

A Comparative Study of Students' Academic Performance in Language and Literature Courses: English and French Languages in Focus

¹SARAF A ADENIRAN SALMAN, ²THOMAS AKANBI BALOGUN

¹Department of English, ²Department of French Emmanuel Alayande College Of Education, Oyo
Isalmanadeniran@yahoo.com, 2Baloson2002@yahoo.com

Date Received: January 22, 2015; Date Revised: February 25, 2015

Abstract - This study assesses and compares the performance of students studying French and English languages in language and literature courses in their various Departments at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo in Oyo State. This study also focuses attention on possible ways of improving the performance of the students in the afore-mentioned courses. It also suggests ways by which their performance in the said courses could be improved. The study considered some students' results in the said courses over a period of three years (between 2010 and 2013). The collection of data was by the use of students' results and questionnaire that were administered randomly to a selected sample population of some students. For this study, sixty students were randomly selected in English Department while fifteen students were purposely selected in French Department. Interviews were conducted by the lecturers in charge of those courses with above seven years of experience in teaching these courses and some observations were also employed as secondary instruments. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentages. The findings show that students performed better in language courses than in literature courses.

Keywords: Language, performance, focus

INTRODUCTION

Language according to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2010:834, 869) is defined as "the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area"; on the other hand, literature is defined as "pieces of writing that are valued as work of arts especially novels, plays or poems" while performance is defined by the same dictionary as "how well or how badly you do something". From the above definitions, it is very clear that language and literature are indissociable as they are closely related. It is impossible to talk or study literature

without making reference to language. So language is indispensable to literature as this is used esthetically in different forms to relate events or teach morals. In the other way round, the study of literature also opens ways to delve into different language aspects. Constant contacts with literary works improved students' language skills especially on reading and written expression/composition, more vocabularies are acquired thereby increasing students' competence in the language used for literary works. As an aspect of written communication, literature increases the linguistic power or ability of the learners. Hence, the study of language and literature "has reciprocal influence" (Oni, 2011:23). In fact, just as the study of literature enhances our ability to relate to others by acquainting ourselves with some facts about the history, the ways they lead their lives and the culture of people, so the mastery of language diction too facilitates the gaining of knowledge and insight into their world and activities. Oluikpe (1984:69) recognizes this fact and notes "when we fail to communicate effectively, we fail to impart whatever ideas and knowledge we wish to contribute to humanity". This implies that language is an amazing tool that helps in digging deep the understanding of literary language and style. Hence, in order to learn or study any other subject/course successfully, one needs to have a language in one's possession, which is a good mastery of some aspects of language in one's control to enhance effective understanding of the subject one engages himself/herself to study which includes literature. Considering all these facts, we therefore want to give here attention to how well or how badly students work to prove their worth in language and literature courses both in French and in English languages in Colleges of Education in Nigeria with special reference to Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo in Oyo State.

It has been observed in the history that humanity has been identified and recognized in its class struggle

or superiority among peers and this is exactly why human performance is being measured either physically or intellectually and/or in whatever he does in life. Hence, linguistically speaking, man can also be assessed on how he can put his mental and intellectual ability in use to manipulate this unique tool (language) in his possession for various activities. The fact still remains that, human beings have different ability and individuals put their best to prove their worth in the society they live. Hence, to perform poorly or to the best of one's ability in other way depends on how best one has exercised his psychological, mental and intellectual gifts either in a relaxed mood or skillfully to increase his/ her ability or not. A living human being should not be adjudged a failure unless he proves it so. It is for that very reason that we deem it fit to consider critically and analyze the performances of these students in those aforementioned language and literary courses.

Academic performance is a topical issue that cannot be glossed over. It seems that the song about the decline of the standard of education continues to be loud worldwide. The performances of students in their academic tasks according to Adepoju (2003) continue to generate special interest to educators and stakeholders in the education field. The reason could not be farfetched from the observations and comments from the public which show that the standard of our students' education at all levels continue to fall progressively. Our aim in this study, therefore, is to look at our students' intellectual struggle in order for us to compare their academic performances in some aspects of English and French language courses in their various Departments. If a student is to perform excellently or poorly, a number of factors are to be put into consideration. Among those factors that could contribute to either students' academic success or failure include among others: their family background, their attitudes to learning and their interest in academic pursuance. In this way, we shall, therefore, find out whether or not the students perform high in the aforementioned courses. We shall equally propose or suggest ways of helping them to improve their performance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the many benefits one could derive from language learning especially foreign languages like English and French, it is astonishing that many students do not take the study of the important aspects of these languages with seriousness. Could this be the way the language teaching in schools is being handled as

noticed by Collier (1992:188) or the approach and the attitudes of students themselves towards learning these subjects? What could probably be the factors militating against being so serious in their language and literary studies and how could these situations be remedied?

Of course, Students' academic performance in language learning "has been a subject of topical discussion in the field of language" education in Nigeria for years (Olaniyan and Khalid, 2013). Language is the tool for the study of other subjects; be it sciences, medicine, technology and other social science subjects, all these can never be taught without the use of a language. For instance, in Nigeria (an Anglophone country and English being the official language), it is mandatory that one should have a good background in English before being admitted to study a course in a tertiary institution. In addition to this, language is also vital in all facets of human activities such as in education (as in the study of the above-mentioned subject areas), in business, in politics, in interactions just to mention but a few. Languages in Nigeria can be categorized into two, namely the indigenous and the non-indigenous. Among the indigenous are Hausa, Igbo Yoruba and the likes and the non-indigenous are foreign languages which include English, French, Spanish, Arabic and the likes (Oladosu, 2008:11). This study lays emphasis on English and French (as European languages) when it refers to foreign languages. We cannot as well overlook in this study the role language plays in learning other people's culture and many of the benefits we can derive from this (this aspect of language study is otherwise known to be literature). The knowledge of the culture(s) of another language(s) is known through the study of literary works of these different languages. The study of literature gives one an insight into other people's cultures and their norms as it affords one the opportunity critically to analyze man's situation in a philosophical and psychological way. More to that, the study of literature helps to increase one's vocabulary and one's ability to navigate better and understand the world in general. So, being able to use and manipulate different languages, individuals can achieve a great amount of self-realization and confidence in terms of education, values, skills, status in the society (nationally and internationally), employment opportunities and so on. Hence, considering the importance and usefulness of language and literary studies in the development of individual and in nation building, it is expected that students get better academically in this field in order to assess and tap from other resources apart from theirs.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Primarily, this study compares students' academic performance in some courses in English and French languages and find out the reasons for their uneven performance in these courses/subjects. The study also examines the background characteristics (Magagula and Ngweenya, 2004) of learners enrolled in these paralleled courses at Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, the extent to which the academic performance of the French and English students in language and in literature courses are similar and/or different, the advantages and the disadvantage of offering language and literature in these different languages.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In this study, a number of questions were examined to ascertain the level of and the reasons for students' academic performance in language and literature courses in their various Departments. Specifically, the study aims to determine the factors that militate against students' performance in language and literature related courses; and identify if the students were forced or coerced to study their present course(s); and determine the extent of the students' academic performance in language and literature courses similar and/or different.

METHODS

The study was a survey design where the investigators were able to sample the scores in courses under review of the selected students in English and French Departments of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo in the past three sessions. Some Lecturers who have been taking these courses for the past years were interviewed in order to get the knowledge of the kind of method(s) used to teach the candidates to see if this/ these method(s) should be continued with or not and/or suggest other method(s) that could be appropriate so that the lot of the students could be improved.

The target population for this study is students from different levels (Part I to Part III) in English and French N.C.E. of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo. Twenty students were randomly selected from each level in English Department totaling sixty while only fifteen students were used in French Department. The fifteen students were selected purposively. The reason for this disparity is the low enrollment of French students in the Department. Students were randomly selected according to gender equality and there was no

partiality of gender preference. This gives the total of seventy-five students. In order to ascertain some facts, four Lecturers (two from each Department) handling these courses were also interviewed. Moreover few copies of the questionnaire were used for the students on the ground as at the time of the study.

Past examination scores of these selected students were used. These scores which were taken from the three past academic sessions were considered for the purpose of this study. Moreover, few copies of the questionnaire were administered to some students on the ground as at the period of the research. These examination scores along with the student's questionnaires were analyzed using simple percentages. An oral interview conducted for the Lecturers handling these courses was also considered as part of the fact-finding. This gives the researchers more opportunities to reason clearly why and how students perform poorly or otherwise.

An eighteen item questionnaire was developed for this study. It has two sections: section A for students while section B is for the lecturers. The investigators solicited the cooperation of the Heads of the concerned Departments for the procurement of the secondary data required for the selected students in these courses under review. They also assisted in administering the section A which comprises of a ten-item questionnaire that was developed for the study to the students. This made the task to be somehow easier for the investigators to find/locate students who were still on the ground as at the time of the study and administer the questionnaires on them.

In this research paper, simple percentage and mean were used to analyze the data collected. In order to make the analysis a succinct one, the researchers have considered (using a mixed method approach) to merge the six academic grades into three (namely Good for A&B; Average for C&D and Poor for E&F grades.) to analyze the data. In English Department, thirteen language courses and nine literature courses were examined from Parts one to three. In French Department on the other hand, twenty-one language courses and only three literature courses were examined. The grades for language and literature courses in the individual Departments were analyzed separately. We have considered the results of those courses under review (language and literature courses) from the two Departments, brought them together into correlation in order to arrive at a good point for comparison.

- Note: Academic grades in Nigeria according to N.C.C.E. (National Commission for Colleges of Education) are as follow:

A	→	(between 70% and above)
B	→	(between 60 and 69%)
C	→	(between 50 and 59%)
D	→	(between 45 and 49%)
E	→	(between 40 and 44%)
F	→	(between 0 and 39%)

courses under review (language and literature courses) from the two Departments, brought them together into correlation in order to arrive at a good point for comparison.

- Note: Academic grades in Nigeria according to N.C.C.E. (National Commission for Colleges of Education) are as follow:

A	→	(between 70% and above)
B	→	(between 60 and 69%)
C	→	(between 50 and 59%)
D	→	(between 45 and 49%)
E	→	(between 40 and 44%)
F	→	(between 0 and 39%)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Students’ scores in language and literature courses during 2010/ 2011 Academic Session in English Department.

	Good (A&B)		Average (C&D)		Poor (E&F)	
LANGUAGE COURSES						
ENG 111 Listening Skills	03	15%	09	45%	08	40%
ENG 114 Basic Grammar	04	20%	11	55%	05	25%
ENG 121 Speech Work	02	10%	11	55%	07	35%
122 Applied Linguistics I	01	5%	13	65%	06	30%
ENG 214 Phonetics & Phonology	04	20%	11	55%	05	25%
ENG 222 Composition I	01	5%	14	70%	05	25%
ENG 313 Applied English linguistics II	06	30%	11	55%	03	15%
OVERALL AVERAGE	105/7= 15%		400/7 =57.14%		195/7=27.86	
LITERATURE COURSES						
ENG 113 Introduction to Literature	01	5%	10	50%	09	45%
ENG 124 Modern African Literature	-	-	03	15%	17	85%
ENG 213 Selected European Authors	01	5%	10	50%	06	30%
ENG 225 Literature Methods	01	5%	03	15%	16	80%
ENG 226 Critical Theory	-	-	08	40%	12	60%
ENG 318 Female Writers	-	-	04	20%	16	80%
ENG 326 Children Literature	-	-	05	25%	15	75%
OVERALL AVERAGE	15/7=2 .14%		230/7= 32.85%		435/7=65%	

Table 2: Students’ scores in language and literature courses during 2011/ 2012 Academic Session in English Department.

	Good (A&B)		Average(C&D)		Poor(E&F)	
LANGUAGE COURSES						
ENG 111 Listening Skills	06	30%	10	50%	04	20%
ENG 114 Basic Grammar	02	10%	13	65%	05	25%
ENG 121 Speech Work	06	30%	09	45%	05	25%
ENG 122 Applied Linguistics I	03	15%	14	70%	03	15%
ENG 214 Phonetics & Phonology	04	20%	08	40%	08	40%
ENG 222 Composition I	01	5%	13	65%	06	30%
ENG 313 Applied English linguistics II	02	10%	11	55%	07	35%
OVERALL AVERAGE	120/7=17.14%		390/7=55.71%		190/7=27.14%	

Table 2 (Cont). Students' scores in language and literature courses during 2011/ 2012 Academic Session in English Department.

LITERATURE COURSES	Good (A&B)		Average(C&D)		Poor(E&F)	
ENG 113 Introduction to Literature	06	30%	08	40%	06	30%
ENG 124 Modern African Literature	05	25%	07	35%	08	40%
ENG 213 Selected European Authors	-	-	10	50%	10	50%
ENG 225 Literature Methods	01	5%	03	15%	16	80%
ENG 226 Critical Theory	-	-	08	40%	12	60%
ENG 318 Female Writers	01	5%	09	45%	10	50%
ENG 326 Children Literature	-	-	03	15%	17	85%
OVERALL AVERAGE	65/7 =9.28%		240/7=34.28%		395/7=56.43	

Table 3: Students' scores in language and literature courses during 2012/ 2013 Academic Session in English Department

LANGUAGE COURSES	Good (A&B)		Average(C&D)		Poor (E&F)	
ENG 111 Listening Skills	04	20%	12	60%	04	20%
ENG 114 Basic Grammar	03	15%	13	65%	04	20%
ENG 121 Speech Work	03	15%	09	45%	08	40%
ENG 122 Applied Linguistics I	06	30%	11	55%	03	15%
ENG 214 Phonetics & Phonology	05	25%	10	50%	05	25%
ENG 222 Composition I	02	10%	09	45%	09	45%
ENG 313 Applied Linguistics II	03	15%	12	60%	05	25%
OVERALL AVERAGE	130/7=18.57%		380/7=54.29%		190/7=27.14%	
LITERATURE COURSES						
ENG 113 Introduction to Literature	-	-	08	40%	12	60%
ENG 124 Modern African Literature	02	10%	06	30%	12	60%
ENG 213 Selected European Authors	-	-	02	10%	18	90%
ENG 225 Literature Methods	01	5%	08	40%	11	55%
ENG 226 Critical Theory	-	-	10	50%	10	50%
ENG 318 Female Writers	-	-	09	45%	11	55%
ENG 326 Children Literature	01	5%	08	40%	11	55%
OVERALL AVERAGE	20/7= 2.86%		255/7=36.43%		425/7=60.71%	

The total overall Passes in language courses for the period under review are **1525/21= 72.61%**

The total overall Failures in language courses for the period under review are **575 /21 = 27.38%**

The total overall Passes in literature courses for the period under review are **825/21 = 39.28%**

The total overall Failures in literature courses for the period under review are **1275/21 = 60.71%**

Tables 1- 3 present the results of students offering language and literature courses in English Department for the 2010/ 2011, 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 academic sessions. The study shows that 72.61% passed language courses while only 27.38% performed below average. On the other hand, while the study revealed that the total percentage of passes in the literature for the periods under review was 39.28%, the percentage of the students that performed poorly proved to be 60.71%. This shows exactly the picture of the level of students' performance in those courses. The data as presented in these tables reveal clearly that students performed much more below average in literature courses than they did in language courses.

Tables 4- 6 present the results of students offering language and literature courses in French Department for the 2010/ 2011, 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 academic sessions. The study shows that 85% passed language courses while only 15% performed below average. On the other hand, while the study reveals that the total percentage of passes in the literature for the periods under review was 46.67%, the percentage of the students that performed poorly stands at 53.33%. Like in English, the data as presented in these tables revealed clearly that students performed much more below average in literature courses than they did in language courses.

Table 4: Analysis of students' scores in language and literature courses during 2010/ 2011 Academic Session in French Department.

	Good (A&B)		Average(C&D)		Poor (E&F)	
LANGUAGE COURSES						
FRE 111 Expression Orale I	02	40%	02	40%	01	20%
FRE 112 Grammaire I	01	20%	03	60%	01	20%
FRE 121 Expression Orale II	02	40%	02	40%	01	20%
FRE 122 Grammaire II	02	40%	02	40%	01	20%
FRE 125 Exercice de laboratoire	03	60%	02	40%	-	-
FRE 211 Expression Orale III	03	60%	02	40%	-	-
FRE 212 Grammaire III	02	40%	02	40%	01	20%
FRE 213 Expression Ecrite III	01	20%	04	80%	-	-
FRE 223 Phonétique et Phologie	02	40%	02	40%	01	20%
FRE 224 Méthodologie de l' enseignement du français	01	20%	04	80%	-	-
FRE 324 Traduction (Théorique et pratique)	01	20%	02	40%	02	40%
FRE 321 Expression Ecrite IV	02	40%	01	20%	02	40%
OVER ALL AVERAGE	440/12=36.66%		560/12=46.67%		200/12=16.67%	
LITERATURE COURSES						
FRE 215 Introduction à la littérature Africaine d'expression française I	01	20%	02	40%	02	40%
FRE 225 Littérature Francophone Africaine d'expression française I	-	-	02	40%	03	60%
FRE 323 Littérature Française	-	-	02	40%	03	60%
OVER ALL AVERAGE	20/3 =6.66%		120/3 =40%		160/3 =53.33%	

Table 5: Analysis of students' scores in language and literature courses during 2011/ 2012 Academic Session in French Department.

	Good (A&B)		Average(C&D)		Poor (E&F)	
LANGUAGE COURSES						
FRE 111 Expression Orale I	03	60%	02	40%	-	-
FRE 112 Grammaire I	02	40%	02	40%	01	20%
FRE 121 Expression Orale II	01	20%	03	60%	01	20%
FRE 122 Grammaire II	02	40%	02	40%	01	20%
FRE 125 Exercice de laboratoire	02	40%	03	60%	-	-
FRE 211 Expression Orale III	02	40%	03	60%	-	-
FRE 212 Grammaire III	01	20%	04	80%		
FRE 213 Expression Ecrite III	02	40%	01	20%	02	40%
FRE 223 Phonétique et Phologie	01	20%	03	60%	01	20%
FRE 224 Méthodologie de l'enseignement du français	02	40%	03	60%	-	-
FRE 324 Traduction (Théorique et pratique)	02	40%	01	20%	02	40%
FRE 321 Expression Ecrite IV	02	40%	02	40%	01	20%
OVER ALL AVERAGE	440/12=36.66%		580/12=48.33%		180/12=15%	
LITERATURE COURSES						
FRE 215 Introduction à la littérature Africaine d'expression française I	-	-	03	60%	02	40%
FRE 225 Littérature Francophone Africaine d'expression française I	01	20%	02	40%	02	40%
FRE 323 Littérature Française	01	20%	01	20%	03	60%
OVER ALL AVERAGE	40/3=13.33%		120/3=40%		140/3=46.67%	

Table 6: Analysis of students' scores in language and literature courses during 2012/ 2013 Academic Session in French Department.

	Good (A&B)		Average(C&D)		Poor (E&F)	
LANGUAGE COURSES						
FRE 111 Expression Orale I	01	20%	04	80%	-	-
FRE 112 Grammaire I	02	40%	03	60%	-	-
FRE 121 Expression Orale II	04	80%	01	20%	-	-
FRE 122 Grammaire II	02	40%	02	40%	01	20%
FRE 125 Exercice de laboratoire	03	60%	02	40%	-	-
FRE 211 Expression Orale III	02	40%	03	60%	-	-
FRE 212 Grammaire III	01	20%	03	60%	01	20%
FRE 213 Expression Ecrite III	02	40%	01	20%	02	40%
FRE 223 Phonétique et Phologie	02	40%	02	40%	01	20%
FRE 224 Méthodologie de l'enseignement du français	02	40%	03	60%	-	-
FRE 324 Traduction (Théorique et pratique)	02	40%	01	20%	02	40%
FRE 321 Expression Ecrite IV	02	40%	02	40%	01	20%
OVER ALL AVERAGE	500/12=41.66%		540/12=45%		160/12=13.33%	
LITERATURE COURSES						
FRE 215 Introduction à la littérature Africaine d'expression française I	-	-	01	20%	04	80%
FRE 225 Littérature Francophone Africaine d'expression française I	01	20%	02	40%	02	40%
FRE 323 Littérature Française			02	40%	03	60%
OVER ALL AVERAGE	20/3=6.66%		100/3=33.33%		180/3=60%	

The total overall Passes in language courses for the period under review are **3060/36= 85%**

The total overall Failures in language courses for the period under review are **540 /36 = 15%**

The total overall Passes in literature courses for the period under review are **420/9 = 46.67%**

The total overall Failures in literature courses for the period under review are **480/9 =53.33%**

Table 7 showing students' level of interest in their chosen courses.

	Number of respondents	Yes (%)	No (%)
Do you like your course of study?	75	68(90.7%)	07 (9.3%)
Do you always buy the recommended texts suggested by your Lecturers?	75	46 (61.3%)	29 (39.7%)
Do you always have access to the recommended texts?	75	63 (84%)	12(16%)
Do you read the recommended texts?	75	64 (85.3%)	11 (14.7%)
Do you find those texts interesting?	75	48 (64%)	27(36%)
Do you find those texts boring?	75	30 (40%)	45 (60%)
Which aspect of language courses are you interested in?:			
- syntax (grammar)?	75	40(43.3%)	18(24%)
- phonetics & phonology?		42(56%)	22(29.3%)
Do you like the method(s) through which these courses are taught?	75	72 (96%)	03 (4%)
Do you regularly do the assignments given to you?	75	52 (69.3)	23 (30.7%)

From table 7 above, the response to item 1 shows that majority of the respondents like their course of study. The reason for this assumption is that sixty-eight (68) respondents representing 90.7% responded positively in favor of the statement while only seven (07) representing only 9.3% responded negatively.

The response to item 2 explains that forty-six (46) respondents which represent 61.3% agree that they could afford to buy the recommended text while twenty-nine (29) representing 39.7% are incapacitated to buy the recommended text. Collier (1992:188) corroborates this fact that "student's background

variables are very likely to have an influence on student achievement". This shows that out of this number, even though they are interested in reading the text(s) they will have no way to do so just because of their financial constraint which might have hindered them from procuring the book(s) for themselves, and this may result from most of the time in failure. Whereas many are able to have the text(s) handy but do not have time reading them; this too can result in not doing so fine in the course.

Item 3 revealed that out of seventy five (75) respondents, sixty three (63) representing 84% claimed that they had access to the recommended texts while twelve (12) of them representing 16% prove otherwise. Definitely when students fail to lay their hand on the text(s) to be studied in the class, we could not expect magic from them to perform better.

Item 4 reveals that sixty-four (64) respondents representing 85.3% claim that they read the recommended texts as eleven (11) representing 14.7% prove the opposite.

In item 5, forty-eight (48) respondents representing 64% claimed that they found it interesting when they read the recommended texts whereas twenty-seven (27) representing 36% were of negative opinion to the statement.

In item 6, out of the seventy-five (75) respondents, thirty (30) representing 40% admitted that they found it boring when they engaged in reading the recommended text(s). This indicates that whatever efforts they exerted on the text(s), they may not comprehend what they read and this could lead to failure. On the other hand forty-five (45) respondents representing 60% agreed that they did not have any chagrin reading the text(s).

Item 7 comprises of two items examined. Item 7a shows that forty respondents, that is, 43.3% had an interest in Grammar and only eighteen (18) respondents representing 24% lacked interest in it. On the other hand, in item 7b forty-two respondents representing 56% were interested in Phonetics and Phonology as a course while twenty-two representing 29.3% lack interest toward it. However seven respondents representing 9.3% make the difference in showing interest in both.

In item 8, the majority of the respondents agreed that the method through which the courses were taught were acceptable as seventy-two (72) representing 96% responded positively to this assumption. Only three representing 4% disagree with this.

The last item indicates that while out of the seventy-five sampling population, fifty-two representing responded positively that they did their

assignment regularly whereas some great number representing do not do their assignment. This lack of seriousness will definitely give birth to a negative result in their academic performance.

The responses from the lecturers handling these courses show a correlation between students' performance and their choice of their course of study. Some students came to study that course really out of their own volition. However many find themselves reading the course because they have no other option. Most especially majority of French students came to study French because they were denied the opportunity to pursue their most desired course of study. However, majority of them became successful after some motivations received from the lecturers handling them. This study reveals that, though, the subject happens to be a foreign language, language related courses offered are much more than those of literature courses. Notwithstanding, students still performed better in the former than the latter.

Generally, the comments of the lecturers handling the two subjects reveal that the majority are not ready to take full responsibility for their study. In other words, they do not show much seriousness as some lack good orientation and positive attitude towards studies.

Another area that seriously affects students' performance is linked to their social background (Collier, 1992) that is, their parents' financial condition. Some students' parents' level of poverty could even not afford them buying the recommended texts for their wards. Moyo (2013) concluded in his research "that poverty is an overall forum of deprivation cutting across the physical, mental, economic and social needs" of students. These needs, when deprived of students because of poverty may cause mental and/or psychological imbalance in them among their peers. This problem, of course, might have partly reflected and/or resulted in the poor performance of students academically especially in the area of literature courses. Viewing it from another angle is the students' linguistic proficiency. This could improve their performance if they cultivate/ form the habit of skillfully and efficiently communicating in the language(s) (English and/or French) they study especially when they are among their colleagues, both on campus and outside. It is observed that some students failed their courses just because of their inability to interpret the examination questions given to them properly.

The communicative approach used in teaching the students by the lecturers in both Departments is a fantastic one. One of the features of this teaching method is that students are given opportunities to have

much participation in doing many activities in the classroom through instructions provided for them by their teachers.

CONCLUSION

After a long consideration of the student's performances in both language and literature courses, we realized that students performed generally better in language courses in both Departments than in literature courses. This difference could be traced to the fact that many students (though willing to read) "have limited access to books" (Olaniyan & Khalid, 2013) and even many of them do not have access at all to recommended texts due to the financial status of their parents which hinder them from having their personal copies of the texts. However, the majority of the students themselves should be blamed for their poor performance. The reason is not farfetched from the fact that most of them are lazy and lackadaisical towards their study. It could be observed that the teachers have tried in giving them their best but many of them are grossly involved in social networking rather than reading literary texts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Lecturers handling these courses especially literature courses should endeavor to give students assignment(s) from the net since most of them are vulnerable to giving themselves to social networking. Lecturers should be assigned courses that are relevant to their areas of specialization so as to encourage effectiveness and productivity as this will reduce the cause of failure. There is the need to employ more literature lecturers in English Department to relieve the only two on ground to be able to handle about nine literature courses offered in the Department. This will surely reduce the level of failures in literature courses. Students should be mandated to always express themselves in the language of their study and /or in English when they are in the college premises as this could help them improve their language vocabulary and in interpreting properly examination questions.

REFERENCES

- Adepoju, T.L. (2003). "Location Factors and Academic Performance of Students in Senior School Certificate Examinations: Oyo State as a case study". A Paper Presented at the WAEC Monthly Seminar, Lagos. March, 28.
- Collier, V.P. (1992). "A Synthesis of Studies Examining Long-Term Language Minority Students Data on Academic Achievement" in *Bilingual*

- Research Journal*, 16:1&2, Winter/Spring 1992. pp 187-212
- Magagula, C.M. and Ngwenya, A.P. (2004). "A Comparative Analysis of the Academic Performance of Distance and On-campus Learners" In *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education- TOJDE* October 2004; ISSN 1302-6488 Volume: 5 Number: 4
- Moyo, Wisdom (2013). "Causes and Effects of Poverty on Academic Achievement of Rural Secondary School Students: A Case Study of Tshazy Secondary School in Insiza District". *International Journal of Asian Social Science*. Retrieved on 14/01/2015 from <http://www.aessweb.com/journal-detail.php?id=5007>
- Oladosu, A.G.A.S. (2008). "The Role of Indigenous and Foreign Language in the Education Reform in Nigeria", *Readings in Language and Literature in the Current Education Reforms in Nigeria*. Oyo: School of Languages, Oyo State College of Education. pp 1- 17
- Olaniyan, O. and Khalid, S. (2013). "A Correlational Study of Students' Academic Achievement in Mathematics and Poverty Profiles: Implications for Closing Regional Poverty Gaps in Nigeria". *International Journal of Special and General Education (IJSGE)*. Volume 2, December, 2013. ISSN 2315-9839.
- Oluikpe, B.O. (1984). "Criteria for Planning Effective use of English Programmes in Nigerian Universities" in Oluikpe, B.O. (Ed). *New Direction for Nigerian Higher Education, Focus on General Studies*. Lagos: Nigerian Association of General Studies. pp 62-70.
- Oni, G, F. (2011). "The Effect of Literature-in-English on the Educational Performance of Students in English: A case Study of three Selected Secondary Schools in Ayedaade Local Government Area in Osun State". An unpublished B.A.ED project submitted to the Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of Ado Ekiti.
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010). *International Student's Edition*. Oxford University Press. Oxford, New York.