perception about the prescribed prose text with weighted mean of 2.88 which is more than the threshold of 2.50. However, there was a significant relationship between perception of students and achievements in prose literature (r (2.99). Based on the findings, it is recommended that evaluation of possible relationships that may exist between perception of the prescribed prose text and students' achievements in prose literature should be undertaken prior to the prescription of the prose texts.

Keywords: Perception, Achievement, Prose texts, Literature in English

Introduction

Literature is the light that reflects life. It encapsulates diverse views, opinions, beliefs or ideologies amongst others that people of different races, genders, religion and communities have towards common or specific issues in life. With references to literature, people are aware or enlightened about other things around them and in the entire world. Consequently, literature enables people in a particular geographical and cultural setting to know about their past, understand their present, identify and forecast the future. Literature liberates people from havocs and dangers through reading of texts, watching of a particular play or movie. People learn the best way to address a specific or certain issue through literature as it teaches sympathy and empathy.

According to online Collins English Dictionary (2023), Literature is a work of art material such as poetry, novels, essays, and so on, especially works of imagination characterized by excellence of style and expression and by themes of general or enduring interest. Accordingly, Literature is pieces of writings or printed information on a particular subject. Fakeye (2015) cited in Salimat (2023) views Literature as a medium through which emotions, feelings, norms and cultural values are shown and transmitted. It educates, entertains and serves as a means of relaxation as it reduces tension and frustration in the reader. Onuekwusi (2013) views Literature as nothing but any imaginative and beautiful creation in words whether oral or written, which explores man as he struggles to survive for his existence and position and which provides entertainment, information, education and excitement to its audience.

Moreover, the importance of literature cannot be overemphasized. It broadens people's knowledge about life and modifies people's orientation on certain issues. Literature has the advantage of improving the linguistic performance of the students as it keeps them with the ability to extensively read from literary text. However, literature is of benefit to students' abilities to comprehend what they read. Through the creative pedagogy of teaching literature, students can be assisted to develop confidence in themselves while producing coherent and cohesive written and spoken discourses and in making the sentences to become paragraphs with effective linkers and using paragraphs to maintain coherent and meaningful written discourse. Hence, literature enhances the development of reading skills. Literature being the source of transmitting foreign cultures serves as motivating materials for language teaching. Lazar (2017), Literature is to serve as medium to transmitting the culture or and the language written in Culler (2011). Idialu, (2014) agrees to the legitimacy of literature as it serves value resource for language thinking. Literature is imaginative, expresses thoughts and feelings, deals with life experiences, uses words in a powerful, effective and yet captivating manner, promotes recreation and revelation of hidden facts.

Literature-in-English is a subject in the secondary school curriculum which comprises prose, poetry and drama. It is the product of artistic and imaginative part of human mind that is creative, pleasant and attractively deviated form of language to express one's ideas, feelings and experiences. It is an art which reflects the society and where it emerges. Literature-in-English is a work of art that

stretches students' imagination, widens their insight, deepens their experiences and heightens their awareness. It is the mirror through which students see the world and through which they navigate the happenings around them. Through literary texts, the writers uses their imagination to select, order and interpret real experiences and express values in prints (Ugwu, 2021).

Ogunnaike (2022) maintains his view that, a good literary text serves as an important tool for cultural diffusion, language performance and language competency; conflict resolution, emotional stability, developing values and good oriented attitudes for better life; a liberation to educational entertainment, relaxation and various experiences positively to values; desirable moral and other attribute; and as a consequence of all these a stable and mature personality.

The objectives of teaching Literature-in-English as contained in the Secondary School Curriculum are to: (I) broaden the cultural horizon of students through literary texts that vary in perspective but are universal in application,(II) expose students to healthy human values and attributes, (III) expose students to language in action in literary texts, thus re-enforcing their English language skills already acquired, (IV)develop capacity for independent thought, judgment and literacy competence of the students, (V) inculcate in students the entertainment and instructive values of literature,(VI) expose students to the beauty and potentials of language, (VII) give students a rich and well-rounded humanistic education, (VIII) equip the students to develop the capacity for independent thought and judgment, (IX) develop students ability to respond appropriately and independently to literary works and (X) prepare students to pass Literature-in-English in the Senior Secondary School Examinations and the Joint Matriculation Examination and prepare them for work (Federal Ministry of Education, 2009). According to the National Policy on Education, 6th edition 2013, Section 20 Sub section b1 page 7 which stipulates that, among other subjects, English studies whose contents include literature shall be taught at lower basic. Section 23, page 8 of the same document makes provision for teaching of English studies at upper basic with separate texts for the literature. Section 38 sub-section 2(3) page 13 makes Literature - in- English as a subject to be taught in Humanities asides English Language which is compulsory for all students, at Post Basic Education level. The curriculum of Literature in English encompasses, drama, poetry, and prose.

Omujuyigbe (2015) asserts that prose is straightforward and its message is usually conveyed in clear and direct expressions. It is easily comprehensible because it prides itself straight forward arrangement of words. Prose is a communicative style that sounds natural and uses grammatical structure. Prose is a short or long story written in chapters, paragraphs and sentences. It is a narrative of event which could be verbal or written in word, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and chapters and utilizes punctuation, grammar and vocabulary to develop its message. One major characteristics of prose is the use of action (Fakaye, 2015).

According to Ayo (2003) prose in literature has all the ingredients for better literary write ups. It is usually set down in printed characters for the reader to read, though some forms of it are performed on certain social occasions.

Prose is conversational in tone, follows natural patterns of speech and communication. It has a grammatical structure with sentences and paragraphs. Sentences and thoughts continue across lines and uses everyday language (Dan Brown, 2021). Omobowale and Adeyinka (2017) also view prose as a kind of writing that flows freely almost like day to day conversation but with great respect for the rules of the language, narrative technique, setting, plot, point of view, figurative expressions, characterization and usually written in plain and easily understandable language (Fakeye 2011). Prose is a division of literature in which characters are given life-like. characteristics but it is neither performed on stage nor poetic (Ibitoye, 2005; Omobowale and Adeyinka, 2017).

Prose can be fiction and non-fiction. Fiction is a kind of story drawn from the author's imagination as it is closely and mostly untrue events but serves as a means of instruction, education, persuasion and its arousal to its audience (Icheku, 2017). Fiction includes novels, short stories, mystery stories, detective stories, romance and historical fiction. Non-fiction contains factual event experienced or witnessed by the author (Ezeokoli and Adefulire, 2018). Prose non-fiction otherwise referred to as occasional literature is also important genre of literature that deals with important issues (Anthony, 2011)

The poor performance of students in prose literature has been related to several factors such as inaccessibility to literary texts, thematic familiarity, general preference,(Anthony 2011) non availability of literary texts, teachers' poor pedagogical practices; poor reading habit, reading anxiety, self-efficacy, lack of qualified teachers, non-possession of recommended texts and too much dependence on abridged version, students perception, poor language proficiency among others (Ezeokoli and Igubor, 2014; Ezeokoli and Adefulire,2018, Danner

and Musa,2019). Also, some teachers of prose literature teach this aspect of the subject using summary notes. They do not engage students with the literary text recommended to be read (Icheku, 2017).

Although most of these studies came up with good contributions to the teaching and learning of prose literature-in-English but the academic performances of students in prose as a whole is still not encouraging, hence, the need to look into some other variables that are yet to be considered could be responsible for the students' poor performance in prose literature.

According to Balogun (2015), Perception is found as a particular tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favours or disfavour. To him, Perception is a response to stimuli that is positive or negative. He added further that Perception is a psychological tendency to act in a situation demanding for actions. Balogun (2015) found that psychological tendency is a state that is internal of evaluative response, whether overt or covert; cognitive; affective and psychomotor behaviour. Psychological tendency are regarded as a type of bias that people put forward as responses which are positive or negative. He opined that Perception is biased because it is self-centred. This is because individual does not have Perception until he responds evaluative to an entity on affective, cognitive and psychomotor basis. Perception to him is similar to character. Perception is the way an individual acts or reacts to stimulus. It is a part of individual characteristics. Thus, Perception is part of characters. Characters are long-lasting and develop over time, Perception occurs within a short time frame. Character cannot be identified within a short period of interaction but Perception can be ascertained shortly. Perception is an action towards an event or reaction that is from the manner an individual acts, reacts, speaks or behaves within the first contact; his Perception can be identified and evaluated to be acceptable or rejected. In addition, Bavis (2014) found that evaluative responses whether overt or covert can have and produce psychological tendency to respond with a particular degree of evaluation with a Perception or object. If the tendency to respond is established, the person has formed positive Perception towards the object. Therefore, the concept of Perception is a conscious effort and behaviour towards an entity or object.

Many studies have shown that students' perception of school subjects are strong determinant of students' outcome in essay writing, English reading comprehension, Mathematics and other school subjects. Perception can alter every aspect of a person's life, including their education. Student Perceptions on learning determine their ability and willingness to learn. If negative Perceptions are not altered, a student is unlikely to continue his education beyond what is required. Changing students' negative Perceptions towards learning is a process that involves determining the factors driving the Perception and using this information to bring about change. Once educators uncover student Perceptions on learning, the challenge is using this information to shape a positive Perception. Adult students can see the future results of their learning, such as a better job and more money. Elementary students, however, are too young to see the big picture. To them, the need for drive and reward is instant. At the least, students must want to learn, be receptive and participate in the learning process to ultimately experience satisfaction from learning. A positive learning Perception requires motivation and gratification; the timing of those variables depends on the age of the student. Student Perceptions on learning, good or bad, affect their outlook toward learning throughout life. According to Balogun (2015) students' Perceptions on learning determine their ability and willingness to learn. If negative Perceptions are not altered, a student is unlikely to continue his education beyond what is required. Changing students' negative Perceptions towards learning is a process that involves determining the factors driving the Perception and using this information to bring about change.

Statement of the problem

Prose Literature in English is studied in secondary schools in order to refine students' sensibilities. Literature has been a mirror to the society, reflecting cultural, social, and philosophical shifts while providing insights into the human experience. Literature continues to reflect globalisation, multiculturalism and the impact of technology on the society. However, despite the importance attached to prose aspect of Literature-in-English in the senior secondary school curriculum in Nigeria, students' performance in this aspect of the subject is below average yearly. Previous reports revealed that the poor performance of students in prose literature is largely responsible for the students' failure in Literature-in-English. As a way of addressing this problem, researchers have concentrated efforts on interventions, students' related factors such as attitude, interest, non - possession of Literature texts among others, but with little emphasis on perception of the prescribed prose text and Secondary School Students achievement in prose literature. It is against this background that this study examined perception of the prescribed prose text (*Second Class Citizen*) and secondary school

students' achievement in prose literature in English in Akinyele Local Government Area, Oyo State.

Objectives of the study

The broad objectives of this study examined perceptions of the prescribed prose text and secondary students' achievement in prose literature in English.

The specific objectives of this study is to;

1. Describe perception of secondary students towards prescribed prose text;
2. Determine the relationship that exists between perception of secondary students towards the prescribed prose text and their achievement in prose literature;

Research questions

This study provided answers to the following questions:

1. What perception do secondary students have towards prescribed prose text?
2. What relationship do students' perception have with their achievement in prose literature?

Scope of the Study

The study examined perception of reading Second Class Citizens among senior secondary schools students in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study covered Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizens* out of the African prose recommended literature texts for WASSCE for 2021-2025. The reason for this choice was that this prose literature text selected was being read in the schools that were selected for the study. The study covered senior secondary school 2 Literature-in-English students from 10 schools in Akinyele Local Government, Oyo State.

Significance of the Study

This study revealed how perception of prescribed prose text positively could impact secondary students' achievement in prose literature in English. It exposes Literature-in-English teachers to the reason for poor performance in prose Literature-in-English. The study provides empirical information on how this variable affects students' achievement in prose Literature-in-English and their motivation to read prose literature texts. The findings of this study will be significant in many ways to educational stakeholders especially curriculum planners, examination bodies, Ministry of Education, teachers as well as students themselves.

Methodology

The survey design was adopted for this research. The participants were 300 SSII students from 10 schools in Akinyele Local Government Area, Oyo State. The instruments used were Perception of the Prescribed Prose Text Questionnaire(r=0.78) and Achievement Test in Prose Literature(r=0.75). The researcher sought permission from the principals of the selected schools before proceeding with the administration of the research instrument which lasted for three weeks. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and Pearson Product Moment Correlation at0.05 level of significance

Results

Research question one: What are perceptions of the prescribed prose text (Second Class Citizen)?

Table 1: Perception of the prescribed prose text (Second Class Citizen)

S/N	Statement	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD (%)	$\overline{X}$	S. Dev.	Rank
1	I have preference for prose than other genres of literature	104 (34.7)	151 (50.3)	35 (11.7)	10 (3.3)	3.16	.75	3
2	I don't like prose because it is not straightforward	65 (21.7)	8 (2.7)	99 (33.0)	128 (42.7)	2.03	1.15	10
3	I find it easy to interpret prose literature	149 (49.7)	90 (30.0)	52 (17.3)	9 (3.0)	3.26	.85	2
4	I consider prose texts to be more complex than other texts	93 (31.0)	59 (19.7)	106 (35.3)	42 (14.0)	2.68	1.05	8
5	Narrative techniques used in prose literature is easy	100 (33.3)	144 (48.0)	40 (13.3)	16 (5.3)	3.09	.82	4
6	I can relate the subject matter in prose literature to real life concept	157 (52.3)	119 (39.7)	10 (3.3)	14 (4.7)	3.40	.76	1
7	I have perseverance in reading difficult prose literature	139 (46.3)	80 (26.7)	44 (14.7)	37 (12.3)	3.07	1.05	5
8	I score high in prose literature	106 (35.3)	130 (43.3)	29 (9.7)	35 (11.7)	3.02	.95	6
9	I perceive African prose literature to be difficult	113 (37.7)	67 (22.3)	57 (19.0)	63 (21.0)	2.77	1.16	7
10	The choice of words used in prose literature are not easy to interpret	67 (22.3)	59 (19.7)	90 (30.0)	84 (28.0)	2.36	1.11	9
	TOTAL	**109 (36.3)**	**91 (30.3)**	**56 (18.7)**	**44 (14.7)**	**28.84**		
	Weighted mean=2.88, Threshold mean=2.50					**2.88**		

Table 1 shows students, perceptions of reading second class citizen. The result indicates a weighted mean of 2.88 which is more than the threshold set at 2.50. This implies that the selected students had a good perception about the reading of Second Class Citizen.

Research question Two: What relationship exists between perception of the prescribed prose text and secondary students' achievement in prose literature?

Table 2: Relationship between perception of the prescribed prose text and secondary students' achievement in prose literature

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	R	P	Remark
Achievement Test	300	15.57	2.49	299	.190**	.001	Sig.
Students' perception	300	28.85	4.04				

*Correlation is significant at 0.05(2-tailed)

Table 2 Shows that there is positive relationship between perception of students and achievement in prose literature ($r(299)=190^{**}p<0.5$): This implies that significant relationship existed between perception of students and achievement in prose literature.

Discussion

Students' Perception of Prescribed Prose Literature Texts

The findings of this study revealed that the students' selected had a good perception on the reading of *Second Class Citizen*. This could either be due to their personal experiences or stories from friends and family based on the perception of students to interpret prose literature text easily; students have preference for prose than other genre of literature; found narrative technique used in prose easy. This finding corroborates Anthony (2011).which reported that students have preferences for prose than other genre of literature. The finding also corroborates the study of Noraisah etal (2015) who all found that students had positive perception about the prescribed literature texts. However, the result negates Adeyemi (2023) on the perception of teachers of prose texts in secondary schools. The study revealed that students had negative perception about prose texts.

Relationship between Perception of the Prescribed Prose Text and Secondary Students' Achievement in Prose Literature in English

The findings of this study revealed that positive relationship existed between perception of the prescribed prose text and secondary students' achievement in prose literature. The finding is in support of Anthony (2011); Fakeye (2012); and Daniel (2013) and Tevdouska (2016) which revealed that genral preference had significant positive contribution to students' achievement in literature-in-English.

Conclusion

From this study, it can be concluded that students had high perception on the reading of prescribed prose text. Positive relationship exists between students' perception and achievement in prose literature. Hence, it can be concluded that students have a good perception of prescribed literature–in-English text (*Second Class Citizens*), which invariably positively influenced students' achievements in prose literature.

Recommendations

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

1. Perceptions and preferences of the prescribed prose texts should be considered in the prescription of literature-in-English texts.
2. Possible relationship that may exist between perception of the prescribed prose text and students' achievement in prose literature should be valued prior the prescription of literature-in-English texts.
3. Education policy makers should support the goal of providing equitable education opportunities for all students in secondary school.

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