

Original Paper

Is Attitude an Impediment to Achieving English Proficiency amongst the Final Year Students in the Northern Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria: A Comparative Study of Southern and Northern Geopolitical Zones

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Abstract

This study investigated whether it is the learners' attitudes in the northern geopolitical zone of Nigeria which impede them from achieving high level of proficiency in the study of English language as compared to that of their counterparts in the southern geopolitical zone. Three research questions were generated to guide the study. 28-item questionnaire adapted from Gardner's (1985b) Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) were used to elicit the data needed. The descriptive survey research design that was adopted for the study comprised of four-part Likert-type statements. 610 students (male and female) registered for SSCE examination were selected from 18 government-owned public secondary schools in the Northern and Southern geopolitical zones using stratified random sampling technique. The data collected were analyzed using simple mean scores and percentages. The result of the study showed that students in the Northern geopolitical zones, in fact, have high positive attitude towards the learning of English but were not motivated to learn it and that language anxiety had a pervasive impact on the language learning experience of the students. The study recommends amongst others that, language teachers need to evolve effective teaching and learning strategies that generate the attitudes and motivation most conducive to the production of more successful learners of English language.

Keywords

attitudes, impediment, motivation, Nigerian students, English proficiency

1. Introduction

Motivation is a “key factor in L2 learning” (Ellis, 1994, p. 508). It is invaluable as an influencing factor in examining success in second language acquisition. Attitudes, one of the motivational variables has been found to be a crucial factor in this regards. In this study, attitudes to the learning of English was investigated among final year secondary schools in the Northern states of Nigeria to find out whether students’ attitudes to the study of English language is what impede them from achieving high level of proficiency. To do this, a comparative survey was carried out with their counterpart in the Southern part of the country. Nigeria, it must be noted, is a former British colony where English is the official language. To fully understand learners’ attitudes to English language therefore, there is a need to take a closer look at a broader linguistic picture of the context. This, the study seeks to examine in the following sections.

1.1 Background to the Study

Like many other African countries that were under colonial rule, at independence, English language became the country’s official language. English came to occupy this position not so much because it is a language of wider communication; rather it has more to do, with its unifying role in Nigeria: it is a language which seems to eliminate the communication barriers created by the existence of the many languages in the country. Consequently, it becomes necessary for every Nigerian to learn the language in addition to their L1 to be able to function effectively. Thus, the stage is set for the unassailable position of English Language in Nigeria as an L2.

The national language policy in Nigeria, it appears, encourages multilingualism. Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba are recognized by the 1979 Constitution as national languages and can be used along with English in conducting the business of legislation in the National Assembly. At the educational level, however, English, by virtue of its status in Nigeria, is the medium of instruction in schools: secondary and post-secondary levels. At the primary education level, the National Language Policy on Education (NLPE) stipulates that “the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially, the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community, and at a later stage, English” (Federal Ministry of Education, 1977). What happens in practice is that most primary school teachers endeavour to use English as the medium of instruction as early as possible even right from the first year. The implication of this is that the Nigerian student is exposed to English early to help quicken the acquisition of the language.

Nigeria today is divided into six geopolitical zones. The southern geopolitical zone comprises of South West, South-South, and South-East while the northern geopolitical zone is made up of North West, North-Central, and North-East Zone. The Yorubas and the Ibos are the major ethnic groups occupying the southern geopolitical zone while the Hausas populate the northern geopolitical zone respectively. During the period of colonization, the Yorubas and the Ibos accepted western education and by implication, the use of English language while the Hausas did not. This is partly because they are predominantly an Islamic society and they equate accepting western education to a change in their

religion and culture (Fafunwa, 1976, p. 69). The resultant effect of this is that there is a disparity in the levels of educational attainment between the Yorubas and the Ibos on the one hand, and the Hausas on the other. It is very important to understand this point in order to situate the context in which this study took place.

As a result of the number of years the researcher spent in teaching the English language in the northern states, I observed that learners of English in the northern geopolitical zone have a lot to contend with in the classroom. Unlike their counterparts in the southern geopolitical zone of the country, they are not exposed to the English language until they get to school at the age of 6. The traditional Koranic school that they have to attend from age 3 appears to be one of the reasons adduced for this (Fafunwa, 1976, pp. 50-70). The situation is such that by the time they get into the primary schools, learners would have only succeeded in nearly mastering the native language (Hausa); but as for the Arabic language, they really never get to master it properly. To compound the issue, they have to learn a new language -English-, which they consider a huge problem to contend with.

English is to a large extent in the northern geopolitical zone is restricted to the classrooms. The learners find no reason to use the language outside the classroom because she/he functions in a predominantly monolingual society. Perhaps the only time she/he is forced to use the English language outside the classroom is when she/he wants to communicate or transact business with the so-called “non-indigenes” in the state. Evidence in second language acquisition research has, however, revealed that there is definitely a link between the degree of exposure to English and competence in the language.

Further to this, year in year out students in the northern geopolitical zone fail to achieve success in English examinations conducted both internally and externally. Nowhere is the failure more glaring than in the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education Examination (SSCE) conducted at the end of school year in secondary schools by the West African Examination Council (WAEC). Judging from the 1987 to 1999 SSCE results and statistical figures available to the researcher obtained through the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), the assertion is true especially when results are compared with that of their counterparts in the southern geopolitical zone. In Kano state, one of the states in the northern geopolitical zone, for example, 9,832 students sat the exam in 1991; and 8,822 failed, representing 87.94%. That same year in Lagos state, one of the states in the southern geopolitical zone, 22,827 sat the exam while 11,234 failed representing 49.21%.

In 2014, WAEC reported that for those who made five credits and above including Math and English in some states in the northern geopolitical zone, Adamawa recorded 8.75% Jigawa, Sokoto, Zamfara, and Kebbi recorded 7.47%, 7.12%, 6.65% and 6.30% respectively. Gombe State recorded 5.68%, Bauchi 5.28% and Yobe, 4.85%. Whereas Enugu, Lagos, Imo, Delta, Rivers Abia and Ekiti states in the southern geopolitical zone recorded 51.91%, 45.86%, 40.12%, 62.78%, 52.78%, 58.52% and 33.80% respectively.

In 2016, WAEC result showing how each of the 36 states performed in its examination rated Sokoto-30th, Bauchi-31st, Kebbi-32nd, Katsina-33rd, Gombe-34th, Jigawa-35th, Zamfara-36th, and Yobe-37th. In the same year Abia rated 1st, Anambra 2nd Rivers, Imo, Delta, Enugu and Ekiti rated 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th and 11th respectively.

The study became significant because every year, a large number of students in the northern geopolitical zone fail to achieve success in English language examinations conducted both internally and externally; and as stated earlier, this is more glaring in the SSCE conducted at the end of school year in secondary schools.

1.2 The Problem

The English language is a compulsory subject that all Senior Secondary School (SSS3) students in Nigeria take in their final SSCE examination conducted by WAEC and National Examination Council (NECO). Based on the background, the central problem of this study was that secondary school students are performing poorly in this examination despite the considerable amount of time devoted to English instructions in Nigeria. This failure to achieve an acceptable level of competence in the language has been a matter of great concern to English language teachers, educators and researchers. Parents and government are in total agreement that their huge investment in education is not yielding the desired dividend as the students' performances still remain poor. The result of this is that researchers, from different contexts, have taken up the gauntlet to find out why this is so (Bello, 2010; Ogar, 2007; Yoloye, 2004; Gardner, 2001a; Noels, 2001).

The main purpose of this study will be to compare the language attitudes of the students in the northern geopolitical zone with that of the southern geopolitical zone. This is because anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that attitudes towards English by students in secondary schools in the southern geopolitical zone of Nigeria are generally positive while that of those in the northern geopolitical zones are negative; and that this, perhaps, accounts for the reason why northern students often fail to perform well in English examinations. Such impression or statements can neither be proved nor disproved until research is carried out in the context. Below were the specific questions addressed by the study. Answers to these questions, it is hoped, would increase the researcher's understanding of the issues specifically related to the learners:

- What is the attitude of students towards the learning of English language in the southern and northern geopolitical zones?
- Are students in the northern geopolitical zones less motivated than the students in the southern geopolitical zone because of their attitudes to the study of English language?
- What factors within the learner/social milieu (e.g., self-confidence, teacher, parent) hinder the effective learning of English?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

A key framework and very influential in the field of L2 motivation and learning is Robert Gardner's Socio-Educational Model of second language acquisition. Gardner and Lambert and their associates

began their work in Canada in the 1950s and this has continued to the present (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1980, 1985a, 1988, 2000a). Through the works of Gardner and his associates, a battery of testing instruments, the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was also developed (Gardner, 1985b). Since this groundbreaking research by Lambert and Gardner, there has been a lot of research that has been carried out internationally to investigate learners' motivation and attitude towards the learning of English language. These researches have had a profound effect on our understanding of L2 acquisition.

Gardner (1985a, pp. 146-147), however, best summarized the model. The model focuses on four classes of variables in the socio-educational model: the social milieu, individual differences, language acquisition contexts, and linguistic outcomes. The language acquisition process is viewed as involving a particular causal interplay of these four types of variables. The social or cultural milieu refers to the environment in which an individual is situated, thus determining their beliefs about other cultures and language. These beliefs do have a significant impact on second language acquisition; it also determines the attitude and motivational orientation individuals hold toward the target language, its speakers, and its culture. As a consequence, Gardner avers that an individual's attitude toward the other language group or toward other groups, in general, can influence the extent to which he acquires the language. The model postulated that second language acquisition is facilitated by an integrative motive, which "reflects favourable attitude towards the language community and a general openness towards the group in general" (Gardner, 2001a, p. 5).

In the socio-educational model, motivation has most frequently been characterized as an integrative motive. Gardner (1988, 2005) while elaborating on the model, says this integrative motive comprised of integrativeness, attitude toward the learning situation, and motivation. integrativeness refers to an individual's desire to interact with the TL group while attitude toward the learning situation deal with the individual evaluation of the course and the teacher. All these are related to achievement in the second language. Their effect is indirect and they act through motivation. Within the model, motivation is conceptualized to subsume three components. These include *effort* which refers to the time spent studying the language; *desire*, which indicates how much the learner wants to become proficient in the language and *affect* illustrates the learner's emotional reactions (e.g., enjoy) with regard to language study. This is the positive attitudes toward the goal.

Gardner (1985a) Gardner avers that in order to understand why learners were motivated, it is necessary to understand the learners' ultimate goal or purpose of learning the language. Gardner refers to this as the learner's orientation or reasons for second language study which he identified as integrative and instrumental. Gardner (1983, p. 203) explained and clarified what is meant by an "integrative motivation" as: "learning a language because the learner wishes to identify himself with or become integrated into the society of the target language". In other words, a learner is integratively motivated when she/he learns a language because she/he wants to know more about the culture and values of the foreign language group. It is believed that students who are most successful when learning a target

language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used. This form of motivation is known as integrative motivation, which is believed to underlies successful acquisition of a wide range of registers and a native-like pronunciation (Finegan, 1999, p. 568).

In contrast to integrative motivation is the form of motivation referred to as instrumental motivation. Gardner defines instrumental motivation as “learning a language because of someone or less clearly perceived utility it might have for the learner” (ibid., 1983, p. 203). In other words, a learner is instrumentally motivated when she/he wants to learn a language in order to pass an examination, to use it in one’s job, to use it in holiday in the country, because the educational system requires it (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Instrumental motivation is generally characterized by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language. With instrumental motivation the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher pay based on language ability, reading technical material, translation work achieving higher social status. Instrumental motivation is often a characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of the learner into a community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired.

It is instructive to note that the two orientations function merely as stimulus or “motivational antecedents that help to arouse motivation and direct it towards a set of goals either with a strong interpersonal quality (integrative) or a strong practical quality (instrumental)” (Dörnyei, 2001). Specifically, orientation is “a class of reasons” (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994, p. 361) for studying the language and its purpose is to fuel learners’ motivation; whereas motivation is the overall goal of learning a second language. In fact, according to Gardner, (1985a) it reflects the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity.

1.4 Concept and Definition of Attitude

Various definitions of attitude abound in the literature. According to Bohner and Dickel (2011), an attitude is defined as a belief or thought toward any object, person, or event based on judgment. In describing the main features of attitude, Baker (1992) contends that attitudes consist of three components: cognition, affect, and readiness for action. Cognition comprises thoughts and beliefs. The affect is related to feelings or emotions for the object, such as love or hate, and passion for language learning and use. Both components of attitude, cognition and effect, are not always consistent with each other. That is to say, although a person might have a favourable attitude toward English language learning, he or she may have negative feelings about the instruction. Third, readiness for action indicates a tendency of language behaviour in relation to a person or object in a specific context. It is connected with cognition and effect components.

A positive attitude, no doubt, is good to cultivate in order to achieve success in second language learning. Researchers have shown that positive attitude facilitates learning (Jolayemi, 1999; Peng,

2003). In fact it is most injurious if the students' attitude is negative. Gardner (1982, p. 136), corroborates this observation when he points out that "there is an overwhelming evidence" in support of it. If learners have a positive attitude towards a language then there is every likely-hood that they will have more confidence in learning a language and that success in learning that language is guaranteed. For the purpose of this work, it seems best to restrict the definition of attitude specifically and only to a language learners feelings towards and opinions about the target culture and the TL.

1.5 Relationship between Attitude and Motivation

Researchers have admitted that simple as these explanations are, a truly perplexing issue is determining the relationship between attitude and motivation in social psychological research. Lightbown and Spada (1993), echo this perplexity when they say that, even though research findings show that attitudes and motivation are indeed related to successful L2 learning; yet how they do so has not been indicated. Masgoret and Gardner (2003, p. 124), also acknowledge this problem when they affirm that "relationship reported in the literature between attitude and motivation was inconsistent to draw any firm conclusion". Ellis (1985, p. 116), on his part, posits that this might be because the "distinction blurs". Despite these comments, researchers are unanimous in their belief that attitude and motivation are two important ingredients needed in creating an optimal learning environment. MacIntyre et al. (2001, p. 281), corroborates this when they declare that attitudes and motivation are "key factors that influence the rate and success of second language learning in the classroom".

From Gardner and Lambert (1972) perspective, "attitude" is the persistence shown by the learner in striving for a goal; whereas, "motivation" is seen in terms of the overall orientation or goal. They argue that attitude is related to motivation by serving as supports of the learner's overall orientation. Indeed, the acquisition of a second language is a long and difficult process because it is not like "learning mathematics or word processing... it involve[s] not only the linguistic and cognitive capacities of the learner as an individual but her social, historical, emotional, cultural, moral sense of self as a subject" (Kramch, 2001, p. 12). A stable attitudinal base, therefore, is needed to maintain motivation for a long period.

1.6 Review of Previous Studies

Researchers have shown that positive attitude facilitates learning (Fakeye, 2010; Bello, 2010; Babajide, 2001; Colletta, 1982). In fact it is most injurious if the students' attitude is negative. In discussing the attitudinal dimension to the language achievement in schools, there is need to emphasize that attitude to learning is not solely shaped by learners themselves; this is because attitudes of the teacher, the learner's peers, and the parents are also contributive factors. "Each relationship", Spolsky (2000, p. 273), maintains "might well be shown to be a factor controlling the learners' motivation to acquire the language".

Fakeye (2010) for example, in his study titled "students' personal variables as correlates of academic achievement in English as a second language in Nigeria" investigated the relationship between students personal variables such attitude and academic ability and their achievement in English language: Four

research questions were generated for the study in Lagos state. The instruments used were Questionnaire on Students' Attitude to English (QSAE) and Students' Academic Ability Test (SAAT), four hundred senior Secondary II (SSII) Students randomly selected from five secondary schools in Lagos state were involved in the study. The result of the study showed that there was a positive relationship between students' attitude and their academic achievement in the English language.

Bello (2010), study titled "students' personality traits and performance correlates of high grades in senior school certificate English examination in Kwara state was designed to correlate students' personality traits (e.g., attitude, motivation) with the performance and high grades in senior school certificate English examination. For this study, he sampled 450 SS3 from fifteen secondary schools in three senatorial districts of Kwara state using stratified random sampling technique. Eight research questions and seven hypotheses were generated for the study. The instrument used was Students' Personality Attributes Questionnaire (SPAQ) adapted from National Advisory Mental Council's (1995). The finding of the survey showed that the general level of students' attitudes in learning English is positive because the students obtained a mean of 13.44 out of 20 which is the maximum obtainable score. The finding of this study corroborates the work of Ogar (2007), who investigated instructional, media, learner and teacher factors as correlates of senior secondary students' learning outcomes in the English Language in Cross Rivers' state.

Babajide (2001) in his study of language attitude patterns of Nigerians reports that 75% of Yoruba respondents are comfortable in the use of English; while only 37.5% of Hausa respondents are in this category. The reasons he adduced for this is that the Yoruba land embraced Western education earlier than the Hausa land. This finding corroborates the work of Adegbija (1994), who stated that in most Hausa states, for example, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto, the majority of the population have indifferent, negative and hostile attitudes towards English language; but they rather encourage, nurture and promote the speaking of Arabic.

In a survey carried out by Oyetade (2001) on the attitudes of 60 parents in Ibadan and Lagos on the use of indigenous language in early child education, he showed that majority of the parents were averse to the use of mother tongue. In fact, the use of English was supported by 70% of the respondents while 23.7% supported the use of the MT and English simultaneously.

In an investigation, Colletta (1982) examined parental influence on students' attitudes and motivation in second language learning. Data were obtained from 68 grades 7, 8, 9 and 10 Anglophone students enrolled in the Late French Immersion Programme of the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board during the academic year 1978-79. Data were also obtained from their parents. Attitudes and indices of motivation of both students and parents, and of self-confidence with French (students only) were measured. The result confirmed parental influence on students' attitudes and motivation in second language learning.

2. Method

2.1 Population of the Study

The population of this study was made up of the final year students registered for SSCE in eighteen government-owned public secondary schools in two out of the six geopolitical zones that make up Nigeria- the North West and the South West geopolitical zones. A further breakdown showed that the southern geopolitical zone is made up South West, South East, South-South geopolitical zones while the Northern geopolitical zone comprises North West, North East, and North Central. There are 9,162 secondary schools spread across the 36 States of the country and the Federal Capital Territory FME (2004).

The choice of the terminal class was firstly, because of the interest and focus of this study and secondly, it was reasoned that the students who have studied English language for at least twelve years [through their Primary, Junior Secondary School and Senior Secondary School education] would have gained enough knowledge using English language. In addition, it was believed that they were mature enough to give their opinion about English language learning.

The researcher concentrated on the southern and northern geopolitical zones so as to compare the attitude and motivation of the students. A closer look at these two zones showed that each one of them has the same broad political and social history and identical educational policies. All the schools selected for the study utilise the mandatory SSCE syllabus and all the students sit for the same examination in their terminal class.

2.1.1 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Participants were drawn from 6,100 students registered for SSCE examination comprising male and female students from each of the participating schools out of which 10% or 610 were randomly selected for the study. The sample which consists of 610 students drawn from eighteen public secondary schools owned by the government was considered adequate. Fowler (1988) reiterates that a sample of 150 people will describe a population of 15000 or 15,000,000 with virtually the same degree of accuracy, assuming all other aspects of the design and sample procedures were the same. In this case, 10% of the students registered for SSCE examination in the 18 schools located in the northern and southern geopolitical zones were selected and used in this study.

For this research, the researcher used stratified random sampling for the government-owned senior secondary schools and simple random sampling techniques for the entire final year students understudied for the research. Nigeria has six geopolitical zones (South West, South East, South-South, North West, North East and North Central). Using stratified random sampling technique, the researcher divided Nigeria into two parts: the Southern and the Northern geopolitical zones. The Southern zone in effect is made up of South West, South East and South-South geo-political zones; while the Northern zone had the North West, North East, and North Central geopolitical zones.

Thereafter, from these two zones—the Southern geopolitical zone and the Northern geopolitical zone—the researcher used a hat and draw method to select one geo-political zone from each of them. These

were the North West geopolitical zone from the Northern geopolitical zone and South West geopolitical zone from the Southern geopolitical zone. It should be noted that the South West geopolitical zone is made up of six states (Lagos, Ekiti, Oyo, Ogun, Osun and Ondo) while the North West geopolitical zone has seven states (Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara). Using a hat and draw method, three states each were selected from the two zones earlier drawn: Kano, Jigawa, and Kaduna from the North West zone; and Lagos, Osun and Ekiti from the South West zone. In order to ensure a fair representation of the target population in the six selected states (Lagos, Ekiti, Osun, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano), the researcher used the three senatorial districts already in existence in each of the states as the basis for randomly selecting three government-owned public secondary schools per state for the research to give a total of eighteen. The limited sample size was informed by virtue of the vigour and demanding nature of the study. Therefore, for ease of administration and because of the detail with which the data were analyzed, it was not possible to study a large number of subjects.

2.1.2 Instrumentation

The main instrument used for this study was Gardner's (1985b) "Attitude Motivation Test Battery" (AMTB). The underlying principle of selecting it was its established validity and reliability over the last two decades, as it has been used in a significantly large number of quantitative studies which focused on examining different affective components influencing second language learning (See for example Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Masgoret & Gardner, 1994; Kristmanson, 2000). The instrument of the study is a 28-item questionnaire with sections A-G. The sections are (A) motivation index, (B) self confidence, (C) integrative motivation, (D) instrumental motivation, (E) attitude towards learning English, (F) teacher influence, and (G) parental influence. Each of the sections was structured with four statements on a four-point Likert scale to generate the information on the SS3 students' attitude and motivation.

In addition to the questionnaire, an open-ended question was also used as an instrument for data collection. The students were asked to answer an open-ended question by categorizing themselves as either "Student A" or "Student B", and offer reasons for classifying themselves as such.

Student A: English is very important to me and I enjoy the English class. I really want to continue learning the language.

Student B: English is not important to me and I do not enjoy the class. If I had the opportunity I would want to stop learning the language.

By requesting that the students select among exemplars of the attitudes A and B that is most descriptive of them and give reasons for doing so, it is hoped that it would shed more light on the answers given by students in the questionnaire.

2.1.3 Method of Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 16.0 program was used to analyze the data. In analyzing the data, the researcher made use of the mean scores for individual variables and the overall mean scores were calculated for each of the scales. Frequencies, percentages and bar chart were also

used to analyze and present the findings of the study. All the questionnaire items were based on a 4-point Likert-type scale 1-4 (1=strongly disagree (SD), 2=disagree (D), 3=agree (A), 4=strongly agree (SA)).

3. Results

Here, the research questions were answered by using the questionnaires administered to the students. The analysis of the research question was based strictly on the data collected from the respondents. For ease of reference, the results are discussed according to the order of the research questions.

Research Question 1:

What is the attitude of students towards the learning of English language?

To answer this research question, mean response for the students responses on attitudes towards the learning of English scale of the questionnaire was used and the result is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Mean and Overall Mean Scores of Students' Attitudes towards the Learning of English Language

(*n*=587)

Item	Sgpz Mean Score	Ngpz Mean Score	
E: Attitudes towards Learning EL			
5	I really enjoy studying English language.	3.31	3.34
12	I will choose to learn English even if there were no exams.	3.26	3.28
19	If I had the choice I would give up learning English.	2.24	1.90
26	I study English because it is compulsory.	2.87	2.80
	<i>Mean Score (Sgpz & Ngpz)</i>	2.94	2.83
	<i>Overall Mean Score</i>	2.91	

In Table 1 above, four statements were used to elicit the attitudes of final year secondary school students towards the learning of English language in the southern geopolitical zone (Sgpz) and northern geopolitical zone (Ngpz). Looking at the mean scores, the attitude variables in items number 5 and 12 were the most positively responded to items, "I really enjoy studying English language" (Sgpz, 3.31; Ngpz, 3.34); "I will choose to learn English even if there were no exams" (Sgpz, 3.26; Ngpz, 3.28). These items seem to represent the informants' perception of the importance of English language. Of particular interest were the findings for items number 19 and 26. They show that 71% of the northern geopolitical zone respondents agree that giving the choice they would give up learning English as opposed to 39% of the southern geopolitical zone who shared the view Equally, 68.8%

(Sgpz) 61.4% (Ngpz) respondents study English because it is compulsory. With overall mean scores of 2.91, it can be safely concluded that the students' attitudes toward learning English is high.

Research Question 2:

Are students in the northern geopolitical zones less motivated than the students in the southern geopolitical zone because of their attitudes to the study of English language?

To answer this research question, mean response for the students' responses on motivation index scale of the questionnaire was used and the result is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Mean and Overall Mean Scores of Students' Motivation towards the Learning of English Language

(*n*=587)

Item	Sgpz Mean Score	Ngpz Mean Score
A: Motivation index		
1 English lessons are not interesting.	1.49	1.53
8 Learning English is a waste of time.	1.27	1.40
15 I really want to be able to speak English with confidence.	3.49	3.56
22 I study English regularly even when there is no specific English assignment.	3.17	3.16
<i>Mean Score (Sgpz & Ngpz)</i>	2.35	2.41
<i>Overall Mean Score</i>	2.41	

The students were asked to indicate on a four-point scale their motivation towards the learning of English language; the result revealed that motivation questionnaire items number 15 and 22 were the most positively responded to: "I really want to be able to speak English with confidence" (Sgpz, 3.49; Ngpz, 3.56); "I study English regularly even when there is no specific English assignment" (Sgpz, 3.17; Ngpz, 3.16). These items seem to represent the participants' perception that English is needed for their success in life. Even though the students desire to speak English very well and study English regularly when there is no specific English assignment, the lessons were found not to be interesting; as a higher percent of 92.3% and 91.7% respondents of the southern geopolitical zone and northern geopolitical zone respectively indicate this in their response. A closer look at the mean response of the individual items on the scale also showed that the least positively responded to items are item number 1 "English lessons are not interesting" (Sgpz, 1.49; Ngpz, 1.53); and item number 2 "Learning English is a waste of time" (Sgpz, 1.27; Ngpz, 1.40). As presented in Table 2, the overall mean score of 2.41 fall below the "ideal" average considered for this study which suggests that the SS3 students' motivation towards English language is negative.

Research Question 3:

How do students rate their confidence in the learning of English language?

To answer this research question, mean response for the students' responses on self-confidence scale of the questionnaire was used and the result is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Mean and Overall Mean Scores of Students' Rating of Self-Confidence

(n=587)

Item	Sgpz Mean Score	Ngpz Mean Score	
B: Self-Confidence			
2	Learning English language is easy for me.	3.19	3.05
9	Learning English language is a difficult task.	1.70	1.95
16	I am afraid other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	1.82	2.03
23	In English language class I can get so nervous I forget the things I know.	2.00	2.20
	<i>Mean Score (Sgpz & Ngpz)</i>	2.17	2.30
	<i>Overall Mean Score</i>	2.27	

With an overall mean score of 2.27, the confidence of SS3 in the northern geopolitical zone and southern geopolitical zone rates negative on the rating scale. When the respondents were asked to indicate whether they are afraid other students will laugh at them when they speak English, 78.6% of southern geopolitical zone respondents were in agreement with the variable, while 69.6% of northern geopolitical zone respondents shared the view. In fact, out of the four items on this scale, only item 2-“Learning English language is easy for me” rates very high (Sgpz, 3.19; Ngpz, 3.05). While the others items: 9-“Learning English language is a difficult task”; 16-“I am afraid other students will laugh at me when I speak English”; 23-“In English language class I can get so nervous (sic) I forget the things I know” rate low on the self-confidence scale. In fact, three out of the four self-confidence items were ranked at the bottom of the scale for self-confidence; this is an indication that students do not have confidence in themselves when they speak English language. In order to obtain proficiency in the learning of English language learners' must have a positive attitude toward the subject and have minimal anxiety.

Research Question 4:

What role do teachers play in students learning of English?

To answer this research question, mean response for the students on teacher influence scale of the questionnaire was used and the result is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Mean and Overall Mean Scores of Teacher Influence on Students Learning of English
(n=587)

Item	Sgpz Mean Score	Ngpz Mean Score	
F: Teacher Influence			
6	I wish I had a different teacher for English.	2.54	2.65
13	My English teacher encourages me to learn English.	3.19	3.38
20	I like English language because of my teacher's method of teaching.	2.88	3.12
27	I am happy with my English teacher.	3.25	3.30
	<i>Mean Score (Sgpz & Ngpz)</i>	2.96	3.11
	<i>Overall Mean Score</i>	3.01	

In Table 4, the informants were asked to indicate on a four-point scale how the teachers influence them in the learning of English language. The result revealed that even though, the teachers encourage them to learn English (item no. 13), they like their teacher's method of teaching (item no. 20), and they are happy with their English teacher (item no. 28); yet they wished they had a different teacher for English (item no. 6). In fact, 55% of southern geopolitical zone respondents agreed with item number 6, "I wish I had a different teacher for English"; while 57% of northern geopolitical zone expressed the same view. This perhaps may be because 1) teachers use unsuitable methods to teach the subject and, 2) they do not have a thorough grasp of the instructional content and procedure. With an overall mean score of 3.01 which is far above the "ideal" average considered for this study, the students can be considered to be strongly influenced by the teachers.

Research Question 5:

In what ways do parents of students influence their children positively towards learning of English language?

To answer this research question, mean response for the students' responses on parental influence scale of the questionnaire was used and the result is presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Mean and Overall Mean Scores of Parental Influence on Students*(n=587)*

Item	Sgpz Mean Score	Ngpz Mean Score
G: Parental Influence		
7 My parents think that learning English is not important.	2.51	2.54
14 My parents think English language will be useful to me.	3.42	3.43
21 My parents encourage me to learn English.	3.29	3.51
28 My parents try to help me with my English language.	3.22	3.48
<i>Mean Score (Sgpz & Ngpz)</i>	3.11	3.24
<i>Overall Mean Score</i>	3.17	

Table 5 above has been used to present the data on parental influence over the students in the learning of English language. When the mean scores of the items on the scale of parental influence on the final year secondary school students in Nigeria in the northern geopolitical zone and southern geopolitical zone were examined, the data showed that the students are strongly influenced by parents in three of the items measured with mean scores of above 3. The items least positively responded to is item number 7, “My parents think that learning English is not important” (Sgpz, 2.51; Ngpz, 2.54); though the mean score is still moderately high. With the overall mean score of 3.17, the respondents can be considered to be strongly influenced by their parents.

Table 6. The Response of Informants to Exemplars A and B

Exemplars	Sgpz	Ngpz
Exemplar A: English is very important to me and I enjoy English class. I really want to continue learning the language.	85%	59%
Exemplar B: English is not important to me and I do not enjoy the class; if I had the opportunity I would want to stop learning the language.	15%	41%

Table 6 above has been used to present the data on response of informants to exemplars A and B. The two exemplars are intended to provide additional information on the measures of attitudes and

motivation. It is interesting to find that more than 50% of the southern geopolitical zone and northern geopolitical zone respondents think that exemplar “A” best describe them, rather than “B”. The students’ reasons were analysed and coded to produce eleven distinct themes presented along with examples of respondents’ comments taken from the questionnaire. Table 7 below shows the eleven distinct themes.

Table 7. Reasons Given for Liking or Disliking English by SS3 Students in North West and South West Geopolitical Zones

(n=587)

	freq. (Sgpz)	freq. (Ngpz)
1. English is not enjoyable to learn	30	34
“I study English because it is compulsory”		
“I do not enjoy the class”		
“I am not really understand English very well”(sic)		
“If I had the choice I would give up learning English”		
“it is an(sic) official language”		
“I have no choice than to continue [learning English] because it is compulsory”		
“I will like to continue but I want to change my teacher”		
“the teachers should make it easy for us”		
2. English is enjoyable to learn	20	27
“I realy (sic) always enjoy English class”		
“I am happy with my English teacher”		
“I like English because of my teacher’s method of teaching”		
“I like how our teacher Mr. Lawal teaches us”		
“Anytime I am inside English class I feel Happy”		
3. English as a confident builder	29	32
“I want to be able to speak English with confidence”		
“It will make me speak better in the mise (sic) of my collice” (sic)		
“I will be able to talk in public without afraiding” (sic)		
“it make me feel good about myself”		
4. English enhances status	18	33
“I will have a specific status in the society”		
“Ability to speak English make people to respect you”		
“Because it will increase my status in the society”		

“if you can’t speak English in the society your esteem will low” (sic)		
“because it makes me to know better people” (sic)		
“it will make me have more respect the way I speak it”		
5. English is needed to travel	16	23
“because I wish to visit English countries”		
“To see what is happening in other countries”		
“I will learn about what is happening in other world”		
“English language allow (sic) you to travel to from country to countries”		
“I will be able to travel round the world”		
“it widens my horizonV (sic)		
6. English as a means of communication internationally	25	37
“without English language you won’t be able to interact with people”		
“English is an international language”		
“English helps me to get alone [along] easily”		
“because it is a universal language”		
“It will make me to talk with anyone”		
7. English is useful for academic purposes	28	40
“It will help me in higher institution”		
“English language is important to my education V		
“without English I cannot gain admission into universities” (sic)		
“I need English to pass my exam”		
“English is very important in my academy” (sic)		
“Without English Education is never complete”		
8. English is a means to career	19	35
“I would like to become English teacher”		
“I need English to work in a company”		
“because I need English for my future career”		
9. English helps one to meet foreigners	5	15
“I like to speak with English people”		
“I will like to know more about English people”		
“I like speak (sic) English so that I can meet people from other countries”		
10. English as way of identifying with the speakers	14	26
“it helps one to learn about cultures of other people”		
“because it makes me feel like white [British]”		
“I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of English group”		
11. English is useful to get a good job	25	39

“English help (sic) get better jobs”		
“without English language you can’t get a good job”		
“English will help me get a better job”		
“English makes you get vacancy without suffering” (sic)		
12. Others	5	11
“Because it is used in hip-hop music”		
“To develop my vocabulary”		
“Allah says where education is find it to know”		
	234	353
Total Respondents	587	

As can be seen from Table 7, some of the comments clearly show that the learners have the desire to continue learning English but for various reasons. Some of the reasons correspond to integrative orientation (e.g., items no. 3&10); instrumental orientation (e.g., items no. 4&11); and personal reasons; (e.g., “Because it is used in hip-hop music”; “To develop my vocabulary”). None, however, seems to relate directly to inherent interest (intrinsic orientation) in studying the language; in fact for some students the main reason why they are still studying English is because it is included in the curriculum, (e.g., “I have no choice than to continue [learning English] because it is compulsory” “If I had the choice I would give up learning English” (see Table 7)).

There were three other reasons inferred from the open-ended responses of the students in section B of the questionnaire which may have hindered the success of the SS3 students in learning English in the North West and South West geo-political zones. They are related to the major findings of the research. One of this was that the lessons were found not to be interesting—a situation which appears to indict the teachers’ teaching methods, styles and/or difficulty of tasks set for students. The second reason has to do with learners’ fear that peers might laugh at them when they speak English. Finally, personal reasons associated with difficulties with the subject (English) aspects such as vocabulary, structures and spelling were also found to be demotivating factors for the students.

4. Discussion

This study investigated whether it is the learners’ attitudes in the northern geopolitical zone of Nigeria which impede them from achieving a high level of proficiency in the study of English language as compared to that of their counterparts in the southern geopolitical zone using Gardner socio-educational model. The students’ responses from open-ended questions in the section B part of the questionnaire as shown in Table 7 were particularly useful as they served to buttress the findings. Where necessary, therefore, the discussions were supported by quotations from the students’ response to emphasize the importance of their contribution to the final results.

On Research Question 1, what is the attitude of SS3 students towards English language learning? Some interesting findings were obtained concerning the students' English language attitudes. Perhaps the most startling revelation for the researcher in this study was the clear evidence that students from the northern geopolitical zone when compared with their counterparts in the southern geopolitical zone of Nigeria generally have the same level of attitudes towards the study of English language. The significance of this finding becomes more apparent in the light of the earlier anecdotal evidence which seems to indicate that attitudes towards English by students in secondary schools in the southern geopolitical zone of Nigeria are generally positive while that of those in the northern geopolitical zones are negative. In fact, in two of the variables tested, item no. 5— "I really enjoy English language"; item no. 12—"I will choose to learn English even if there were no exams", students show a high percentage of overall agreement. This study could be said to establish that final year secondary schools students' in Nigeria generally have a high positive attitude towards English language.

Researchers have pointed out that attitudes play a major role in students' success in second language learning. If learners have a positive attitude towards a language and the culture of the people who speak the language; then there is the likelihood that they will have more confidence in learning target language (Gardner, 2001c). However, despite the fact that they exhibit high positive attitudes towards the study of English language these students failed to achieve success in English examinations conducted both internally and externally. A possible explanation would be that learners' positive attitude has not led to proficiency. This is consistent with the findings of Bello (2010). Bello asserts that it is possible for learners' to demonstrate high levels of positive attitudes toward the learning situation, but if these are not linked with motivation to learn the language, they will not be particularly related to achievement. In other words, an attitude is seen as support for motivation, but it is the motivation that is responsible for achievement in the second language.

Two possible reasons why the students in the northern geopolitical zone still study the English language as revealed in this study, were 1) it is part of the curriculum; and 2) it is a language of wider communication across national and cultural boundaries. These were corroborated by some of the responses in the open-ended section of the questionnaire: "I have no choice than to continue [learning the language] because it is compulsory"; "Because English is the lingua franca of the world" (see Table 7).

On Research Question 2, to what extent are SS3 students motivated to learn English language?

The data from the research into the students motivation showed that the students' desire to learn English language was strong as they want to be able to speak English very well and so was the effort they expended on the language because they study English regularly even when there was no specific English assignment; however, their attitudes toward learning English was not very positive (e.g., "I study English because it is compulsory"; "If I had the choice I would give up learning English"). The truly motivated individual according to Gardner (2001a) displays effort, desire, and affect [and] each

element, by itself, is seen as insufficient to reflect motivation. It can be safely inferred that the final year secondary school students in Nigeria were not motivated to learn English language.

Another reason the researcher could deduce from this finding was that the final year secondary school students in Nigeria appear to be motivated “from without” (extrinsic) and not “from within” (intrinsic). Noel et al. (2003) maintains that learners who are extrinsically motivated will have the incentive to continue engagement in the learning process but they are likely to quit at the first opportunity to do so. It was, therefore, not surprising to see the following response from students (e.g., “I study English because it is compulsory”; “If I had the choice I would give up learning English”).

On Research Question 3, what factors within the learner/social milieu (e.g., self-confidence, teacher, parent) hinder the effective learning of English?

The roles played by the teacher in the classroom would go a long way in motivating students to acquire English language. The result revealed that students are strongly influenced by the teachers in the northern and southern geopolitical zones. However, there is the need to point out the contradiction in the response given to the variables. Even though the teachers encouraged SS3 students to learn English, they like their teacher’s method of teaching, and they are happy with their English teacher; yet they did not find English lessons interesting. In fact, more than half of the population sampled in the northern and southern geopolitical zones expressed the view that they wished they had a different teacher for English language. This is somewhat a sad commentary. One probable interpretation for this contradiction might be 1) that the final year students in these zones do not want to be outrightly critical of their teachers, and 2) that this is a way of saying that the teachers are incompetent without being confrontational.

The situation, unfortunate as it is, reflects closely the attitudes of these final year secondary school students towards the learning environment in which teachers play prominent roles. Not surprising, this issue also came out in the response of the students to the open-ended questions in part B of the questionnaire: e.g., “English is enjoyable but my teachers [sic] do not make me have interest in it”; “I will like to continue [learning English] but I want to change my teacher because it [sic] is not too interesting”. All these appear to raise serious indictment on possibly, the teachers’ teaching methods, styles and or difficulty of tasks set for students.

The finding here is consistent with the findings of Ogar (2007) who argued that negative attitudes toward teachers could adversely affect student motivation not only in the classroom but also in terms of a student’s desire to continue learning the language; thereby suggesting that teachers’ role in motivating learners is important and crucial in determining success in English language.

Parental encouragement plays an important role in shaping the idea of the learners’ attitude towards the TL community. The research further revealed that parental influence on students in the North West and South West geopolitical zones is very high. The learner’s perception of their parents’ support is related to their willingness to continue language study and in their own assessment of how hard they work to learn the second language in the Northern and Southern geopolitical zone. As Gardner (1985, p. 122)

points out, it is "...one reason why some students reach a higher level of attainment in a foreign/second language learning". In this study, parents seem to be more involved in their children's education, e.g., "My parents is (sic) encouraging me".

This is consistent with a number of studies in the L2 field which have revealed that parental encouragement plays an important role in shaping the idea of the learners' attitude towards the TL community (Gardner, 1985; Gardner, Masgoret, & Tremblay, 1999; Babajide, 2001). A greater involvement is however canvassed for to foster more positive attitudes toward school and enhance academic achievement.

Language anxiety, as the research revealed, had a pervasive impact on the language learning experience of the students. As the result indicated, more than half of the final year secondary schools students were afraid that other students would laugh at them when they speak English, e.g., "I want to be able to talk in public without afraiding" (sic). Nigeria's language learning contexts appear to be particularly prone to anxiety arousal. Students anxiety may manifest in various ways, such as trying to avoid difficult linguistic structures and express difficult or personal messages in the English language, getting nervous in role-play activities, not volunteering answers and participating in oral activities, coming unprepared to class, avoiding speaking in English language class, being less willing to communicate and express themselves compared to more relaxed students.

The research revealed two possible explanations which may indicate why the SS3 students in Nigeria fail to succeed in the learning of English language were provided by the response to the section B part of the questionnaire. One possible explanation for the anxiety in language production might be that the students lacked the requisite language skills that would enable them to function effectively in their academic settings, e.g., "To develop my vocabulary". Finally, the anxiety in language production might be as a result of the students' desire to express themselves as native English speakers: "It will make me speak better in the mise [midst] of my collice" [colleague].

In Nigeria generally, the underlying classroom culture is that the teacher wields enormous control over the class and would not tolerate mistakes in English class. It is, therefore, not surprising to see students feel anxious, embarrassed when they make mistakes or when they are called upon to speak in front of their colleagues; the only option that they believed is opened to them is to "clam up"—an option that has dire consequences for their achieving competency in the language. This is because evidence in SLA research has shown that there is a definite link between degree of exposure to English and competence in the language. This feelings and symptoms of "uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry" similar to any other specific anxieties as established in other findings (e.g., Horwitz, E., Horwitz, M., & Cope, 1986) are similar to the ones found in this research. They indicate why the final year secondary school students in Nigeria fail to achieve proficiency in the learning of English language.

5. Implications for Practice

This study investigated whether it is the learners' attitudes in the northern geopolitical zone of Nigeria which impede them from achieving a high level of proficiency in the study of English language as compared to that of their counterparts in the geopolitical zone. Three questions, it would be remembered, were posed at the beginning of the study:

- What is the attitude of students towards the learning of English language in the southern and northern geopolitical zones?
- Are students in the northern geopolitical zone less motivated than the students in the southern geopolitical zone because of their attitudes to the study of English language?
- What factors within the learner/social milieu (e.g., self-confidence, teacher, parent) hinder the effective learning of English?

Contrary to the researcher's belief that attitude may have been responsible for students in the northern geopolitical zone inability to achieve higher levels of proficiency in English, the findings suggest that this is not so. In fact, northern geopolitical zone students appear to exhibit a high positive attitude to the study of English compared to their southern counterpart. They are equally motivated to learn the language as they want to be able to speak English very well; they also study English regularly even when there is no specific English assignment.

To the question, whether students in the northern geopolitical zone are less motivated than students in the southern geopolitical zone because of their attitudes to the study of English language; the answer would appear to be that the students in the northern geopolitical zone are no less motivated than their southern counterpart. Results from the survey data show that there is no marked significance on the variables used to operationalise the motivation index between students in these two zones; which seems to suggest that motivation is likely to be at par. Most theories suggest that students, who have a high degree of motivation (as displayed by the students in both zones) are successful learners; yet students in the northern geopolitical zone fail to achieve a high level of proficiency in the study of English compared to their counterpart in the southern geopolitical zone. Perhaps what this suggests is that learners' in the northern context are only motivated "from without" (extrinsic) and not "from within" (intrinsic). Noel et al. (2003, p. 39) maintains that learners who are extrinsically motivated will have "incentive to continue engagement in the learning process" but they are likely to quit at the first opportunity to do so. To achieve a high level of proficiency in the language therefore in this context, students need to be motivated "from within" (Deci, 1996; cited in Ushioda, 2003, p. 93).

Two other reasons are inferred from the research findings which may have hindered the success of learning English. One of this is that lessons are found not to be interesting—a situation which seems to indict the teachers' teaching methods, styles and/or difficulty of tasks set for students. It is also speculated that this lack of interest may have stemmed out of the fact that success in language learning in the context is defined by mastery of rules and forms in which students need to learn a great deal

about vocabulary, grammar, and sentence which make language learning uninteresting. The other reason has to do with learners' fear that peers might laugh at them when they speak English. One reason which the researcher thinks may have been responsible for this in the context is the underline classroom culture in which the teacher dominates and would not tolerate mistakes. It is, therefore, not surprising to see students feel nervous, anxious, embarrassed when they make mistakes or when they are called upon to speak in front of their colleagues. The only option they believed open to them is to "clam up"—an option that has dire consequences for their achieving competency in the language. The above findings no doubt present clear pedagogic implications for practice and they are stipulated below.

6. Implications for the Language Teacher

From the findings, the students were found not be motivated to learn English language. Equally, they complained that the lessons were not interesting. There is, therefore, a clear implication for teachers to consider what they can do to motivate students in the northern geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Firstly, the language learning process needs to be made a more motivating experience. In pursuance of this, teachers need to put a great deal of thought into developing programmes which maintain student interest; something akin to "programme of exposure" advocated by Chandrasegaran (1981, p. 64) (see also Norris-Holt, 2001; Ngeow, 1998). This can be achieved through activities in which language is used spontaneously to communicate ideas, feelings, and opinions or even through identification of informal out-of-class language learning experiences. All these may help to motivate students to improve their TL proficiency.

The use of interesting textbooks can also help to increase the motivation level of students in the classroom. Many Nigerian texts often contain materials which fail to capture the interest of students due to the heavy emphasis on vocabulary and grammar. Textbooks, which contain topics that can create a great deal of classroom interaction and help to motivate students to develop their language skills, are hereby advocated. Suitable soccer topics will no doubt make a classroom lively, active and fun because of the underlying familiarity of the learner to the issue since it constitutes his/her interest and experience. Songs, too, can be used in different ways to teach grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Studies in SLA have shown that students' motivation for learning a language increases when they see connections between what they do in the classroom and what they hope to do with the language in the future.

Bringing cultural content into the language classroom by teachers might equally prove useful in increasing the learners' motivation. This is because as Tremblay and Gardner (1995, p. 506) argue "an openness and positive regard for other groups and for groups that speak the language' serves as powerful influences on language learner motivation". In doing this, however, Sonaiya (2002, p. 114) cautious remark should guide the teachers:

The process [of bringing in cultural content] needs to be managed so that the learner does not feel that his or her culture and, consequently, his or her identity is being

overly threatened by the culture of the language being acquired (Sonaiya, 2002, p. 114).

Equally, if teachers at all times convey an enthusiasm that is contagious in the teaching of the language in this context, learner achievement may improve tremendously. One way through which teachers could achieve this is to take advantage of topics which can create a great deal of classroom interaction and help to motivate students to develop their language skills within and outside of school. Studies in SLA have shown that students' motivation for learning a language increases when they see connections between what they do in the classroom and what they hope to do with the language in the future. Finally, in the words of Oxford and Ehrman (1993) cited in Wu Man-Fat (2004), it is desirable that:

Teachers must do everything they can to heighten L2 learning motivation by ensuring that the materials and the tasks are communicative, non-threatening, exciting, relevant, appropriately challenging, capable of stimulating successful performance, and presented according to students' favoured need to help reverse any negative attitudes (e.g., stereotypes) that might harm student motivation (Oxford & Ehrman, 1993, p. 200).

7. Implications for the Students

First, students in northern geopolitical zones need to recognize that the demands that the language place on them is enormous. According to Gardner (2001c, p. 33), "they [students] need to acquire language content, skills, develop some degree of automaticity and fluency with their handling of the language; and ultimately, develop some degree of willingness to use the language outside of the classroom". These are no small set of requirements; as such, they must be ready to do all it takes to be proficient in the language.

One of the findings in this study was that language anxiety had a pervasive impact on the language learning experience of the students in spite of having affirmative attitudes towards English language learning. In order to overcome their causes of anxiety, the students need to know that the use of the target language plays a crucial role in successful second language learning. The consequence of this is that students in the northern geopolitical zone must be willing to take risks in the use of English language without being bothered by whether their peers would laugh at them or not. Conducive environment plays an important role in facilitating effectual language learning and moderates their disquiet levels (Kristmanson, 2000). In order to take risks, one needs an environment which is favorable and appreciative, where anxiety levels are low. Language communication is the ultimate aim for many students.

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