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Writing Anxiety, Knowledge of and Attitude to Yoruba Orthography as Correlates of Secondary Students' Achievements in Yoruba Essay Writing

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated secondary students' writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of Yoruba orthography as indicators of their achievement in Yoruba essay writing in the Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State. Three research questions were answered using the survey research design of the correlational type. Four hundred and twenty (420) Senior Secondary II students taking Yoruba in 12 purposively selected secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis responded to the four self-constructed instruments used. Data collected were analysed using the Pearson's Product Moment of Correlation (PPMC) and Multiple Regression Analysis at 0.05 level of significance. Writing anxiety ($r = .125$; $p < 0.05$) and knowledge of Yoruba orthography ($r = .147$; $p < 0.05$) had significant positive relationship with students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing while attitude to Yoruba orthography ($r = .084$; $p > 0.05$) had positive but non-significant relationship with students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. The joint contribution of the three independent variables was significant ($F(3; 407) = 4.848$; $Adj. R^2 = .027$; $p = .003 < 0.05$). However, the knowledge of Yoruba orthography ($Beta = .136$; $p = .006 < 0.05$) is the factor that had significant relative contribution to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. Therefore, students should endeavor to develop interest in and increase their knowledge of Yoruba orthography.

1. Introduction

Language is a means of both oral and written communication among humans. Language is important in a long-term literacy development, since the process of language development and acquisition is continuous and unending (Adeyinka & Akinsola, 2021). Therefore, the Yoruba Language curriculum for students in the

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senior secondary schools in Nigeria has emphasised the process of communicating through writing (Adeyinka & Ilesanmi, 2014). Yoruba essay writing is thus taught to students to make them develop adequate written communication skills in their indigenous language.

Yoruba essay writing involves putting together or conjoining different ideas which can stem out from life experiences, facts, statements, analysis, explanation and creativity which when put together correctly and appropriately communicate or give information in a satisfying manner (Adeyinka, 2014). Yoruba essay writing is taught diligently at the senior secondary school level. This is so basically because of its importance as one major mode of assessing each student's ability on the usage and knowledge of Yoruba language. To this end, teachers, students and even the school authority need to hold the teaching of Yoruba essay in high esteem. According to Abijo (2022: 2), the teaching and testing of Yoruba essay writing in Nigerian secondary schools is to develop in students the "ability to express themselves through writing in any of the forms, including; narrative, descriptive, argumentative/debate, exposition, letter, article, speech, report and creative writing."

To achieve the above stated objectives, the various rules involved in writing must be taught (Adeyinka & Ilesanmi, 2014). The rules revolve around the mode of constructing sentences, usage of appropriate words, correct usage of punctuation marks and tone marks, and appropriate usage of Yoruba orthography. These rules and many more are a guide to an acceptable way of writing essays in Yoruba language. The ability to instill into the learners these rules by the teachers is essential and will be of great benefit to the students. Another constituent of essay writing which the teacher ensures come to the understanding of the learners is the structure or format in which the essay is written or presented. According to Kolawole (1998), a standard essay consists of three sections – introduction, body and conclusion. These three sections can be split into five paragraphs or more depending on the writer's intuition, intelligence and ability to compose and create ideas which are meant to be merged in order to form the categorisation of the section expected of an appropriate essay (Adewale, Fatokun, Mabayoje & Yusuff 2010; Kolawole, 1998).

Observation shows that despite the teaching of essay writing as an important aspect of Yoruba Language in senior secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis, the results produced are often poor as against what the teachers anticipated. Most students had already lost interest in Yoruba Language both as a language and as a school subject (Kolawole, 2016; Akinsola & Adeyinka, 2020; Akinsola, 2023a; Akinsola, 2023b). Their inappropriate use of colloquial language, awkward phrasing and unconventional grammar, difficulty in structure and word order, trouble reading back what was written, inability to construct a complete sentence, inadequate knowledge of the rules of grammar, inability to make use of tone marks and poor knowledge of Yoruba orthography were reported by Yoruba Language teachers in some schools in Ibadan metropolis prior to this study. In response to these deficiencies, previous studies have indicted the conventional method of teaching Yoruba essay writing and proposed innovative strategies

(Abijo, 2019; Adeyinka & Ilesanmi, 2014). Some other studies have also found factors such as vocabulary and reasoning abilities (Abijo 2022); language proficiency and attitude (Adeyinka, 2014); linguistics abilities, attitude and gender (Abijo, 2012; Abijo; 2013) responsible for students poor writing skill in Yoruba and recommended the adequate consideration of such factors.

Despite the contributions of the previous studies mentioned from the foregoing, observations and reports from various examination bodies like the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), and the National Examination Council (NECO) revealed that the problems and deficiencies of students in Yoruba essay writing persists till recent years and research attention should be drawn to them. For instance, there was an unarguably emphasis in the WAEC Chief Examiner's Report (2019-2023) that candidates lacked proper understanding of some essay topics; wrote their essays using outdated/poor orthography; wrote using non/poor tone marks; were unable to write correct Yoruba words and spelling of terms; wrote illegibly; lacked in-depth knowledge of the phonological and grammatical aspects of the language (www.waeconline.org.ng/e-learning). Therefore, attention needs to be shifted to writing related factors such as writing anxiety and knowledge of and attitude to Yoruba orthography.

Writing anxiety means that a writer is experiencing negative feelings about a given task. It is also an apprehensive and pessimistic feeling about writing. Many students when faced with a writing task are anxious, disturbed and depressed such that they do not produce good composition afterwards. Therefore, writing anxiety can go a long way in influencing students' achievement in any writing task; just as Horwitz (2000) emphasizes that anxiety interfere with learning which results in a deficit outcome. This hypothesizes that the higher the level of writing anxiety a student have the lower the achievement such student is likely to obtain in a writing task (Sparks, Ganschow and Javorsky 1992). Studies (Hartono & Mega, 2020; Dela, Bambang & Fiftinova, 2018; Fakeye & Ohia, 2016; Cocuk, Yanpar-Yelken, & Ozer 2016) have reported a strong relationship between writing anxiety and students' achievement in essay writing mainly in the context of second and foreign language teaching. It is still empirically unknown how well writing anxiety can correlate with students' achievement in writing essay in their indigenous language, hence, the examination of the relationship between students' writing anxiety and achievement in Yoruba essay writing in this present study.

Writing is the act of encoding information using acceptable alphabets and punctuations of a given language. This makes orthography important to writing any language. By writing, someone can express a certain goal or intention to other people clearly so that readers can understand the meaning (Inayah,2024). Yoruba language orthography evolved in the 19th century and has seen then passed through series of development and innovation with the last and most current orthography established in 1974 (Makinde & Adetokun, 2022). Therefore, it is pertinent that secondary students are fortified with the adequate knowledge of Yoruba orthography and be positively disposed to following them if they will write excellent essay in Yoruba.

The knowledge of Yoruba Orthography is the amount of information students have about the standard way of writing Yoruba (Adetokun, 2018). Yoruba, being a tonal language, possesses a specialised orthography different from other African languages or even the English language (Adeyinka, 2019). It is very important that students master the art and act of writing Yoruba for them to achieve optimally in essay writing. The students that have proper knowledge of Orthography would have high level of confidence and hence show traits of competence in his writing. Studies (Oyeladun, Akinsola & Adeyinka, 2023) have only emphasised the effect of students' knowledge of tone marks as moderator variable in an intervention study directed towards improving students' achievement in Yoruba vocabulary. Another study by Adeyinka (2018) found home and school related factors responsible for students' achievement in Yoruba orthography. Owing to the strong link between orthography and writing, it is necessary to examine knowledge of Yoruba orthography as a factor that can determine students' achievement on Yoruba essay writing. Education is the most important factor in a person's life, because it can distinguish a person's ability to think (Bella, 2023).

Even with adequate knowledge of Yoruba Orthography, if students still display a high level of non-challant attitude towards the learning of Yoruba language and its orthography, they may not be able to produce excellent essay in Yoruba language. This makes students' attitude to Yoruba orthography another important variable of consideration in this study. Attitude is individual's mindset and disposition towards an object (Akinsola, 2023; Esimaje & Nnamani 2018). Over time, attitude has tested significant to the prediction of students' achievement in various aspects of Yoruba studies (Adeyinka, 2014). However, there exist a paucity of empirical evidence on the extent to which students' attitude to Yoruba orthography would indicate their achievement in Yoruba essay writing, hence, the need for this study.

Therefore, this study was carried out to examine writing anxiety, knowledge of and attitude to Yoruba Orthography as correlates of secondary students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between independent variables (writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of Yoruba orthography) and students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing?
2. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of Yoruba orthography) to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing?

What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of Yoruba orthography) to students' achievement in essay writing?

2. Methodology

This study adopted a correlational survey research design. Writing anxiety, Attitude to and Knowledge of Yoruba orthography were correlated with students' achievement in Yoruba Essay Writing in the Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. From the five local government areas in Ibadan metropolis, the simple random technique was used to randomly select three and then the purposive sampling technique was used to select four schools from each of the three local government areas selected. This made a total of 12 secondary schools selected using the following purposive criteria:

- i. Being a government-owned secondary school;
- ii. Being a school that has been presenting students for external examinations (WAEC and NECO) for at least 10 years;
- iii. Being a school that has at least two qualified Yoruba language teachers at the senior secondary arm;
- iv. Being a school that has more than 35 SS II students taking Yoruba;
- v. Being a school that agreed to participate in the study.

From each of these 12 school, the simple random sampling technique was used to select 35 SS II students taking Yoruba. In all, 420 SS II students taking Yoruba in secondary schools in the Ibadan metropolis were the respondents of this study. Four instruments used for data collection were:

- i. ***Students' Writing Anxiety Questionnaire:*** This questionnaire was constructed by the researcher to measure the level of students' writing anxiety in Yoruba. The questionnaire comprised 15 items, to which response was structured on the four-point scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).
- ii. ***Students' Attitude to Yoruba Orthography Questionnaire:*** This questionnaire was constructed by the researcher to measure the students' attitude to Yoruba Orthography. The questionnaire comprised 18 items, to which response was structured on the four-point scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).
- iii. ***Students' Knowledge Test on Yoruba Orthography:*** This instrument was designed to measure students' knowledge of the Yoruba Orthography and it comprised 20 items which was split into two categories. One category was designed to measure students' knowledge on Yoruba words and their spellings while the other category was designed to measure the students' knowledge on the Yoruba tonal system.
- iv. ***Students' Achievement Test in Yorùbá Essay Writing:*** This instrument was designed by the researcher to measure the students' achievement level in writing Yoruba essay and it comprised two essay type questions in which the students are required to answer just one in two hundred words. The two questions are: (a) Kọ àròkọ lórí “òrẹ̀ rẹ̀ tí o fẹ̀ràn jùlọ̀” (*Write an essay on “Your Best Friend”*). (b) Kọ lẹ́ta sí Ọ̀gá ilé-ẹ̀kọ̀ rẹ̀ láti fi idúnnú rẹ̀ hàn lórí ànfààní ẹ̀kọ̀-òfẹ̀ tí ó jẹ̀ (*Write a letter to your school*

principal, expressing your delight about the scholarship opportunity you were given).

All the instruments above went through face and content validity by experts after which they were trial tested on 20 students outside the geographical scope of the study. Their reliability coefficients were respectively 0.72, 0.80, 0.75 and 0.84. These values implied that the instruments were reliable in measuring what they purported to measure. Data collected using these instruments were analysed using both the descriptive and inferential statistics. Research question one was answered using inferential statistics of the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation while research questions two and three were answered using Multiple Regression Analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between independent variables (writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of Yoruba Orthography) and students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing? In Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of PPMC Result for the Relationship between Independent Variables and Students' Achievement in Yoruba Essay Writing

Variables	Achievement in Yoruba Essay	Knowledge of Yoruba Orthography	Attitude to Yoruba Orthography	Writing Anxiety
Achievement in Yoruba Essay	1			
Knowledge of Yoruba Orthography	.147* (.003)	1		
Attitude to Yoruba Orthography	.084 (.086)	.045 (.362)	1	
Writing Anxiety	.125* (.010)	.084 (.088)	.133* (.006)	1
Number of students	420	420	420	420
Mean	3.87	9.44	36.19	34.70
Std. Deviation	3.85	3.38	15.78	12.85

Table 1 shows the relationship that exists between the independent variables (writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of Yoruba Orthography) and students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing, using the Pearson's Product Moment correlation. The result indicates that students' achievement in Yoruba essay had a positive significant relationship with the students' knowledge of orthography ($r=.147$; $p<0.05$) and the level of the students' writing anxiety ($r=.125$; $p<0.05$) but a positive non-significant relationship with the students' attitude to Yoruba orthography ($r=.084$; $p>0.05$). This thus implies that there was a direct relationship between the students' knowledge of orthography, the students' attitude to orthography, the level of the students' writing anxiety and the students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing.

Research Question 2: What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of Yoruba Orthography) to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing? In Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of the joint contribution of the independent variables to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing

Model 1						
R = .186						
Adjusted R Square = .027						
Std. Error of the Estimate = 3.80						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	211.031	3	70.344	4.848	.003 ^b
	Residual	5905.996	407	14.511		
	Total	6117.027	410			

Table 2 shows the joint contribution of the three independent variables (writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of Yoruba Orthography) to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing using the Multiple Regression Analysis. The result indicates that the composite contribution of writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of Yoruba Orthography was significant to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing ($F_{(3;407)}=4.848$; $\text{Adj } R^2 = .027$; $p = .003 < 0.05$). This implies that the three independent variables, when pulled together, significantly contributed to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. In addition, the $\text{Adj } R^2$ of 0.027 implies that 2.7% variance in students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing was accounted for by the joint contribution of the three independent variables, while the remaining huge 97.3% could be due to other factors not included in this model.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of Yoruba Orthography) to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing? In Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of the Relative Contribution of the Independent Variables to Students' Achievement in Yoruba Essay Writing

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	1.585	.720			2.200	.028
Knowledge of Yoruba Orthography	.085	.030	.136		2.790	.006
Writing anxiety	.025	.015	.082		1.669	.096
Attitude to Yoruba Orthography	.018	.012	.071		1.450	.148

Table 3 shows the relative contribution of the three independent variables (writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of Yoruba Orthography) to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing, using the standardized coefficient beta weight. The result indicates that only knowledge of Yoruba Orthography (Beta = .136; $t=2.790$; $p=.006 < 0.05$) had significant relative contribution to students'

achievement in Yoruba essay writing. It can therefore be said that the students' knowledge of orthography is the variable that could individually determine students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing.

Discussion of Findings

There is a positive relationship between the independent variables (writing anxiety, attitude to and knowledge of orthography) and students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. Writing anxiety, as examined in this study, is one of the predictors of students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. A student with a relatively high level of anxiety is prone to experience poor achievement in essay writing because it often hinders such student from proper thinking having experienced some features of anxiety like trembling hands, inability to compose ideas and put them into writing on the essay topic given, feeling scared and agitated. As supported by Erkan and Saban (2011), students experience anxiety in writing because they are afraid to make writing errors because they will unintentionally try to avoid writing because of the fear of making mistakes. However, the finding of this present study is a radical departure from the norm, as writing anxiety had positive relationship with achievement in Yoruba essay writing. This implies that the more students were anxious, the more they performed in writing Yoruba essay. This could be connected with the need to pass writing in their indigenous language. Therefore, being anxious did not negatively affect them but rather geared them towards improving their writing skills in the Yoruba language. The students must have done this for indigenous language and identity pride (Olaosebikan & Akinsola, 2023).

Students' attitude to Yoruba orthography positively related to their achievement hence; it would be advantageous to the students to have a right and positive attitude towards Yoruba orthography. This was supported by Adeyinka (2014), who indicated that language proficiency and students' attitude are two potent predictors that can determine students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. It should be noted that the students' achievement is directly proportionate to the kind of disposition they have towards the said subject because students can only claim to be excellent and successful if their attitude and perception towards the subject is positive.

However, the result negated Abijo (2012) who stated that there was no significant main effect of attitude on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. While Abijo investigated the effect of attitude, this study was interested in the relationship between attitude to Yoruba orthography and students' achievement in essay writing. Attitude may generally not have effect on achievement in essay writing as Abijo's study found because there was no specificity about the attitude being referred to. However, in this present study, attitude to Yoruba orthography was the focus because orthography is an important nuance of writing in the Yoruba language. In Yoruba essay writing, the knowledge of orthography is very vital. This is because the orthography which includes tone marking and appropriate spelling of Yoruba words are the major constituents of Yoruba essay. If students have the knowledge of the topic given and has the ability to compose

ideas on the topic but lack the adequate knowledge of Yoruba orthography, such students would find it difficult to write excellent essay. Having the proper knowledge of Yoruba orthography would propell the student into having the right attitude and then perform well in the essay writing. Ojo (2006) supported this claim that many students have little or no knowledge of Yoruba orthography as a result of deprivation of the opportunity to learn it especially as their first language. This often occurs amidst the supposed native speakers who are the elites of the society. This deprivation has caused a depreciating interest in the minds of the students and so they believe they do not necessarily have to know the Yoruba orthography since emphasis was not laid on its importance. In addition, having the adequate proportion of knowledge of Yoruba orthography is characterised by various factors among which are the home language of communication, the school system and the student's level of enthusiasm to learn.

This study has established that there is a significant joint contribution of the knowledge of and attitude to Yoruba orthography and writing anxiety on students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. This therefore means that these three factors when combined can determine the level of students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. Any student with high knowledge of and positive attitude to Yoruba orthography coupled with low level of anxiety will perform better than a student without them. This is because orthography deals with writing. Abijo and Oyekanmi (2017) contributed to the result of the findings that factors can jointly determine the achievement of students by stating that the availability of material resources, parent subject perception and the school type are the possible factors which can predict students' performance.

However, knowledge of the Yoruba orthography was the variable found to have a significant relative contribution to students' achievement in Yoruba essay writing. This is due to the importance of orthography to writing in general. It is scholarly believed that the Yoruba language has a peculiar orthography with mandatory use of tone marks (Oyeladun, Akinsola & Adeyinka, 2023). Thus, a student with high level of orthographic knowledge may invariably have nothing to be anxious of and also may have a positive attitude towards it, because he or she would be confident in what and how to write. This is corroborated by Ojo (2006) that positive attitude fosters positive achievement of students. That is, a student with low level of knowledge can greatly increase in knowledge if such student exhibits readiness to learn by carrying out researches, attending classes and obeying the rule of language learning by reading, speaking and writing the language.

4. Conclusion

Essay writing in Yoruba language is largely dependent on students' knowledge of Yoruba orthography. Adequate knowledge of Yoruba orthography is germane as it is the sole determinant of students' achievement in essay writing. The proper knowledge of Yoruba orthography helps students to conquer their anxiety and encourages them to have a positive attitude to the writing of Yoruba essay. This study established that good knowledge of Yoruba orthography is essential for

students to have a high level of achievement in Yoruba essay writing. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- i. The students should endeavor to develop interest in the learning of Yoruba orthography.
- ii. The teachers should also employ various methods and instruments of teaching to effectively teach Yoruba orthography to enhance the students' knowledge.
- iii. The school should ensure that qualified language teachers are employed in order to teach the students all the components of Yoruba language appropriately.

Parents should endeavor to encourage the proper usage of Yoruba language in their homes.

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