Online ISSN : 2249-460X
Print ISSN : 0975-587X
DOI : 10.17406/GJHSS

GLOBAL JOURNAL

OF HUMAN SOCIAL SCIENCES: G

Linguistics & Education

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Discovering Thoughts, Inventing Future

Volume 16 ISSUE 8 VERSION 1.0

Global Journal of Human-Social Science: G
Linguistics & Education

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Linguistics & Education

Volume 16 Issue 8 (Ver. 1.0)

Open Association of Research Society

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Employer Identification Number (EIN):
USA Tax ID: 98-0673427

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Contents of the Issue

Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: G
Linguistics & Education
Volume 16 Issue 8 Version 1.0 Year 2016
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Teaching the Listening Skill in Greek Secondary Education

By Evanthia Avgerou
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Abstract- The present assignment aims at: 1) critically approaching the skill of listening as it is taught in the Greek State Secondary Education in the framework of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in state Junior High Schools. This critical study of the skill of listening is of particular interest since EFL books for use in State Junior High Schools have only been recently introduced by the Greek Pedagogical Institute in Greek Secondary Education and 2) creating an authentic-in nature listening input followed by original tasks made by a teacher of EFL in a State Junior High School so as to be consistent with the criteria that are applicable to the skill of listening in modern Applied Linguistics.

Keywords: *listening skill, secondary education, authentic-in-nature, original tasks.*

GJHSS-G Classification: *FOR Code: 930299*

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

Teaching the Listening Skill in Greek Secondary Education

Evanthia Avgerou

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keywords: listening skill, secondary education, authentic-in-nature, original tasks.

Part One: Description of Teaching Situation with Regard to the Teaching of Listening in Greek Junior High Schools/ Teaching Listening from Class Coursebok

The teacher's present teaching situation involves learners in the 1st grade of Junior High School in Akrata, Achaia. The teaching situation should be placed in Kachru's *expanding circle*, that is, English taught as a foreign language (as cited by Sifakis, Georgountzou and Hill, 2004). The level of students can be defined as B1 *'Independent User', 'Threshold',* according to the categorization of the Common European Framework (CEF). Taking into account Woodward's descriptive parameters (as cited by Sifakis et al., 2004) the class profile could be roughly sketched as follows:

- Number of learners: 18
- Sex ratio: 15 girls and 3 boys
- Age range: 12-13 years old
- Mother tongue: Greek , Albanian, thereby defining the class as *multilingual* and *intercultural* , according to Lytra (as cited by Sifakis et al., 2004).
- Other languages learners speak: French, German.
- Target language level: B1 *'Independent User', 'Threshold'.* The level was specified after a placement test at the beginning of the school year.
- Learners' perception of their own confidence: Learners are highly motivated and willing to achieve best performance in class.
- Profession and/or other interests: Most students are interested in sports, music, TV, travel. Therefore, most course book topics are appealing to them.
- Books and materials currently and previously used: 'Think Teen' 1st Grade of Junior High School Προχωρημένοι. The book is part of an ambitious project by the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs to introduce new teaching materials for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in state schools with the aim to: ' acquire basic knowledge, skills and communication strategies that will enable the learners to function efficiently in various linguistic and cultural environments, developing their personality through topics that emphasize social development and integrate with knowledge from other school subjects'. (Karayianni, Koui and Nikolaki, 2009).
- Learners' target situation: Learners are taught English for No Obvious Reason (TENOR), only as part of the school curriculum.
- Other commitments during the course-View of the course: The learners are quite relaxed during classes, they are consistent with their homework and have a positive attitude towards English since it can be applied to real-life situations (understand song lyrics, access web pages in English, make a profile on Facebook), in contrast with other school subjects.

Teaching example of listening activity: 'Think Teen' 1st Grade of Junior High School'
Προχωρημένοι p.51

The listening activity from Unit 4 of the course book does not stand alone but it is included in the general framework of the teaching purposes of the unit which are: 1) to be able to follow the course of a narrative and 2) to be able to use Past Simple and Past Progressive in order to describe the sequence of past events or events that happened simultaneously or were interrupted by other events in the past.

The listening input is highly *transactional,* (i.e. information-transferring or message-oriented (Sifakis et al. 2004). *Narrative genre* (genres are different kinds of speech acts or events associated with particular communicative situations [Sifakis et al., 2004]) is primarily used to describe past events whereas *descriptive genre* is used to describe the location of flats. The input is *non-authentic* (it is created for pedagogical purposes but does not possess the characteristics of spontaneous language [Sifakis et al., 2004]), it is *scripted* (its content and form has been

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prepared and written out in full by the course designer and then recited by trained actors [Sifakis et al., 2004]), showing no signs of *genuineness* altogether (there are no features of spoken language such as pauses, hesitations, false starts, ellipsis, variable speeds, variable accents as indicated by Rost, 1990).

The input was read live to the learners by the teacher, so there was not any background noise that may have inhibited comprehension and the input was simplified in terms of *restrictive simplification* (simplification that the teacher brings about in the classroom setting 'following decisions that he/she makes regarding the learners' attention, comprehension and competence' according to Sifakis et al., 2004) mainly through *phonological simplification* (emphasising word boundaries by slowing down or exaggerating speech patterns [Sifakis et al., 2004]).

Although it is supposed to be a formal report, the content is not inherently difficult in terms of *cognitive processing* (mental effort demanded by the activity) on behalf of the learners and it is in tune with the overall L2 competence as specified by the syllabus. The content of the input is also relevant to the learners' interests, since most students are interested in detective stories at this age. However, the tasks themselves are not realistic but mainly listening comprehension ones (multiple-matching and reciting information using specific grammatical patterns).

On the whole, the listening input makes use of Kraschen's *Input Hypothesis* in which he maintains that development from the current stage of the learners' linguistic competence can be achieved only if the learner 'comprehends' language that contains linguistic items at a level slightly above the learner's current knowledge (as cited by Rost, 2002). Thus, by repeatedly identifying instances of Past Progressive used in the input ' they were driving to some friends at the time of the burglary' or 'Mr Smith was watching the football match on TV and his wife was talking on the phone' the learners are able to understand the use of the Past Progressive. This is in agreement with the L2 processing models (the Information Processing Models of Bialystock, Hulstijn and Mc Laughlin, the Input Processing model of Van Patten and his colleagues , the Competition Model of Bates and Mac Whinney and the Multidimensional Model of Meisel, Clahsen and Pienemann (as cited by Rost, 2002).

As far as the listening tasks are concerned, listening is not the main aim of the lesson but it is mainly intended to teach certain grammatical structures (Past Simple and Past Progressive). There are no *pre-, while- and post-listening stages*. (According to Richards, [as cited by Sifakis et al, 2004] the *pre-listening* stage poses the 'problem' and helps learners tune into the listening input by providing them with a purpose to listen, *while-listening* activities 'help learners find their way through the listening text and build upon their expectations raised by the pre-listening activities', as Underwood points out [cited by Sifakis et al., 2004] and in the *post-listening* phase the learners are given the opportunity to take the listening activity a step further performing other types of activity related to the listening they were exposed to (Sifakis et al., 2004). There is one single task that asks students to recognise grammatical word classes as well as major syntactic patterns and devices, reconstruct or infer situations and infer links and connections between events according to Richard's taxonomy of *micro-skills* (subskills required or performed by listeners [as cited by Sifakis et al. 2004]. Integration of other skills is poor (speaking and writing are only used to account for each person's actions the previous night or to do multiple matching). Therefore, the task is not communicative but rather a merely listening comprehension one.

Finally, learners use *bottom-up processing* (i.e. 'establishing the various cohesive links of a text and passing through a number of consecutive levels of interpretation until some overall meaning is induced' [Sifakis et al., 2004]) and *top-down processing* (that involves the interpretation of various messages in relation to the listener's world knowledge, knowledge of the topic and the context of communication by activating the relevant *scripts* and *schemata* in the listener's mind according to Sifakis et al., 2004) whereas *feedback* is mainly given by the teacher and, to a lesser degree, by learners themselves (*peer feedback*).

As far as individual activities are concerned, rubrics are clear and unambiguous asking learners to employ bottom-up processing involving *hard-focus* (carefully concentrating on the listening input as defined by Sifakis et al., 2004) listening for detail in order to be able to describe what each person was doing the previous night and do the multiple-matching task as well as *top-down processing* (paying less attention to the listening input details [Sifakis et al., 2004]) making inferences from the whole input and relating the information to the existing schemata in the learners' minds in order to decide whether any of the persons is guilty (since only the persons who were somewhere else at the time of the burglary might be guilty).The overall aim and function of the activity is comprehensive or informational and through the processing of information learners should be able to identify and understand the function of Past Simple and Past Progressive.

Finally, since this listening activity stands alone, the teacher decided to construct a pre- listening activity in order to help learners 'tune into' the listening input as well as a post- listening activity that enabled the learners follow up the discourse they have been exposed to with other types of discourse, therefore achieving a better *skills integration* where the *receptive skill* of listening is followed by the *productive skill* of speaking according to Burgess (as cited by Sifakis et

al., 2004). In the pre-listening activity, the learners are asked to listen to descriptions of criminals read by the teacher and match each description to the criminal shown in the sketches handed out to them. In this way, they activate relevant cognitive schemata, they are introduced to relevant vocabulary and their interest in the topic is raised. In the post-listening activity, learners are asked to perform a role-play in class (a robbery victim gives an account of what happened to the police). In this way, they use the knowledge they acquired during the listening activity and practice collaborative learning.

Part Two: Teaching Listening through an Original Listening Input

The listening input the teacher created was an *authentic-in-nature* (i.e. the spoken discourse that is produced for pedagogical purposes and 'exhibits features which have a high probability of occurrence in genuine acts of communication...while at the same time exhibiting features of language or content which are usable within a planned language syllabus' according to Geddes and White [as cited by Sifakis et al., 2004]) interview among her and non-native learners of the 1st grade of Junior High School. The interview took place in the school's Science laboratory and was recorded for the purposes of the lesson. The learners were given prompts (*semi-scripted* input i.e. partially and not totally dependent on some form of notes as it is shown by Dirven and Oakeshott-Taylor and cited by Sifakis et al., 2004) to help them with the interview questions and asked the teacher to rehearse the whole interview before it being recorded since they were quite unsure about their performance. The outcome is an authentic-in-nature input that contains several genuineness features (repetition, fillers, false starts, [see lines 9,10,11,12,16,17,37,38,39,42,43,44,45,66,67,68,74,75 of the listening transcript]) mainly by the teacher, since students were so language conscious and aware of not making mistakes that their flow of discourse is rather monotonous and lacks features of genuineness most of times. However, the input preserves the features of natural flowing speech to a great extent and it is intended to be listened to by learners. Unfortunately, there is some background noise as well as fluctuation in the pitch of voices (the teacher's voice is high pitched whereas the learners' voices are sometimes barely audible due to the distance each one had from the tape recorder and the lack of sound mixing facilities).

The content of the input is mainly transactional, aiming at conveying information, it is not inherently difficult for the learners' cognitive processing, while there is *elaborative simplification* on the teacher's part: phonological (using higher pitch to promote attention), syntactic (providing rephrasing and repetition of difficult syntactic constructions to provide more time for processing of meaning) and discoursal (providing explicit frame shifts 'well', 'so', 'okay' to assist in identifying idea boundaries and relationships (Rost, 2002).The genre mainly used is *descriptive* (describing the current situation in Greek EFL classrooms) and *problem-solving* (since certain solutions are recommended for problems).

The input is of interest to the learners since it deals with everyday problems at school and recommends ways to improve the quality of education offered at schools nowadays, making specific references to English language teaching and its problems in Greek Secondary Education. The input is also commensurate with the learners' proficiency levels as specified by the Common European Framework (CEF) and the requirements of the syllabus as defined by the authors of the course book (cf. specifications made by Karayiannni, Koui and Nikolaki [2009] in the description of the teaching situation above).

As far as the global role of listening tasks is concerned, listening was the main aim of the lesson. A whole teaching hour was devoted to it and its overall orientation was a 'learning to listen' one. More specifically, the following micro-skills were practiced throughout the listening lesson (Richards, 1983):

- Ability to retain chunks of language of different lengths for short periods.
- Ability to recognise vocabulary used in core conversational topics.
- Ability to detect key words.
- Ability to guess the meaning of words from the context in which they occur.
- Ability to detect meanings expressed in different grammatical forms/sentence structures. This was achieved by techniques of simplification the teacher employed, mainly elaborative simplification of the input.
- Ability to use real world knowledge and experience to work out purpose, goals, settings and procedures by activating relevant scripts and schemata according to Schank and Abelson (as cited by Richards, 1983).
- Ability to reconstruct topics and coherent structure from ongoing discourse involving two or more speakers.
- Ability to process speech containing pauses, errors, corrections.

The sequencing process of the tasks is organised in three stages:

a) There is a pre-listening stage

b) While-listening activities 'help learners find their way through the listening text and build upon their expectations raised by pre-listening activities as Underwood points out (cited by Sifakis et al., 2004). The activities give learners the opportunity to practise both top-down and bottom-up processing.

c) In the post-listening phase the learners are given the opportunity to follow-up the listening activity with other types of activity related to the discourse they were exposed to (prepare an oral announcement for the board of teachers based on information they consolidated in the previous stages).

There is a smooth transition from listening to other types of discourse, such as speaking and writing. Therefore, the principles of skills integration in a model where practice of the receptive skills can lead into the practice of the productive skills according to Burgess (as cited by Sifakis et al., 2004) as well as the principle of *content validity* i.e. 'whether the activity adequately or actually makes use of skills and behaviour that are part of listening in the real world' and *transferability* i.e. whether 'the abilities which the exercise develops transfer to real life listening purposes' (Richards, 1983) are followed. Students are asked to perform tasks based upon situations they encounter in real school life, thus performing communicative tasks, although the listening comprehension nature of tasks could not be completely avoided (Task 4, Part A/Task 5, Part B/ Task 6, Part C).

As far as *time-on task* (time spent on individual tasks) and *wait time* (' the time allowed by the teacher for learners to formulate answers before repeating, rephrasing or redirecting the question to another learner' as defined by White and Lightbown (cited by Sifakis et al., 2004) are concerned, the teacher tried to balance these two features giving students the opportunity to cognitively process the listening activities as well as to prepare for the subsequent speaking activities without being pressed for time. However, the learners were extremely anxious with their being recorded that they needed constant clarification of tasks as well as constant feedback on behalf of the teacher. This had as a result to exceed the time allocated for the tasks and set the last task for homework. There were also interruptions as the teacher was setting the task for homework by other students who barged into the classroom, so she had to interrupt the lesson several times to be able to give adequate explanations on how to prepare the task.

Feedback was primarily given by the teacher (she was constantly simplifying instructions given by the rubrics or corroborating/ disputing what was said by learners) and, to a lesser degree, by learners themselves (peer feedback during *jigsaw activities* that contained information gaps that could only be provided by one group of learners to the other).

As for individual listening activities, students had to use both soft-focus, top-down cognitive processing in Part A Task 3 since they were listening for gist as well as hard focus, intensive listening in Task 4 of part A. They also had to use bottom-up cognitive processing since they were required to jot down specific information. Another technique that students used was 'jigsaw listening' in Part B, Task 5 since the learners were divided in two groups and were required to fill in each other's information gaps by employing hard focus, intensive listening and then exchange information. Part C involved selective, hard focus listening for specific information and bottom-up processing since they had to focus on specific key words.

The task rubrics were quite clear and gave specific instructions for the tasks whereas the teacher had to explain words that learners might find difficult such as 'utterances' or repeat and simplify them in an elaborative way in order to minimise the learners' level of anxiety, since it was the first time their performance was recorded in class.

On the whole, tasks could be described as 'heuristic' according to Richards (1983) and 'simulating real life' communication according to Allright (as cited by Sifakis et al., 2004). The teacher tried to construct real life tasks, that is, communicative instances that learners are likely to encounter in their real life school reality, such as defending a student who has been expelled from class or asking for improvements in their learning environment. She tried to achieve this through collaborative discourse in the form of role-play. However, learners 'had difficulty in attending to and producing accurate forms for collaborative discourse' and the teacher had to ' give focal attention to target forms that are necessary to arrive at meaning' according to Long and Robinson, Ellis, Loewen and Backsturkmen, (as cited by Rost 2002), mainly forms asking for permission 'Could we?' 'Can we?' as well as using past tenses they had already been taught to reconstruct past actions.

Finally, the teacher used the method of '*paused tasks'* in order to achieve ongoing listener response by designing the tasks using short inputs and repeating that input by playing the tape again. In this way, she tried to take advantage of optimal 'training windows' for new listening skills and strategies, minimising the limitations that exist in the learners' short term memory and inhibit mental processing as Bostrom and Waldhart, Cowan, Carpenter, Miyake and Just point out (cited by Rost, 2002).

In conclusion, this paper proves that, on the one hand, coursebook listening materials for the 1st class of Junior High Scholl in Greek Secondary Education are rather integrated in the teaching unit as supplementary tasks in order to enhance the teaching of grammar and vocabulary or function as mere listening comprehension tasks. Therefore, they lack the characteristics of listening as a separate skill that will improve the communicative competence of learners. On the other hand, an attempt made by the teacher to teach listening as a separate skill following the appropriate principles resulted in the learners' performing better where listening comprehension was involved and worse when they should use the information provided by the listening

tasks to perform communicative acts they encounter in their real life.

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Appendix I

*Interview: I*deal language class

Ideational framework: Grid

Problem area	Problem	Solution
Classrooms	Ss move from class to class for English lessons since they are divided into 'elementary' and 'advanced'	Separate language lab with its own equipment (tape recorder, video projector, TV set, DVD player)
Teaching materials	Books are boring, students have already been taught the material, lack of other resources	Use of authentic materials such as You-tube videos, songs, movies
Further language activities	Lack of original language activities that could motivate Ss use L2 in authentic contexts	Carry out original projects such a school newspaper in English, organise school clubs such as Drama club, Cookery club, set up a school library, video club

Appendix II

Lesson plan: 'The ideal school'

Procedure	Aims	Duration
• *Pre-listening* T hands in task sheets to all Ls 1.Ls read the utterances ad match them to the high-school pictures 2. Ls do the mini-quiz deciding to what degree the characteristics described in it apply to their school	This problem-solving task raises interest in the subject Ls activate relevant content schemata and are introduced to relevant vocabulary	2 min 3 min
• *While-listening* <u>Part A</u> 3.Ls listen to the first part of the recording and identify the purpose of it by choosing one of the options available 4. Ls listen to the recording again and write the equipment that is needed for a modern language classroom	Soft-focus listening for general understanding of the topic Hard-focus listening for details	4 min 4 min
<u>Part B</u> 5. Ls listen to the second part of the recording. They are divided in two groups. Group A jots down the reasons for not paying attention in class whereas Group B takes notes of some ideas expressed to make the lesson more interesting. 6. <u>Role-play</u>. Ls are supposed to use the information from the previous activity and defend a classmate who was sent to the headmaster's office as well as ask for permission to carry out some projects suggested in the recording.	Ls listen for different sets of information (jigsaw listening).Also, they listen to different sets of information through note-taking framework in order to process the language used. Hard-focus listening for detail. Ls are supposed to use Past Simple and Past Progressive structures they have already been taught in order to give an account for what happened in the class as well as making suggestions using language from the input e.g. 'We could...' Act out a realistic dialogue dealing with an issue that often happens at school.	7 min 8 min
<u>Part C</u> 7. Ls listen to the third part of the recording and tick which of the activities listed in order to improve English language classes are mentioned in the recording.	Hard focus listening for detail. Ls activate previous knowledge and cognitive schemata from the unit as a whole since there has already been a discussion about school clubs and they have already made a 'cookery club' themselves.	5 min
• *Post listening* 8. Ls are divided in two groups each one processing different kind of information. They have to prepare an announcement for the board of teachers making suggestions to improve the teaching conditions in the EFL classroom.	Ls have to use their overall knowledge from the listening input as a whole and help the president of the class prepare an announcement for the board of teachers using structures form the input to make suggestions. Ls use their knowledge in a realistic environment and practice collaborative learning.	10 min

Appendix III

(Learners' Interview Prompts)

Student A

Problem area: Classrooms

Problem: Ss move from class to class for English lessons since they are divided into 'elementary' and 'advanced'

Solution: Separate language lab with its own equipment (tape recorder, video projector, TV set, DVD player)

Student B

Problem area: Teaching materials
Problem: Books are boring, students have already been taught the material, lack of other resources
Solution: Use of authentic materials such as You-tube videos, songs, movies

Student C

Problem area: Further language activities
Problem: Lack of original language activities that could motivate Ss use L2 in authentic contexts
Solution: Carry out original projects such a school newspaper in English, organise school clubs such as Drama club, Cookery club, set up a school library, video club

Appendix IV

1. *Transcript of original listening input-'An ideal school'*
2. ok+good morning kids+good morning++we're here to discuss+eh+problems
3. that you may have in your English language classes+ok++because you asked
4. me to do that+we'll see what we could do in order to solve these
5. problems+ok+are you ready to start++yes+ok+ marilena++eh+what do you
6. think is the most important problem in your English language
7. class+well++one most important problems+is that we move+from class to
8. class for english and french lessons+during the break+because+we are
9. divided+into levels+elementary+and advanced+ and+we+have+to
10. change+classes+so+you move from class to class+eh+eh++you're divided as
11. you said+into elementary and advanced++after the lesson starts+eh+and you
12. change classes every day to have english lessons++eh++and what is the main
13. problem that++eh++is+eh+caused by this++eh ++let me think++we have to
14. carry our bags++and move ++from class to class as well++and sometimes+we
15. forgot things+and+we have to go back and get them+during the lesson++and
16. that making a lot of noise and disturbing the class++ok+so+you++forget your
17. bags+your pencils+your books +and you have to go back+eh+to the other
18. class++and+eh+bring them+and+disturb the other class+and+you disturb
19. your lesson as well++ok++eh+your teacher+is everything ok with her++does
20. she have a problem too++yes+she has to carry the tape recorder from class to
21. class as well+ +ok+so+ she carries her bags+ her books+the tape recorder+she
22. drops books+her bag+eh+ok+that's a problem+ that's a big
23. problem++eh++what do you think+should be+that+you should do++that the
24. school should do++in order to+solve this problem++a good idea+that+should
25. be+a separate language lab+for all classes+with all the necessary
26. equipment+in it+as a tape recorder+a dvd player+a video projector+and a tv
27. set+ok+so+ you could use+eh+a classroom+ that+eh+is not needed+for other
28. +lessons such as+this eh+lab+and+make +turn it+into a language lab+do you
29. think it would be++ good+eh+what do you think+the rest of
30. you++yes+yes+you could have your posters + on the
31. walls+eh+everything+ok+now+alexia+any other problems you have+in your
32. english classes+well+books are boring or too easy++we+eh+we have already
33. been taught vocabulary and grammar in frontistirio++eh++so+we don't pay
34. attention most of times+we make noise+and+ quite often+we are sent to the
35. headmaster office++ok+that's a big problem+ because+eh+you have to calm
36. down before the lesson starts+++during the lesson+you have only the book in
37. front of you+you think you know++everything++ you don't know everything
38. but you think so+eh+you make noise+the teacher quarrels with the
39. students+eh+she sends them to the head's office+and+or+a lot of trouble is
40. caused +ok+do you have only the book to be taught from+or do you have any
41. other material+in your class+as well++so as not to be bored++eh+we have
42. only the book to be taught from+and the tape recorder for listening++only
43. those things++ok+so it's boring+what do you think+eh+you need+in order to

44. make english lessons less boring+or more interesting+what+what other things
45. could be used in order to++eh+participate more in the lesson or make it more
46. interesting and not be bored+ok+because it's three hours a week+so+it's
47. +quite a lot of time+eh+what do you think you need+in your class+well++we
48. would like to watch English movies in class+to listen to songs in
49. English+watch youtube videos+use grammar and vocabulary exercises from
50. internet resources++so as not to be bored+so+ these are+these are+things you
51. already do+ok+you listen to+to music and songs in English+you watch
52. youtube videos++you watch tv+eh+all these materials could be used in
53. class+ok+so as not to be+bored+eh+and not have +your
54. +teacher+write+words+on the ++board+or use+the tape recorder++and be
55. bored++ok++all right++and last but not least++sophia+ok+what do you
56. think+eh+is the main problem in english classes+eh+in your
57. opinion+eh+well++eh++we don't use the English+eh+we learn in our
58. everyday lives so+we think that++it is just another boring lesson+that has to
59. be done+ok+so+English++is +just like maths+ eh+physics+yes+french
60. language++just another++boring lesson+eh+we could carry out projects in
61. class++to practise english+such as++cookery club+drama club+all
62. right++eh+ok+what else+you could+you could do+eh+in order to make
63. English more interesting+eh+yes+well++eh++ yes++eh+eh+we could
64. publish+aschool+newspaper+inEnglish+eh+with articles from students+with
65. subject+that interest them+such
66. as+sports+cinema+books+eh+videogames+ok +that's a good
67. idea+so+eh+you+have+ things you're interested in+such
68. as+sports+books+eh+movies+you could write down some
69. articles+and+eh+publishthem++publish them+in a school newspaper+in
70. English+ok+all right++eh+ok+eh+any other sug gestions+sophia+any other
71. ideas+yes+eh+we could make a school library++ with readers+or books+that
72. already exist+at school+or students+don't need any more+so that+we can
73. borrow books+and improve their english++ok+eh +there are a lot of
74. books+ok+in the school library+yeah+we don't need any more+so you could
75. take them all together+and make a small+school library+you can borrow
76. books from+and read+ok+very good idea+any- thing else++to finish+any
77. other+yes+we could also take part in+school +exchange+programmes+with
78. english speaking students+from+other countries+ that would be
79. great+yeah+student exchange programes already exist++but+eh+you have
80. to+carry them out+find students that might be interested to +in visiting
81. greece+visit+england+would you like to do that+yes+eh++ok+all right+is that
82. all++eh+do you want to++do you want to add anything++eh+no+no+if all
83. these things come true+i think english will turn into a fantastic experience for
84. you+ok+thank you very much+eh+ok+see you in class+ok+thank you

Appendix V (Task Sheet)

Pre-listening

1) *In what school are the students more likely to have said those things? Match the utterances below to the school pictures given to you (A or B)*

a) 'We visited the Museum of Modern Art yesterday and showed some of our projects. It was fantastic!'

b) 'Well, we have to move from class to class to have our English or French lesson. This is awful....We even have to carry chairs from one class to anther.'

c) 'Our new multimedia class and Science lab are fantastic! We even have a school library with lots of books and DVDs in English to borrow!'

d) 'Ahh... the books are so boring.... We may even fall asleep during class or make so much noise that our teacher sends us to the head's office.'

2) *To what degree do the following characteristics apply to your school?*

Tick the appropriate box in the questionnaire below.

Equipment for language teaching (media lab, video projector, tape recorder, internet access)	Not enough	Enough but faulty or old-fashioned	Sufficient
Are foreign language books boring or complicated?	Most of times	Sometimes	Excellent books!
Would you like to take part in classroom projects in English such as drama club, cookery club, school newspaper, music band	No, I think it's too difficult	Yes, but only if I had help from my teacher	Yes, I'd love to
Would you like to have a separate language classroom for English instead of moving from class to class?	No, I think it's fun changing classes	Sometimes I'd like to but changing classes is an excuse to be late in class because we have to carry chairs, bags...	Yes, definitely!
Would you like to take part in a school exchange program and travel to an English-speaking country?	No, my parents would never let me...	Well, yes, but only if our teacher was with us to help with our English	Yes, that would be a fantastic experience!

While-listening

Part A

3) *Listen to the first part of the interview and tick what the purpose of the discussion is.*

a) To point out a problem and offer solutions.
b) To complain to the headmaster about a problem.
c) To show that the situation in Greek English language classrooms is perfect.
d) To quarrel with other classmates about a problem.

4) *Now, listen again and make notes about the equipment that is needed for a modern language classroom according to the speakers.*

.....
.....
.....
.....

Part B

5) *a) You are about to defend two classmates of yours who have been sent to the headmaster's office because they were making noise in class. Form two groups. The first group jots down the reasons for not paying attention and making noise while the second group gives some ideas to make the lesson more interesting. Listen to the second part of the interview and take notes.*

Group A Group B

Reasons for not paying attention	*Ideas to make the lesson more interesting*

b) Role-play. You are now in the headmaster's office. The spokesperson of the first group explains why the students made noise in class while the spokesperson of the second group gives ideas on how to make the lesson more interesting. In the end, ask for permission to make some of these ideas come true (i.e. ask for help to publish a school newspaper or organise an exchange program during Christmas or Easter holidays)

Part C

6) *Now listen to the last part of the interview and tick which of the following activities are mentioned by the third student in order to make English language classes more interesting.*

Activities to make language classes more interesting

Drama club
School library
Cookery club
Arts and Crafts

School newspaper in English
Sports club
Student exchange programs

Post- listening

7) *The students' council has decided to make some suggestions to the board of teachers in order to improve English language lessons at school. Form two groups. The first group prepares a list with the equipment that the school has to buy for English language classes whereas the second group makes a list with the activities you can carry out until the end of the year to show your progress. The president of your class will make the announcement to the board of teachers. Help him/her prepare the announcement and read it in class. Do you agree with it? Would you like to change or add anything?*

Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: G
Linguistics & Education
Volume 16 Issue 8 Version 1.0 Year 2016
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Differences in Academic Performance by Grade Span Configuration for Students in Poverty

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Keywords: *grade span configuration, academic achievement, poverty, grade 5, grade 6.*

GJHSS-G Classification: *FOR Code: 139999*

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

Differences in Academic Performance by Grade Span Configuration for Students in Poverty

Carolyn F. Fiaschetti [α], John R. Slate [σ], George W. Moore [ρ] & Cynthia Martinez-Garcia [ω]

Abstract- In this investigation, the degree to which passing rates on the STAAR Reading and Mathematics assessments of Grade 5 and 6 students in poverty in the state of Texas differed as a function of grade span configuration was examined. Data were obtained from the Texas Education Agency for all Grade 5 and 6 students in poverty who were enrolled in single/double grade level (i.e., Grades 4-5, 5 only, or Grades 5-6) or in multi-grade level (i.e., PreK-6) grade span configurations for the 2012-2013 through the 2014-2015 school years. Inferential analyses revealed the presence of statistically significant differences in reading and mathematics passing rates between the two grade span configurations. Grade 5 and Grade 6 students in poverty had statistically significantly higher reading and mathematics passing rates in multi-grade level schools than in single/double grade level schools. Implications for policy and practice are provided.

Keywords: grade span configuration, academic achievement, poverty, grade 5, grade 6.

I. Introduction

Differences in Academic Performance by Grade Span Configuration for Students in Poverty Student academic achievement, from toddlers through college-bound students, differs by income and poverty status (Coley & Baker, 2013). Coley and Baker (2013) utilized data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Birth Cohort from 2009, and described the relationship between cognitive skills and poverty. In the area of Listening Comprehension, 39% of the 2-year olds who were at or above the poverty line scored proficient, whereas only 29% of the 2-year olds in poverty scored proficient. The 2-year olds scored similarly for the Expressive Vocabulary assessment: 67% who were at or above the poverty line scored proficient, whereas only 55% of the 2-year olds in poverty scored proficient. A similar relationship existed between poverty and achievement patterns for 4-year olds. In the area of Letter Recognition, 37% of the children at or above poverty scored in the proficient range, whereas only 20% of the 4-year olds in poverty scored proficient. A difference was present in the area of Numbers and Shapes. The 4-year olds at or above the poverty range scored 72% proficient, whereas less than one half, 45%, of the 4-year olds in poverty were proficient.

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Poor academic performance by children in poverty continues into the elementary, middle, and high school years. Coley and Baker (2013) reported on the progress measure in reading for students in Grades 4 and 8 who took the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Students in Grade 4 who were eligible for free lunch under the national lunch program had an average scale score of 206, whereas students who were not eligible for free lunch had an average scale sore of 235. The difference in average scale scores for the students in Grade 8 were similar to Grade 4. Students in Grade 8 who were eligible for free lunch had an average scale score of 250, whereas students who were not eligible had an average scale score of 275. Additionally, Coley and Baker (2013) compiled statistics from the College Board (2012) for SAT reading scores and family income from college bound seniors. Seniors who took the SAT and were from the lowest levels of family income (i.e., less than $20,000/year) scored over 100 points lower than those students from the highest levels of income (i.e., greater than $200,000/year). The relationship between the SAT Critical Reading score and family income had a strong relationship.

Reardon (2013) explained that family income, not ethnicity/race, is more suggestive of educational success in the United States today. As such, this relationship represents a change from the 1950s and 1960s. DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, and Smith (2013) determined that the real median household income in 2012 ($51,017) was 8.0% lower than in 2007 ($55,627) and 9.0% lower than the median household in 1999 ($56,090). The official poverty rate in 2013 was 14.5% or 45.3 million people living in poverty (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2013).Children represented 23.5% of the total population and 32.3% of the people in poverty (about one in five children ages six and under were in poverty in 2013). Finally, more than one-half (55%) of the children ages six and under were in poverty if they were being raised by a female head of house. This statistic was five times more (i.e., 10.2%) than if children ages six and under were being raised by married couples (De Navas-Walt et al., 2013).Abramsky (2013) stated that with the exception of Romania, the United States had the highest

percentage of children living in poverty than any developed country. Of importance for this investigation is that poverty influences the educational opportunities available to children and the educational outcomes they are likely to achieve (Coley & Baker, 2013).

The economic means of a family have a profound effect on the success of a student in school. Burney and Beilke (2008) noted, "to gain the rigorous academic preparation needed for success, a student must have the opportunity and background preparation to do well, which is often absent in low-income households" (p. 302). Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2011) documented the lack of opportunities and background preparation that families in poverty have to face including poor health, limited access to quality preschools, limited summer and after school programs, more movement in and out of schools, and teachers with lower credentials. These examples are all issues with which families in poverty struggle to support their children's education.

Abbott and Joireman (2001), in an analysis of school achievement by ethnicity/race and income levels, documented that income levels have a greater effect on academic achievement than ethnicity/race. Students from high poverty family environments typically have (a) less exposure to parents who model reading, (b) fewer books in their home, (c) few interactions with technology, and (d) differing patterns of interactive reading and conversation within the family unit than students with families of higher education levels (Chatterji, 2006). Moreover, students in poverty may not have the financial means to participate in school-related activities directly correlated to higher achievement (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003).

The National Center for Education Statistics gathered data on economic disadvantage and academic achievement. In 2011 Grade 4 and Grade 8 students who were economically disadvantaged had lower reading and mathematics scores than students who were not economically disadvantaged. The mean difference for the scale score in Grade 4 mathematics between the two groups was 23 percentage points, and the mean difference for Grade 4 reading between the two groups was 27 percentage points. Similarly, the mean difference between the Grade 8 scores of students who were economically disadvantaged and students who were not economically disadvantaged in mathematics was 26 percentage points and 24 percentage points in the area of reading. Presented in the 2009 Comprehensive Annual Report for the Texas Education Agency Grade 10 students who were economically disadvantaged passed the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Mathematics assessment and the Algebra I assessment at a rate of 44% which was 17% points lower than those students who were not economically disadvantaged who scored 61%. Students who were economically disadvantaged scored 21 percentage points lower (51%) than those students who were not economically disadvantaged (72%) in Geometry (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

Numerous authors (e.g., Abbott &Joireman, 2001; Burney & Beilke, 2008; Chatterji, 2006) have documented that students in poverty come to school with deficits that affect their academic achievement. In addition to deficits, students and families in poverty are subject to inaccurate stereotypes; ones that Gorski (2012) rebutted with facts and figures. For example, the stereotype that poor people are lazy was invalidated with the fact that many poor people work over 2,500 hours per year-equivalent to 1.2 full time jobs. These positions require the most intense manual labor and have virtually no benefits (Gorski, 2012). The idea that poor people do not value education was expounded upon with the concept that class specific barriers that inhibit school involvement included the ability to afford to take off from wage work, the ability to afford child care, and the ability to afford public transportation (Gorski, 2012). "Stereotypes can misdirect efforts to implement effective policies for eliminating socioeconomic in equities in schools" (Gorski, 2012, p. 313).

Under the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), educators are held responsible for the academic success of all students. As such, the academic achievement of students who are economically disadvantaged, as well as the academic achievement of students who are not economically disadvantaged, is salient for educational leaders. One school characteristic, relevant to this article and to student achievement, is grade span configuration of schools. Renchler (2002) contended that grade span configuration may have a tremendous influence on student success; however, only a few research studies have been conducted in this area.

In one such investigation, Wren (2003) compared the academic achievement of Grade 6, 7, and 8 students in middle schools and K-8 public schools and determined that students had higher academic achievement test scores in the K-8 setting than in the middle school settings. Clark (2012) established that students who were enrolled in K-8 schools had a higher passing rate on state assessments than students enrolled in middle schools. In her study of the most effective grade span configuration for Grade 5 students in meeting the benchmark standards of the No Child Left Behind Act, Comer (2006) determined that the elementary school configuration had the highest percentage of students meeting the academic standards. Of interest is that the grade span configuration that had the least educational benefit was the K-12 grade span schools. With reference to Texas, the state of interest in this investigation, Clark et al. (2013) analyzed the extent to which differences were present in reading and mathematics performance on

state assessments of students in K-8 schools versus middle schools for five school years. For all five years, students who were enrolled in a K-8 grade span configuration had higher passing rates in reading and mathematics than their counterparts who were enrolled in a 6-8 grade span configuration. As the number of grade levels increase in a school setting (i.e., a greater span of grades within a school setting), the academic achievement of students increases simultaneously (Wren, 2003).

Rock off and Lockwood (2010), in an analysis of data on students who transitioned from an elementary school to a middle school, documented the presence of a 0.15 standard deviation decrease in reading and mathematics performance after the transition occurred. They contended that when students are combined from additional elementary settings into one large cohort in the middle school many issues can arise. Middle school students can be difficult to educate due to low self-esteem, increasing negativity, and an increased inability to judge risks and consequences of their actions (Rock off & Lockwood, 2010).

In a recent investigation about grade span configuration and academic achievement of middle level students, Meyer (2014) analyzed the academic achievement of Grade 5 students in Texas on the statewide assessments in reading, mathematics, and science during the 2006-2011 school years. After analyzing every possible grade span configuration, Meyer (2014) documented that Grade 5 students in a K-5 or K-6 grade span configuration outperformed Grade 5 students in any other grade span settings. The lowest academic performance was obtained by students who were enrolled in an EE-12 grade setting. In an additional layer of the study, Meyer (2014) reviewed the effects of economic status on the academic achievement of fifth graders. Grade 5 students who were not economically disadvantaged had a higher passing rate for every subject area on the statewide examinations. Students receiving reduced prices in lunch had the next highest passing rates, and the lowest passing rates came from the students receiving free lunch. In every case the difference between the highest passing rates and lowest passing rates was a difference of 20% points or more (Meyer, 2014).

An even more recent study completed on Texas Grade 5 and 6 students in poverty was conducted by Fiaschetti and Slate (2015). They analyzed the academic achievement of Grade 5 and Grade 6 students on the Texas statewide assessment, in the areas of reading and mathematics. Students were grouped according to the grade span configuration of their school, either PreK-5/6 or single/double grade level configurations (i.e., Grades 4-5, 5 only, or 5-6). Statistically significant differences were present in the reading scores of students who were economically disadvantaged in the multilevel grade span versus the single/double grade span configuration. Reading scores for students in Grades 5 and 6 were almost 2% higher in the multilevel schools than in the single or double grade level schools.

With in the last 15 years, researchers (e.g., Dove, 2007; Howley, 2002; Weiss & Kipnes, 2006) have completed studies in which they concluded transitions and grade span configurations were not the primary reasons for student success in school. Dove (2007) examined the mathematics and literacy achievement of three different groups of students in Grade 6 dependent upon their transitions (i.e., grade span) over a 3-year time period. Dove (2007) noted that grade span configuration alone did not account for negative achievement scores in the middle grades on the Arkansas Benchmark Examination. Huss (2004) completed a descriptive study about the perceptions on middle schools including their organization, grade span, teacher licensure, and curriculum studies, based on the responses of middle level teachers in elementary, middle, and junior high settings. Huss (2004) determined that no matter what grade span configuration, teachers who teach middle grades have attempted to meet the specific needs of adolescent students in terms of the middle school philosophy including a "shared vision, educators committed to young adults, positive school climate, and an adult advocate for every child, family and community partnerships, high expectations for all students, buttressed by an integrative, exploratory curriculum" (p. 1).

In research studies on grade span configuration, including investigations involving students who were economically disadvantaged, no conclusive evidence exists that grade span configuration is the key to academic achievement. Researchers must continue to analyze this topic and add to the body of research on the effects of grade span configuration on the academic achievement of students in poverty. It is imperative that researchers continue to support this population in providing every opportunity available for them to achieve academic success.

a) Statement of the Problem

Former Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, stated that "No Child Left Behind is about a commitment to all children, and of course, it's one that we absolutely must honor if we're going to continue to thrive as the great nation that we are" (USDE, 2005, p. 1). The objectives of the No Child Left Behind Act are focused on increased accountability and academic achievement for all students. The importance of academic success for all student groups in all settings is getting national recognition (Reyes, 2008). The No Child Left Behind Act has been a stimulus in intervening with students who are not making progress (individually and across subgroups) and has improved

teaching and learning (Jorgenson, 2012). School district leaders have investigated many methods to improve teaching and learning that have included curriculum changes, implementation of various intervention programs, and variations in class size. Another method district leaders can take to support student success for individuals and across subgroups is the grade span configuration of local school settings (Combs et al., 2011; Fiaschetti & Slate, 2015). The concept of grade span configuration has been extensively reviewed by educators and researchers in regard to the most appropriate social, emotional, and academically sound placement for students in the middle grades, particularly students in Grades 5 and 6 (Clark et al., 2013; Combs et al., 2011; Dove, 2007; Fiaschetti & Slate, 2015; Johnson, Jones, Simieou, Matthew, & Morgan, 2012; Meyer, 2014; Renchler, 2002; Rock off & Lockwood, 2010; Wren, 2003).

The concept that has not been addressed in depth in the research literature is the effect of grade span configuration on the academic achievement of students in poverty. Particularly not well examined in the extant literature is a comparison of the academic performance of students who are economically disadvantaged as a function of grade span configurations of single or double grade levels in comparison to the typical elementary school setting (K-5). As early as the late 1990s, researchers (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997) confirmed that reading ability in the first grade was a strong predictor of reading success in the eleventh grade, even when measures of cognitive ability were ruled out. The importance of elementary curriculum, the efficacy of instruction, and the consistency of relationships are paramount in the future success of all students, particularly students of economic disadvantage. School boards are making decisions about the makeup of their schools and grade levels therein to meet the demands and rigor of the No Child Left Behind Act expectations without sufficient research. The number of transitions students make in moving from one school to another may influence, negatively, student academic performance. As such, the academic performance of students in a single or double grade level school may be lower than the academic performance of students who remain in a K-5 setting. Additionally, this research investigation will be in an area of need at the state level due to the fact that most decisions regarding school policies and procedures are made at the state and local level (Howley, 2002).

b) Purpose of the Study

Given the emphasis on all students being academically successful, efforts are needed to support the academic achievement of students who are economically disadvantaged. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of two specific grade span configurations to the reading and mathematics achievement of students in poverty for the 2012-2013 through the 2014-2015 school years. Specifically, the academic achievement of students in Grade 5 and 6 for students in poverty were examined separately with respect to the grade span configuration of the school in which they were enrolled. As such, the extent to which grade span configuration was related to academic achievement was determined separately for students in a PreK-6 grade campus and for students in single or double grade campuses (Grades 4-5, 5 only, or Grades 5-6).

c) Significance of the Study

Wren (2003) commented that if grade span configuration does make a difference in the achievement of students, then school administrators should give serious consideration regarding the configurations of their schools. Renchler (2002) contended that grade span configuration may have a tremendous influence on student success, however, only limited research exists on this topic, specifically for students of poverty. Through this study valuable information was obtained on the relationship of grade span configuration with the academic achievement (i.e., reading and mathematics) of students in poverty within multi-grade level or single/double grade span configurations. The information gathered by this research will provide educational leaders and policymakers with credible data regarding the extent to which grade span configuration is related to student academic performance. Furthermore, the extent to which students in poverty have differences in their reading and mathematics achievement as a function of grade span configuration was determined. Accordingly, policymakers and educational leaders may utilize this information to determine how to configure their school settings to obtain the highest academic achievement for all students.

d) Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What is the difference in reading achievement as a function of grade span configuration for Grade 5 students in poverty?; (b) What is the difference in mathematics achievement as a function of grade span configuration for Grade 5 students in poverty?; (e) What is the difference in reading achievement as a function of grade span configuration for Grade 6 students in poverty?; (e) What is the difference in mathematics achievement as a function of grade span configuration for Grade 6 students in poverty? All four research questions were examined for three school years of data (i.e., 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015). Following the statistical analyses, the extent to which trends were present in reading and in mathematics achievement were determined for each grade span configuration.

II. Method

a) Research Design

The archival data that were utilized herein represent past events (Johnson & Christensen, 2012), therefore, a non-experimental causal-comparative research design (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012) was utilized for this study. In non-experimental, causal-comparative research, no manipulation of the independent variable occurs. Due to the design of the study, the independent variables had already occurred and extraneous variables were not controlled. The independent variable involved in this research article was grade span configuration (i.e., multi-grade level schools or single/double grade level schools). For each grade span configuration, the dependent variables were the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Reading and Mathematics passing rates. The samples of students whose data were analyzed were students who met the state criteria for being economically disadvantaged. Economic disadvantage exists when students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program. Additional economic disadvantage criteria include: (a) families with an annual income at or below the official federal poverty line; (b) families eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) or other public assistance; (c) families that have received a Pell Grant or other state program of need based on financial assistance; (d) families eligible for programs assisted under the Title of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA); or (e) families eligible for benefits under the Food Stamp Act of 1977 (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

b) Participants and Instrumentation

Archival data were obtained for the 2012-2013 through the 2014-2015 school years from the Texas Education Agency Ask Texas Education Directory (Texas Education Agency, 2016) and Texas Academic Performance Reports system for all Grade 5 and 6 students. Test scores for Grade 5 and 6 students in poverty and the grade span configuration in which students were enrolled were obtained from the Texas Academic Performance Reports and Ask Texas Education Directory. All school campuses and school districts are mandated by the Texas Education Agency to report student demographic characteristics, along with other salient information. Each spring students take the state-mandated assessments and the scores are provided to the Texas Education Agency.

Specific data downloaded from the Texas Education Agency Academic Performance Reports were: (a) grade span configuration of the school in which each student was enrolled; (b) student demographic characteristics; and (c) reading and mathematics achievement passing rates. Readers are referred to the Texas Education Agency website for more detailed information about the data they require school campuses and school districts to provide; for the auditing procedures used to ensure accuracy of the data; and for the technical manuals on the score reliabilities and score validities of the STAAR Reading and Mathematics tests.

III. Results

Prior to conducting inferential statistics to determine whether differences were present between single/double and multi-grade level schools in the academic achievement of students who were economically disadvantaged, checks were conducted to determine the extent to which these data were normally distributed (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2002). Although some of the data were not normally distributed, a decision was made to use parametric independent samples *t*-tests to answer the research questions. For results that were statistically significant at the .05 level, the effect size (i.e., Cohen's *d*) was calculated. Statistical results will now be presented by academic subject area.

For the 2012-2013 school year for Grade 5 students, the parametric independent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference, $t(151.04) = 2.96$, $p = .004$, between single/double grade level schools and multi-grade level schools on the STAAR Reading test passing rates. This difference represented a small effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 0.37 (Cohen, 1988). Grade 5 students in poverty had higher STAAR Reading passing rates in multi-grade level schools by more than 5%than did their peers who were enrolled in single/double grade level schools. Readers are directed to Table 1 for the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the STAAR Reading Passing Rates by Grade Span Configuration for Grade 5 Students in Poverty for the 2012-2013 Through the 2014-2015 School Years

Grade Span Configuration	*n* of schools	*M*	*SD*
2012-2013			
Single/Double	239	82.01	8.34
Multi-Grade	105	85.79	11.85
2013-2014			
Single/Double	243	80.35	9.02
Multi-Grade	103	84.77	11.11
2014-2015			
Single/Double	241	81.64	9.71
Multi-Grade	394	84.31	11.86

Concerning the 2013-2014 school year for Grade 5 students, the parametric independent samples *t*-test yielded a statistically significant difference, $t(161.67) = 3.57$, $p < .001$, on the STAAR Reading test passing rates as a function of grade span configuration. This difference represented a small effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 0.44 (Cohen, 1988). Congruent with the previous year, Grade 5 students in poverty had higher STAAR Reading passing rates in multi-grade level schools by more than 3% than did their peers who were enrolled in single/double grade level schools. The descriptive statistics for this analysis are presented in Table 1.

With respect to the 2014-2015 school year for Grade 5 students, the parametric independent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference, $t(581.92) = -3.09$, $p = .002$, on the STAAR Reading test passing rates as a function of grade span configuration. This difference represented a small effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 0.25 (Cohen, 1988). Commensurate with the previous two years, Grade 5 students in poverty had higher STAAR Reading passing rates in multi-grade level schools by more than 2% than did their peers who were enrolled in single/double grade level schools. Delineated in Table 1 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Next, the STAAR Mathematics test passing rates were analyzed as a function of grade span configuration for Grade 5 students in poverty. Concerning the 2012-2013 school year, the parametric independent samples *t*-test did not reveal a statistically significant difference, $t(160.74) = 1.43$, $p = .16$, on the STAAR Mathematics test passing rates as a function of grade span configuration. Passing rates on the STAAR Mathematics test were comparable for Grade 5 students in poverty in both grade span configuration groupings. Revealed in Table 2 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for the STAAR Mathematics Passing Rates by Grade Span Configuration for Grade 5 Students in Poverty for the 2012-2013 Through the 2014-2015 School Years

Grade Span Configuration	*n* of schools	*M*	*SD*
2012-2013			
Single/Double	239	82.87	9.46
Multi-Grade	106	84.80	12.48
2013-2014			
Single/Double	243	83.18	9.86
Multi-Grade	101	85.78	12.75

Concerning the 2013-2014 school year for Grade 5 students, the parametric independent samples *t*-test did not reveal a statistically significant difference in STAAR Mathematics passing rates between the two grade span configurations, $t(152.00) = 1.83$, $p = .07$. Although the multi-grade level campuses had slightly higher passing rates on the STAAR Mathematics assessment by two percentage points, the results were not statistically significant at the conventional alpha level of .05. Readers are referred to Table 2 for the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Results of the statistical analyses for Grade 6 students will now be reported. For the 2012-2013 school year, the parametric independent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference t (138.36) = 2.97, $p = .004$,between single/double grade level schools and multi-grade level grade schools on the STAAR Reading test passing rates. This difference represented a small effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 0.39 (Cohen, 1988). Grade 6 students in poverty had STAAR Reading passing rates in multi-grade level schools that were more than 5% higher than their peers who were enrolled in single/double grade level schools. Table 3 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the STAAR Reading Passing Rates by Grade Span Configuration for Grade 6 Students in Poverty for the 2012-2013 Through the 2014-2015 School Years

Grade Span Configuration	*n* of schools	*M*	*SD*
2012-2013			
Single/Double	200	67.44	10.39
Multi-Grade	100	72.86	16.71
2013-2014			
Single/Double	208	75.54	9.77
Multi-Grade	102	78.86	14.38
2014-2015			
Single/Double	178	72.75	10.47
Multi-Grade	382	76.86	13.83

Concerning the 2013-2014 school year for Grade 6 students, the parametric independent samples *t*-test yielded a statistically significant difference, $t(148.21) = 2.11$, $p = .04$, on the STAAR Reading test passing rates as a function of grade span configuration. This difference represented a small effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 0.27 (Cohen, 1988). Congruent with the previous year, Grade 6 students in poverty had higher STAAR Reading passing rates in multi-grade level schools by more than 3% than did their peers who were enrolled in single/double grade level schools. The descriptive statistics for this analysis are presented in Table 3.

With respect to the 2014-2015 school year for Grade 6 students, the parametric independent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference, $t(445.06) = -3.89$, $p < .001$, on the STAAR Reading test passing rates as a function of grade span configuration. This difference represented a small effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 0.33 (Cohen, 1988). Commensurate with the previous two years, Grade 6 students in poverty had higher STAAR Reading passing rates in in multi-grade level schools by more than 4% than did their peers who were enrolled in single/double grade level schools. Revealed in Table 3 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Next, the STAAR Mathematics test passing rates were analyzed as a function of grade span configuration for Grade 6 students in poverty. Concerning the 2012-2013 school year, the parametric independent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference, $t(149.81) = 2.83$, $p = .01$, on the STAAR Mathematics test passing rates between the two grade span configurations. The difference represented a small effect size (Cohen's *d)* of 0.36 (Cohen, 1988). Grade 6 students in poverty had higher STAAR Mathematics passing rates in multi-grade level schools by more than 5% than did their peers who were enrolled in single/double grade level schools. The descriptive statistics for this analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for the STAAR Mathematics Passing Rates by Grade Span Configuration for Grade 6 Students in Poverty for the 2012-2013 and the 2013-2014 School Years

Grade Span Configuration	*n* of schools	*M*	*SD*
2012-2013			
Single/Double	200	70.60	11.40
Multi-Grade	102	75.83	16.79
2013-2014			
Single/Double	207	77.44	11.01
Multi-Grade	103	82.36	14.91

With respect to the 2013-2014 school year for Grade 6 students, the parametric independent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference, $t(159.05) = 2.97$, $p = .003$, on the STAAR Mathematics passing rates as a function of grade span configuration. This difference representeda small effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 0.38 (Cohen, 1988). Commensurate with the previous year, Grade 6 students in poverty had higher STAAR Mathematics passing rates in multi-grade level schools by more than 4% than did their peers who were enrolled in single/double grade level schools. Revealed in Table 4 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

IV. Discussion

In this investigation, the extent to which differences were present in reading and mathematics achievement as a function of grade span configuration for students in poverty in Texas was examined. Three years of Texas statewide data were obtained and analyzed on students in Grades 5 and 6 who wereenrolled in either multi-grade level schools (i.e., PreK-6) or in single/double grade level campuses (i.e., Grades 4-5, 5 only, or Grades 5-6). For all three school years analyzed, the passing rates on the STAAR Reading tests for Grade 5 and 6 students in poverty

were statistically significantly higher in multi-grade level schools than in single/double grade level schools. Passing rates on the STAAR Mathematics tests for Grades 5 and 6 students in poverty were statistically significantly higher in multi-grade level schools in one of the two school years than in single/double grade level schools.

To determine the magnitude of the differences between the average passing rates for students in poverty attending a single/double grade level configuration or a multi-grade level grade span configuration for each school year, a Cohen's *d* (Cohen, 1988) was calculated for each subject, school year, and grade level. The array of the Cohen's *d* calculations for both the STAAR Reading and Mathematics analyses was from a low of 0.17 to a high of 0.44, with the range being 0.27 for the three years of data analyzed. Thus, the average degree of practical significance of the statistically significant results was small. Delineated in Table 5 are the Cohen's *d* effect size calculations for the STAAR Reading and Mathematics analyses.

Table 5: Cohen's d for Differences in the STAAR Reading and Mathematics Passing Rates by Grade Span Configuration for Grade 5 and 6 Students in Poverty for the 2012-2013 Through the 2014-2015 School Years

Grade and Subject	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Grade 5			
STAAR Reading	0.37	0.44	0.25
STAAR Mathematics	N/A	0.23	N/A
Grade 6			
STAAR Reading	0.39	0.27	0.33
STAAR Mathematics	0.36	0.38	N/A

With reference to the STAAR Reading results of Grade 5 students in poverty, Cohen's *d* values ranged from a low of 0.25 to a high of 0.44 for the three years that were analyzed. In comparison, the Cohen's *d* was calculated for the STAAR Reading results of Grade 6 students in poverty which ranged from a low of 0.27 to a high of 0.39 for the same three years that were analyzed. For both grade levels, students enrolled in multi-grade level schools performed at a higher rate on the STAAR Reading assessment than did their peers in single/double grade level schools. Students enrolled in multi-grade level schools had an average passing rate that was 2.67% to 5.42% higher than the average passing rate for students enrolled in single/double grade level schools. Readers are referred to Table 5 for these Cohen's *d* calculations.

In regard to the STAAR Mathematics test performance for Grade 5 students in poverty, a Cohen's *d* was calculated to determine the magnitude of difference. Only two years of data were reported for the STAAR Mathematics due to the fact that performance standards were not yet established for the redesigned assessment which included the new curriculum standards (Texas Education Agency, 2013). The Cohen's *d* difference in STAAR Mathematics passing rates as a function of grade span configuration for Grade 5 students in poverty was from 0.17 to 0.23. The difference of these averages for the two years were 1.93% and 2.6%, respectively. Both of these averages were in favor of students attending multi-grade level schools in comparison to students attending single/double grade level schools. Table 5 contains these Cohen's *d* calculations.

Concerning the STAAR Mathematics Assessment for Grade 6 students in poverty, the Cohen's *d* difference in STAAR Mathematics passing rates by grade span configuration for Grade 6 students in poverty ranged from 0.36 to 0.38. The difference in the average passing rates were 5.23% and 4.92%, with both differences being in favor of students attending multi-grade level schools in comparison to students attending single/double grade level schools. Readers are referred to Table 5 for these Cohen's *d* calculations. Grade 5 and Grade 6 students in poverty who were enrolled in multi-grade level schools had higher average passing rates in reading and in mathematics for the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015 school years than their peers who were enrolled in single/double grade level schools. Readers are referred to Table 6 for the mean differences in passing rates between the grade span configurations and the grade span configuration in which students in poverty had the highest average passing rates.

Table 6: Differences in the STAAR Reading and Mathematics Passing Rates by Grade Span Configuration for Grade 5 and 6 Students in Poverty for the 2012-2013 Through the 2014-2015 School Years

Grade, Subject, and Year	Mean Difference	Grade Span With Highest Passing Rate
Grade 5		
STAAR Reading		
2012-2013	3.78	Multi-Grade Level
2013-2014	4.42	Multi-Grade Level
2014-2015	2.67	Multi-Grade Level
STAAR Mathematics		
2012-2013	1.93	Multi-Grade Level
2013-2014	2.60	Multi-Grade Level
Grade 6		
STAAR Reading		
2012-2013	5.42	Multi-Grade Level
2013-2014	3.32	Multi-Grade Level
2014-2015	4.11	Multi-Grade Level
STAAR Mathematics		
2012-2013	5.23	Multi-Grade Level
2013-2014	4.92	Multi-Grade Level

a) Connections with Existing Literature

Researchers (e.g., Clark, 2012; Clark et al., 2013; Combs et al., 2011; Fiaschetti& Slate, 2015; Johnson et al., 2012) have examined the relationship of academic achievement with grade span configuration. In this multiyear, statewide investigation, results were congruent with Johnson et al. (2012) wherein students who were enrolled in schools with multi-grade level grade span configurations had higher academic achievement scores than did their peers in schools with single/double grade span configurations. Similarly, results delineated herein were commensurate with Clark (2012) who contended that an optimal grade span configuration for students to be academically successful would have multiple grade levels, specifically K-8, in comparison to a middle school (6-8) grade span configuration.

Readers should recognize, however, that other researchers (e.g., Carolan & Chesky, 2012; Wilson & Slate, 2014) have produced results that are not commensurate with the results of this multiyear, statewide investigation. Carolan and Chesky (2012) and Wilson and Slate (2014) both determined that grade span configuration was not related to the academic achievement of all students in the middle school setting. Carolan and Chesky (2012) analyzed the influence of school attachment on the relationship between grade span configuration and student achievement in reading and mathematics. They contended that getting young adolescents to enjoy school, develop positive adult and peer relationships, and feeling safe were all school attachment factors that played a greater role in increasing student achievement than grade span configuration. Wilson and Slate (2014) investigated grade span configuration and its relationship on student achievement for Grade 6 Hispanic and Black students. They documented that Hispanic students had statistically significantly higher scores in a traditional 6-8 grade school setting versus a multi-grade level, K-8, school setting. Black students in Grade 6 performed in a similar manner on achievement assessments in the 6-8 and K-8 school settings.

b) Connection to Theoretical Framework

In this research article, the school connectedness theory (Klem& Connell, 2004; McCormick & O'Conner, 2015; Rimm-Kaufman, Baroody, Larsen, Curby, & Abry, 2015) was utilized as the theoretical framework. As mentioned previously, academic achievement is not only related to grade span configuration but also to school connectedness. The theory of school connectedness encompasses the concept that positive relationships with their teachers and staff members who care about them, will result in a positive attitude, student satisfaction, and higher academic engagement (Klem& Connell, 2004). Results from this particular study are supportive of schools with

a multi-grade level span having more student connectedness than single/double grade level schools. Conclusively, students who are able to develop close, positive relationships with the school staff for a greater period of time have higher academic performance.

c) Implications for Policy and Practice

In this analysis of academic achievement and grade span configuration for Grade 5 and 6 students in poverty, students in schools with multi-grade level configurations had the highest passing rates on the STAAR Reading and Mathematics assessments. Grade span configuration has substantial implications for education policy and practice. First, educational leaders need to examine the current grade span configurations of their schools. If schools within their district that have single or double grade levels are not performing well with regard to their schools that have multi-grade level grade spans, then the possibility of reconfiguration would merit consideration. Another idea would be for educational leaders to develop communities or families within their schools to create an atmosphere that would enable students to develop closer relationships with staff members. With respect to students in poverty, the United States has the highest percentage of people living in poverty, with nearly 25% of the population consisting of children (Abramsky, 2013). It is critical that school leaders identify factors that support the academic achievement of students in poverty. Educational leaders need to find ways to increase the academic engagement and performance of students in poverty and assist in supporting positive, and caring relationships with staff members that allow students to be connected to their school community. For future school construction, Texas legislators should examine the extant literature on grade span configuration and student performance.

d) Recommendations for Future Research

For this study, differences in academic achievement as a function of grade span configuration were examined for students in poverty. Given the consistent results that were obtained, researchers should consider extending this study to other groups of students such as at-risk or English Language Learners to determine whether grade span configuration is related to their academic achievement. Because the grade span configuration and academic achievement data analyzed in this study were aggregated data across Texas elementary and middle schools, researchers are encouraged to examine individual student level data from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System. Individual student level analyses would provide more detailed results than aggregated school level data. Such individual level analyses could be conducted by ethnicity/race, by student programmatic enrollment, and by school campus level. Furthermore, this study could also be extended to other states. Additionally, an investigation could be conducted analyzing grade span configuration and additional school connectedness variables such as attendance rates, truancy, and misbehaviors.

For purposes of this study, quantitative data were used; therefore, researchers are encouraged to examine qualitative data including perceptions of educational leaders, teachers, and students regarding grade span configuration and its relation to academic achievement. Moreover, the underlying mechanisms by which grade span configuration is related to academic achievement have yet to be determined. As such, researchers are encouraged to conduct studies into the underlying reasons for the relationship between grade span configuration and academic achievement. Finally, a mixed method research study would be beneficial to identify school personnel and student views on school connectedness as it relates to grade span configuration and how their perceptions match the academic achievement data at their schools.

V. Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to determine the degree to which differences were present in reading and mathematics achievement as a function of grade span configuration for students in poverty in Texas. Data were analyzed for all Grade 5 and 6 students in poverty who were enrolled in multi-grade level schools (PK-6) and in single/double grade level schools (Grades 4-5, 5 only, or Grades 5-6)in Texas for the 2012-2013 through the 2014-2015 school years. Statistically significant differences were present in passing rates for Grade 5 students in poverty for reading and Grade 6 students in poverty for reading for all three years analyzed, and statistically significant differences were present for two years for mathematics passing rates for Grade 6 students in poverty. Grade 5 and Grade 6 students in poverty had higher average passing rates for all subject areas for all three years analyzed in a multi-grade level configuration setting than in a single/double grade level setting. Congruent with previous researchers (e.g., Clark, 2012; Johnson et al., 2012), students in poverty who were enrolled in multi-grade level schools had higher levels of academic achievement than did their peers who were enrolled in a single/double level grade setting.

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Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: G
Linguistics & Education
Volume 16 Issue 8 Version 1.0 Year 2016
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Nigerian Literature and Current Realities: The Challenge of Illiteracy and E-Literacy

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Abstract- Today's world is becoming more and more technology-driven, and the speed of change in technology has become neck-breaking, mind-breaking and intractable to many related fields. Literature is one of such fields that have much to do with the information technology, particularly in relation to language use and retrieval and utilization of information resources – activities that require high or relatively high level of literacy. This paper examines the issues of illiteracy and e-literacy as some of the challenges confronting the 21st century Nigerian literary writer, critic and reader. Hence, it has three trajectories: the Nigerian writer's use of information technology as a tool for propagating African literature; the Nigerian critic's use of information technology as a tool for propagating the criticism of African literature; and the Nigerian reader's use of information technology as a tool for accessing African literature. The study looks at the response of the Nigerian literary scholar to the global requirement of e-literacy against the backdrops of poor reading culture and high rate of illiteracy in Nigeria.

Keywords: illiteracy, e-literacy, information, communi-cation, technology, literature, globalization.

GJHSS-G Classification: FOR Code: 339999

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

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Keywords: illiteracy, e-literacy, information, communication, technology, literature, globalization.

I. Introduction

Presently, the world is referred to as a global village. This is the extent to which technological advances have shaped our world.

> Organizations will increasingly be seeing the world as their playing field….Technological advances made in the present century are only a tip of the iceberg. The Internet, the electronic system, the mass media explosion have all contributed to sharing of information and service delivery quicker and more efficiently. There will be a greater reality in the future and the difference between success and failure…will be the ability to create and maintain sustainable competitive advantage in the application of technology to deliver better value to the customers (Odumodu 1999).

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The above prediction by Joseph Odumodu, made at the close of the last century, emphasizes the increasing importance of the application of technology to business and to all areas of life in the human society. This effect of technological advancement is in nowhere more conspicuous than in the areas of information computation, information transmission and communication acts and processes. And a major tool that is extensively being exploited in the present day technologically-driven human society is language. This is what has informed the task of examining language use in the 21st century, especially in relation to the observed evolution from information technology to communication technology. The focus of this paper is to examine the role and nature of language in the information technology compared with the role and nature of language use in the communication technology.

II. Origin and Nature of Communication

It seems natural to trace the origin of communication to the creation of life, when all living creatures in the universe, whether aquatic or terrestrial, needed to communicate in order to interact with one another. For the human species, Adam and Eve were the first to communicate with each other, making use of language. This, however, is not to undermine the divine/human interaction through language that had existed between God and Adam, before Eve came into the scene.

In the ancient human societies, which were relatively smaller in size, there was minimum recognizable formal integration and cohesion. Communication was much simpler. The various localities were united only by moral consensus, where values, ideas and economic activities differ from one locality to another (Okolo et al 1998). Then, for instance, the family or village head could communicate a message of communal importance through the village or town crier, who would beat his gong or 'egogo' at night to summon members of the community and deliver the message to them. In some other instances, some special messages could be symbolically sent to the members of the community through fire signals, tying of shrubs or leaves, and making of cuts or marks on trees, or through verbal codes or cat calls.

With growth in size and in complexity of modern societies, however, it becomes difficult, and even impossible, to employ such simple, crude and direct forms of communication that were used in the ancient societies. That is, as society becomes more and more sophisticated in nature, the need for more sophisticated, more efficient and more effective systems of communication continues to arise in order to have clearer and unambiguous information transfer within modern societies. And such information and communication systems must be designed to promote optimum understanding of the message (or information) and a near accurate prediction of the response of the recipient(s). Most probably, the need to meet these requirements is the reason why changes in the information and communication industry have been so rapid, especially in this 21st century.

a) The Advent of Information Technology

Since the turn of the 21st century, information has become pronounced as the omnipotent catalyst for improved human relationship, business productivity, national development, international relations and globalization. Today's world is becoming more and more technology-driven, and the speed of change in technology has become neck-breaking, mind-breaking and intractable to many related fields. To a very large extent,

> Technological innovation has changed the social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of life since the end of the Cold War (Taylor, 2001). Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been instrumental in social transformations – from industrial society of the 20th century to the 'network society' of the new age of 'informationalism' – where even intercontinental neighbours are now one button-push away (Castells, 1996). (Adebiyi, 3, 2012).

Also, as observed by Aderemi Raji-Oyelade,

> The electronic media has become a dynamic space to determine the presence, significance and rating of disciplines – the humanities and the sciences – and professionals including literature and literary traditions, to the extent that the dictum has come to say: 'if you are not on the website, you are out of sight'." ("Reflections…" 15).

Raji-Oyelade's succinct observation, here, underlines the need for every discipline to register its presence in, as well as take full advantage of the electronic media in order to command relevance in the current 21st century world.

Obviously, the 21st century world is a world that is ruled by information and communication technology (ICT). And any individual, organization, people of group and even discipline that would fit into this world must not but become literate in the true sense of the word. And, by becoming literate, here, we mean it both in the literal sense and as it apply to the reigning technology of the day – the e-technology.

b) The Changing Face of Communication Systems in Recent Times

That there have been changes in the forms of communication systems employed since the ancient/pre-historic period to the present modern period requires no argument whatsoever. It is very obvious that the simple and crude communication methods of sending messages through village/town criers or through symbolic fire signals, cat calls or marks on trees have long given way to more sophisticated communication systems. The computer age did not only usher in the analog system, which made communication systems more effective and more efficient, but the more recent digital system has stupendously increased their speed and coverage, while at the same time becoming smaller and smaller in size. And, in very recent times, the telecommunication, telephone and audio/visual systems have found a meeting place via the Internet, and the world has been reduced far beyond the size of a global village to a global neighbourhood.

But in spite of all these technological miracles of the present age, the problem that seems to stand out is that of determining the effectiveness and relevance of the modern systems of communication, e.g. the Internet, especially in terms of language use in social and business relationships. Can we really say that there is marked difference in effectiveness and relevance between the old and modern systems of communication? How have the changes in the information and communication ages affected language use in social and business relationships? While the exhaustive discussion of these issues is far beyond the scope of this paper, I nevertheless intend to hazard a word or two in this regard.

c) Changes in Modern Information and Communication Systems in the 21st Century

As we move from the general to the specific, the pendulum is swinging very swiftly from the sense of regarding communication as a process of social/business interaction to that of seeing it as a system of exchanging information between individuals or groups, especially in social/business environments. What this simply means is that we are using 'communication system' interchangeably with 'information system'. And this, in fact, calls for a re-definition of terms.

Kenneth C. Laudon and spouse (2000) see communication system – rather, information system – as "interrelated components working together to collect, process, store, and disseminate information to support decision making, coordination, control, analysis, and visualization in an organization." This definition tends to point towards Management Information System (MIS). Laudon and wife further establish this when they define

'information system' from a business perspective, as "organizational and management solution, based on information technology, to a challenge posed by the environment." Gradually, we are obviously being led towards appreciating the role of communication or information systems in organizations.

And, talking about the pivotal role of management information system in today's organizations, Laudon and his partner hold:

> …it is difficult, if not impossible, to manage a modern organization without at least some knowledge of information system what they are, how they affect the organization and its employees, and how they can make business more competitive and efficient.
> They submit: "Information systems have become essential for creating competitive firms, managing global corporations and providing useful products and services to customers."

Of course, we cannot help but agree with Laudon and his wife, as they echo Leonard Barton's (1995) observation: "Across all industries, information and the technology that delivers it have become critical, strategic assets for business firms and their managers." In this light, Laudon strongly believes:

> Information systems are needed to optimize the flow of information and knowledge within the organisation and to help management maximize the firm's knowledge resources. Because the productivity of employees will depend on the quality of the systems serving them, management decisions about information technology are critically important to the prosperity and survival of a firm.

d) The Internet as a Modern Communication System

Having established the pivotal role(s) of Management Information Systems in today's business and social environments, the next thing to do is to identify some of those information systems, or gadgets, that help to perform this essential function. We said in the above section that there have been remarkable changes in the forms of communication system employed since the ancient/pre-historic periods to the present modern period. One of the areas of such remarkable change is in the use of the typewriter keyboard. Of recent, the Lord Lugard kind of manual typewriting keyboard has metamorphosed into the all-purpose electronic keyboard, which now serves as an input device for the computer. And the computer itself has gone through countless stages of metamorphoses until it now stands as the powerful wizard of the business and social world.

We cannot help but agree that technology has revolutionized communication during the past decade and access to people and information anywhere in the world has become quicker, cheaper, and easier. This observation is in line with an earlier one by The United Nation's publication, Human Development Report (2003), "People's lives around the globe are linked more deeply, more intensely, more immediately than ever before." This new wave in the communication highway is made possible by no other single factor than the reigning computer technology. With the multi-dimensional metamorphoses of the computer system, the computer has become a kind of demi-god with, please permit me to say, omnipotent ability. Today, there seems to be a marriage between the computer system and the telephone system that has produced a most powerful wizard for the information and communication use of the 21st century.

Yes, the Internet is where it is all happening right now. The Internet seems to provide a level playfield for all corporate entities and individuals in the world today to showcase their wares. It is now generally believed that the Internet is providing the hottest selling business opportunity in the world today. And with the advent of social media, almost every Tom, Dick and Harry is keying into the advantage (and disadvantage?) of reaching the world with whatever he has to offer in real time; and those who do not learn to use it will be left out. This exciting new business and social revolution has created a wide variety of opportunities for almost everything imaginable to be done through the Internet. These include the possibility of personalized consulting on Internet, electronic marketing, new advertising/sales promotion media, business automation, e-mail services, electronic publishing, match-making, social relationship, counselling, research, education, etc. The result of the Internet opportunities is that people now have more access to other people's lives, products and ideas. And the ultimate goal is to enhance the way people live, work and play.

e) The Challenge of Illiteracy and E-literacy in Today's World

Literally, illiteracy is a state of being unable to read and write; it implies a state of being uneducated. Hence, a person who has not had the privilege of acquiring formal education is often regarded as an illiterate. With the level of civilization in the world today, every member of the human society is expected to possess the minimum level of education – primary school education. It is needless to say that anybody who does not possess this minimum level of education would be at a very serious disadvantage, as far as functioning in the systems of today's world is concerned.

But it must be strongly noted that the world has gone far beyond having its members possess the minimum level of education, to having them possess the minimum level of e-literacy. And e-literacy, here, goes beyond computer literacy to literacy in the sophisticated ever-changing technology of the present day. The starting point for acquiring the required e-literacy is for

members of the human society to gain some level of competence in the use the facilities of the present day information and communication technology.

Alphonsus Adebiyi informs:

> The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2003) defines ICTs as: …basically information-handling tools – a varied set of goods, applications and services that are used to produce, store, process, distribute and exchange information. They include the 'old' ICTs of radio, television and telephone, and the 'new' ICTs of computers, satellite and wireless technology and the Internet. (3, 2012)

These varieties of ICTs have their uses, which cut across the various disciplines and fields of endeavours. This is in line with Marshall's (2002) opinion, which Adebiyi seemingly confirms:

> … many different types of technology can be used to support and enhance learning. According to him (referring to Marshall), everything from video content and digital moviemaking to laptop computing and handheld technologies have been used in classrooms, and new uses of technology such as podcasting are constantly emerging. Various technologies deliver different kinds of content and serve different purposes in the classroom. For example, word processing and e-mail promote communication skills; data base and spreadsheet programs promote organizational skills; and modeling software promotes the understanding of science and math concepts. (4, Emphasis Mine).

Adebiyi (2012) reinforces the observation of Becker et al (2000), regarding the swinging of the pendulum to arrive at the use of ICT facilities as vehicles for education: "It is important to consider how these electronic technologies differ and what characteristics make them important as vehicles for education." (4). But our focus in this paper is the use of ICT facilities in the areas of language and literature.

III. Nigerian Literature Versus Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Literature is one of the fields of learning that have much to do with the information technology, particularly in relation to language use and retrieval, and the utilization of information resources – activities that require high or relatively high level of e-literacy. This is also so, considering the fact that literature, using the words of Aderemi Raji-Oyelade, is "the concrete science of imagination". (15). It therefore follows that we must respond positively to Raji-Oyelade's posers on the interface of technology and creative writing:

> …how much of the interface of technology and creative writing has been exploited… How much of the technologization of the world has been achieved in this national literary culture? ("Reflections..." 14-15);

And,

> ...how much of the software technology has been explored and exploited on its behalf, in contemporary Nigerian literary space? (15)

These questions establish the need of the Nigerian literary scholar to positively respond to, embrace and fully utilize the available multi-varied facilities of information technology to access, appreciate, project and promote the cultural wealth of the nation, that are contained in her literatures, before the global community for full patronage.

a) The Nigerian Writer and ICT

Here, we are concerned about how well the Nigerian writer has employed the facilities of the Information and Communication Technology for propagating the Nigerian literature. First, let us examine how Raji-Oyelade has demarcated the generations of Nigerian writers:

> The pioneer generation of Nigerian writers including Gabriel Okara, Chinua Achebe, J.P. Clark, Wole Soyinka, Mabel Segun, Christopher Okigbo and Flora Nwapa belong to the period before the media revolution which initiated the language and the activity of the hipertext. (15).
>
> …the second generation, especially those who emerged in the mid 1980s, including Kole Omotoso, Pol Ndu, Ossie Enekwe, Femi Osofisan, Niyi Osundare, Buchi Emecheta, Festus Iyayi and Tanure Ojaide arrived at the beginning of the revolution, but their inability to appreciate the portal can be described as the apt example of the postcolonial African condition of being the catch-up rung of Late Capitalism's cultural imperialist achievement. At a later decade…some of these authors began to embrace electronic technology as supplementary means of their presence on the global scene, even if tangential. (15).
>
> The Third Generation of Nigerian writers, signalled off in the late 1980s and emerging in the mid 1990s, can be said to be the inheritors of traditions including the advantage of Web 2.0… Notable among Nigerian writers who have pushed the borders of writing beyond the print are Sola Osofisan (nigeriansin-america.com), Nnorom Azunoye (sentinel, uk), Peter Anny-Nzekwe (Dublin Quarterly), Afam Akeh, Chuma Nwokolo (African writing online), and more recent examples by Dami Ajayi and Emmanuel Iduma (Saraba) and Richard Ali (Sentinel, Nigeria online). (15)

The trouble with Raji-Oyelade's demarcation is mainly with the first two generations; and it is in the fact that the time of arrival into the literary scene has nothing to do with when a writer chooses to register his e-presence. In other words, that Kole Omotosho arrived

the literary scene at the period before the media revolution does not fit him into the later generation of Nigerian writers as against a writer like Wole Soyinka who though arriving long before him, may have indeed embraced the new technology first. In the same way, that a writer like Afam Akeh arrived at the period that web 2.0 is the reigning tradition does not make him a third generation Nigerian writer as against a writer like Ossie Enekwe who may have embraced the new technology earlier than him. Therefore belonging to a generation of Nigerian writers, as far as the information and communication technology is concerned does not depend on when a writer arrives the literary scene, but more on when a writer embraces the reigning electronic technology, how well the writer has utilized the technology to remarkably register his e-presence and how often the writer is upgrading himself in response to the ever-changing technology.

Regardless of the generation to which the Nigerian literary writer belongs, the paucity of materials in the Internet, whether of the older generation, second generation or even the newer generation of Nigerian writers is a clear testimony to the fact that the Nigerian literary writer is yet to come to terms with global technological realities; and something urgently needs to be done by Nigerian literary writers or their agents in order to fill this gap and make our literature available to readers in the information and communication super highways.

b) The Nigerian Literary Critic and ICT

Our focus here is not on literary critics of Nigerian literature, since this would bring into consideration such foreign literary critics of Nigerian literature as Bernth Lindfors and many others. But our focus here is on Nigerians who are functioning as literary critics, whether they are studying Nigerian literature or any other literature in the world for that matter. Our examination is about how far and how well Nigerian literary critics are taking advantage of the multi-varied information/communication systems to enrich and propagate their critical ideas/opinions to the world.

Definitely, it cannot be argued to the contrary that Nigeria has produced a huge crop of literary critics of international stamina. With the proclaimed dynamism and robustness of the critical works of such Nigerian literary critics as Dan Izevbaye, D.I. Nwoga, Romanus Egudu, Biodun Jeyifo, Tejumola Olaniyan, Chinweizu, Madubuiko, Abiola Irele, Wole Soyinka, Harry Garuba, Emmanuel Obiechina, Ernest N. Emenyonu, Charles E. Nnolim, Ezenwa Ohaeto, Peter Onwudinjo, Femi Ojo-Ade, A.E Ohaegbu, Kalu Uka, Chris Nwamuo, Funso Aiyejina, Odia Ofeimun, Olu Obafemi, Niyi Osundare, Catherine Acholonu, Chidi Maduka, Molara Ogundipe, Isidore Okpewho, Steve Ogude, Sunday Anozie, Theo Vincent, J.A.J. Nwachukwu-Agbada, Ropo Sekoni, Nwahunanya, G.G. Darah, Chidi Amuta and lots of others, Nigeria can boast of having showcased some of the best literary critics in the continent of Africa. But a look at these foremost Nigerian literary critics would reveal that majority of them are already gearing towards retirement or are already retired from active service, from productive academic activities or from critical exercises. For this reason, many of them would most probably prefer to enjoy their retirement in peace and quietness, rather than be bothered by the information and communication technology systems that are reigning sway in today's world. And, outside these great icons of international repute, there seems to be nobody left in the literary criticism scene in Nigeria.

A look at our academic journals and publications of today seems to reveal lack of the dynamism, robustness and prolificacy that we saw in the works of Nigerian literary scholars of yesteryears, who were able to clearly etch their names in annals of history as renown literary critics. Yet, with the great wealth of resource materials that are made available in the electronic (information and communication) systems today, one would think that the writings of our literary critics of today would be richer in depth and variety than those of the previous generations of Nigerian literary scholars; and one would also think that the literary critics of today would be more prolific and more visible in the electronic media than those of the older generations.

c) Readers of Literature in Nigeria and ICT

Here, it seems we also have a problem of definition. By readers of literature in Nigeria, are we limited to Nigerian readers of Nigerian literature, or are we to include non-Nigerian readers of Nigerian literature? Or, looking at it the other way round, should we or shouldn't we be talking about Nigerians who are readers of literature, regardless of whether they are readers of Nigerian literary texts or non-Nigerian literary texts?

If the first group of people identified above is the case in question, then we have in our hands what we could call, 'double tragedy'. This is clearly because we have in Nigeria a non-reading culture, which is further made tragic by the fact that literary creativity, more than any other form of creativity, is neither encouraged nor appreciated in Nigeria. Therefore to look for Nigerian readers of Nigerian literature within the facilities of the ICT is almost like looking for water in the desert.

If the second group – the non-Nigerian readers of Nigerian literature – is the case under reference, then there could be some hope. But the questions that readily come to mind are: How many non-Nigerian literary readers are interested in Nigerian literature? How much of Nigerian literature is uploaded and made available online? I guess that the answers to these questions are obvious. First, we do not expect other people to show more interest in our literatures than us. If there are readers of Nigerian literature, our best bet

should be Nigerians. And if Nigerians are not interested in reading their own literature, neither should we expect others to read our literature? So we have a situation in which almost nobody or very few people are reading Nigerian literature, whether offline or online. Second, not much of Nigerian literature is available online. You can try it by using any of the search engines to see for yourself. So, even if the non-Nigerian literary readers are interested in reading Nigerian literature, much of the literature is not available, and consequently inaccessible within the ICT facilities.

But if the third group– Nigerians who are readers of literature (generally speaking) – is our focus, then there is brighter hope here; the reason being that, today, there is a huge avalanche and a wide variety of literature available within the ICT facilities; and any and every good reader has more than enough literature online to occupy him probably for ages to come. But, Nigerians being who we are, how many Nigerian literary readers are computer compliant, let alone Internet savvy?

IV. Conclusion

We may conclude by re-affirming the following facts about the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Nigerian Literature in the 21st century:

- Today's world has become more and more technology-driven and the speed of technological changes is very rapid and intractable.
- The 21st century world is a world that is ruled by information and communication technology.
- In this 21st century, information has become pronounced as the omnipotent catalyst for improved relationships, business productivity, national development, international relations and globalization.
- Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been instrumental to social transformations in the 21st century.
- Technology has revolutionized communication in the past decade and access to people and information has become quicker, cheaper and easier.
- The electronic media have created a dynamic space to determine the presence, significance and rating of disciplines.
- The Internet provides a level playfield for corporate entities and individuals to showcase their wares.
- The Internet has enhanced the way people live, work and play.
- Everybody in today's world is expected to possess the minimum level of education and of e-literacy (i.e. considerable competence in the use of facilities of today's sophisticated and ever-changing technology) in order to function in the systems of today's world.
- The use of ICTs cuts across the various disciplines and fields of endeavour.
- ICT facilities are being used as vehicles for education.
- Language is the main tool for the information and communication technologies.
- Literature is one field that has much to do with the information technology in terms of language use, retrieval and utilization of resources – activities that require high level of e-literacy.
- The Nigerian literary scholar is expected to positively respond to, embrace and fully utilize available facilities of the ICT in order to access, appreciate, project and promote the cultural wealth of the nation that are contained in her literature.
- The paucity of Nigerian literary materials in the Internet shows that Nigerian literary writers are yet to take full advantage of the current global technological realities. This gap needs to be filled to make our literature available to online readers.
- There is lack of dynamism, robustness and prolificacy in emergent Nigerian literary critics of the 21st century that we saw in literary scholars of yesteryears. Therefore, Nigerian literary critics of the present century need to rise up to this challenge.
- We have in Nigeria a non-reading culture – Almost nobody or very few people are reading Nigerian literature, whether offline or online. What factors could be responsible for this unhealthy development? Whatever may be the reasons, Nigerians need to do everything possible to improve on the reading culture.
- Literary creativity is not encouraged or appreciated in Nigeria – Nigerians hardly read their own literatures. This is very demoralizing for existing and would-be literary writers in Nigeria.
- Few non-Nigerian readers are interested in Nigerian literature, because they have their own literatures to read first before others.
- Not much of Nigerian literature is available online. Literary writers should rise up to their responsibility of making their literary works available, both offline and online.
- There is a huge avalanche and wide variety of literature of literary writers of other nations of the world available within the ICT facilities that many Nigerian literary readers do not get to read because they are not computer compliant or Internet savvy. This negative trend needs to be urgently addressed.

Despite the strong temptation to go ahead and investigate or pursue the numerous questions and issues raised in this paper, time and space would not permit us to do so here. Therefore, this paper is meant to agitate our minds and probably serve as a curtain raiser for a possible academic debate among scholars regarding the issues of Information and Communication

Technologies (ICTs) and Nigerian Literature in the 21st century.

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Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: G
Linguistics & Education
Volume 16 Issue 8 Version 1.0 Year 2016
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Differences in Dropout Rates by Ethnicity/Race of Middle School Students: A Multi-Year Analysis

By Jessica C. Wiltz & John R. Slate
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Abstract- Examined in this study were dropout rates for Black, Hispanic, and White middle schools students during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. Texas middle school dropout rates were downloaded from the Texas Academic Performance Reports for two school years. Inferential statistical analyses were conducted separately for each ethnic/racial group to determine whether changes had occurred in their dropout rates between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. Black and White students did not have a statistically significant difference in their dropout rates between those two school years. Hispanic students, however, had a statistically significantly higher dropout rate in the 2013-2014 school year than in the 2012-2013 school year. Implications of these results are discussed, as well as recommendations for future research.

Keywords: *dropout rates, texas academic performance report, black, hispanic, white.*

GJHSS-G Classification: *FOR Code: 139999*

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

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I. Introduction

Projections show that by 2018, Americans will need to have a postsecondary education to obtain 63% of available jobs. Only an estimated 10% of jobs will be available to high school dropouts (Kahn, 2012). The United States will have 32% of high school students not succeed at receiving a high school diploma within 4 years (Peguero, 2011). Dropping out could lead to serious problems in time such as, a stronger possibility of being unemployed, more likely to use drugs, and more likely to be incarcerated in comparison to students who obtain a high school diploma (Peguero, 2011). This dropout problem is high for Blacks and Hispanics. An overrepresentation of dropouts among Blacks and Hispanicsis historical and persistent (Peguero, 2011). Signs of possible dropout behavior are present well before the student is in high school. Students in Grade 6 who attend school less than 80% of the time, who demonstrate continued misbehavior, and who are failing reading or mathematics have a greater chance of dropping out in high school (Kahn, 2011). Systems developed that target students early on can ensure identification and providing of resources is given to those students. Traditionally, concentration has been placed on interventions in the high school level; however extensions should be made to provide middle school grades with the necessary resources to stay on track to graduati on success.

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II. Review of the Literature

Carpenter and Ramirez (2007) conducted a research study to investigate the factors related to dropout behavior as a measure of achievement gaps among Black, White, and Hispanic students. The research was conducted and progressed in two phases. Carpenter and Ramirez (2007) used data collected from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, which began while participants were in their Grade 8 year, continued into high school, postsecondary education, and into the labor force (Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007). As part of the data collection procedure questionnaires in addition to cognitive tests were given to each student. Similarly, the school principal, student's parents, and two teachers were also given questionnaires. The school sample was restricted to regular public and private schools that had eighth grade students enrolled. The research sample included a total of 17,613 participants. The dropout rate in their study was documented as being 15.0% for Black students and 15.4% for Hispanic students (Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007). The dropout rate for White students was 8.4%. Consistent with previous findings, students in private schools drop out less than those students enrolled the public school sector, as well students in single parent homes drop out at higher rates than those students raised in two parent households. A large number of students who dropped out of school had previously been retained.

In addition to Carpenter and Ramirez (2007), Stearns etal. (2007) conducted a research study to investigate if previous theories of dropout would explain the link between students who had to repeat a grade and later dropping out of school. They analyzed data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988. Stearns et al. (2007) focused on two dependent variables: early dropout and late dropout. Late dropouts were defined as being students who were enrolled in school in the eighth and tenth grade, but were no enrolled by the 12th grade. Early dropouts were calculated from 1990 whether dropout or currently enrolled of those students who were in the eighth grade in 1988. Early dropouts and late dropouts were analyzed separately due to the realization that younger students have different factors for dropping out than their older

counterparts. Early dropout students were measured in the eighth grade, and tenth grade was used as the measure for late dropouts. Retention will predict early and late dropout for White, Black, and Hispanic students even as well as differences in resources, socio-demographic, and educational background (Stearns et al., 2007, p. 228). The differences in resources did have an effect on the likelihood of dropping out between retain and continuously promoted students differently across different ethnic groups.

a) Statement of the Problem

The Intercultural Development Research Association releases attrition rates each fall. As of the fall of 2015 Texas fails to graduate one out of every four students (Attrition and Dropout, 2015).Black and Hispanic students were two times more likely to leave high school without obtaining a diploma in comparison to White students (Attrition and Dropout, 2015). With predictions showing that 90%of jobs will require a high school diploma by the year 2020 (O'Brien, 2012), it is critical that educational leaders become more involved in dropout prevention. It is difficult to determine when and why these students ultimately make the choice to dropout, however warning signs that maybe evident in earlier grades can predict this outcome. Educational leaders in middle schools should target possible dropouts by providing resources for dropout prevention to students who have poor behavior but may not be failing their academics (O'Brien, 2012).

b) Significance of the Study

As a part of his education agenda, President Obama outlined a plan to address high school dropout rates by addressing middle schools and paying for interventions to address this area (Wagon, 2012).The vast majority of research on school dropout rates and prevention is predominantly geared toward high school students. More research studies need to be conducted on dropout rates in middle schools. President Obama focused on middle school students because typically students who do drop out of school usually are on that path before they reach high school (Wagon, 2012). It is important to address those students before they drop out of school. Middle schools are typically designed to give these younger students a greater level of support in comparison to high schools when it is harder to reach those students (Khan, 2012).Strong predictors of whether a student will graduate are formed in this critical middle school period (Khan, 2012). The findings of this study will provide data for school administrators, counselors, and classroom teachers as well as policymakers to ensure a focus toward middle school students.

c) Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which the dropout rates of Black, White, and Hispanic middle school students differ between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school year. Specifically addressed was whether changes occurred in the dropout rates of these three groups of students between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. The vast majority of research on school dropout rates and prevention is predominantly geared toward high school students. More research studies are warranted on dropout rates in middle schools.

d) Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What is the difference in the dropout rates of Black middle school students between the 2012-2013 school year and the 2013-2014 school year?; (b) What is the difference in the dropout rates of Hispanic middle school students between the 2012-2013 school year and the 2013-2014 school year?;and (c) What is the difference in the dropout rates of White middle school students between the 2012-2013 school year and the 2013-2014 school year?

III. Method

a) Participants

Participants in this study were middle schools in Texas for which dropout rates were reported on the Texas Academic Performance Reports. Data on the dropout rates for Grade 7 and Grade 8 middle school students in Texas in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school year were downloaded from the Texas Education Agency website. A total of 788 middle schools provided data on Black student dropout rates in the 2012-2013 school year and 806middle schools provided these data in the 2013-2014 school year. Similarly, a total of 1,066 middle schools provided data on Hispanic student dropout rates in the 2012-2013 school year, and 1,085 middle schools provided these data in the 2013-2014 school year. Additionally, a total of 980 middle schools provided data on White student dropout rates in the 2012-2013 school year, and 985 middle schools provided these data in the 2013-2014 school year.

b) Instrumentation and Procedures

Data were obtained from the Texas Academic Performance Reports database for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, and then imported in to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software program. Next, the data files that were downloaded from the Texas Academic Performance Reports were converted into a SPSS data file. Then the relevant variables for this investigation were assigned labels, prior to statistical analysis., Because student data were reported to the Texas Education Agency directly from school districts, minimal errors in the data are assumed to be present.

c) Definition of Terms

The focus of this study was middle school dropout rates among Black, Hispanic, and White students in the state of Texas. The specific term

dropout refers to a student who was enrolled in a Texas public school in grades 7-12, but did not return to a Texas public school the following fall within the school start window, was not expelled, did not graduate, receive a GED, continue high school outside the Texas public school system, begin college, or die (Accountability Manual, 2009).

*Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR)*isformerly known as the Academic Excellence Indicator System Reports, these reports pull together a wide range of information annually on the performance of students across the state of Texas. This report provides information on staffing, programs, and demographics of every school and district (Texas Education Agency, 2016). *Attrition rates* can be defined as the indicator of a school's holding power, or the ability to keep students enrolled in school and learning until they graduate (Attrition and Drop Out, 2015).

IV. Results

Prior to conducting inferential statistics to determine whether a statistically significant difference was present between middle school dropout rates and ethnicity for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, checks were conducted to determine the extent to which the data were normally distributed. An examination of the standardized skewness coefficients (i.e., the skewness value divided by its standard error) and the standardized kurtosis coefficients (i.e., the kurtosis value divided by its standard error) revealed large deviations from normality. All three standardized coefficients were far outside the bounds of normality of +/-3 (Onwueg buzie & Daniel, 2002).

Because the data for middle school dropout rates and ethnicity for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years were not normally distributed, a nonparametric statistical procedure had to be utilized (Slate & Rojas-LeBouef, 2011). Accordingly, a nonparametric Wilcoxon's dependent samples *t*-test (Huck, 2007) was used to address the research question. A dependent samples *t*-test was an appropriate inferential statistical procedure to calculate when the variables (i.e., ethnicity) are related (Slate & Rojas-Le Bouef, 2011). In this investigation, middle school dropout rates were present for by ethnicity and were at the interval/ratio level of measurement.

For the first research question, the Wilcoxon's dependent samples *t*-test did not yield a statistically significant difference in middle school dropout rates between the 2012-2013 and the 2013-2014 school years for Black students, $z = -1.17$, $p = .24$. Black students in middle schoolshaddropout rates in the 2012-2013 and the 2013-2014 school years. Presented in Table 1 are the descriptive statistics for Black student' middle school dropout rates in both school years.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Black Student Middle School Dropout Rates by School Year

School Year	*n* of schools	*M*	*SD*
2012-2013	771	0.19	0.67
2013-2014	771	0.31	1.60

With respect to the second research question, the Wilcoxon's dependent samples *t*-test did yield a statistically significant difference in dropout rates between the 2012-2013 and the 2013-2014 school years for Hispanic students, $z = -2.37$, $p = .018$. The effect size associated with this difference, Cohen's *d*, was 0.10, small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Hispanic students in middle schools hada statistically significantly lower dropout rate in the 2012-2013 school year, 0.04% lower, than in the 2013-2014 school year. Table 2contains the descriptive statistics for Hispanic student dropout rates in middle schools in the 2012-2013 and the 2013-2014 school years.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Hispanic Student Middle School Dropout by School Year

School Year	*n* of schools	*M*	*SD*
2012-2013	1,063	0.20	0.57
2013-2014	1,063	0.23	0.02

In reference to the third research question, the Wilcoxon's dependent samples *t*-test did not reveal a statistically significant difference in dropout rates between the 2012-2013 and the 2013-2014 school years forWhite students in middle schools, $z = -1.14$, $p = .25$. White students in middle schoolshad similardropout rates in both school years. Delineated in Table 3 are the descriptive statistics for White student dropout rates in the 2012-2013 and the 2013-2014 school years.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for White Student Middle School Dropout Rates by School Year

School Year	*n* of schools	*M*	*SD*
2012-2013	951	0.18	0.81
2013-2014	951	0.24	1.07

V. Discussion

Examined in this study were the dropout rates of Black, Hispanic, and White middle school students for the 2012-2013 and the 2013-2014 school years. The specific focus in this investigation was whether the dropout rates of these three groups of middle school students had changed between these two school years. In this study, the dropout rates of Black and White middle school students did not differ between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. Of concern, however, was that Hispanic middle school students did have a statistically significant change in their dropout rates between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. The dropout rate of Hispanic middle school students increased between these two school years. This result is congruent with the extant literature in that students who dropout of school are disproportionately from Black, Hispanic,low-income, and attend urban schools (Irby &Mawhinney, 2014).

No attempt was made in this study to determine the reasons for theincrease in Hispanic dropout rates during these two school years. Additional studies should be conducted to investigate in more depth the reasoning behindwhy these students are dropping out of middle school. Empirical data were analyzed in this current study and, as such, provide information for Black, Hispanic, and White middle school dropout rates across the State of Texas. Researchers are encouraged to conduct not only additional quantitative investigations, but also qualitative and mixed methods studies, to obtain more in depth information regarding why middle school students drop out of school. Such information might be helpful in improving already existing dropout prevention programs.

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Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: G
Linguistics & Education
Volume 16 Issue 8 Version 1.0 Year 2016
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Analysis of Teaching Methods of English Language at Government Secondary School Level in D.G. Khan City-Pakistan

By Prof. Dr. Abdul Ghafoor Awan & Mehvish Shafi

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Abstract- There are two basic purposes to conduct this study in D.G Khan area i.e. to evaluate the methodology for teaching English language at secondary level in government school and to take the perspective from the students about the present teaching methodology of their teachers. For this purpose, we have selected six out of nine government secondary schools of both girls and boys three from each. We have used simple random sampling technique for the collection of data and used inferential, descriptive and one tailed test for the analysis of the data. Total 300 students of both girls and boys Schools are included in the sample and thirty teachers at secondary level are included. Two questionnaires: one for teachers and the other for students were developed for data collection. These questionnaires were distributed personally along with the permission letter so that we do not face any kind of difficulty for collecting data. Results were analyzed SPSS software. The finding of our study is that GTM is liked by the students of D.G Khan and 80 percent of teachers are using in the classes, which means this method is more convenient and popular among the teachers and the students.

Keywords: *GTM method, Dm dialogue practices, direct method.*

GJHSS-E Classification: *FOR Code: 200302*

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

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Prof. Dr. Abdul Ghafoor Awan [α] & Mehvish Shafi [σ]

Abstract- There are two basic purposes to conduct this study in D.G Khan area i.e. to evaluate the methodology for teaching English language at secondary level in government school and to take the perspective from the students about the present teaching methodology of their teachers. For this purpose, we have selected six out of nine government secondary schools of both girls and boys three from each. We have used simple random sampling technique for the collection of data and used inferential, descriptive and one tailed test for the analysis of the data. Total 300 students of both girls and boys Schools are included in the sample and thirty teachers at secondary level are included. Two questionnaires: one for teachers and the other for students were developed for data collection. These questionnaires were distributed personally along with the permission letter so that we do not face any kind of difficulty for collecting data. Results were analyzed SPSS software. The finding of our study is that GTM is liked by the students of D.G Khan and 80 percent of teachers are using in the classes, which means this method is more convenient and popular among the teachers and the students.

Keywords: GTM method, DM dialogue practices, direct method.

I. Introduction

a) Role of English as a second language in Pakistan

In Pakistan English language enjoys a role of second language not as a foreign language. Due to political, decisions or official policies in Pakistan English has been taught as a second language in our schools, Colleges and Universities. It has become the language for television, newspapers, mass media and radio. English language plays a vital role for giving standard education in institutions of elite. It is also the language for industrial organizations. This small detail highlights the facts that developing countries like Pakistan; the one who has command over English language may have a permit for the socio-economic prosperity. As the increasing demand of this language had also increased the demand for competent students. It is foremost important for the Pakistani students to have a command over this language. The students who had a strong competency over English language then they had a chance to make high achievements in their education career. Students with good English medium background may have a chance to attain a satisfactory status in the society as well.

b) English is being taught as a second language in Pakistan

Acquisition of any language is a skill, but method of teaching the English language has not generated preferred objectives. It is sad fact that Pakistani learners who are studying from 8-10 years can't communicate easily particularly students from rural areas for whom English language stands as a third or fourth language. L3 lacks all the four basic skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking. Truthfully, Pakistani teachers go through with such methods that do not meet the requirement of generating creative power among the students. Grammar translation method is still being used especially in rural areas. The translation method hinders the acquisition of copied structures in that it depends profoundly on inaccessible parts. Parts of grammar, ignoring the context and prosodic features, in which the sentences are sentenced by the native English speakers. Translation is just an imitation and imitation cannot generate innovative and creative thinking [1].

c) Factors under which English is being taught

Second language acquisition research describes that audio visual aids such as flash cards, charts, pictures, models, films, scripts, tape recorders, computers and overhead projectors facilitate successful acquisition of a second language. But classrooms in Pakistan are not being facilitated with such materials. Another factor is the use of inapt text books in Pakistan. Text books are not written in properly designed methods and the material in the books are not sufficient. In Pakistan we do not pay a lot of attention to the selection and upgradation of the text books. Many developed countries keep the ESL in their mind while making the syllabus material for their students. Another factor under which English is being taught is that teachers for primary level in Pakistan are not subject specialist. They are supposed to teach all the subjects in that way students lack the competency in the English language. Our examination system in Pakistan are not knowledge-oriented and it is result and marks-oriented. It is

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subjective in setting and covers only the skills of reading and writing.

Precisely over all the teaching methodologies of the teachers are affected by these factors under which the teachers are forced to teach the students by using common methods. This is the reason that our students particularly belonging to rural areas are not creative.

d) Types of teaching methods in English language

Many methods have been introduced for teaching English language. Each method represents the negation of the former method of teaching practice. Some of them are given below:

1. Grammar translation method.
2. Direct method.
3. Audio-visual method.
4. The silent way.
5. Suggest opedia.
6. Community language learning.
7. Total physical response.
8. Communicative approach.

i. *Grammar translation method*

Grammar translation method is not the new method for the language teachers. Its other name is classical method of language teaching. This was the method which was used to teach classical languages like Greek and Latin. Mostly it had been taught the students in reading the literature of foreign language. This was also the major aspect of grammar translation method that while having this method student were able to have the grammatical concepts of their own native language and also had the familiarity of the grammatical concepts of foreign language. This method increased the intellectual and comprehension ability of the students. This method is implemented in the large class.

a. Advantage of Grammar translation method

This method has some advantage which a language teachers adopt in their teaching.

- The basic purpose about the use of grammar translation method is that it is helpful for the students to read about the literature and culture of the target language.
- It helps the students to translate the native language into target language or vice versa.
- It increases the ability of reading comprehension of students.
- The teachers provide the correct answer if one or two students give unsatisfactory response to the teacher.
- Students would get a chance to increase their vocabulary by providing the list of vocabulary in target language.
- Students can translate the new words from target language into native language.
- Students find out the similarities and differences about the target language and native language.
- Students are able to know about the forms or structure of the target language.
- Explicit grammatical rules are taught in this method.

Students know about the conscious grammatical rules of the target language.

- Form a habit of memorizing grammatical rules.

b. Techniques of grammar translation method

Every language method has its own techniques. Some of them are given below:

- Translation of literary passage.
- Reading comprehension question,
- Antonyms/synonyms.
- Cognates.
- Deductive application of rules.
- Fill in the blanks.
- Memorization.
- Use of words in sentences.
- Composition

ii. *Direct Method*

Direct method was introduced to oppose to Grammar translation method. Grammar translation method basically focuses on the comprehension of the students' ability but direct method concentrates on the communicative abilities of students in the learning of foreign language. The most important rule for direct method is that no 'translation.' Direct method means to communicate with the students in the target language directly without having the interaction with the students in their native language. No rules for grammatical concepts had been given importance. No cramming was given importance. Basic purpose of this method is to communicate with the students in target language only. This method is suitable for the class of thirty students.

a. Advantage of Direct Method

There is some advantage of direct method which a teacher should keep in mind while teaching students

- Reading aloud practice of the text.
- Students understand the meanings of the objects in the classroom present environment.
- Teachers and students used target language instead of native language.
- Teachers demonstrate the questions instead of explaining the question.
- Develop the students' ability to think in the target language.
- Vocabulary is acquired through natural way instead of providing the list of vocabulary.
- Develop the ability of having communication in the target language.
- Improve the pronunciation of the students.
- Students themselves correct their grammatical mistakes.

- Dialogue practice is encouraged in this method.
- Grammatical concepts taught by using inductive method.
- Creative writing is the most important part of this method.
- Situation based syllabus is designed not on the grammar based.
- Students learn and practice the target language naturally.

b. Techniques of Direct method

There are some techniques for direct method which are discussed below.

- Reading aloud
- Question and answers exercise.
- Getting students to self-correct.
- Conversation practice.
- Fill in the blanks exercise.
- Dictation.
- Map drawing.
- Paragraph writing.

e) Main Research Question

The main research questions of this study are the followings: -

Which method is the most suitable for the students of secondary level in government school of D.G Khan City: GTM or DM?

Do all the concepts can be taught through Direct Method?

Are the students of the government schools satisfied with the teaching methodology of their language teachers?

Which method for teaching of English is being used mostly?

f) Hypothesis

GTM is not appropriate for teaching English language.

DM is more appropriate than GTM.

g) Objectives of the study

To evaluate the methodology and approach of teaching English language in government schools in D.G Khan.

To find out true perspective of the teachers and students for the evaluation of teaching methodologies.

To make suggestions for the teachers to overcome those areas in their teaching which are playing a hindrance for their students to take knowledge from them.

II. Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted on the area of using Grammar-Translation and other methods in teaching of English as a second language. These studies have contributed a lot to the expansion of the discipline of language teaching. Numerous studies try to prove that translation is one of the most effective pedagogies applicable to the L2 teachers.

Shejbalová used two approaches GTM and CLT to see the acquisition of students in learning of second language of pre-intermediate level. In his methodology the results of experimental groups are that CLT shows better performance in acquisition of language learning [2]. Jin fang and Qing-Xue analyzed which method is more useful for teaching English language learning. The analysis shows that each method has its own merits and practitioner should use it according to the contextual background and need of a learner [3]. Kazi and Iqbal conducted a research on the use of language learning strategies at higher secondary level in Pakistan. They use Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to measure the effects of the different strategies on different academic backgrounds. The results show that mostly teachers follow the meta-cognitive strategies and students also have low understanding of English. They are less proficient in speaking English. Questionnaire technique has been used for data collection [4]. Chang (2011) conducted a research in which she finds that grammar translation method is the most useful method for teaching foreign language in Taiwan rather than CLT. It is the experimental research [5]. Mondal used a survey method for collection of data from the teachers and finds that Grammar Translation Method is the best one for the students of Bangladesh [6]. Dagieliene also used a survey method for collection of data from the university students to check whether translation method is useful or not. It has been suggested that translation method is the effective method for foreign language learning [7]. Walia has made comparison between the CLT and GTM. The survey method is applied and questionnaire has been filled by the teachers of Rajhisthan College. The results show that mix approach of both CLT and GTM is more useful then to use just one method [8]. Rahman analyzed about teaching method being used in Bangladesh. She does an internship in a school and adopts different methodologies related to GTM. She finds that GTM is the best method for the students of Bangladesh[9]. Awan & Yasmin said that memorizing is the first step used by teachers and mothers to get memorize words and sentences to the child while generating creativity through different ways is the second step {10]. Awan &Yahya content that text repeated revision is the best method to get memorize the lesson to the students while commentary on text or verse are the one way to generate creativity among the students [11]. Awan et al conducted textual analysis of editorial and concluded that reading of newspapers and specific articles also enhance creativity.

a) Distinction of this study

The distinction of this study is that it has evaluated best teaching methodology of teaching

English as a second language at secondary level. It has examined whether GTM or DM is the best from the perspective of students and also from the point of view of teachers. We applied quantitative measures and presented data in a tabular form. This study is restricted to D.G Khan City, the remote area of Southern Punjab, Pakistan. Its distinction is that it is the first one in this area.

III. Research Methodology

a) Simple random sampling

We have used simple random sampling technique to collect the data from target population. It is deliberate method to select subjects for observations which enables the researcher to draw valid conclusion on the basis of observations and conclusion.

b) Sample size of Students' data

The size of the sample is 300 for collecting the data from the students. This sample size represents the whole population of the D.G Khan students at secondary school level.

c) Sample size of Teachers' data

The size of the sample is 30 for collecting the data from the teachers. This sample size represents the whole population of the teachers in D.G Khan who are teaching at secondary school level.

To get the clear picture for collecting data two questionnaires were structured for collection of data from teachers and students. Questionnaire technique appear to be the most efficient and effective way to record comprehensive response of respondents and to find out the language approaches being used at secondary school level in D.G Khan City.

d) Data Collection Method

The target population of the study is the students of secondary level from government schools of D.G Khan City. Both boys and girls are selected for the study. The method is chosen for the selection of the sample is simple random sampling. Firstly, list of the boys and girls secondary schools are taken from the Board of intermediate and secondary education of D.G Khan. Through simple random sampling technique three boys and three girls government secondary schools were selected. The number of students in government schools are greater than the private schools. In each school total five sections are there for 9^{th} and 10^{th} classes. So the questionnaires are equally distributed among the students. Total sample of the students were 300, so fifty questionnaires were distributed in each school. Out of fifty, five questionnaires were distributed in each section of the 9^{th} and 10^{th} students. The authors personally visited selected schools and distributed the questionnaire among the students and got filled them. The Same method was used while collecting data from teachers. five questionnaires are distributed in each school in that way total thirty samples are taken from the teachers which are representing the total population of the teachers at secondary schools of D.G Khan City.

e) Types of questionnaires

Two teaching approaches are taken Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Direct Method (DM) for taking the response from the teachers and students. The questionnaire which are taken from the students of secondary level in D.G Khan city are specially designed for students level and keeping the abilities of students of government schools. Choice of language are simple and less use of technical terms so that students may give proper answers of the questions which were asked from them. Total twelve questions are asked from the students. All questions were close ended. They have to give response from the choices which has been given in the options.

First questionnaire was specially designed for the students of secondary level. First five questions were designed to get the students' perception about their likeness of GTM next six questions are designed to get their perception about their likeness of DM Last question was meant to take the response of their satisfaction level for the present teaching style of their teachers.

The second questionnaire which are taken from the teachers of secondary school level of D.G Khan city are designed to take their response for teaching approach towards GTM and DM. Total fifteen questions are specially designed by keeping in mind the methods which are currently using in the remote areas for teaching English at secondary level. All questions are close ended and teachers have to response from the choices which are given in the questionnaire. First seven questions were designed to get their perception about their likeness of GTM and next seven questions are designed to get their response about their likeness of DM. The last fifteenth question were asked about the present method, which they are using in their class room.

IV. Data Analysis

For analyzing the data, we use SPSS (statistical program for social science) for providing a comprehensive analysis of the collected data for the study. It is helpful to take out the results in a statistical way. In order to determine which approach is preferred by the students of secondary level in D.G Khan City. We use the percentage technique to check the statistical analysis of the results.

a) Descriptive analysis of survey taken from students

The results are displayed in the table 1 which indicates that 96.9% students have favored translating text from English to Urdu while 3.1% students did not like this methodology. In the second question 85.5% students were liked to translate Urdu sentences into English while rest of the 14.5% students did not like it. In the third question 91.7% students understand the

lesson which their teachers teach them in Urdu language while 8.3% students did not understand well when their teachers teach them in Urdu. In the fourth question 82.4% students were in favor of learning essays and stories from any helping book while 17.2% students did not like to learn stories and essays. In the fifth question 81% students liked to fill the blanks which has been given from the books while 19% students did not like to fill the blanks. In the sixth question 77.9% students liked to ask questions during the lesson from the teachers while 22.1% did not like to ask the questions. In the seventh question 48.6% students preferred to take lesson in English language while 51.4% students were reluctant to take lesson in this language. In eighth question 22.1% students would like to speak English with their teachers and friends' while 77.9% students were hesitated to speak English language with their teachers and friends. This means the students lack spoken power of English language. In the ninth question 51% students were better understand the lesson when their teachers teach them in English language instead of Urdu while 49% students don't understand the lesson. The result of ninth question shows that students has the capacity or ability to take lessons in English language. In the tenth question 58.3% students would liked to perform on oral communication skills like dialogues while 41.7% students don't like to perform dialogues. The authors observed during data collection that students were hesitant to speak English due lack of exposure. In the eleventh question 79% students would like to do creative writing tasks instead of memorizing the stories and essays while 21% were not in favour of doing creative writing practice. In short, our results The results show that mostly students were in the favor of GTM but results of some questions like question number six, nine, ten and eleven also show their inclination towards English language. These results are given in Table 1

Table.1: Results of students survey

Sr.	Questions	Results	%ages	Mean	St. Deviation
1	I translate the text of lesson from English to Urdu.	Yes No	96.9% 3.1%	.9690	.17371
2	I learn English grammar tense rules in Urdu and then convert the sentences in to English.	Yes No	85.5% 14.5%	.8552	.35254
3	I understand the lesson when my teacher teach me in Urdu.	Yes No	91.7% 8.3%	.9172	.27599
4	I learn the essays or stories which my teacher told me to learn from helping book.	Yes No	82.4% 17.2%	.8621	.70706
5	I like to fill in the blanks which are taken from the text.	Yes No	81% 19%	.8103	.39271
6	I ask question during period.	Yes No	77.9% 22.1%	.7793	.41543
7	I take lesson in English language instead of Urdu.	Yes No	48.6% 51.4%	.4862	.50067
8	I speak in English language with my teacher and my friends.	Yes No	22.1% 77.9%	.2207	.41543
9	I can better understand the lesson when my teacher teach me in English language instead of Urdu.	Yes No	51% 49%	.5103	.50076
10	I like to act on dialogues during communication skills.	Yes No	58.3% 41.7%	.5828	.49396
11	I prefer to creative writing tasks in writing skills instead of memorizing essays or stories.	Yes No	79% 21%	.7897	.40826

b) Analysis of Students' satisfaction about present teaching methodology

In the twelfth question 95.9% students were satisfied with the present teaching methodology of their teachers while 4.1% showed their dissatisfaction about it. Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' opinion regarding teachers' methodology

Sr.	Question	Results	%age	Mean	St. Deviation
12	Are you satisfied with the present teaching style of your teacher of English subject?	Yes No	95.9% 4.1%	.9586	.19951

c) Analysis of Teachers' survey

The second questionnaire which were designed to ask questions from teachers to evaluate the approaches of the teaching of English language at secondary level in D.G Khan City. The author designed fifteen questions for teachers. The statistical analysis of response is shown in Table 3.

d) Descriptive analysis of teachers' survey

In the first question 90% teachers had the knowledge of different teaching methods of English while 10% teachers didn't know about teaching method. In the second question 96.7% teachers were agreed that GTM was suitable teaching method in the perspective of remote areas like D.G Khan while 3.3% didn't think so. In the third question 73.3% teachers agreed that abstract ideas were easily taught in GTM while 26.7% thought that abstract ideas did not teach easily by using DM. In the fourth question 63.3% teachers were agreed that GTM is useful to improve the pronunciation of the students in English language while 36.7% didn't think so. In the fifth question 26.7% teachers were agreed that GTM develops the habit of cramming things while 73.3% think that GTM did not develop such habit of learning. In the sixth question 86.7% teachers were agreed that GTM was suitable to teach in large classes while 13.3% did not agreed. In the seventh question 73.3% were agreed that our social environment was supportive for GTM while 26.7% were disagreed. In the eighth question, 70% teachers were agreed that DM was helpful for creative writing in English while 30% were not agreed. In the ninth question, 90% of the teachers were agreed that DM develops the speaking power in target language while 10% did not think so. In the tenth question, 80% were agreed that DM improves the pronunciation of students in English while 20% didn't think so. In the eleventh question, 53.3% teachers were agreed that students remain active in the DM while 46.1% did not agree. In the twelfth question, 33.3% teachers think that all the concepts were easily taught in DM while 66.7% teachers think that all the concepts could not be taught through GTM. In the thirteenth question, 90% teachers were agreed that DM develops spoken fluency while 10% did not think so. In the fourteenth question 53.3% teachers were agreed that DM develops the students' comprehension skills while 46.7% teachers reject this statement.

e) Discussion of the results

In the above discussion the survey which had been taken from the teachers showed that most of the teachers were agreed that GTM was most suitable method for the students but they also agreed that DM had the capacity to lead their students towards the today's demand of language. Mix results had been found from the teachers' survey. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of Teachers survey

Sr.	Questions	Results	%age	Mean	St. Deviation
1	I have the knowledge of various teaching methods of English.	Yes No	90% 10%	.9000	.30513
2	GTM is suitable in the perspective of DGK at secondary school level.	Yes No	96.7% 3.3%	.9667	.18257
3	Abstract ideas can easily be taught by using GTM.	Yes No	73.3% 26.7%	.7333	.44978
4	GTM able to improve English pronunciation of students.	Yes No	63.3% 36.7%	.6333	.49013
5	GTM develops the habit of cramming without understanding.	Yes No	26.7% 73.3%	.2667	.44978
6	GTM is easy to use in large classes.	Yes No	86.7% 13.3%	.8667	.34575
7	Our social environment is supportive for GTM.	Yes No	73.3% 26.7%	.7333	.44978
8	DM is helpful for creative writing in English.	Yes No	70% 30%	.7000	.46609
9	DM develops fluency in speaking the target language.	Yes No	90% 10%	.9000	.30513
10	DM of teaching English improves the pronunciation of students.	Yes No	80% 20%	.8000	.40684
11	Students remain active in DM of teaching English.	Yes No	53.3% 46.1%	.5333	.50742
12	All the concepts can easily be explained to the students by using DM.	Yes No	33.3% 66.7%	.3333	.47946
13	DM develops spoken fluency.	Yes No	90% 10%	.9000	.30513
14	DM of teaching English improves comprehension of students.	Yes No	53.3% 46.7%	.5333	.50742

f) Opinion of teachers regarding their present teaching methodology

In the last fifteenth question another table had been made to ask the present methodology which they are using in the classroom. In that survey 80% of the teachers were using GTM in their classroom while 20% teachers were not using GTM however they were using DM in their classrooms. This sowed that most of the teachers were using GTM and preferred to have GTM in their classes rather D.M. according to the teachers' opinion GTM was suitable for the students of rural area like D.G Khan due to their language differences. Results was shown in table 4.

Table 4: Result of teachers' opinion regarding their present teaching methodology

Sr.	Question	Results	%age	Mean	St. Deviation
15	presently which method you are using in the class room	GTM DM	80% 20%	1.2000	.40684

g) Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing had been used for the validation of the results. One tailed test had been applied to check the validity of sample over the population of D.G Khan City. In proportion $Ho: P \leq 0.70$ and $H1: P \geq 0.70$. We found that that how many responses were significant and which method students were liked to have in their teaching second language at their secondary level. The same one tailed test was also applied to the teachers' data.

i. *Students one tailed test*

First five questions had been asked from the students to record their opinion about GTM and from Q.7 to Q.11 had been asked to take their response about DM. Q.6 had been related to a response for both methods. In second table responses had been taken from teachers. The same first seven questions were asked to take their response about GTM and DM. The results of hypothesis testing are given in Table 5:

Table 5: Students' one-tailed test

Sr.	Questions	One-tailed test	One tailed data
1	I translate the text of lesson from English to Urdu.	Sig.	16.564
2	I learn English grammar tense rules in Urdu and then convert the sentences in to English.	Sig.	2.665
3	I understand the lesson when my teacher teach me in Urdu.	Sig.	7.234
4	I learn the essays or stories which my teacher told me to learn from helping book.	Sig.	1.495
5	I like to fill in the blanks which are taken from the text.	Sig.	.4449
6	I ask question during period.	Sig.	-.848
7	I take lesson in English language instead of Urdu.	Insig.	-10.673
8	I speak in English language with my teacher and my friends.	Insig.	-23.747
9	I can better understand the lesson when my teacher teach me in English language instead of Urdu.	Insig.	-9.850
10	I like to act on dialogues during communication skills.	Insig.	-7.490
11	I prefer to creative writing tasks in writing skills instead of memorizing essays or stories.	Insig.	-.432

The results of the hypothesis testing clearly proves that GTM is more significant than DM because the students have showed their interest more in GTM than DM.

ii. *Teachers' one tailed tests*

The results of teachers' survey of one-tailed hypothesis test was given in Table 6

Table 6: Results of Teachers' one-tailed test

Sr.	Questions	One tailed sample test	One tailed data
1	I have the knowledge of various teaching methods of English.	Sig.	1.795
2	GTM is suitable in the perspective of DGK at secondary school level.	Sig.	5.000
3	Abstract ideas can easily be taught by using GTM.	Insig.	-.812
4	GTM able to improve English pronunciation of students.	Insig.	-1.862
5	GTM develops the habit of cramming without understanding.	Insig.	-6.495
6	GTM is easy to use in large classes.	Sig.	1.056
7	Our social environment is supportive for GTM.	Insig.	-.812
8	DM is helpful for creative writing in English.	Insig.	-1.175
9	DM develops fluency in speaking the target language.	Sig.	1.795
10	DM of teaching English improves the pronunciation of students.	Insig.	.000
11	Students remain active in DM of teaching English.	Insig.	-2.878
12	All the concepts can easily be explained to the students by using DM.	Insig.	-5.331
13	DM develops spoken fluency.	Sig.	1.795
14	DM of teaching English improves comprehension of students.	Insig.	-2.878

V. Conclusion

Most of the students show their interest and preferences to get learning from Grammar Translation Method. The results of our findings show that mostly students are interested to take lessons in Urdu language instead of English. They would like to learn essays and stories instead of doing creative writing. They do not ask questions rather to prefer lecture method. They would like to communicate with their friends in Urdu instead in English. All these results show that they want to study English at their secondary level to have a Grammar Translation Method. Mostly students belong to rural areas and their mother tongue is Saraeki or Punjabi or Urdu and when they get admission in school they have to learn Urdu as well as acquire English. The other finding of the study is related to evaluate the teaching methodologies from the perspective of teachers who are teaching at secondary school level in government schools of D.G Khan. According to the findings most of the teachers teach their students by using Grammar Translation Method instead Direct Method. They are in the favour of GTM because it is most suitable and effective method for teaching English language.

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Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: G
Linguistics & Education
Volume 16 Issue 8 Version 1.0 Year 2016
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Differences in Disciplinary Consequence for Texas Middle School Boys as a Function of Ethnicity/Race and Economic Status

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Abstract- Examined in this study was the degree to which differences were present in Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP) placements for Grade 7 and 8 boys in Texas as a function of their ethnicity/race and economic status. Texas statewide middle school discipline data were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System on all boys in the 2010-2011 school year. Inferential statistical procedures revealed the presence of statistically significant differences in JJAEP placements forboys in both Grades 7 and 8 as a function of their economic status and ethnicity/race. In both Grade 7 and Grade 8, Black boys had statistically significantly higher percentage of JJAEP placements than their White counterparts, 3 to 4 times higher. For Hispanic boys in Grades 7 and 8, they had a JJAEP placement rate that was 2 to 3 times higher than the JJAEP placement rate of White boys.

Keywords: economically disadvantaged, expulsion, juvenile justice alternative education program (JJAEP), school-to-prison pipeline, white, hispanic, black.

GJHSS-G Classification: FOR Code: 939999p

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

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Christopher Eckford [α] & John R. Slate [σ]

Abstract- Examined in this study was the degree to which differences were present in Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP) placements for Grade 7 and 8 boys in Texas as a function of their ethnicity/race and economic status. Texas statewide middle school discipline data were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System on all boys in the 2010-2011 school year. Inferential statistical procedures revealed the presence of statistically significant differences in JJAEP placements forboys in both Grades 7 and 8 as a function of their economic status and ethnicity/race. In both Grade 7 and Grade 8, Black boys had statistically significantly higher percentage of JJAEP placements than their White counterparts, 3 to 4 times higher. For Hispanic boys in Grades 7 and 8, they had a JJAEP placement rate that was 2 to 3 times higher than the JJAEP placement rate of White boys. Additionally, boys who were economically disadvantaged had statistically significantly higher percentage of JJAEP placements than did boys who were not economically disadvantaged, 2 to 3 times higher. Implications of the findings are discussed and suggestions for further research are made.

Keywords: economically disadvantaged, expulsion, juvenile justice alternative education program (JJAEP), school-to-prison pipeline, white, hispanic, black.

I. Introduction

The overrepresentation of Black and Hispanic boys in the exclusionary discipline consequences of suspensions and expulsions is not a new finding (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Young men and boys of color are disproportionately affected by suspensions and zero-tolerance policies in schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Suspensions, expulsions, and other disciplinary practices that exclude students from school often contribute to students having poor grades, being disruptive, and being exposed to negative life experiences that further lead them toward a life of crime. Students who are suspended or expelled from school are often stigmatized in ways that compel educators and peers to view them as "problem students," a perception that is difficult to change (Kennedy-Lewis, Murphy, & Grosland, in press; Weiss man, 2015).According to Vox Media (2015), 31% of students who were suspended or expelled were likely to repeat one or more grades, drop out of school, and/or become involved in the juvenile justice system. Frazier, Bishop, and Henretta (1992) agreed that certain individual characteristics, including gender and socioeconomic status, as well as certain community characteristics, such as poverty, urbanization, and income inequality, increase the likelihood that minority youth will come in contact with the juvenile justice system.

In a report by the Council of State Governments Justice Center (2011), repeated suspensions and expulsions predicted poor academic outcomes. Documented in the report was that only 40% of students disciplined 11 times or more graduated from high school during the study period, and 31% of students disciplined one or more times repeated their grade at least once. In another report by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014), the 2011-2012 data showed that Black students were suspended or expelled at three times the rate of their White classmates, and 6% of Black students were subject to exclusionary discipline, in comparison to 5% of White students. Also in their analysis, the Council of State Governments Justice Center (2011) documented that in-school suspensions ranged from a single class period to several consecutive days, and out-of-school suspensions averaged two days per incident; students were assigned to District Alternative Education Program for an average of 27 days, and students serving in Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP) were off the school campus for an average of 73 days.

Another nationwide matter of growing concern to parents, advocates, and educators is that the presence of police officers in public schools results in the criminalization of disruptive behavior. Whereas other researchers (Skiba & Rausch, 2006) have focused on zero-tolerance policies and the overuse of out-of-school suspension and expulsion as important factors in contributing to the "School-to-Prison Pipeline," Dahlberg (2012) reported additional problems of arrest, in particular the use of arrest to address behaviors that would likely be handled in the school, by school staff, if not for the presence of on-site officers. Teachers and school administrators relied on School Resource Officers(Texas School Safety Center, 2013) to be more than just a presence on campus. School Resource Officers were often used to help manage student behaviors that, in most cases, did not require the assistance of law enforcement. When students were

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removed from the classroom setting to be taken to jail for behavior that could be addressed with school discipline measures, their academic opportunities are substantially limited. Dahlberg (2012) reported that a large percentage of school-based arrests were for "public order offenses"—conduct that might be disruptive or disrespectful, but that most people would never consider criminal. Consistent with other researchers, Dahlberg (2012) established that students of color and students with disabilities were disproportionately subject to school-based arrests, and in particular to arrests based on disruptive behavior, not criminal activity .According to the Harvard Law Review (2015), juvenile incarceration makes a person more likely to end up in the adult criminal justice system later. In a study of 35,000 juvenile offenders, the authors of the Harvard Law Review (2015) established that offenders who were incarcerated as juveniles were twice as likely to go on to be locked up as adults, as those who committed similar offenses and came from similar backgrounds but were given an alternative sanction or simply not arrested."A student who becomes involved in the criminal justice system costs the state much more money than a student who is sitting in a classroom. These findings are an important addition to existing research examining the "school-to-prison pipeline" (Skiba, Aredondo, & Williamson, 2014, pp. 554-555) whereas students are being frequently arrested for minor disruptive behavior that could be better addressed by school administrators, particularly in school districts that rely heavily on police officers in their schools.

a) Statement of the Problem

Inequities in school discipline assigned to Black students have been a long studied phenomenon. Racial disparities in school discipline have been noted as important predictors of life opportunity disparities for children as they transition through adulthood (Skiba et al., 2011; Walden & Losen, 2003). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), the nationwide average suspension rate for Black students is 13%; the highest rate for all ethnic/racial groups. Alarming as it sounds, Black and Hispanic students have been disproportionately assigned school disciplinary consequences for almost half a decade compared to their White and Asian counterparts (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Jones et al., 2014, 2015; Shore, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011). School districts in the South alone were responsible for 50% of Black student expulsions from public schools in the United States, with Black boys comprising of 44% of those expulsions, making them the highest among all racial/ethnic groups (Smith & Harper, 2015). Noting these statistics, inequitable school disciplinary practices continue to remove students of diverse racial, ethnic, and economically disadvantaged backgrounds from their school setting, further contributing to the vast achievement gap and increasing their exposure to the school-to-prison pipeline.

b) Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which differences might be present in the proportion of Black, Hispanic, and White Grade 7 and 8 boys were assigned to a juvenile justice alternative education program placement in Texas public schools. Specifically examined was the influence of student ethnicity/race and economic status on school assignment of JJAEP placements for Black, Hispanic, and White students.

c) Significance of the Study

Considering the research that exists on the correlation between juvenile justice alternative education program placements and the school-to-prison pipeline, information acquired from this study may be useful to educational leaders and policymakers in Texas. In the course of analyzing statewide data within the three student groups, the effect of being removed from a public school setting to a juvenile based alternative education setting may be revealed. If being assigned to a juvenile justice alternative education program is associated with ethnicity/race or economic status, educational leaders might need to re-evaluate school discipline protocols and procedures.

d) Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this investigation: (a) What is the difference in the percentage of boys by their ethnicity/race who receive a Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program placement?;and (b) What is the difference in the percentage of boys by their economic status who receive a Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program placement? Both research questions were repeated for both grade levels (i.e., Grades 7 and 8) for which data were present, as well as examined for one school year (i.e. 2010-2011).

II. Method

a) Participants

Participants in this study were White, Black, and Hispanic boys enrolled in traditional Texas public middle school Grades 7 and 8,in the 2010-2011 school year. Data were obtained on all Grade 7 and 8 boys, regardless of whether or not they had been assigned to aJJAEP placement. Data were acquired from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System, a reporting system that collects data from individual school districts regarding boys and personnel demographics, academic performance, and financial and organizational information (2006). By request, the Texas Education Agency provided

information regarding boy's ethnicity/race, economic status, and whether or not they had received aJJAEP placement

b) Definition of Terms

Expulsion with educational services include removals resulting from violations of the Gun Free Schools Act that are modified to less than 365 days; (c) *School-to-prison pipeline* was defined by the American Civil Liberties (2014) as a disturbing national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems; and, (d) *Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP)* was defined by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (2015) as a program where students are assigned as a result of violating Texas Education Code Chapter 37 listed offenses which include: mandatory expulsion from their home school for serious infractions of the Student Code of Conduct; discretionary expulsions for serious infractions that occur off-campus as well as other infractions of the Student Code of Conduct; or are court ordered due to title V offenses or probation conditions. . As defined by the Texas Education Agency (2011), *economically disadvantaged* was the sum of the students coded as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or eligible for other public assistance.

III. Results

To ascertain whether a statistically significant difference was present in JJAEP placements (i.e., received a JJAEP, did not receive a JJAEP) by ethnicity/race and economic status for Grade 7 and 8boys in traditional Texas middle schools, Pearson chi-square analyses were conducted. This statistical procedure was viewed as the optimal statistical procedure to use because frequency data were present for ethnicity/race, economic status, and for JJAEP receipt. As such, chi-squares are the statistical procedure of choice when both variables are categorical (Slate & Rojas-Le Bouef, 2011).

For the first research question regarding the ethnicity/race of Grade 7boyswho were assigned a JJAEP placement, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 52.13$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's *V*, was trivial,.02 (Cohen, 1988). As depicted in Table 1, Black boys who were assigned to a JJAEP placement at a rate that was three times higher than the JJAEP placement rate of White boys, and one and a half times higher than the JJAEP placement rate of Hispanic boys. Readers are referred to Table 1 for the frequencies and percentages of JJAEP assignments by student ethnicity/race for Grade 7 boys.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of JJAEP Assignments for Grade 7 and Grade 8 Black, Hispanic, and White Students

Ethnicity/Race	Grade 7 *n*and % of Total	Grade 8 *n*and % of Total
White	(*n* = 63) 0.1%	(*n* = 76) 0.1%
Hispanic	(*n* = 224) 0.2%	(*n* = 326) 0.4%
Black	(*n* = 80) 0.3%	(*n* = 96) 0.4%

Concerning the research question for Grade 8 boys by their ethnicity/race, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 84.46$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's *V*, was trivial, .02 (Cohen, 1988). Grade 8 Black and Hispanic boy shad a JJAEP placement rate that was four times higher than the JJAEP placement rate of White boys. Table 1contains the frequencies and percentages of JJAEP assignments by student ethnicity/race for Grade 8 boys.

With respect to the second research question regarding the economic status of Grade 7boys who were assigned a JJAEP placement, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 72.71$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's *V*, was trivial, .02 (Cohen, 1988). Boys who were economically disadvantaged had a JJAEP placement rate that was twice the JJAEP placement rate of Grade 7boyswho were not economically disadvantaged. Readers are directed to Table 2 for the frequencies and percentages of JJAEP assignments by student economic status for Grade 7 boys.

Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of JJAEP Assignments for Grade 7 and Grade 8 Students by Economic Status

Programmatic Label	Grade 7 *n* and % of Total	Grade 8 *n* and % of Total
Not Economically Disadvantaged	(*n* = 74) 0.1%	(*n* = 129) 0.2%
Economically Disadvantaged	(*n* = 302) 0.3%	(*n* = 381) 0.4%

With respect to the research question regarding the economic status of Grade 8boys who were assigned a JJAEP placement, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 65.30$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's *V*, was trivial, .02 (Cohen, 1988). Grade 8 boys who were economically disadvantaged had a JJAEP placement rate that was two times the JJAEP placement rate of Grade 8 boys who were not economically disadvantaged. Delineated in Table 2are the frequencies and percentages of JJAEP assignments by student economic status for Grade 8 boys.

IV. Discussion

In this investigation, the degree to which differences were present in JJAEP assignment by student ethnicity/race and economic status of Grade 7 and 8 White, Hispanic, and Black boys was examined. Statistically significant differences in JJAEP assignments were revealed for each inferential analysis regarding Grade 7 and Grade 8 boys by their ethnicity/race and economic status. Black and Hispanic boys in both Grade 7 and in Grade 8received statistically significantly more JJAEP assignments than their White counterparts. Moreover, Grade 7 and Grade 8 boys who were economically disadvantaged received statistically significantly more JJAEP assignments than their counterparts who were not economically disadvantaged. Although a small sample size was present for Grade 7 and 8 boys by ethnicity/race, readers should note that this sample constituted 100% of JJAEP assignments for this school year. Readers should also note that JJAEP assignments are serious consequences as they expose students to an alternative learning environment, not equivalent to that of a traditional public school. Of the 367 Grade 7 boys who received a JJAEP assignment, Black boys received 20%more JJAEP assignments compared to their White counterparts who only received 10% respectively. Of the 498 Grade 8 boys who received a JJAEP assignment, Black and Hispanic boys received 30% more JJAEP assignments compared their White counterparts who only received 10% respectively. Of the 376 Grade 7 boys who received a JJAEP assignment, those boys who were economically disadvantaged received 20% more JJAEP assignments compared to their peers who were not economically disadvantaged. Of the 510 Grade 8 boys who received a JJAEP assignment, those boys who were economically disadvantaged had twice the percentage (20%) of JJAEP assignments than did their peers who were not economically disadvantaged.

Results of this statewide investigation are congruent with the suspension rates of Black students and of students of low economic status (Evans et al., 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2012, 2014; Jones et al., 2014, 2015; Sullivan et al., 2013). Results from this study were commensurate with Hilberth and Slate (2014) who established that Black students enrolled at the middle school level were two times more likely to be suspended and expelled than their White peers. This overrepresentation of Black students and potential academic ramifications are well documented in the literature (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Gregory et al., 2010; Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Jones et al., 2014, 2015; Skiba et al., 2011).

No attempt was made in this study to examine if differences were present in JJAEP assignments for Grade 7 and 8 girls by ethnicity/race and economic status. Therefore, this study should be expanded in further studies. Other questions that could be considered for future research include: (a) What is the difference in the number of JJAEP days assigned to Grade 7 and 8 boys as a function of student ethnicity/race and economic status?;(b) What is the difference in the number of JJAEP days assigned to Grade 7 and 8 girls as a function of student ethnicity/race and economic status? A word of caution is given to readers concerning the generalizability of findings. This study was limited to Grade 7 and Grade 8boys in the State of Texas. Additionally, data were analyzed for only one year and could represent an abnormality that may prevent the study's findings from applying it to other students in Texas and other states. A multi-year study would improve the generalizability of this study.

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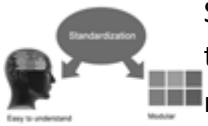

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- Reason of the study - theory, overall issue, purpose
- Fundamental goal
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- Present a justification. Status your particular theory (es) or aim(s), and describe the logic that led you to choose them.
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The page length of this segment is set by the sum and types of data to be reported. Carry on to be to the point, by means of statistics and tables, if suitable, to present consequences most efficiently.You must obviously differentiate material that would usually be incorporated in a study editorial from any unprocessed data or additional appendix matter that would not be available. In fact, such matter should not be submitted at all except requested by the instructor.

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	A-B	**C-D**	**E-F**
Abstract	Clear and concise with appropriate content, Correct format. 200 words or below	Unclear summary and no specific data, Incorrect form Above 200 words	No specific data with ambiguous information Above 250 words
Introduction	Containing all background details with clear goal and appropriate details, flow specification, no grammar and spelling mistake, well organized sentence and paragraph, reference cited	Unclear and confusing data, appropriate format, grammar and spelling errors with unorganized matter	Out of place depth and content, hazy format
Methods and Procedures	Clear and to the point with well arranged paragraph, precision and accuracy of facts and figures, well organized subheads	Difficult to comprehend with embarrassed text, too much explanation but completed	Incorrect and unorganized structure with hazy meaning
Result	Well organized, Clear and specific, Correct units with precision, correct data, well structuring of paragraph, no grammar and spelling mistake	Complete and embarrassed text, difficult to comprehend	Irregular format with wrong facts and figures
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ISSN 975587