



Parental Attitude to the Use of English of the Girl-Child: A Panacea for Crime against Women in Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The girl-child is the future mother, teacher and a potential nation builder. "Educate a girl and educate a nation" goes the saying. The role of the girl-child is unquantifiable but it is regrettable that the girl-child is faced with a host of unpardonable crimes against her and her innocence; Rape, forced marriage, forced labour, prostitution, trafficking, hawking, forced withdrawal from school, high illiteracy and poor attitude of parents to her use of English language because her education is not possible without it. Using spearman correlation coefficient, a weak positive correlation was found in the opinion of parents on their attitude towards the use of English of the girl-child. It was considered that negative attitude of parents was one of the problems towards the learning of English of the girl-child. Findings show that the negative attitude of parents inhibits the quantity and quality of the use of English of the girl-child. Thus the study recommends that government should as a matter of urgency educate parents on the need to have positive attitude towards the use English of the girl-child with a view to eradicating the various crimes against women so that the girl-child will develop the potentials in her and contribute her quota to national development.

Keywords: Girl-child, English language, parents, learning

INTRODUCTION

English is the leading language in many countries of the world today, including Nigeria. It is not just a national or an official language but also the most widely taught and learned language as well as the medium of instruction at all stages of education system all over the country. Osakwe (1999) opines that English Language has assumed irreplaceable roles in the country school system. Most Nigerian learners start learning English just from the very beginning of their education.

It is also known that parents play a major role in shaping their children's attitudes towards anything at all including language learning. Parents' attitudes toward language learning affect their children's success in the use of the language. Olumba (2012) submits that parents' negative attitude impede women education. Furthermore, Selma, Elyidirum & Sally, Ashton (2006) are of the opinion that in learning a foreign language negative attitudes of the society impede learning and conversely positive attitudes increase learning success. Many studies have indicated that parents play an important role in maintaining their children's language ability as well as in participating for the success of school and learning. Wong (2000) found out that parents serve an important language model for shaping children's language behaviour. Hence parents' behaviour and attitude influence their children's language learning development.

In the same vein, Oskamp (1977) comments that "a child's attitudes are largely shaped by his/her own experience with the world but this is usually accomplished by explicit teaching and implicit modelling of parental attitudes." He further explains that parents' roles affect their children's language development: "There are many other areas where the average child has no direct experience at all and in these areas, parental influence on the child's attitudes may be very great. Examples include attitudes towards foreigners, and towards other countries." Gardner (1975) even mentions the relationship between parental attitudes towards foreign language learning and the level of language proficiency achieved by the child as follows "Relationships between the parents' attitudes and the students' orientations suggest that the students' orientation grows out of a family-wide

orientation and consequently... the degree of skill which the student attains in a second language will be dependent upon the attitudinal atmosphere in the home.”

Attitude of Parents

Home environment and parents' role cannot be over emphasized in a child's all-round developments. Attitudes of a child towards things are built by the atmosphere of the home, relations of family members with the child. Parents are centre of all activities and a source of inspiration for their children and children imitate them. The influence parents have on their children can be active. They can play games, share video-cassettes and read books. Hayman, Johnson & Mayers (1964) stated that parents can be effective active supporters of their children's foreign language learning without themselves having skill in the foreign language. The attitudes of the parents are very important for their children in order to improve their English. Positive encouragement to learning in any field will lead to statistically higher levels of achievement.

Uchegbu et al (2012), also asserts that a child's socialization process begins with the family and whatever a child becomes in the larger society, can be linked to his/her family background. The role of parents in the education of any child is unquantifiable. More so, the family, being the first socializing agent that the child comes into contact with. The more educated the parents are, the more they will value the education of their children and provide him or her with the necessary materials that will facilitate learning and eventually culminate into academic achievement. Adamu & Afolabi (2009) opines that some parents do not have a reading culture. They only take pleasure in politics and in this type of home; the study habit of the students will be hindered.

In the same view Bulya (2006) believes that parents too pose a serious problem in this regard because they send their children to school without learning materials – text books pencil, exercise books, biros and some children attend classes with empty stomachs.

Language-learning environments

Young children find it more difficult to pick up English if they are not provided with the right type of experiences, accompanied by adult support using 'parents' techniques. Young children need to feel secure and know that there are some obvious reasons for using English. Activities need to be linked to some interesting everyday activities about which they already know, e.g. sharing an English picture book, saying a rhyme in English, and having an 'English' snack.

Activities are accompanied by adult language giving a running commentary about what is going on and dialogues using adjusted parents language. English sessions are fun and interesting, concentrating on concepts children have already understood in their home language. In this way children are not learning two things, a new concept as well as new language, but merely learning the English to talk about something they already know. Activities are backed up by specific objects, where possible, as this helps understanding and increases general interest.

Crime against Women

Crime against women is regrettably multifarious and alarming. The girl-child is faced with a host of unpardonable crimes against her: forced marriage, rape, prostitution, trafficking, hawking, illiteracy, forced withdrawal from school, poor attitude towards her education etc. It is important to say that a positive attitude to English language learning can help to eradicate these vices because English language is the engine room of educational development. Education brings enlightenment and awareness and when the girl-child is knowledgeable in the use of English, she can free herself from harmful cultural practices. Nko (1994) asserts that once a woman is educated, she is free from ignorance, slavery and intimidation. The prevalent upsurge of crime against women is simply unfathomable. Inability to give sound education to the girl child is criminal and no meaningful education without English language.

The Girl-Child and the English Language

Language is purely a human activity and not a peculiarity of any gender but scholars who have studied men and women in relation to language agree that girls do better in language than boys. Evanston (2002) opines that researchers have long agreed that girls have superior language abilities than boys. In the same vein, Leopold (2008) asserts that areas of brain associated with language work harder in girls than boys. It will then be a waste of potentials if the girl-child who has the aptitude to learn the language and use it for her well being is denied.

Statement of Problem

This study attempted to find out the attitude of parents towards the use of English Language of the girl-child and to find answers to the following research questions.

1. What is the attitude of parents towards the use of English by the girl-child?
2. Do the parents provide access to instructional materials in the use of English Language for the girl-child?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the attitude of parents and the learning of English Language of the girl-child.
2. There is no significant relationship between the attitude of parents and the quantity and quality of the use of English Language of the girl-child.

Significance of the Study

The results of the study will inform parents of the need to develop positive attitude in the use of English of the girl-child. The result of the findings will also help teachers and even the girl-child herself to use the English language to prevent the various crimes bedeviling her.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research designed adopted by the researcher for the study was survey design. The researcher adopted the percentages (descriptive statistics for the research questions and chi square inferential statistics) to test the hypotheses.

Population Sample

The population of the study consisted of all parents in all the secondary schools in the study area. However, the population was considered too large; so, ten parents were selected from each of the five junior and senior secondary schools used for this study using stratified random sampling technique. From each junior secondary school, four parents were randomly selected while six were selected in the senior secondary making a total sample of 50 parents in all.

Research Instrument

A-20 item questionnaire designed by the researchers was the instrument used to collect relevant data on a two point likert scale of Agree and Disagree. A section of the questionnaire also demanded for demographic data like gender, age, profession. The draft version of the instrument was given to two colleagues in the field of educational evaluation to scrutinize and comment on its face and content validity. The corrected version of the instrument based on the comments of the experts was administered to 50 parents having girl-child in junior and senior secondary schools with similar characteristics to those of the target sample. The reliability of the instrument was determined by using Crookback Alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained and was considered good enough for this study. The instrument was personally administered and it elicited information from major areas.

Data Analysis

An item by item analysis of the questionnaire responses was carried out. The number of respondents who picked the same type of responses was counted then the result of each group was computed using percentages for the research questions and spearman rank correlation for the hypotheses.

RESULTS

The results of the analysis in table 1 show that 60% of the parents do not believe in the education of the girl child. The girls were not exposed to English Language before admission into the school while most of the parents do not speak English Language to their daughters at home. Also, the parents do not encourage their daughters to write essay at home. 70% of the parents do not have time to go through the English notes of their

daughters and help where necessary. The parents do not encourage their daughters to take part in quiz and debate in the school. It was also revealed that 68% of the girl-child likes English as a subject but they are not able to write English very well. This is because they do not read English novels at home. These show that attitude of parents towards the use of English of the girl-child is poor.

Question 1: What is the attitude of parents towards the use of English of the girl-child?

Table 1: Attitude of parents towards the use of English of the girl-child

S/N	ITEMS	Agree	(%)	Disagree	(%)	Decision
1	I believe in the education of the girl child	20	40	30	60	Disagreed
2	My girls were exposed to English Language before admission into the school	19	38	31	62	Disagreed
3	I speak English to my daughters at home	15	30	35	70	Disagreed
4	I encourage my daughters to write essay at home	20	40	30	60	Disagreed
5	I regularly go through the English notes of my daughter and help where necessary	15	30	35	70	Disagreed
6	I am very strict with my daughters	21	42	29	58	Disagreed
7	I have time attend to my daughters at home	15	30	35	70	Disagreed
8	I instruct my daughters to listen to English programmes on the radio	24	48	26	52	Disagreed
9	I encourage my daughters to take part in quiz and debate in the school	24	48	26	52	Disagreed
10	My daughters like English as a subject	34	68	16	32	Agreed
11	My daughters write good English	24	48	26	52	Disagreed
12	My daughters regularly read English novels at home	20	40	30	60	Disagreed
13	My daughters are punctual at school	30	60	20	40	Agreed
14	The girl-child does not have a prospect with English Language	35	70	15	30	Agreed

The result of analysis in table 2 shows that 56% of the girl-child use educative English toys at home, 58% did not have access to educative media at home but when taught English language, they respond adequately to instructions in English. 82% of the girl-child did not watch educative programmes in English on the television and 70% have no recommended English textbooks. These results imply that the girl-child has no access to instructional materials in the use of English Language.

Question 2: Do the parents provide access to instructional materials in the use of English Language for the girl-child?

Table 2: Girl-Child access to instructional materials in the use of English Language

S/N	Items	Agree	(%)	Disagree	(%)	Decision
1	My daughters use educative English toys at home	28	56	22	44	Agreed
2	My daughters have access to educative media at home	21	42	29	58	Disagreed
3	My daughter respond adequately to instructions in English	29	58	21	42	Agreed
4	My daughters watch educative programmes in English on the television	9	18	41	82	Disagreed
5	My daughters have the recommended English textbook	15	30	35	70	Disagreed

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the attitude of parents and the learning of English Language of the girl-child.

Table 3: Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient for Parents’ Attitude and Learning of English of the Girl-Child

Variables	N	r-calculated	r-table
Parents’ Attitude	50	-0.202	0.160
English Language learning			

P<0.05 (Result not significant)

The result of analysis in table 3 shows that the coefficient of the correlation (-0.202) is less than the level of significance (0.160). This makes hypothesis 1 to be accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between the attitude of parents and the learning of English Language of the girl-child.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between the attitude of parents and the quantity and quality of the use of English Language of the girl-child.

Table 4: Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient for Parents’ Attitude and quantity and quality of the use of English Language of the Girl-Child

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
Parents’ Attitude (1)	1		
Quality in the Use of English (2)	0.099	1	
Quantity in the Use of English (3)	0.095	-0.225	1

The result of analysis in table 5 shows that the relationship between parents’ attitude and the quality in the use English is very low. Also, the relationship between parents’ attitude and the quantity in the use English is also low. The r-coefficients of the correlation for quality and quantity against parents’ attitude are 0.099 and 0.095 respectively. These values are less than the level of significance (0.495 and 0.116). This makes hypothesis 2 not to be rejected. Hence, there is no significant relationship between the attitude of parents and the quantity and quality of the use of English Language of the girl-child.

DISCUSSION

Findings in Table I showed that the attitude of parents towards the use of English language of the girl child is very poor. Most of the parents do not believe in the education of the girl- child. These poor attitudes of parents often discourage the girl-child from showing interest in the learning of English Language. They hardly speak the language at home and have no time to go through the English notes of their girl -child. The result of the

findings was in line with the findings of Selma, Elyidirun and Sally, Ashton (2006) that negative attitude of parents towards the learning of foreign language impede learning among students. Also, the study of Wong (2000) showed that parents serve an important language model for shaping children's language behavior. Hence, parent's behavior and attitude influence their children's language learning development.

Furthermore, the result of analysis in table 2 revealed that parents do not provide access to instructional materials on the use of English language for the girl-child. The girl-child does not have access to educative media such as educative programmes in English on television and recommended textbooks. This has contributed significantly to inability of the girl child to develop language learning in English. This is corroborated by the findings of Obadare and Deji-Afuye (2011) that appropriate media for the teaching of English language is very essential as it allows for individualistic learning. Models for teaching listening skills, pronunciation of words, stress and intonation patterns are provided through the media. The learning of English language becomes difficult when all these educative media are not provided by the parents.

Table 3 further shows that there is no significant relationship between parents' attitude and the learning of English Language of the girl-child. The attitude of parents is very important for their children in order to improve their English. According to Uchegbu (2012) positive encouragement to learning in any field will lead to statistically higher levels of achievement.

Parents' attitude in both the quantity and quality of the use of English language of the girl-child was also revealed in Table 4 to be poor. The study correlated with the findings of Adamu & Afolabi (2009) that some parents do not have reading culture; this poor study habit has hindered them from developing their children in both quantity and quality in the use of English language. Obadare (2007) opines that students do not make deliberate efforts to speak English. They speak their mother tongue always. She adds that English language can only be learnt by speaking it always.

CONCLUSION

Acquisition of competence in the use English by the girl-child is not accidental but deliberate and is hinged on positive attitude of parents which if effectively utilized can be effectively used to curb the various criminal activities against women. Obadare (2014) submits that students' inability to comprehend the English language will automatically affect the whole system of education. According to Uchegbu (2012) a child socialization process begins with the family and whatever a child becomes in the larger society can be likened to his kind of family background. Nko (1994) asserts that once a women is educated she is free from the handcuff of ignorance, slavery and intimidation but suffice it to say that English Language is the gateway to education

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parents and guardian of the girl-child must encourage her to use the English Language.
2. The girl-child must be conscious of her innate ability to learn the English Language and use it.
3. The girl-child must be exposed to the use of the four language skills.
4. A student's success is directly related to his/her reading ability so the girl-child must be encouraged to read novels, story books, newspapers, magazines written in standard English.
5. Parents should provide the girl-child with linguistically rich environment.
6. Parent should develop positive attitude towards the use of English of the girl-child when the girl child is academically empowered, she will be free from the various crimes against her.

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