

# CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENT IN LANGUAGE LEARNING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

English as a Second Language (ESL) students in Nigeria lack access to interact with the native speakers of English, but with co-curricular activities they can be good speakers of English language. This paper investigates the impact of co-curricular activities out-side the classroom on Secondary School Students' achievement in Nigeria. Out-of-classroom events can be devised by schools to make students feel that they are surrounded by the language if they participate in active use of the language among themselves during activities like games, debating, press updates, social gathering, etc. The variables that were considered in the study were Press club and Literary and Debating society, the involvement period, and their academic achievement. Eight out of 17 secondary schools were randomly selected with one hundred students from each school. The questionnaires for the data collection relate students' personal data and twelve questions on press club and literary and debating society. The mock examination results show that there is a positive significant influence in co-curricular activities on senior secondary school students' academic achievement in English. The result of this study shows that students who spend longer time in participating in the activities perform tremendously better than other students who spend less time or do not participate at all in the activities in English, and they perform academically better as well and speak English language fluently.

**Keywords:** Co-curricular activities, Academic achievement, English Language Teaching, English as a Second Language (ESL)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The context where learning takes place plays vital role in successful learning of language, and this is a true situation of learning a language. According to Pickard (1996), the role of language out of classroom activities is often mentioned by researchers, but to explore it for developing language learning is not given the right attention. In addition, a lot of strategies that are necessary for outside classroom language learning by students have been formulated by Rubin (1975), Naiman *et al* (1978), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990).

English language in Nigeria context plays a significant role in the education system in Nigeria, especially at both post-primary and tertiary levels. It not only acts as the medium of instruction but also is treated as a compulsory subject offered to all. Thus, the curriculum guidelines set for the teaching of English language in secondary schools have been designed generally towards the achievement of high level of proficiency in the Nigerian students' use of English language (Federal Ministry of Education (FME), 1985). Since English language is the prime subject to all other subjects taught in schools, there is crying need to be proficient in it, especially with country where there is no direct contact with the native speaker. Over the years, tremendous efforts have been made to ensure its (English) effective teaching and learning in schools in Nigeria. Unfortunately, these efforts have not yielded much result as most students still fail in their West Africa Examination

Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) examinations.

Years back, concentration was focused on intrapersonal determinants of school achievement to the detriment of external determinants while there is increasing evidence to show that cognitive abilities explain only limited part of the variance in academic achievement of students (Olasheinde, 1999). Developmental psychologists recognize the fact that during adolescence, children become conscious of being involved in social relationships with practical significance and with sentimental ideals. Rubin (1975) and Naiman *et al.* (1978) identify some learning activities that learners of second or foreign language need to get involved in to have efficient acquisition of the target language. Such activities include reading story books, magazines, newspapers, as well as listening to tape recorder, English music, films writing pen-friends where interacting with native speakers is rare.

Following Bialystok (1981)'s model of the role of conscious strategies of learning second language (functional practice), one can say that the mentioned out of classroom activities help in improving the performance of students, and it is believed that if co-curricular activities are well supervised, they can make learners responsive and competent in the target language as a result of constant practice. Receptive and efficient students will be familiarized with the sociolinguistic rules that will help them function within and outside the Nigerian cultural context, and they will be proficient in the four basic language skills, such as listening, speaking,

reading and writing. Huang and Naerssen (1987) and Pickard (1996) carry out similar research on the functional practice in developing oral communication of second language learners, and they find out that learners who are involved in functional practice perform extremely well in oral communication as they get involved in speaking with other students frequently; reading, watching films and TV program help them to think and talk in English language.

The question of this research is whether involvement in out-of-classroom activities has significant impact on students' academic achievement in English. The aim of the paper is to explore the effects of the mentioned activities on Senior Secondary School Students' achievement in English language learning in Nigeria.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Press, literary and debating activities are ways of presenting information in the form of spoken words, dialogue, discussion interview, commentary and dramatized sense. Researchers like (Pickard, 1996; Cheung, 2001; Olasheinde, 1999; Lawal, 2006; Bialystok, 1981; Naiman *et al.*, 1987) and a host of others agree that students are only motivated to learn things that are important and meaningful to them. The Ministry of Education of Nigeria also believes that co-curricular activities for schools are ways to install active social interaction, leadership role, self-discipline and self confidence in them. Through out-of-classroom activities, students learn character building lessons that they can

apply to their study habits and lives. Activities, such as literary and debating society, press club and other social groups teach students how to discipline themselves through drills, practices or rehearsals. As school activities, students have responsibilities to the activities and must participate and perform any task assigned to them whether it is writing a report, news or debating a topic; therefore, such students gain a sense of self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence.

Although social aspects of a student's life do not directly affect their academic achievement, they do affect the overall performance of the students. Learning is not only achieved through reading books, but also can be learnt from peers through out-of-classroom activities. Students learn how to compromise and work in a group and interact with people who are not within their close group. Press club in school helps to improve the level of interaction among students; it also develops the skills of writing and preserves the norms and values of the school. It improves the intellectual activities by promoting learning environment. Press club creates an exciting, entertaining and creative environment in school, thereby improving writing and speaking abilities for proficiency and efficiency in the use of English language.

A study carried out by Hafiz and Tudor (1989) shows that experimental group of second language learners who have spent three months reading for pleasure for one hour per day, make significant levels of improvement in all language tests. In other words, learners of English language who are exposed to extensive reading and listening have shown substantial

improvement in linguistic proficiency skills in English language as a second language. Cheung (2001) also emphasizes the importance of newspaper in language learning by saying that newspapers are among the relevant texts used in the classroom. Newspaper is the language enrichment material, and it is easy to adopt, mark, cut, paste and discard easily. In other words, reading and debating issues in novels, newspapers and magazines help to widen the students' knowledge and use of the language unconsciously. Ferron (1975) and Bergencico & Vicomi (2013) posit that reading books and student involvement in extracurricular and co-curricular activities has been the most accessible recreational activities with positive link to many aspects of academic success in GPA, retention, language use and confidence building in students and for children in developing countries.

### **Problems of teaching and learning English as a Second Language (ESL)**

English as a second language and as a compulsory subject is taught in schools in Nigeria. Adeyanju (1978) associates the poor performance in the subject is due to poor teaching method while Banjo (1996) asserts that the language is not professionally taught at the primary and secondary levels, and the poor background knowledge is later transferred to tertiary institutions. Adeyanju (1978) and Banjo (1996) further note that at every level of education the failure rate in the subject is widespread and encompasses complaints about the low level of communicative

competence even among university students.

Inadequate facilities, like language laboratory, enough classrooms, poor sitting arrangement, poor teaching aids, etc. are problems associated with the teaching/learning of English language in most schools, especially when more students are admitted than the facilities on ground and then congestion is observed in the classrooms. According to Akindolu *et al.* (2010), over population in the classroom does not make students concentrate while lesson is going on and could serve as constraint for verbal performance of the learners. Only few students may contribute verbally during lesson while others are passive learners instead of being active learners. The use of language teaching activities is an effective way of teaching. Unfortunately, most schools do not involve students in activities like listening to radio/tape recorder, television set and most importantly in language laboratory.

Another problem of teaching/learning English as a second language is the instructor. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria on National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004), there is no educational system that can rise above the quality of its teacher. Therefore, incompetence and laziness on the part of the teachers can be a problem in the teaching/learning of language as some teachers lack proper approach, initiatives and good motivational technique which could lead to students' poor performance. NPE also has suggested that all teachers should be professionally trained and equipped for the task ahead of them and be prompt for effective performance of their duties.

Unavailability of textbooks (Opeke, 2002) constitutes an impediment to English learning in the country because they are scarce and their scarcity is not in terms of the limited number of books available but is not available to the learners due to the harsh economic situation. Lawal (2002) observes that no single textbook can satisfy the needs of a class of students from different linguistic backgrounds, and this constitutes problem for publishers in preparation of textbooks and syllabus in a multi-lingual situation, like Nigeria. Ubahakwe (1979) points out that selected language books should be well and properly examined, analyzed and evaluated before, selected for use in the classroom.

In addition, students themselves constitute problem in the teaching/learning English as a second language. Learning needs self-determination, concerted effort, perseverance and endurance which students of today lack (Jimoh, 2009). The relationship between students to teachers and students to students add to the academic performance of students in any learning situation. Teachers should have inherent sensitivity to other people, gain sympathy of his students and adopt an intuitive flexibility that distinguishes him/her as a good teacher. Therefore, if a teacher is insensitive, authoritarian and rigid, his students will learn less effectively in an unhappy environment. On the other hand, students should be unreservedly submissive to the guidelines provided through the school curriculum, the instructional personnel and the learning resources for effective and efficient teaching/learning situation.

Finally, at home, the parents are not left out in the problem of teaching/learning English as a second language. The economic and educational status of parents seem to influence the performance of students in language learning. Hurluck (1990) is of the opinion that parents of high educational status equip home with facilities that encourage learning and creativity in the children. In support of this view, Ojie (2007) asserts that parents' occupational status contribute significantly towards students' academic performance. Therefore, students from poor and uneducated homes might perform poorly in the subject because the school may be their first place of contact with the language due to the environment they come from.

### **Factors Promoting the Learning of English as a Second Language**

Teachers play a vital role in the teaching/learning of English as a second language. Alfred (1999) emphasizes the role of the teachers in assisting students through the use of newspaper, magazines, novel, and other prints as a source of deviating from oral discussions and by seriously addressing students' attitudes and motivation, and they play an important role in propelling students to achieving success. Teachers should be prepared to teach as expected and face the task decently, read for proper grooming and be motivated while performing their duties. Teachers of English language at this level should have minimum of first degree in the subject and should have experience before they can be allowed to teach. Therefore, English

language teachers must have adequate knowledge of language theories and methodologies of teaching and should be encouraged to go for service training.

The introduction of reading and writing workshop, literary discussion and participation in cooperative learning groups give room for students to communicate with other students, share ideas and gain confidence with books and other printed materials. In other words, teachers should select materials that appeal to the learners both culturally and linguistically. The study of literature is another factor that promotes the learning of English language. According to Emenanjo (2003), literature is an exercise of the mind and intellect which emanates from one's desire to narrate stories, and relates using words creatively to expose aspects of the experiences of mankind. Literature is language in use is a tool for teaching English language in a second language situation. It facilitates the acquisition of grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing, all of which are taught in English language class. Yusuf (2004) contends that students of literature have the opportunity to improve their sentence construction since they are able to see how sentences unite and cohere and their use in written and oral communication. Bright and McGregor (1970) are also of the view that where there is little reading, there will be little language. Therefore, students who study literature would be exposed to stylistic uses of language. The study of literature suggests enhancing better performance in English language examinations. Aderemi (1997) in one of his studies confirms that students who study

literature in English performs better in English than those who are not offered the subject. So students should be encouraged to read extensively for better performance in the language and should be prepared to work to attain success.

Motivation is a factor that can facilitate the teaching/learning of English in our society. Aliyu (2002) asserts that learners need both instrumental and integrative types of motivation. Most students do not understand why they have to pass well in English language. There is no motivation from both the parents and government to gear up their interest in learning, so for students to perform well in the subject, they should be sensitized on the importance of English all over the world. More authors and writers should be recognized and appreciated by selecting their works for use. The habit of reading should also be cultivated in students at the secondary school level since most of them enter school with varied backgrounds and little knowledge in reading. In other words, the four types of reading should be taught alongside with listening so that they can be aware and use them as a way of learning and relearning.

Increasing inter-marriage across ethnic groups is another factor that promotes the teaching and learning of English language in the Nigeria. It is such a situation where both parents could not speak each other's language, and English language becomes inevitably the language of their children. Such children go to standard schools where the target language is mainly the language of instruction. The anxiety of some illiterate parents to Western education also helps to promote the learning of English language

because such parents would do anything to help them speak English language as a sign of pride and encourage them to learn English. Therefore, the socio-economic status of parents have influence in promoting learning among students by providing the necessary facilities that enhance learning, and students from such homes do less household duties that can take most of their leisure time; as a result, they are more active in the activities carried out in school. Hillock (1981) as cited by Yusuf (2004) agrees that the amount of play time of children depends primarily on the family's economic status.

According to Bello (2002), gender stereotyping is a social phenomenon through which fixed or standardized roles are ascribed to male and female by the society through socialization process. In every society there are gender roles to be acquired among other roles. Gender roles set the pattern according to which individual male and female is to act in a given situation. For instance, a male child in most societies, including Nigeria must learn to be competitive, aggressive and full of ambition in direct contrast to female child that is expected to be gentle, submissive and less ambitious; all these have part to play in students' academic achievement. Bello (2002) concludes by saying that male uses language effectively to oppress female and control her behavior, but the full participation of both male and female students in language learning is a prerequisite for production of the required quality and efficiency needed for proficiency and sustainable development in the society.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The question of this research deals whether the involvement in co-curricular activities has significant impact on students' academic achievement in English. The option emanated from this study reviews that curricular activities in secondary schools are highly desirable. The following hypotheses (HO) were generated to find out whether students' participation in co-curricular activities has significant influence on senior secondary school students' academic achievement:

**HO 1:** Co-curricular activities have no significant influence on senior secondary school students' general academic achievement in English language.

**HO 2:** The periods of involvement in co-curricular activities have no significant influence on senior secondary school student's academic achievement in English language.

**HO 3:** Co-curricular activities have no significant influence on male students' academic achievement in English language.

**HO 4:** Co-curricular activities have no significant influence on female students' academic achievement in English language.

### **Instrument**

A research-made questionnaire tagged students' co-curricular activities (SCAQ) is used for data collection on the level of participation in press club and literary and debating societies, the level of involvement by students and the school administration. Eight secondary schools were randomly selected from seventeen Government and

**Table 1:** Pearson analysis shows the influence of co-curricular activities on senior secondary school students’ academic achievement.

Table 1 Pearson analysis of co-curricular activities

	Frequency	Mean	Standard deviation	Degree of freedom	Calculated t-value	Calculated r-value
Co-curricular activities	800	3.454	2.449	79.8	.905	.062
Students’ academic achievement in English	800	6.110	3.88			

P < 0.05

grant aided schools in Ilorin West and a sample of 800 senior secondary year students from the eight selected schools were involved in the study from Nigeria. Hypotheses 1, 3 and 4 were tested with the use of Pearson Product Movement Correlation Statistic and hypothesis 2 is tested with the use of t-test statistical technique, each at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

**HO1:** Co-curricular activities have no influence on senior secondary school students’ general academic achievement in English language.

Pearson analysis shows the influence of co-curricular activities on senior secondary school students’ academic achievement.

### Significance

The result in table 1 indicates that the calculated t-value 0.905 is greater than the

calculated r-value 0.062 with 79.8% degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis one is rejected and shows the meaning that there is a significant influence of co-curricular activities on senior secondary school students’ academic achievement in English language in Nigeria.

**HO2:** the period of involvement in co-curricular activities has no significant influence on senior secondary school students’ academic achievement in English language. The period of involvement in co-curricular activities on the students’ academic achievement is shown in Table 2.

Hypothesis-2 shows that the calculated t-value 2.610 is greater than critical r-value 1.906 with 798 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. Thus the hypothesis is rejected and shows that there is a significant influence of the periods of involvement in co-curricular activities on senior secondary school students’ academic achievements in English language.

Table 2: Period of involvement in co-curricular activities

	Frequency	Mean	Standard deviation	Degree of freedom	Calculated t-value	Calculated r-value
Less than one year	115	2.09	2.10	798	2.610	1.906
More than one year	685	3.55	2.49			

P<0.05

**HO3:** Co-curricular activities have no significant influence on male students' academic achievement in English language. Pearson's analysis is showing the influence of male students' involvement in co-curricular activities on their academic achievement.

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value 0.739 is greater than the critical r-value 0.139 with 239 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance of male involvement in co-curricular activities on their academic achievement in English language. Therefore, there is a significant influence of male involvement in co-curricular activities on their academic achievement.

Table 3: Influence of male students' involvement in co-curricular activities on their academic achievement.

	Frequency	Mean	Standard deviation	Degree of frequency	Calculated t-value	Calculated r-value
Male co-curricular activities	241	4.900	2.394	239	.239	.139
Male academic achievement	241	4.485	2.113			

P<0.05

**HO 4:** Co-curricular activities have no significant influence on female students' academic achievement in English language.

Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value .826 is greater than the critical r-value 0.088 with 557 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level. In other words, there is a significant influence of female involvement in co-curricular activities on their academic achievement in English language.

### Summary of the Findings

Based on the result of the findings, the following summary is made:

- There is a significant influence of co-curricular activities on senior secondary

Table 4: Influence of female students’ involvement in co-curricular activities on their academic achievement.

	Frequency	Mean	Standard deviation	Degree of frequency	Calculated t-value	Calculated r-value
Female co-curricular activities	559	2.943	1.051	557	.826	.088
Their academic achievement	559	2.310	1.020			

P<0.05

school students’ academic achievement in English language.

- There is a significant influence of the period of involvement in co-curricular activities on senior secondary school students’ academic achievement in English language.

- There is a significant influence in male students’ participation in co-curricular activities on senior secondary school students’ academic achievement in English language.

- There is also significant influence of female students’ participation in co-curricular activities on senior secondary school student’s academic achievement.

### Discussion

From the findings of this research, it is revealed that there is significant influence on students’ participation in co-curricular activities and their academic achievement. HO1 shows high correlation of 0.905 between co-curricular activities, and students’ high correlation could be attributed to the following;

For instance, item 1 which states how frequent students participate in co-

curricular activities has 607 number, which is picked by 75.9% of the respondents, and they tick ‘always and often’ and the mean score is of 9.26%. This is followed by item 2 which states how often the activities were carried out in school. This item is picked by 612 (76.5%) of the respondents who tick ‘always and often’ while item 6 which states how frequent the school debate is has the score of 562 (70.3%) respondents who pick it.

The result of this study, therefore, reveals that literary and debating society and press club were the most attractive and active co-curricular activities in many schools in Nigeria. This findings support previous work done in this area (Olasheinde, 1999; Pickard, 1996; Naiman *et al.*, 1978).

HO2 reveals that the period of involvement in co-curricular activities have significant influence on students’ academic achievement and it indicates that 685 out of 800 respondents were members of co-curricular activities, and items 5, 6, 10 & 11 show the frequency in students’ involvement in co-curricular activities. 546 (68.3%), 562 (70.3%), 500 (62.6%) and 486 (60.7%) respondents pick ‘always and

often' which show their levels of involvement in literary and debating society and press club. In agreement with this finding, Hafiz and Tudor (1989) attest that second language learners who spend more time in reading and listening for pleasure will have significant level of improvement in all the language skills. Olajide (2004) also affirm that lovers of literacy and extracurricular activities should embark on schemes that would promote reading not only in Nigerian schools but also in other colleges all over the world. Therefore, students who were exposed to extensive reading, listening and speaking will substantially improve in their linguistic proficiency skills in English language.

HO 3 & HO 4 show that gender difference in co-curricular activities as related to sampled schools; 241 (30.1%) of the respondents were male while 559 (69.9%) were female in the eight selected schools for the study. School type facilitates effective learning among students, and this is evident in the difference in performance of students in Mock examination results in the different schools. Items 7, 8 & 9 which reflected students interest in writing and reading news on the assembly ground reveal that 540 (67.6%), 432 (54%) and 443 (55.4%) respectively pick 'always and often'. These show that both male and female students were active members of literary and debating society as well as press club in the selected schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has revealed the participation of students in co-curricular

activities in schools in Ilorin, Nigeria. It also has revealed the influence of students' involvement in literary and debating society and press club on their academic achievement in senior secondary school.

The relevance of co-curricular activities to the overall language and social needs of students at school has been emphasized by the results of the present study. The research equally finds out that the level of participation of students in co-curricular activities is high. The responses of students in the 8 selected schools on the items of the questionnaire show the existence of the activities in the schools and the majority of the students were members of literary and debating societies and press clubs. It also reveals that students that spend most of their time at home listening to radio and television programs perform better in the language.

## **Recommendations for schools**

Schools principals and teachers should be actively involved in co-curricular activities of the school to enable the students benefit and improve their proficiency in the use of the target language. Constant organization of the activities will attract more students as members.

Also, co-curricular activities that aid language learning will be of immense benefit to students in the secondary schools if the activities are included in the school programs and necessary facilities are provided to motivate students to actively participate so as to improve their ability to manipulate the language effectively. Equally emphasis should be placed on the need for teachers of English language and

school management to be active in the organization of the school activities for positive results both in academic and social development of students.

### Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher suggests that similar studies should be carried out in other Local Government Areas in the states of the nation and across other countries. Future researchers should look into other aspects of co-curricular activities in schools to give clearer picture of the difference between co-curricular activities and students' academic achievement. This study only examined the influence of press club and literary and debating society on language learning. Further research can focus on the influences of quiz competitions, writing competitions, sport activities and use of other channels such as Internet, TV, radio etc. on language learning.

Also, similar studies should focus on other levels of education to determine the relevance of the activities on students' language learning especially where students have now close access with the native speakers.

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