

## Second Language acquisition and writing proficiency of Secondary School Students in Ogun State

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### Abstract

*This study examined the relationship between Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and writing proficiency of students in selected secondary schools in Ogun State. Three (3) out of twenty (20) Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected. Four (4) research questions guided the study while a narrative essay tested the expression of the students. Error Analysis process was used to determine the pattern of errors in the students' writing. The study highlighted the difficult areas, investigated the variation and problems in SLA among Secondary School II Students in the selected secondary schools in Abeokuta, Ogun State and stated the implications. Few students (12%) were able to write the required 450 words. However, majority (53.4%) showed comprehension of the essay topic as they scored high marks in Content, Organisation, and Expression but not in Mechanical Accuracy. Sadly, teachers in public secondary schools avoid giving compositions to students because of the large class size while private school teachers have manageable classes. Since composition writing is essential for a credit pass in English studies, which enhances performance in other subjects, there is need for concrete intervention to reduce inequality in writing proficiency of the students in secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria.*

**Key words:** Language Acquisition, Proficiency, Error Analysis

### Introduction

English Language is not only a medium of social communication in Nigeria, it is also the language of inter-ethnic communication amongst people of different linguistic backgrounds. It is the language through which Nigerians are heard outside Nigeria. It is the language of administration and bureaucracy. Formal documents, archives, national records and written records of meetings are documented in English language. Even in the Houses of Assembly in the thirty-six states, House of Representatives and Senate, deliberations are in English. It is used for legal business and documents. The constitution is written and interpreted in English. The English language is used at political rallies, writing and presenting party manifestos and political speeches. Hence, it can be referred to as a political language. It is the language used in import and export, advertisements, negotiations, presentation of irrevocable letters of credit and filling foreign

exchange forms thus language of commerce. The language of the colonial masters happens to be the code of information, media and technology as news items are constructed in English before being translated to the local languages of the indigenes. Even the grass root stations that broadcast majorly in the indigenous languages still join the network service of the mother stations to broadcast news in English. Apart from the indigenous programmes, all other programmes transmitted are encoded in English language. It is the language of education. The society emphasizes acquisition of English language and anyone who does not speak the language proficiently is not regarded as being literate. In Nigerian schools, English language is taught by immersion as all subjects apart from the Mother Tongue (MT) are taught in English. English language is also the language of evaluation because all subjects minus indigenous and foreign languages are evaluated using the language.

According to Akeredolu-Ale (2020), Nigerian government gives English language a pride of place so much that a credit in the subject at the General Certificate of Education: Ordinary Level is required as a prior condition for acceptance into academy for higher learning. Although over five hundred and twenty five (525) local languages are spoken in Nigeria, English, which is the language of former colonial British Nigeria, is the national language. (Translators without Borders) It is the diplomatic language. Yet it is not the first language because the people of Nigeria have their indigenous languages, Mother Tongue (MT). Though the children of some elites in the society who live in academic environment or highbrow areas might be exposed to English as their L1, majority of Nigerian parents (especially those in the rural areas) communicate with their children with the MT, thus putting English language in its position as Second Language (SL or L2.)

SL is not the speaker's mother tongue, it is not the native language of the speaker. It is learnt later. It is possible for L2 to be a speaker's dominant language, even if it is not the MT but the language often used by the speaker especially if he is very comfortable with it. While L1 is acquired from birth via actively listening to parents and other family members, L2 is usually learnt at a later stage after the MT. L1 can also be reckoned with as the indigenous language of the speaker. However, SL is a language that is not the first language acquired by someone, it is a non-natal language, not parent tongue. L1 is learnt effortlessly by babies and it is less complex. On the contrary, L2 is learnt actively by studying grammar rules and many concepts. L2 is not the MT, it is spoken by an individual or a group of people for interaction in business or pursuit of academic endeavour. It is not the indigenous language of the populace but officially accepted for the purpose of interaction in a nation endowed with many languages.

A lot of studies had been carried out on the relationship between second language and

cognitive ability of students as the issue of second language is not peculiar to Nigeria. Researchers in the early 20s wondered if learning of French which is the SL in Canada enhances cognitive development and what are the effects of SL learning on first language and non –language subjects, (Bournots-Trites, 2006). According to Obi (2007), there is a significant effect of second language (English language) on students' achievement in Biology and Mathematics whereas it does not have a significant effect on students' achievement in Geography and Literature in English but then proficiency in English aids performance in all the subjects as the students who did well in English also did well in the four subjects. This is in line with the findings of Bournot-Trites and Reeder (2001), which reveals that students with high intensity in French (second language) obtained higher results than the ones with low French intensity. Turnbull et al., (2000), de Courcey and Buston (2000), in Australia showed very similar findings which are corroborated by Akeredolu-Ale (2000). On the contrary, the findings of Marsh, et al. (2000), indicate a negative effect of instruction in English language (second language) on Mathematics achievement and other non –language subjects in Hong Kong.

SLA is an enormous complex process that evades description let alone explanation (Akeredolu-Ale, 2000). Some scholars even perceive it as being chaotic. However, some theories which explain the process of its acquisition are considered. According to Ellis (1993), Stephen Krashen was the first to synthesize and integrate a number of research studies on SLA. As far as Krashen is concerned, acquisition of a language does not need knowledge of the rules of grammar neither does it warrant rigorous drills, what is expected is simply communication in the SL. A natural flow of interaction whereby the interlocutors will freely understand and be understood. The structure of the sentences or language is not essential but the message being sent should be understood for the receiver to be able to give appropriate feedback.

This is what Krashen refers to as 'comprehensible input.' The learner is not under pressure to speak the target language. He speaks when he is ready to do so. The student improves his speech production when he is exposed to 'communicative and comprehensible input'. He is not being pushed to give the right speech or writing based on the rules of grammar. The messages he is exposed to are the ones he wants to hear. There should be native speakers who are willing and ready to assist the student to acquire the TL. Krashen propounded five (5) theories which are: 'the Acquisition – learning hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the Input hypothesis, the Affective filter hypothesis; the Natural Order hypothesis.

The acquisition-learning theory is popular among teachers of English language and linguists. It separates acquisition from learning and sees acquisition as a subconscious process while learning is a conscious process. Monitor hypothesis, on the other hand, is about the relationship between learning and acquisition of a language. It defines the effect of acquisition on learning and this is as a result of the learned grammar. Krashen believes that acquisition system is the initiator of an utterance, while learning is the 'monitor' or the 'editor'. The 'monitor' plans, edits and corrects the utterance when three specific conditions are met, if there is enough time at the disposal of the second language learner, if he focuses on form or think about the correctness of the utterance and if he has knowledge of the rules of grammar.

However, the Input theory has to do with 'acquisition' and not 'learning'. The second language input is a step higher than the linguistic proficient level of the natural order which the learner graduates along into when he receives the second language 'input'. A learner at stage 'i' does not acquire the second language until he is exposed to comprehensible input 'I'. It then means that acquisition takes place at the level of 'i+I'. The natural communicative input is germane to the design of language syllabus because all learners

are not at the same level of linguistic competence. It will enable individual learner to receive the appropriate dose of input stimulus as well as that of comprehensible Input that is ('i+I') required for his level of linguistic competence.

Next is the theory of Affective Filter which states that variables such as motivation, self-confidence, anxiety and personality traits facilitate the acquisition of second language. Variables like high level of motivation, self -confidence, a positive self -esteem, and gregariousness enable the second language learner to acquire the SL. Conversely, apathy, self -depreciation, apprehension, timidity and reticence negate the comprehensible input in that they raise the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that works contrary to the comprehensible input and hinders the acquisition of the second language. In other words, when the filter is 'up' it impedes language acquisition, though positive affective filter is needed, it is not sufficient on its own, for second language acquisition.

The last of Krashen's theory is the Natural Order theory which is based on research findings of (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Fathman, 1975; Makino, 1980 all cited in Krashen, 1987).The findings revealed that acquiring some lexical items follows a predictable order which is natural. While some language rules can be mastered at the early stage of the learner, others are acquired late. The acquisition order has nothing to do with the chronological age of the learner neither has it anything to do with his first language, background and patterns of exposure. Though the studies did not reveal 100% agreement between the individual learners, there were significant similarities which emphasized the presence of a natural order for SLA. However, the natural order theory does not encourage basing the syllabus of a language programme on the order found in the studies. The theory is not in support of grammatical sequencing for achieving the goal of language acquisition.

Krashen, explained that though studying the structure of a second language or any language for

that matter may have educational values and advantages which may be useful in secondary schools and institutions of higher learning, the benefit depends on the learner being accustomed to the language in question.

These theories have a main critique which according to 'Language and Literacy' is that they cannot be tested or proven. The educational periodical wonders what 'comprehensible input' is. The theory of effective filter cannot be helpful if there is no specificity in what affects individual variables and combination of variables and at what levels, serve to raise the filter.

Hence, Error Analysis (EA) which deals effectively with expressive skills that is, speaking and writing, is considered for this study. (EA) in SLA according to J. Richard et al., (2002), came into existence in the 70s. It was established by Corder and his associates. They are behavioural psychologists who used applied linguistics to distinguish between the learner's first and second languages to determine errors. EA differentiates between errors and mistakes. Errors are systematic while mistakes are not. They pointed out that there are omissive errors, additive errors, substitutive and those related to how the words are ordered. These are basic errors. There are also overt and covert errors. The classification can also be by how obvious they are, overt errors such as 'I sad' are apparent and out of context, whereas covert errors are evident only in context. Similarly, errors can also be classified according to domain or the breadth of context. The analyst must examine this and extent of the breadth of the utterance. It is possible for the error to be fixed if there is a change.

There is also classification according to the level of phonological errors, syntactic errors, lexical errors and vocabulary errors. The extent of the interference with communication is yet another level of classification as universal errors may cause misunderstanding of statements. Local errors do not cause misunderstanding of

statements because the error is overt as the meaning is obvious. In the above example, 'I sad' would be a local error, since the meaning is obvious.

Error Analysis (EA) is a technique for documenting the mistakes manifested in a learner's MT and to discover if they are actually mistakes or not and to explain what caused them. The theory focuses on errors that are methodic contraventions of forms in the code to which the learners have been opened to. (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition 2021). EA dissects the mistakes of the language learners. It compares the identified mistakes in the SL and the SL itself. EA emphasizes the significance of learner's errors. EA describes how learning takes place, it checks the learner's output which includes both correct and incorrect statements.

Researches on EA are based on SL learners' mistakes and predict problems involved in acquiring the second language. It points out the areas of difficulty encountered by the students so as to be able to focus on them. MT interference is not the only causal factor for mistakes in the SL. Ali Akbar 2012 pointed to errors observed in SLA thus:

1. Overgeneralizing the structure of the first language. The learners create a deviant structure of the target language on the basis of his experience of the structure of the first language.
2. Failure to observe the restrictions of existing structures due to ignorance of rules restriction.
3. Failure to develop the necessary structure for producing acceptable statements caused by incomplete application of rules.
4. Faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language which happens as a result of false concepts hypothesis

EA is a set of procedures to identify, describe and explain learners' errors. It also explains the reason

for occurrence of errors'. It is carried out in four consecutive stages (Ellis1994). They are:

1. Grouping the representative of the learners' speech/writing
2. Picking out the mistakes.
3. Elucidating the mistakes
4. Clarification of the mistakes.

English Language is an important subject in the primary and secondary school curricular in Nigeria. This is probably because of its importance as the main language of learning various subjects in many countries of the world. The foremost public examination body that determines examination requirements in public interest in Nigeria and other English speaking West African countries is the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC). It administers public examinations in Nigeria and West Africa as a whole. It tests the four language skills that are essential to mastery of English Language which are: listening, speaking, reading and writing. This examination body breaks examination of English Language to three papers: the first two papers are taken at once. There are eighty (80) multiple choice questions in the first paper, and the candidates have sixty (60) minutes within which to respond. They are scored over forty (40) marks. Paper 2 consists of Letter Writing, Newspaper Article, Debate and Story - telling. There are also passages for Comprehension and Summary. This paper lasts 2 hours and carries 100 marks. The third paper comprises sixty (60) multiple choice items which is Test of Orals. It lasts for forty-five (45) minutes and carries 30marks. (WAEC Final Marking Scheme 2020)

The Chief Examiner's General comments on Paper 2 which tests writing skill as revealed on waeconline.org from years 2008 to 2019 reported that the questions were within the competence of the candidates yet the performance did not show any improvement over the previous years. It is obvious that though the three papers are important, Paper 2 seems to be exhaustive and therefore carries the highest marks. Essay writing is allotted fifty (50) marks: which are broken down thus:

Mechanical Accuracy is scored over 10marks, Expression carries 20marks, Content and Organisation carry 10 marks each. Failure in this paper is likely to jeopardise the required credit in the compulsory subject, yet each year the performance is below expectations of the stakeholders though each of the examining bodies makes conscious effort to see that the questions are within the competence of the candidates. Many studies have been done on the Effect of Second Language Acquisition on Cognitive Achievement of Students, Changhu Li (2009), worked on Second Language Acquisition and College English Teaching, Woumans et al., (2018), studied The Relationship between Second Language Acquisition and Nonverbal Cognitive Abilities while Bubbico et al., (2019), carried out a research on Effect of Second Language Learning on the Plastic Aging Brain: Functional Connectivity, Cognitive Decline, and Reorganization. Several studies, empirical studies considered Academic Achievement in a Second Language (Turnbull,2022), few looked into Examining the Role of Language on Students' Achievements ( Rahaman ,2010) while Willey online library (2022) considered What Really Matters in Second Language Learning for Academic Achievement. None of these studies seems to have provided information on the Effect of Second Language Acquisition on Writing Skills of the Students in Secondary Schools in Ogun State. Hence, this study considered the consequence of second language acquisition on writing proficiency of the students in Senior Secondary Schools in Ogun State.

### **Research Questions**

Four questions were raised for the study.

1. What is the range within which the students wrote the required 450 words on the given essay topic?
2. To what extent did the students exhibit comprehension of the topic?
3. What are the common mistakes revealed in the students' writings?
4. How often do teachers of English studies teach, and assess English composition?

### **Objective of the Study**

The intent of the study is to reveal the mistakes that are commonly made by Senior Secondary School Students in composition writing, the probable reasons for the errors and suggestions on remediation.

### **Methodology**

Simple random sampling technique was employed to select three local government areas – Abeokuta North, Abeokuta South and Odeda local government areas out of the twenty local government areas in Ogun state. A public school was randomly chosen from each local government. A narrative essay topic was given through the English teachers of each school to SSII students of the schools. Intact classes of SSII in each school was given the topic but fifty (50) scripts were randomly selected from each school, giving a total of one hundred and fifty (150) students from the three schools. The scripts were marked based on WAEC marking scheme.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also held, where eighteen (18) Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) students of National Teachers Institute (NTI), Abeokuta who teach English studies in private and public schools respectively discussed how they teach English composition classes, the number of periods allotted to essay teaching per week, feedback given to students in form of marking and doing corrections with them.

### **Rules Guiding Marking English Language Examination as Stated by WAEC**

WAEC designed English Examination Paper II to test the candidate's ability to use English as an effective means of communication in a given situation, the candidate's ability to express himself clearly and coherently in a manner appropriate to the audience, purpose, topic and situation. The paper presents topics covering a wide variety of writing skills, such as argumentative, narrative, expository, descriptive and imaginative writing. According to the Chief Examiner's report, topics

are carefully selected to fall within the candidate's experience or knowledge acquired either first hand or through reading. The nature of each test is clear: argument, narration, exposition or description. Any deliberate distortion of the nature of the test is penalized. However, an unusual or unexpected approach must not be rejected without careful thought. In extreme cases, where the composition appears to be totally irrelevant, the scripts are referred to the Chief Examiner/Team Leader in charge. The merit of a piece of writing is judged in terms of the writer's success in achieving the purpose, be it to entertain, instruct, inform, admonish or persuade. The judgment is based, in varying degrees, on factors such as; adequacy of treatment of subject matter, originality of approach, appropriateness of language, clarity of exposition or narration of argument, balance and mechanical accuracy

Examiners are encouraged to work on the principles of POSITIVE MARKING which means they should give credit for what the candidate has done right and then penalize for errors or blemishes. These penalties are not necessarily, in all cases, numerical deductions but often the award of a lower mark than would have been awarded if there were no blemishes.

The qualities mentioned above are grouped into a number of well-defined aspects with a maximum mark for each aspect.

These aspects are:

- (a) Content: Ideas relevant to the central theme and their development.
- (b) Organization: The writing is to be judged as whatever it is intended to be: an article, a speech, a letter, argument and debate. The qualities looked for are: a suitable opening, adequate development, good paragraphing, balance, coherence and a suitable conclusion.
- (c) Expression: The positive qualities looked for under Expression include:

- (i) Clarity and general appropriateness of style (for example, range and aptness of vocabulary and collocation).
- (ii) Effective arrangement and variation of sentence structure and type.
- (iii) Judicious use of figurative language.
- (iv) Skillful and sophisticated use of punctuation. In arriving at the mark for Expression, the examiner is not to be unduly influenced by the mechanical errors.
- undeniable errors in grammar, punctuation errors and spelling errors. Half a mark ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) is deducted for each ringed error up to the maximum allowed for this aspect, which is 10 marks. The examiner, before imposing a ring, must be sure that the error is in grammar or spelling or punctuation. Otherwise, the error must be underlined and penalized under Expression.

### Discussion of Findings

#### Research Question 1:

To what extent did the students write 450 words on the given essay topic?

#### Mechanical Accuracy

The main categories of ringable errors, that is, errors which examiner may indicate with rings are:

**Table 1: Distribution of students according to the number of words written.**

Required number of words	Frequency	Percentage
450		
50 words	90	60.0
80-100 words	42	28.0
450 words	18	12.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Computed from field survey, 2021.

Description of the total number of words written by the students were given in Table 1. Very few (12%) of the students wrote the required number of words while majority (60%) wrote just 50 words and 28 % wrote between 80 and 100 words. Short compositions automatically reduce the scores under Mechanical Accuracy. Majority of the students were probably unable to write the

required number of words due to lack of vocabulary needed for expression.

#### Research Question 2

What is the extent to which the students exhibit comprehension of the topic?

**Table 2: Distribution of students according to comprehension of the topic**

Comprehension of the Topic	Frequency	Percentage
Full topic understanding	80	53.4
Partial topic understanding	20	13.3
No topic understanding	50	33.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Computed from field survey, 2021

Majority (53.4%) of the students had an understanding of what is expected of them because ideas that are relevant to the topic were extensively discussed. However, 13.3 % explained the topic but did not write the expected story while 33.3% went far away from the topic and it was as if they gave themselves different questions which are not relevant at all to the topic.

### Research Question 3:

Which errors are common in the students' writings?

The following errors dominated the students' writings:

#### a) Errors in Grammar

- The absence of essential sentence elements like Subject, Predicator, Complement.
- Wrong tense
- Misuse of modal operators (may/ might/ can/ could);
- Omission of the article;
- Confusion in the use of pronouns;
- Wrong prepositions;
- Errors in concord;
- Errors in comparative constructions.

#### b) Punctuation Error

- Misuse of period, question mark or exclamation mark.
- Misuse or omission of quotation marks.
- Putting a comma between subject and verb, subject and object, verb and complement.
- The insertion of a comma between adjective and noun.
- The use of a small letter for the personal pronoun "I";
- Using a small letter at the beginning of sentences and a proper noun.
- The students also made a lot of mistakes in the spellings of many words.

### Research Question 4:

How often do the teachers of English studies in secondary schools teach composition in a term?

In the focus group discussion, eighteen teachers who are PGDE students of NTI responded to

structured interview on the number of periods they have for English studies, the number of periods for oral and written composition and how often they give essay topics to the students. Ten (10) of the teachers are teaching in private secondary schools while eight (8) are public secondary school teachers. All the teachers teaching in private secondary schools affirm that they have two (2) periods out of ten (10) periods for oral and written composition. While six (6) of them said the essay periods are fixed for Fridays, the remaining four (4) fixed theirs for Wednesdays. Those for Fridays give the written aspect of whatever topic they give as an assignment which the students do over the weekend at home. According to the teachers, the students in a class are between fifteen and twenty so marking is not a problem.

On the contrary, the eight teachers in public secondary schools said they do not give written composition weekly, reason being that the classes are too large. They claimed the class size of eighty students in a class of 7 arms give 560 students which translates to 560 scripts per week is cumbersome as they have other aspects of the subject to teach ,give class work and mark. Two of the teachers said they give once in a month but they do not mark while the remaining six claimed they do not give written essay as there is no reason for giving the assignment that will not be marked. They felt oral essay would give the students the idea of what to write at public examinations.

### Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that very few students, 12%, were able to write the required 450 words and this is probably because majority do not have adequate vocabulary needed to express themselves. The finding correlates with that of Hawkins (2005) who opined that L2 learners struggle with vocabulary, even in United Kingdom where English is referred to as an additional language for those without English as their first language. Such students start their academic career with low level of vocabulary knowledge and take longer time to master high frequency vocabulary needed for academic

success (Coxhead and Bouforwick, 2018). Rohmatillah, (2017) also arrived at the same conclusion about SLA in Saudi Arabia where English is also a second language, the students in public secondary schools have inadequate vocabulary. Learning vocabulary is essential for acquiring new language (Tozcu and Cordy, 2004). Vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of a second language. Adequate vocabulary enables the L2 learner to reach proficiency in the L2. (Narzurllayema and Jinshdava 2021). Alqahtan (2015), pointed out that low vocabulary knowledge causes serious problem for learners of L2 as it is a severe problematic issue for L2 learning. Richard and Renandya (2002) conclude that a learner who does not have enough vocabulary in a language will lose the enthusiasm needed to make use of the language when required. A large vocabulary is essential for other language arts. Vocabulary acquisition is required for communicative competence because it is a task that the L2 learner must accomplish. It is so germane that Wilkins (1972) concludes that while very little can be conveyed without grammar, nothing can be conveyed without vocabulary. This implies that without sufficient vocabulary, students cannot understand others or express their ideas.

Composition writing is an expressive skill, without sufficient vocabulary, students cannot express whatever ideas they have about any topic. Vocabulary helps students to express themselves more precisely and sharpens communication skills. It helps students to acquire cognitive academic language proficiency. The more vocabulary a learner has, the better he learns. According to Brooks et al. (2015), vocabulary knowledge is important for other skills. Vieira (2017), believes that a good knowledge of vocabulary, will allow the students to formulate more interesting sentences and avoid repetition of the same words in one sentence or paragraph. The ability to vary the phrasing and alternate terms can result in more fascinating and interesting sentences or easier and more pleasant paragraphs. A L2 learner will not be able to read, write, listen and speak the

Target Language (TL) without the knowledge of the vocabulary of the L2.

On the aspect of the comprehension of the essay topic, the study revealed that many of the students demonstrated a proper understanding of the composition topic though some could not write the required 450 words, the few words they wrote were in the direction of the task given. This shows that they knew what was required but lacked the vocabulary to express themselves. None of the students was able to score a mark in Mechanical Accuracy because of many ring able errors which are: errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling that dominated the writings. The findings are similar to those of Mehdi (2018) who analysed the errors made by secondary school students in Libya where English language is also an L2. He found out that errors of verb tense and form, subject verb agreement, word order, preposition, articles, plurality and auxiliaries (errors in grammar) were exhibited in the writings of the students. These same errors were detected by Bodunde and Sotiloye (2013) in the writings of some under graduates which revealed that even university students had problems in all aspects of grammar-tense, punctuation, spelling, concord, abbreviation, preposition ,and word amalgamation.

### **Recommendations**

The fact that the errors which manifested in Nigeria are also manifesting in Libya is a pointer to the problem of SLA which goes along with the students even to the university. This implies that the government, curriculum designers, textbook writers and teachers of English language from primary schools to secondary schools have a task at hand. The foundation for English language acquisition is laid in the primary school, many primary school teachers who lay the foundation are also not vast in the rudiments of English grammar. Some of those who teach in private schools read courses other than English Studies. Since they cannot give what they do not have, there should be train – the- trainers’ workshops or in-service training for teachers to continue to learn. Teachers of English studies should deliberate on the experiences they have in Essay

classes and consider how they can exchange their thoughts to enhance teaching and learning. The errors give feedback to the teachers. They show the teachers the problematic areas to address. Team teaching can be put in place in schools where there are teachers who did not specialize in English teach the subject. The ones who studied English or who are good in grammar will handle that aspect of the syllabus. Team teaching can also take care of teaching composition in public schools. Teachers of English studies in a school can be given different aspects to handle whereby those to handle essay writing are not given additional workload, so that they can face essay writing alone while other teachers handle the other aspects. The General Studies department of universities should continue to strive to provide remedial services as some of the students carried these problems from various primary and secondary schools. This will probably correct the problematic areas before the students are released into the society as graduates.

### Conclusion

The large population of students in English classes in public schools in Ogun State discourages teachers from giving essay topics because marking such will take their time and energy. Focus Group Discussion with teachers of English studies revealed that those who teach in private schools give essay topics weekly while those in public schools do not. Those who claimed they do, do not give essay topics regularly and when they do, the scripts are not marked, hence corrections are not made. Consequently, the students in public schools do not have feedback of their writings. Since it is evident in Nigeria, that proficiency in English paves way for Nigerian students to most other academic subjects at all levels of the formal educational system and also facilitates their exploration of knowledge and information beyond the walls of the formal school, hence the need to have the required credit and to be able to function effectively in the society. All the stakeholders should rise up to the situation by doing the needful. Teachers of English studies in secondary schools should assist the students by

giving them opportunity to write constantly, correct them and give immediate feedback so that the students will be aware of their areas of weaknesses.

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