



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Influence of learning variables on secondary school students' performance in English language in Abakaliki education zone of Ebonyi state

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to determine the influence of learning variables on the performance of secondary school students' in Abakaliki Education zone of Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study focused on the influence of: individual differences on the secondary school students' performance in English Language in Abakaliki Education zone. Four research questions and four null hypotheses guided the study. Several factors affecting students' performance in English language positively or negatively were lighted. A total of 270 students were randomly selected for the study, 112 males with the mean of 3.09 Standard Deviation of 1.10 and 138 females with the mean of 2.74 and SD of 1.15. Data was collected using: Secondary School students' Performance Scale developed by the researcher. The research design employed in the study was descriptive, survey with random sampling adopted for data collection; while t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The result shows that there is no significance difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of individual differences on secondary school students' performance in English Language in Abakaliki Education zone, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of cognitive variables on secondary school student's performance in English Language in Abakaliki Education Zone. It also shows that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of affective variables on students' performance in English Language. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of psychomotor variables on secondary school students' performance in English language in Abakaliki Education Zone. With the findings of this study, it is recommended that it will also encourage teachers to make their classroom activities more learner-centered than teacher-dominated activities as was seen in some learning methods.

Keywords: Learning variables; Secondary school students; Performance in English language

1. Introduction

Learning is the gaining of a new behavioural pattern. Stones (1966) an educational psychologist defined learning as any activity which leads to a change in our behaviour. Learning may be formal or informal. Informal learning is the day by day experiences and things that happen to us which make us change the way we think and act. Formal learning may involve attending a course that is planned in a structured way, in a school or college. The secondary school students in the colleges undergo a formal learning as their courses are planned and structured.

English language is one amongst the structured subjects that the secondary schools' students in the colleges are required to learn. To Nigerians, following the colonization by the British Government, English language became her second language. Hence, English is widely spoken and occupies a primordial role at the workplace, in the media and as a medium of instruction in schools, along with the three nationally recognized indigenous languages. The importance and role of English language did not diminish since the attainment of independence.

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Learning of English language is an important factor in the educational system. This is more especially, when it functions as a medium of instruction in schools. English is the language of science and technology and a gateway to educational advancement and prestigious employment. It is also the language of commerce, trade and administration, and a means of national and international communication (Adekola, 2011).

English language as a medium of communication is important for it enhances educational attainment through improved communication ability and skills. Students who have so much difficulty with their communication skill in English language will have difficulty functioning effectively in English language as well as in their academic pursuit. Obviously the situation is so because English language in Nigeria today is the language of text-books as well as the language of instruction in schools. However, the situation where students have high proficiency in English Language, the result will be improve academic performance of such students. But where the situation is on the contrary, the students will have lower academic performance.

The English language teacher is expected to pay special attention to this language skills arranged under this four themes: listening and speaking, reading and writing, grammatical accuracy, structure and literature (Agwu, 2008). English language teachers as educators play a role in the translation of educational ideas into instruments by which schools seeks to translate the hopes of the society into concrete realities. According to Agwu (2013), these innovations are in the areas of population and family life education, drug abuse education, peace education amongst others. Iliyas (2011), observes that a lack of adequate mastery of English language (language of instruction) is a major problem relating to inadequate understanding of the teacher's speech (listening problem) that results from poor vocabulary and syntactic knowledge (note-taking problem), deficient language background and compromise in qualifying entry examination into current stratum of the schools' ladder among students as source of understanding constraints.

English language proficiency could go a long way in affecting students' academic performance in both science and technical education courses for English language is the gateway to educational advancement (Aina, Ogundele and Olanipekun, 2013). This is why Olanipekun (2013) refers to English language as the language of achievers and that the language counts as far as rising up and being a member of the elite class is concerned. Students who understand this do strive to do well in English language as this invariably affect their performance in other subjects.

Students' academic performance represents student's accomplishment after an examination. It is directly linked to the social and economic development of the country. According to Ali, Norhidayah, Jusoff, Kamaruzaman, Ali, Syukria, Mokhtar, Najah, Salamat and Syafena (2009), the students' performance plays a crucial role in producing the best quality graduates who will become great leader of the country thus responsible for the country's economic and social development. Generally, student's performance has been the major concern to researchers on education. Student's academic performance measurement has received considerable attention in previous research. According to Irfan and Shabana (2012) previously most studies of student academic performance were on such issues like gender difference, teacher's education and teaching style, class environment, socio economic factor and family education background. These factors strongly influence the students' performance, but these factors vary from person to person and country to country. On the other hand, considering factors affecting school students' language learning achievement Ramirez (1986) conducted a study on students in a small rural school taught by the same teacher. It was found that the communicative abilities of students in the rural school were lower than those in urban schools. Moreover, urban school students produced more descriptions and speech acts. The issue has gained more interest with the beginning of the twenty first century. However, other studies about the effectiveness of schools have centered their interest on identifying the factors that are best able to predict student's performance in order to intervene early in the process of education to curb academic failure. Other scholars like: Irfan and Shabana (2012), have focussed on factors affecting students' academic performance and Armstrong (2015), teacher characteristics and students performance: An analysis using hierarchical linear modelling.

Besides, some scholars have given credence to the notion that English language is very crucial to the Nigeria education system since it is not only the medium of instruction especially at the upper primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education but also the language of text-books as well as and the language of instruction in schools (Aina and Olanipekun, 2014). This requires developing favourable attitudes as a means of enhancing performance in the learning of second language like English. Ige (1996), connecting attitude to performance under some teaching strategies, concluded among other things on the relationship between academic ability and student's performance in English language; that the attitude will guide teachers to plan their lesson for different ability groups in the class. He concluded that these factors in turn produce poor performance and in turn produce negative attitude on the subject. Quite a lot of researchers and scholars have reported an association between academic ability and achievement in the learning of English language. Using a variety of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests and different methods of assessing language learning, Ige (1996) and Fakeye (2002) observe that intellectual ability (academic ability) was a good means of envisaging how successful a

learner would be at language learning in general and English as a second language (ESL) learning in particular. In his own submission, Lightbown and Spada (1993) notes that, intelligence is more strongly related to the development of reading, grammar and vocabulary; it was unrelated to oral productive skill. Byrne (1993), observes that English as a second language and found that academic ability of the learners was a decisive factor of performance in reading, grammar, vocabulary, comprehension and writing but not of spoken English. In different studies, Anthony (1990), Long (1991) find that intelligence was extremely related to performance in reading, dictation and writing tasks but not on listening comprehension and free oral tasks. Gardner and Lambert in Adebisi (2006) identified two independent factors essential for the development of skill in learning a second language. They are intellectual capacity and an appropriate attitudinal orientation towards the particular language.

The learning variables imply the learning process which may include among other things: nature of the learner which entails; the physical, psychological, social, spiritual and emotional makeup of the individual learner from conception to death. Nature of the learning materials, this implies the human and non-human materials and the facilities that can be used to ease, encourage, improve and promote teaching and learning. Nature of the learning situation is the environment where the learner acquires knowledge, attitudes and skill that are necessary to meet the demands of life. The variables range from the content to be transacted to the attitude of the learner, learner's ability and interest in a particular discipline like English language. The variables also amount to exposure to the English language, the beliefs, dedication, experience, involvement and qualifications of the instructor. Besides, variable includes; the teaching methods and materials employed and individual learner differences appear to play a significant role in learning of English language.

Meanwhile specific classifications vary, such as: individual difference (ID) variables can be socio-cultural (e.g: Beliefs state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing. An attitude is a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation. Experience is the knowledge or mastery of an event or subject gained through involvement in or exposure to it. Cognitive: (e.g., age, aptitude, working memory, cognitive styles, learning strategies) Affective (e.g., anxiety, personality, motivation, willingness to communicate). In nature, IDs cutting across clear-cut categories, themselves being affected by each other and a host of other variables (Dörnyei and Ryan, 2015; Gregersen and MacIntyre, 2014; Pawlak, 2012a).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Several factors affect students' performance in English language positively or negatively. Realizing these factors and the relationship they have with students' performance in English language might facilitate understanding of what constitute these factors. It will also reveal how they affect students' performance positively in English language. It will help in identifying what problems they pose to students in making positive performance in English language, so that solutions could be found and improvements developed.

English language has always been a major problem that many students' in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State encounter. Some students would skip school because of their poor performance in English language (Embi, 2000; El-Omari, 2002). Students' inability to understand English language, sometimes hinder the teaching-learning process in the classroom which usually ends in the student hating the English teacher or even the whole school. English language teaching and learning process is affected by many factors and variables. The variables include mainly nature of the learner, nature of the learning materials, nature of the learning situation, the attitude of the learner and learner's ability. Besides these, other variables are: interest in a particular discipline like English language, the amount of exposure to the English language, the belief systems about English language, dedication to English language, socioeconomic, extracurricular, and attitudinal tendency. Hence, the need for this study is to evaluate: the influence of learning variables on secondary school student's performance in English language in Abakaliki education zone Ebonyi State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the influence of learning variable on the performance of secondary school students in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study explores the influence of:

- Individual differences on secondary school student's performance in English Language in Abakaliki Education zone.
- Cognitive variables on secondary school student's performance.
- Affective variables on secondary school student's performance in Abakaliki Education Zone.
- Psychomotor variables on secondary school student's performance in English Language

Significance of the Study

The research may benefit students, teachers, language specialists, curriculum experts and officials from the zonal education board, academics and textbook writers. This present study may provide insight on the influence of learning variables on secondary school students' performance in English Language. The fact that English language is being used as a medium of instruction in all educational institutes; it is anticipated that the researcher of this nature might give useful insight into ways and means of improving the learning variables and also improve the students' performance in English language. The research from the literature showed that the differences in the students' performance were accounted for by the individual difference, gender, school type and location for students' performance test. The research indicates that cognitive variables have effects in the student's performance in English language. There are significant differences in students' performance on cognitive and psychomotor variables.

This contributes to knowledge on the fact that students in the rural location do not improve due to their lack of exposure to certain amenities. Teachers: the study would benefit them on the effect of learning variables and secondary school student's performance. This would make them to be acquainted with current learning variables. It will also encourage teachers to make their class room activities more learner-centered than teacher-dominated activities as was seen in some learning methods. Curriculum experts, the study may bring to the notice of curriculum experts how best to help students improve their reading. They can achieve this by reading a subject and not just as an aspect of English language on the time table. It will also help curriculum developers design a curriculum that will effect positive change in learning experience of learners in English language. Officials from the Ministry of Education: This study would enable officials from the Ministry of Education to organize conferences, workshops for teachers where they can become innovative towards teaching English language. The study will enable textbook writes by incorporating the learning variables into reading text. Students, the study will help students to effectively articulate and recall information; sharpen their listening faculty and speech skills.

1.2. Scope of the Study

This research aimed at exploring the influence learning variables on secondary school students' performance in English language. The researcher carried out this study within secondary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State. The study involved 4890 students from 20 schools within Abakaliki Education zone.

1.3. Research Questions

This study sought to provide answers to the following research questions.

- How do individual differences influence secondary school student's performance in English Language
- How do cognitive variables influence secondary school student's performance in English language.
- How do affective variables determine secondary school student's performance in English language.
- How do psychomotor variables influence secondary school student's performance in English language.

1.4. Hypotheses

Four hypotheses were put forward at 0.05 level of significant.

- There is no significant difference in mean score of male and female students on the influence of individual difference on secondary school student's performance in English language in Abakaliki Education zone.
- There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female students on the influence of cognitive variables on secondary school student's performance in English language in Abakaliki Education zone.
- There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female students on the influence of affective variables on secondary school student's performance in English language.
- There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female students on the influence of psychomotor variables on secondary school student's performance in English language.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Participants

The population of the study comprise 4896 students in SSII in the state owned secondary school spread across the zone (Secondary Education Board, Ebonyi State 2019). The Zone is bound in the North by Izzi zone, to the Northwest by Ezza Zone, Southeast by Ishielu. The zone consist of (50) public secondary schools, the Igbo language is the most widely used

language in the zone. The education zone is richly blessed with huge vegetation which triggers business transaction between people from different parts of the country. Twenty (20) secondary schools were randomly selected for this research (2106 male and 2790 female) student. Out of the number 270 students were randomly selected 20 students were selected from each secondary school.

2.2. Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was Secondary School students' Performance Scale developed by the researcher. It is a self-administered questionnaire which consisted of structured questions. The instruments have two sections: section 1, covers demographic information which contains the name of school, school type, gender of students the strategy and location of the school. Section 2, it contains 27 questions covering students' performance in English language, Cognitive variables, and affective variable as determinant of performance and students' attitude as determinant of performance. Secondary School students' Performance has a reliability coefficient of 0.93, which showed a very high internal consistency

2.3. Procedure

Data was collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire with two sections. The researcher obtained permission from the appropriate authorities and after words went the selected schools on scheduled with their various principals. On arrival the principal gave permission for the students involved to be gathered in the school hall where the researcher introduced herself and the work she intends to embark on. Afterwards the researcher through the help of research assistants shared the questionnaire to participants which were collected back the same day. After the participants have filled, the questionnaires were validated to suite the present study.

2.4. Design and statistics

This is a survey study that employed both Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions while t-test was used for data analysis.

3. Results

3.1. Research Question 1

How do individual differences influence secondary school student's performance in English language?

Table 1 Mean result on influence of individual differences on students' performance

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	S.D	Decision
1	Individual difference usually influence their performance in English language	111	73	33	33	3.04	1.05	Accepted
2	Learner's background often influence their performance in English language	102	96	42	10	3.16	0.84	Accepted
3	Mother tongue interference sometimes influence learner's performance in English language	54	81	60	55	2.53	1.06	Accepted
4	Individual perception of the teachers personality often influence students performance	124	70	28	28	3.16	1.01	Accepted
5	Individual perception of the teaching approach	45	40	65	100	2.12	1.12	Not Accepted
6	Learner's environment often influence their performance in English language	96	80	39	35	2.94	1.05	Accepted
7	Learner's self efficacy sometimes affects their performance in English language	118	46	32	54	2.91	1.20	Accepted
	Grand mean					2.83		Accepted

The result in table 1 showed that items, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 were accepted because they have mean values above 2.50, while 5 was not accepted because its means value was less than 2.50. However, the grand mean is a mean value of 2.83 meaning that individual difference does influence secondary school student's performance.

3.2. Research Question 2

How do cognitive variable influence secondary school students' performance in English language.

Table 2 Mean results on influence of cognitive variable

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	S.D	Decision
8	Learner's inability to assimilate well affects their performance in English language.	100	51	53	46	2.82	1.15	Accepted
9	Poor reading habits often influence secondary school student performance in English language	99	83	48	20	3.04	.954	Accepted
10	Poor concept of self influence learner's performance in English language	117	75	38	2-	3.15	.939	Accepted
11	Lack prior knowledge of the learner to the subject often influence the students performance	109	70	28	43	2.98	1.14	Accepted
12	Lack of concentration often influence the learner's performance in English	75	79	51	45	2.73	1.07	Accepted
13	Inability of the learner to read for a longer time often influence their performance	77	62	79	32	2.73	1.03	Accepted
14	Inability of the learner to abstract ideas often affect their performance.	86	79	51	34	2.86	1.03	Accepted
15	Learner's inability to register what is being thought	60	97	66	27	2.76	.939	Accepted
	Grand mean					2.88		

The result in table 2 showed that items 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 were accepted because they have mean value above 2.50, however the grand mean value of 2.88 meaning that cognitive variable influence secondary school student's performance.

3.3. Research Question 3

How do affective variable determine secondary school student's performance in English language

Table 3 Mean result of on influence of affective variables on student's performance

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	S.D	Decision
16	Learner's ability to read wide sometimes determines their performance in English language	133	43	39	35	3.09	1.11	Accepted
17	Learner's appraisal of the teachers determines their performance	85	73	47	45	2.79	1.10	Accepted
18	Learner's self motivation often determine the learner's performance	143	36	45	26	3.18	1.06	Accepted
19	Learner's self concept sometimes determine their performance in English language	62	60	40	88	2.38	1.20	Accepted
20	Learner's appraisal of the subject usually determine their performance	123	49	41	37	3.03	1.11	Accepted
	Grand mean					2.89		

The result in table 3 shows that items 16,17,18,20 were accepted because they have mean value above 2.50 while item 19 was not accepted because its mean value was less than 2.50. However, the grand mean is value of 2.89 meaning that affective variable do determine secondary school student's performance.

3.4. Research Question 4

How do psychomotor variables influence secondary school student's performance in English language?

Table 4 Mean result on influence of psychomotor variables on student's performance

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	S.D	Decision
21	Students negative attitude toward their studies sometimes influence their performance in English language	113	40	57	49	2.90	1.14	Accepted
22	Learner's lukewarm attitude to the teacher and also to the subject taught often influence their performance	80	54	70	46	2.67	1.11	Accepted
23	Poor interest of the learner to the subject also influence their performance in English language	187	17	30	16	3.50	.937	Accepted
24	Lack of disposition of the learner's to learn often times influence their performance in English language.	87	63	44	56	2.72	1.16	Accepted
25	Learner's negative approach towards the teacher's methodology sometimes affects their performance.	146	24	48	32	3.13	1.12	Accepted
	Grand mean					2.98		

The result in table 4 showed that item 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 were accepted because they have mean value above 2.50, its grand mean value is 2.98 meaning that psychomotor variables influence secondary school student's performance in English language.

HO₁: There is no significance difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of individual differences on secondary school student's performance in English Language in Abakaliki Education Zone.

Table 5 To test result on influence of individual difference on secondary school student's performance.

S/N	Variable	No	X	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision	Significant
1	M	112	2.33	0.78	248	4.07	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.51	1.17					
2	M	112	3.18	0.71	248	0.46	1.960	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	F	138	3.13	0.93					
3	M	112	3.36	0.92	248	7.40	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.79	0.98					
4	M	112	1.56	0.81	248	2.73	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.57	1.01					
5	M	112	2.73	1.01	248	7.86	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.12	1.09					
6	M	112	2.73	1.09	248	2.98	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.12	0.98					
7	M	112	2.50	1.11	248	4.14	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.18	1.21					
						4.26	1.960		Significant

The result in table 5 showed that t-test value of 4.26 is greater than the t crit value of 1.960, Hence HO, is rejected

This means that there is a significant on the individual differences on student’s performance in English Language.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of cognitive variables on secondary school student’s performance in English Language in Abakaliki Education Zone.

Table 6 To test the result on the influence of cognitive variables on secondary school student’s performance

S/N	Variable	No	X	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision	Significant
8	M	112	3.25	0.86	248	5.65	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.47	1.23					
9	M	112	2.94	0.93	248	1.46	1.960	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	F	138	3.12	0.96					
10	M	112	3.29	0.87	248	2.07	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.04	1.01					
11	M	112	3.23	0.93	248	3.29	1.960	Reg Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.77	1.20					
12	M	112	3.07	1.02	248	4.62	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.46	1.04					
13	M	112	3.39	0.96	248	4.96	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.01	1.01					
14	M	112	3.16	1.01	248	4.28	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.62	0.99					
15	M	112	2.68	0.90	248	1.10	1.960	ACCP	Significant
	F	138	2.81	0.98					
						3.42	1.960		Significant

The result is table 6 show that t-test value of 3.42 is greater that t-crit value of 1.960. Hence HO₂ is rejected. This means that there is a significance difference on the influence of cognitive variable on secondary school student’s performance.

HO₃: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of affective variables on student’s performance in English Language.

Table 7 To test result on the influence of affective variables on student’s performance

S/N	Variable	No	X	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Decision	Significance
16	M	112	2.38	1.12	248	3.77	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.86	1.05					
17	M	112	3.05	1.08	248	3.46	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.57	1.06					
18	M	112	3.18	1.12	248	2.70	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.02	0.99					
19	M	112	2.77	1.12	248	4.87	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.06	1.16					
20	M	112	2.85	1.08	248	2.24	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.17	1.12					
						3.41	1.960		

The result in table 7 shows that t-test value of 3.41 is greater than t-crit value of 1.960. Hence H_{03} is rejected. This means that there is significance on the influence of affective variable in secondary student's performance.

H_{04} : There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the psychomotor variable on secondary school student's performance in English language in Abakaliki Education zone.

Table 8 t-test result on the influence of psychomotor variable on student's performance

S/N	Variable	No	X	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision	Significance
21	M	112	3.09	1.10	248	2.44	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.74	1.15					
22	M	112	3.16	0.98	248	6.82	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.27	1.05					
23	M	112	3.75	0.71	248	4.06	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.28	1.04					
24	M	112	3.06	1.03	248	4.29	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.44	1.19					
25	M	112	2.43	1.14	248	10.22	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.68	0.75					
						5.56	1.960	Rej Ho	Significant

The result in table 8 showed that t-test value of 5.56 is greater than t-crit value of 1.960, hence H_{04} is rejected. This means that there is significance different on the influence of psychomotor variables on secondary school student's performance.

4. Summary of findings

The study recorded the following findings:

- There is difference in the students' mean score; in their individual differences performance in English Language.
- The findings show that the cognitive variables help the students to boost their performance in English language.
- Female surpass male in using affective variables
- The mean rating of male is higher than female students on the influence of psychomotor variable on secondary school students' performance in English language.
- The provision as well as the adequacy of the instructional materials for teaching enhances teachers work output in teaching of English Language.
- Also providing incentives for the learners, encourage them on the need to be acquainted with English Language.
- There is no significant relationship between the individual difference in students performance in learning of English Language in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
- There is no significance difference on the influence of affective variable in secondary school student's performance in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi Nigeria.

5. Discussion

5.1. Finding on the influence of individual difference on secondary school students performance in English Language

Seven Item (1-7) were used to assess students individual difference in their performance in English language. The finding of this study is in agreement with the previous studies that has reported significant differences on level of self-efficacy between genders. Abdullah, Cheong, Ellias, Mahyuddin, Muhamad and Noordin (2006) conducted research on relationship between students self efficacy and their English language performance. In this study one of the variables

that they investigated is gender. From the descriptive – correlational that conducted on 1,146 students from eight secondary schools in Petal district, Selegor, they found that girls have higher self efficacy than boys. It revealed that there is statistically significant and there is relationship between gender with the p-value 0.06.

The finding of this study also support the work of Ezeocha (1990) who state that every learner would like to put his or her best in learning a particular subject. Varaprasad and Manikanta (2018) reported that individual difference has significance impact positively on students' academic performance. Similarly, Omale, Duru, Oriaku, and Chima, (2017) indicate that the intensity of individual differences and staff social status influence student's academic performance in Nigerian Universities. In contrast to the findings of this study, Lawton and Gordon (1993) posited that it is quite possible to have a high ability coupled with a low attainment, achievement or performance. Hence, academic performance is the demonstrated achievement of learning as opposed to the potential for learning and is measured validly with SSCE by WAEC and NECO in Nigeria (Kpolovie, Ololube and Ekwebelem (2011). Therefore, other than individual differences, the academic achievement of students may also dependent to an extent on many environmental factors which include education funding (Kpolovie and Obilor, 2013; Kpolovie, 2014), the student, home, school administration (Ololube and Kpolovie, 2012), teacher, cultural and educational policy (Kpolovie, 2012) that can easily be studied experimentally and conclusive conclusions drawn. Olantunde (2010) showed in a research conducted on students' self-concept and Mathematics achievement that, students who have positive self-concept of themselves performed well in mathematics. The child who views himself and his abilities positively is the one who can maximally benefit and achieve good results in school learning experiences.

5.2. Findings on influence of cognitive variables in secondary school students performance in English language.

Eight Items (8-15) in Appendix I were used to access how cognitive variables affect students performance in English Language.

The findings of this study is in line with the previous studies Jurkovic (2010), examined the effect of two factors on achievement test scores in English as a foreign language for specific purposes in higher education: preexisting linguistic competence and frequency of use of language learner strategies. And among the constructs of language learner strategies, however, the only construct having a statistically significant effect on achievement test scores was metacognitive strategies. Similarly, Ogiegbaen (2004) reports that students' learning environment, their cognitive abilities, self-esteem, self-concept, study habits and motivation affect their academic success. Jensen, (1998) reported that IQ only explained about 25% of the variance in student's achievement.

On the contrary, other than the cognitive variables, there a lot of factors that could impede academic performance of students. Chambers and Schreiber (2004) in his study found a gap between the performance of boys and girls with girls performance better than boys in certain instances. The home environment also affects the academic performance of students. Educated parents can provide such an environment that suits best for academics success of their children.

5.3. Findings on how affective variable determine secondary school students performance in English language.

Five items (16-20) were used to access the influence of affective variables in secondary school student's performance. This finding of this study agrees with the finding of the previous studies. Maina (2010) observed that goal-oriented students usually possess positive feelings regarding their school experiences. It is vital for the students to possess positive thinking in terms of their schools, teachers and academic subjects. With positive attitude, they will be able to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly towards learning and generate the desired academic outcomes. Similarly, Radhika (2018) noted the encouraging attitude of family members in order to achieve the academic goals, support and encouragement from the family members is considered to be utmost significance. When parents are unaware regarding some information, then older siblings mainly guide their younger primarily proves as a source of inspiration and motivation. In agreement with the present study, Adigun, Onihunwa, Irunokhai, Sada and Adesina (2015) observed that there are no longer distinguishing cognitive, affective and psychomotor skill achievements of students in respect of gender. Results from the analysis also reveals a positive relationship between self-concept and academic achievement means that if one feels that he is able to perform a task he/she will work hard to maintain such feelings. The result is in line with the findings of Marsh and Kleitman (1992) who came out with a result that students' self-concept is positively related to their level of academic performance. The result is also in line with the findings of Olantunde (2010); Raju (2013); Archana and Chamudeswari (2013); Sikhwari (2014) who showed in a research conducted on students' self-concept and Mathematics achievement that, students who have positive self-concept of themselves performed well in mathematics. However, the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement is often debated.

5.4. Findings on how attitude influence students performance in English language

Items 5 (21-25) in Appendix I were used to access students attitude towards their performance in English language. When this was correlated with student's performance in English language it gives a correlative co-efficient which shows a high relationship.

The finding of this study is in agreement with the findings of the previous studies Zehr (2016) noted in his that cognitive domain is related with the knowledge, comprehension and application where the psychomotor domain is involving with adaptation, origination and perception. The guideline before they do the internship gives impact towards performance of students with the adequate supply of basic skills and knowledge to sustain the flexibility of students involved. Meni (2010) supported that the internship is the vital factor in the every firm to build the right ability and capability depend on the basic skills and knowledge that student learned in the syllabus. A study conducted by Mugisha (1991) in some selected schools in Kampala District. Uganda on causes of students' poor performance in English revealed that attitudes of children and their home background positively or negatively influence their performance in schools. Kundu and Tutoo (2000) too believed that home background is the most significant primary factor which influences and shapes children's attitudes, personality and behaviour patterns that lead to good performance at schools. But in contrast, Gardner (1985) (referred to by Spolsky, 1989). Many students had a fairly positive attitude to English yet no significant correlation was found between their attitudes to English and their performance in the four English macroskills. Expressing the same view Fakeye, 2010 noted that students fail English language woefully in the yearly school certificate examination is as a result of their negative attitude of some of the student to the English language as a subject. Attitude is one of the personal variables that affect student's performance in English language. Similarly, Gardener and Lambert (1972) notes that success in mastering a second language depends not so much on intellectual capacity or language aptitude as on learner's attitude towards the particular language. Hence they affirmed that, attitude could help the language learning process by changing students' orientation towards particular linguistic cultural groups and thereby modify their motivation to learn that language. It is therefore of the essence that a positive attitude towards English language accounts for success in learning it.

5.5. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of individual differences on secondary school student's performance in English language in Abakaliki Education zone.

The null hypothesis tested on the influence of individual differences on secondary school student's performance in English language shows that there was a significant difference on the individual performance in English Language. The result showed that t. cal value 4.26 is greater than t-crit value 1.960 (sig). Therefore the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected meaning that there is a significant relationship. This signifies that the individual difference affects the students performance in English Language. Andreou et al (2005) studied the affecting factors in second language learning. They reported that females performed better than males in syntax and semantics which is explained by the general female superiority on verbal tasks based on differences in hemispheric specializations for language functions between the two sexes.

In contrast to the findings of this study, Al-Otaibi (1996) examined the influence of gender on the student's performance and found that male students are not better than female students. The results of the study also showed that female students outperformed their male counterparts (Helm, 2007). In the same vein, the findings of Adigun, Onihunwa, Irunokhai, SadaandAdesina (2015) revealed there was no significant difference in the slightly better performance of the male students with their female counterparts. Gender differences in achievement have been examined for some time resulting in a substantial body of literature (Jegede and Iyang (1990); Okeke (1990); Dania (2014); Some of these researchers pointed out that there is no significant gender difference in students' academic achievement.

5.6. There is no significance difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of cognitive variables on secondary school students' performance in English Language.

The null hypothesis tested on the influence of cognitive variables on secondary school student's performance in English Language shows that there was a significant difference.

The result showed that t cal value 3.42 is greater than t-crit 1.960. Therefore the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected meaning that there is a significant relationship. This denotes that cognitive variable influence students' performance in English Language. Obiefuna and Oruwari (2015) shows that the adjusted English language mean scores for male and female there is a difference in the adjusted English language mean scores of male and female Accommodating group at post-test with females achieving better than the males.

5.7. There is no significant relationship in the mean rating of male and female students on the influence of affective variables on the student's performance in English language.

The null hypothesis tested on the influence of affective variables on the student's performance in English language. Show that there was no significant relationship between the affective variables and the student's performance in English language. The result showed that t_{cal} 3.41 is greater than t_{cri} 1.960. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that there is a significant relationship. This means that affective variable influence student performance in English language.

5.8. There is no significance difference in rating male and female students on the psychomotor variable on secondary school student's performance in English language.

The null hypothesis tested on the psychomotor variables and students academic performance in English language showed that there was no significant relationship between psychomotor variables and students academic performance the result showed that t_{cal} value 5.56 is greater than t_{cri} 1.960. Therefore the null hypothesis H_{04} is rejected meaning that there is a significant relationship. This denotes that psychomotor variables affect student's performance in English language. Student's gender strongly affects gender mean rating on their academic performance, with girls performing better in the subjects of Mathematics, and English as well as cumulatively. Girls usually show more efforts leading towards better grades at school (Ceballo, McLoyd and Toyokawa, 2004). It is very important to have comprehensible understanding of the factors that benefit and hinder the academic progress of an individual's education.

5.9. Summary of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence learning variable on secondary student's performance in Abakaliki Education Zone. The research design employed in the study was descriptive, survey with random sampling adopted for data collection. Two hundred and fifty respondents were selected for the study.

The researcher developed instrument which was used for the study. The study has four research questions and hypothesis that guarded the research. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to proffer solution to the research question. To test the hypotheses the study applied t-test. Based on data analysis, the following were the findings. There was a significant on the individual difference on student's performance in English language. The finding also indicates difference in significant level between male and female students taught using cognitive variables. Similarly, the finding shows difference in significant level in mean score of students in their psychomotor variable. In the same vein, the finding revealed that significant difference exists between t-test value and t_{cal} value.

6. Conclusion

The research was aimed at identifying how learning variables influence secondary schools students' performance in English language in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State Nigeria. Information was gathered on how individual difference influence secondary school students performances, the relationship between students' learners background, mother tongue interference and students' self efficacy in students performance in English Language. Student's individual differences and background should be considered by teachers in order to make the students to perform better; they should be motivated using instructional media in class interaction during English language class.

Nature of the learning situation is the environment where the student acquires knowledge, attitude and skills that are necessary to meet the demands of life. The variables ranged from content to be transacted to the attitude of the students' learners' ability and interest in a particular discipline like English Language. The beliefs, the dedication, experience, involvement and qualification of the instructor, the teaching methods and material and the individual students differences appears to play a significant in learning of English Language.

The learning variables spur learners to understand their behaviour which will help them to know more about the use of English language. This study equal made it clear that there is no significant relationship in the mean score of male and female students on the influence of cognitive variables on secondary school student's performance.

Recommendations

In view of the findings, and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- The teachers in the field English Language should consider students individual differences.

- Appropriate policies should be designed by government to close the gap existing between the schools in the rural areas and to provide social facilities in order to improve the performance of the students.
- Regular workshops, seminars and training should be organised for secondary school teachers on how to improve the student's performance in English Language in Abakaliki education Zone of Ebonyi State.
- Schools and class library should be provided and stuffed with materials that can be of benefit to students.

Limitation of study

The limitations of the research are as follows

- The research used descriptive survey design which only allows a partial experimental control over the variable. However the use of t-test has minimized the effect.
- Some students not have interest in English language and it affects their ability in classroom interaction.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The following suggestions were made on how further studies could be carried out.

- This study should be replicated in other education zone to see if this same findings would be obtained,
- The study should be conducted using other design in order to strengthen the findings.
- This study can be carried out in other states in Nigeria with larger sample size.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no grant/financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately affected their report of the findings of this research.

Statement of informed consent

The participation was on voluntary basis and informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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