Bernstein's Deficit Hypothesis and the Nigerian Context[1]: A Survey of the Performance of Students in the English Language in their Senior School Certificate Examinations

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Abstract

The English language is the major medium of instruction in the Nigerian educational system. However, the teaching of the language as a subject in the country's educational system brings unequal access to knowledge across the various and varying social classes attested to in the country; a saddening picture that captures the arguments of Basil Bernstein on language and social class, code theory, which his critics have termed Deficit Hypothesis. In Nigeria, some children, by virtue of their parents' educational status, stand the chance of acquiring the mastery of the language better than their counterparts, especially as depicted in their performances in the language in the Senior School Certificate Examinations. This work therefore examines the influence of the educational status of parents on the performances of their children in the English language in their Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE), within the purview of Bernstein's position on language and social class.

Keywords: *English Language, parents' educational status, Bernstein's Deficit Hypothesis, students' performance, Nigeria*

Introduction

Basil Bernstein's code theory (Bernstein, 1962a, 1962b, 1973), which was later tagged Deficit hypothesis by his critics, claims that the speech of the lower class is more limited in its competence than the speech of the middle class. In other words, social class is an important factor that determines proficiency and competence in the use of a language. This therefore implies that the (social) class an individual belongs to in a society determines the extent of the individual's level of proficiency in the language used in the society. Bernstein opines that social structures shape differential modes of linguistic behaviour, and these modes, in turn, determine the regulation of cognitive and social development of children within these structures. Bernstein identifies two modes of speech: restricted and elaborated codes. According to him, the restricted code is peculiar to the lower or working

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class in the society. Linguistically, the restricted code demands only a minimum amount of planning by the speaker, because the expressions are chosen by the speaker from a relatively narrow set of possible conventional utterances. On the psychological level, the restricted code employs the use of implicit meaning because it relies on the social and physical contexts to supplement what is actually said.

However, the elaborated code is presumed to be a characteristic of the upper and middle classes. In this case, speech is used to express the speaker's idiosyncratic meaning rather than what the speaker has in common with the group. Since the meaning is individualised, it demands a good deal of planning, and the sequence of words and expressions is relatively unpredictable. The code tends to be explicit in spelling out the particular meaning intended. Therefore, what is said can usually be understood without reference to the non-verbal context. People from the middle and upper classes are believed to possess both the elaborated and restricted codes. Bernstein (1973) equally submits that the fact that the code is restricted does not mean a (lower-class) child at no time will use the elaborated speech variants; only that the use of such variants will be somewhat infrequent in the socialization of the child in his family. According to Halliday (1978), Bernstein's Deficit Hypothesis is a theory about society; how a society persists and changes. It is a theory of the nature and processes of cultural transmission, and of the essential part that is played by the language therein.

Following Littleton (2002), we can refer to code as used by Bernstein as a set of organizing principles behind the language employed by members of a social group. Bernstein's hypothesis claims that the speech of the lower class is more limited in its competence than the speech of the middle class. As an educator, Bernstein was interested in accounting for the relatively poor performance of working-class students in language-based objects, while they were competing favourably well with their middle-class counterparts in mathematics-related topics and subjects. Bernstein's Deficit Hypothesis, which is sometimes referred to as a theory of educational failure (Halliday, 1978), is a theory about how a society persists, and how it changes. It is a theory of the nature and processes of cultural transmission; and of the essential part that is played by the language therein. In his work, Bernstein differentiated between what he referred to as Elaborated and Restricted codes.

The Elaborated Code

Wardhaugh (1986) explains that the elaborated code employs accurate grammatical order and syntax to control what is said. He also argues that the code employs complex sentences, with the use of conjunction and

subordination. The code, according to Wardhaugh, also employs prepositions to show relationships of both a temporal and logical nature; depicts the use of pronouns; employs, with care, an extensive use of adjectives and adverbs. According to Bernstein (1973), the code mentioned above is peculiar to the middle-class. It is the pattern that gives access to education and career advancement. The lower working-class people and their children do not have access to this code since they are likely to have little experience with it. According to Bernstein's argument, children from the working class are likely to find themselves disadvantaged when they attend schools in which there is extensive use of the elaborated code.

The Restricted Code

In Bernstein's (1973) view, the restricted code is accessible to every speaker of a language. According to Wardhaugh (1986), the restricted code makes use of short, simple and often unfinished sentences of poor syntactic form; employs little subordination; tends toward a dislocated presentation of information; is rigid and limited in the use of adjectives and adverbs; makes infrequent use of personal pronoun subjects; confounds reasons and conclusions; makes frequent appeals to sympathetic circularity: for instance, you know, as in, etcetera; and uses idioms frequently. The restricted code allows strong bounds or solidarity between group members. Using the restricted code, speakers fall back on background knowledge and shared understanding in driving home their message. Below is the summary of Bernstein's description of the elaborated and restricted codes:

Table 1: Differences between the Elaborated and Restricted Codes

	Elaborated Code	Restricted Code
1)	A variety used by the upper middle-class of the society.	A variety employed by the lower working-class of the society
2)	Characterised by loose bonds (solidarity) among members	Exhibits strong bond; instilling as a sense of includedness among members grammatically and structurally poor
3)	Grammatically and structurally rich	Grammatically and structurally poor
4)	It is very explicit in meaning	A variety of implicit meaning disadvantaged in the academic environment
5)	Verbal elaboration for the expression of differentiated individualised experience condensation	Disadvantaged in the academic environment.
6)	Verbal elaboration for the	Condensation of meaning in stock

	Elaborated Code	Restricted Code
	expression of differentiated individualized experience	words, phrases or sentences structures
7)	Complex conceptual hierarchy	Confusion of the reason with the conclusion; use of devices of sympathetic circularity (tag questions "you know", etc) frequent use of idiomatic phrases, frequent use of short questions and commands.
8)	Use of complex sentences	Use of simple, short, unfinished sentences; frequent use of the active voice
9)	Discriminative selection of adjectives and adverbs	Rigid and limited in use of adjectives and adverbs.

Sources: Atkinson et al. (1982) and Nlem (2010).

One of Bernstein's findings is that working class children do not do well in school as middle-class children of the same intelligence.

The Impact of Bernstein's Deficit Hypothesis on Language Studies

Bernstein's Deficit Hypothesis has given birth to a number of investigations in Europe and the USA, and even in Africa where empirical works have been carried out to investigate its validity. As reported by Atkinson et al (1982) in an investigation carried out by Bernstein in 1962, the middle-class subjects used a higher proportion of subordination, complex verbal items, passive adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions and "egocentric" sequences, whereas the working class subjects showed a preference for "sociocentric sequences.

Susan et al (1980) lends credence to the position of Bernstein as explained above. In their article titled "Social Class Differences in Children's Comprehension of Adult Language", it was concluded, based on the result of their findings that the middle and upper-class mothers communicated better with children than mothers of the lowest social class did. The research involved 25 adult subjects who were mothers, five from each of the social class levels of Hollingshead's (1957) two-factor index of social position, namely upper, upper middle, lower middle, upper middle, and lower lower class. They were selected from a two-county area in Central North Carolina. All were whites, native speakers of English and had IQs above 75 on the Ammons Full-Range Picture Vocabulary Test. The child subjects were a hundred 6-year-old white males, whose families were of the two highest and two lowest Hollingshead social classes with 25 children from each of these four classes. They were selected from a three-county

area in central North Carolina. All were native speakers of English and had IQs of 85 or above on the Peaboy Picture Vocabulary Test. The result of the research work showed that the comprehension of children of lower-lower-class mothers was significantly inferior to the comprehension of lower-middle-class and upper-class mothers.

However, with the emergence of linguists like William Labov, a lot of controversies have come to enshroud the validity of Bernstein's Deficit Hypothesis. For instance, Labov (1968) argues that there is a misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the verbal capabilities of lower-class children. Equally, Labov (1972) argues that it was not obvious from the data Bernstein presented that there was a noticeable difference between the two kinds of speech Bernstein claimed to have observed, and worst still; there was no any qualitative difference that would culminate in cognitive and intellectual differences among children from the different classes observed. In his work, Labov was able to show that lower-class children speak a variety of English different from what is spoken by middle-class children. He argued that "lower-class children live in a verbally rich subculture, where the child is bathed in verbal stimulation and verbal contests from morning to night" (Labov et al. 1968 cf. Dittmar 1976:82). He further argued that lower-class children speak and hear well-formed sentences; there is no linguistic ground which prevents the children's logic capability for analysis being developed. In Labov's view, therefore, linguistic utterances must be observed in the speaker's social surrounding and in natural situations; they must be functionally connected with their communicative needs and their social actions. Similarly, Muvindi and Zuvalinyenga (2013) point out that, although the children of the working-class parents might have demonstrated lower degree of competence in English (their L2) relative to their counterparts from the middle-class parents, it does not imply that these children are not intelligent.

Bernstein's Deficit Hypothesis could be said to have drawn insights from the works of earlier scholars. Some of these works are Sapir (1929), which argues that the real world is built on the language of a group; Whorf's work (1956) which focuses on language relativity; and Schatzmann and Strauss' work (1955) which deals with restricted linguistic ability. Although these works serve as the foundation upon which Bernstein's Deficit Hypothesis is built, his work is a great improvement on them. For instance, Whorf's avowal that only linguistic behaviour conditions experience has been seriously critiqued by Bernstein on the basis that the grammar of a language alone cannot determine shape and experience, thoughts and ideas of the speakers of that language. Bernstein argues that social

structure conditions linguistic behaviour, while linguistic behaviour reproduces social structure.

Social Classes and the Nigerian Context

Kraus et al. (2013) submits that there are three broad traditional approaches to the study of social class. These are the labour perspective, the health psychology perspective and the culture perspective. The labour perspective on social class is predicated on Marx and Engels's (1848, 1973) analysis of capitalism and class conflict. Within this perspective, social classes are made up of labour relations between individuals who are in charge of the means of production (such as factories and businesses) and individuals working within those means. In this regard, vivid distinctions between the *bourgeoisie*, that is, the ruling class and the lower classes derive from these labour relations and from the prestige of the individual's occupation (Beeghley, 2004; Coleman & Rainwater, 1978; Gilbert, 2002; Hout, 2008; Thompson & Hickey, 2005). Different social institutions such as elite preparatory schools, social clubs, corporate boards, and access to political figures are variables that further widen the gap and reinforce the power and control of the ruling class over the lower classes in society (Domhoff, 1998).

The health psychology perspective on social class is predicated on the disparity in the health facilities that different individuals have access to in the society. For instance, it has been argued that lower-class individuals, by virtue of the limited access they have to health facilities, are more vulnerable to physical diseases and psychological hardships than their upper-class counterparts. Lower-class individuals are at greater risk of poor short- and long-term health outcomes compared to their upper-class counterparts (Adler et al., 1994; Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, & Prothrow-Stith, 1997; Wilkinson, 1999); tend to experience reduced subjective wellbeing (Diener & Suh, 1997; Howell & Howell, 2008); and tend to experience more intense and frequent negative mood states, such as dysphoric affect (Gallo & Matthews, 2003).

The third perspective, the social class as culture perspective, views social class as a form of culture, a set of shared social contexts that bring about class-specific repertoires of values and behavioural scripts (Bourdieu, 1979; Grossmann & Varnum, 2011; Kohn, 1969; Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Snibbe & Markus, 2005; Stephens et al., 2011, 2009; Stephens, Markus, & Townsend, 2007). Some of the works that accentuate this phenomenon are Elias (1978), which opines that individuals from different social classes are guided by different manners and rules of etiquette; Snibbe & Markus (2005), which opines that different classes express different aesthetic preferences for art and music; Bernstein (1971), which submits that

different social classes employ language in different ways; Kusserow (2004); Lareau (2003); Pearlin & Kohn (1966), which submit that different social classes use different parenting strategies; Monsivais & Drewnowsky (2009), which submits that different social classes eat and consume different foods.

Nigeria, like many other countries in the world, attests to the existence of social class in human society. However, defining the concept of social class in the Nigerian context is undoubtedly a great task. This is because social classes are not legally or religiously defined or sanctioned. In Nigeria, as in most societies, education, occupation and expended income are three visible factors together with some other behavioural characteristics employed in classifying individuals into particular classes or social groups (Fayeye, 1997). Ajayi (2013 & 2012), employing the phenomenon of education, identify three classes: the elite, the semi-elite, and the non-elite classes in Nigeria. Following Ajayi's classification, we recognize three classes of people in this research work – the elite, the semi-elite and the non-elite classes. The highest level of educational qualifications of the fathers of our subjects is the criterion employed to arrive at this classification. This we do, predicating the social status of their mothers on their fathers. In the Nigerian society, there are individuals who have high educational qualifications such as Higher National Diploma Certificate, university and post-university qualifications, whose children are assumed to have access to the facilities that could facilitate the learning and acquisition of the English language. These are tagged the elite class members in this study.

In the same vein, there are people who barely have post-secondary school educational qualifications like Ordinary National Diploma (OND), National Certificate in Education (NCE) and Monotechnic certificates who are assumed, by virtue of their qualifications, to have children who are limited in their access to the facilities that could aid the proper learning of English language. These are referred to as semi-elite in this work. Also, there are individuals who hold SSCE, JSCE and Elementary School certificates, or who have no certificate at all. These are believed to have minimum access to the English language as their counterparts. They are referred to as non-elite. We employed the father's educational qualification as the basis of our categorisation in this work because the Nigerian society is a highly patriarchal one, where the status of the father largely determines the social class a family is classified into. In other words, the educational status of the mother can oftentimes be inferred from that of the father.

The English Language in the Nigerian Educational System

The English language is one of the many languages in Nigeria. In fact, the prominence of the language in the country cannot be overemphasized, as the language remains a force to reckon with in virtually all important domains in the country. The English language operates in Nigeria as the official language, the restricted lingua franca (among the elite). As reported by Banjo (1982), the English language first came to Nigeria in the middle of the sixteenth century, imported by the English sailors who came to displace the Portuguese, who had, till that time, dominated trade on the west coast of Africa. This resulted in English-based pidgin which was the order of the day till the middle of the nineteenth century, when the institutional teaching of Standard English began in Nigerian.

Since its arrival in the country, the English language has continued to occupy a pre-eminent place in Nigerian educational system (Ajayi, 2012). English is used mostly as the medium of instruction at all levels of education; an apparent violation of the recommendation that English should be used in the last three years of primary school education, following the 1969 National Curriculum Conference, and as stipulated in the National Policy on Education of 1981. The English language holds sway in the nation's educational system in spite of the vehement argument of scholars such as Bamgbose, Akere and Awobuluyi in the Parliament in 1991 against the preponderant prominence given to the language in the nation's National Policy on Education (Olofin, 2012:135).

Even when the policy makes provisions for the use of the nation's indigenous languages, especially the three major ones (Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo), particularly at the elementary levels of education, the reality of the present situation reveals that much premium is placed by the government and the people of the country on the child's competence in the acquisition and mastery of the English language. Amazingly, many parents decidedly would send their wards to some acclaimed standard schools, with a view to making sure their wards acquire the English language, "even better than the native speakers of the language". Also, a credit-level pass in English at the O' Level examination is a minimum requirement for admission into most courses in the Nigerian universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and other post-secondary institutions of learning. Whereas, not so much premium or emphasis is placed on passing a Nigerian language as a prerequisite to securing admission into Nigerian tertiary institutions, except on a very rare occasion, when an individual applies to study Linguistics or a Nigerian language.

Failure to acquire competence in English, however, on the part of a Nigerian child, is like a bad omen, as far as the educational system of the

country is concerned. It therefore means such a child might have to let go of his dreams and aspirations of having formal post-secondary education, because until he or she passes the English language at the O' Level, there is no admission into a tertiary institution. In fact, it is now believed that to make headway in the Nigeria of today; one must have an "English head, mind, and heart".

Problems Associated with the Teaching of the English Language in Nigeria

The English language, being a second language in the country, has been faced with some challenges, especially as it relates to its use as a medium of instruction in schools, and as a subject. In line with this position, Mckay (1965) opines that learning a first language by a child is often problematic; and learning a second language is tantamount to fighting a battle. One of the many challenges, and perhaps the most challenging one, associated with the teaching of the English language in Nigeria is lack of competent teachers. It has been observed in some schools in the country that people who do not have any qualifications or related ones to teach the language have been saddled with the responsibility of teaching the language. This no doubt has posed a great challenge to proper mastery of the language by some learners, especially school students. This is very common in private schools in the country. A personal experience might be apt here. I once visited a secondary school in Ibadan, Nigeria which was in search of an English language teacher; and to my amazement, I saw, among the applications submitted, that of a graduate of Accounting. I was particularly struck when the proprietor of the school commented the applicant did very well in the recruitment test and could be given the job.

The large size of the class and its setting are other factors that constitute a stumbling block to the proper learning of the language in Nigeria. In line with this position, Adelabu (2006) quotes Orisawayi (1985) as saying that a large class is a constraint on the teacher's plan for the verbal performance of the learners. Imagine a situation where there are more than fifty students in a class, it would be difficult for any teacher to effectively follow up on the performance and development of the students. In such instances, it is only the students who are naturally bright, or have make-up classes or learning facilities at home that would not be affected negatively by this situation.

Another problem is linguistic interference. This is a common problem with second language learners. For instance, most students learning the English language as a second language are usually faced with the problem of transliteration; interference at the level of sound production. For instance, it is common to hear Yoruba speakers of English produce /d/ in place of /T/ in the language. Also, there is the problem of direct translation from mother tongue to the English language. Examples of such are "I will slap your face"

Mà á gbá ojú ẹ, "what is doing you?" *Kí ló ń se ẹ́?* among Yoruba speakers of the language, to mention but a few.

Methodology

In order to conduct an in-depth discussion of the subject matter of this paper, I combined tenets of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in data collection and analysis. The student participants whose SSCE results were considered in this work were selected first-year undergraduate students of the University of Ibadan, admitted during the 2010/2011 session. I had to limit myself to these sets of students in view of the difficulty I might have faced trying to get students/subjects to verify the information they would have supplied in response to the questionnaire distributed. Out of the over three hundred students among whom the questionnaires were distributed, one hundred and fifty-eight students were eventually used as participants in this study. These were those whose responses to the questionnaires distributed we considered suitable for this work. The questionnaires distributed among these students contained questions on the type of secondary school they attended and their grades in their Senior School Certificate Examinations, among others. Subjects were urged to write their names and departments on the copies of questionnaire distributed to them. Informal interviews in form of general conversations were initiated by the researcher to help gather information needed to validate the responses of the selected respondents to the questions asked in the questionnaires. This was considered imperative so as to be sure the respondents were sincere in their responses. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis, using frequency count and simple percentage.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Demographic Information of our Subjects

The following tables show the demographic information of our subjects (refer to our discussion on social class and the Nigerian context for our class classification, as used in this work).

Table 2: The Sex Distribution of our Respondents

SEX

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	MALE	84	53.2	53.2	53.2
	FEMALE	74	46.8	46.8	100.0
	Total	158	100.0	100.0	

The table above shows the statistical distribution of our subjects with respect to their sex. Out of 158 students whose responses were analysed in

this work, 84 were males, constituting 53% of the total number of the subjects, while the remaining 74 were females, constituting 46% of the total number. This distribution gives a fair representation of the two sexes examined in the work.

Table 3: Age of Respondents

AGE OF RESPONDENTS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-20YRS	115	72.8	72.8	72.8
	21-25YRS	43	27.2	27.2	100.0
	Total	158	100.0	100.0	

From this table, it is obvious that 115 (72.8%) out of our subjects were between the ages of 15 and 20, while 43 (27.2) were between the ages of 21 and 25. This further shows that majority of the 100 level students in the university in the stated session were between the ages of 15 and 20 (although this is not considered relevant to this study)

Table 4: Father's Highest Level of Qualification

FATHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ELITE	67	42.4	42.4	42.4
	SEMI-ELITE	37	23.4	23.4	65.8
	NON-ELITE	54	34.2	34.2	100.0
	Total	158	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4 above, 67 (42.4%) of our subjects were students from elite homes, 37 (23.4%) were from semi-elite parents, while 54 (34.2%) were from non-elite homes (based on our criterion for classification: fathers' academic qualifications).

Table 5: The Kind of Primary School Attended by Subjects

KIND OF PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDED

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	PUBLIC	22	13.9	13.9	13.9
	PRIVATE	136	86.1	86.1	100.0
	Total	158	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 shows the attitude of many parents towards Government-owned schools in the country. From the table, it is very clear that many parents would prefer to have their wards attend private schools, where it is

believed they can easily acquire the English language. 22 (13.9%) of our subjects attended public primary schools, while the remaining 136 (86.1%) attended private primary schools. This raises a serious question as to whether teachers in public primary schools are not as competent as their counterparts in private primary schools in the country.

Table 6: The kind of Secondary School Attended by the Subjects

KIND OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ATTENDED

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	PUBLIC	47	29.7	29.7	29.7
	PRIVATE	111	70.3	70.3	100.0
	Total	158	100.0	100.0	

The figures in this table are not very different from those in the previous one. The table shows how much patronage private schools enjoy from the citizens of the country, irrespective of their social classes. The table reveals that 47(29.7%) of our subjects attended public secondary schools, while 111(70.3%) attended private secondary schools.

Tables 6 and 7 below further show the distribution of our subjects according to the classes into which they are classified.

Table 7: Kind of Primary School, Class and Father's Qualification

KIND OF PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDED * FATHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION Crosstabulation

		FATHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION			
		ELITE	SEMI-ELITE	NON-ELITE	Total
	PUBLIC	17		5	22
		77.3%		22.7%	100.0%
	PRIVATE	50	37	49	136
		36.8%	27.2%	36.0%	100.0%
Total		67	37	54	158
		42.4%	23.4%	34.2%	100.0%

Table 8: Kind of Secondary School, Class and Father's Qualification

KIND OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ATTENDED * FATHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION Crosstabulation

		FATHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION			
		ELITE	SEMI-ELITE	NON-ELITE	Total
PUBLIC		10	28	9	47
		21.3%	59.6%	19.1%	100.0%
PRIVATE		57	9	45	111
		51.4%	8.1%	40.5%	100.0%
Total		67	37	54	158
		42.4%	23.4%	34.2%	100.0%

Table 9: Place of First Contact with English

RST CONTACT WITH ENGLISH * FATHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION Cros stabulatio

		FATHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION			
		ELITE	SEMI-ELITE	NON-ELITE	Total
HOME		53	32	37	122
		43.4%	26.2%	30.3%	100.0%
SCHOOL		14	5	17	36
		38.9%	13.9%	47.2%	100.0%
Total		67	37	54	158
		42.4%	23.4%	34.2%	100.0%

This table makes it possible for us to graphically appreciate the distribution of our subjects with respect to where they first had contact with the English language. As expected, a greater percentage of our subjects from elite homes had contact with the English language at home before starting school. 53 (43.4%) of our subjects from elite homes had had contact with the English language before school; it was just 14 (38.9%) of them that had their first contact with the English language in school. Equally from the table, we can observe that 32 (26.2%) of our subjects from semi-elite homes had contact with the English language at home before starting school, while 5 (13.9%) of them had their first contact with the English language in school. 37 (30.3%) of our subjects from non-elite homes had their first contact with the English language at home and 17 (47%) of them had their first contact with the language in school. From the table, it is crystal clear that the highest percentage of our subjects that had contact with English before school were from elite homes, while the highest percentage of our subjects who first had access to English in school were from non-elite homes.

Table 10: Subjects' Grades in SSCE

SSCE GRADE * FATHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION Cross tabulation

		FATHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION			
		ELITE	SEMI-ELITE	NON-ELITE	Total
	A1	1			1
		100.0%			100.0%
	B2	7			7
		100.0%			100.0%
	B3	34		18	52
		65.4%		34.6%	100.0%
	C4	12	12	11	35
		34.3%	34.3%	31.4%	100.0%
	C5	7	16	18	41
		17.1%	39.0%	43.9%	100.0%
	C6	5	7	7	19
		26.3%	36.8%	36.8%	100.0%
Total		66	35	54	155
		42.6%	22.6%	34.8%	100.0%

The picture painted in Table 10 gives us a clear picture of the grades of our subjects in the English language in their SSCE results. The only A1 (excellent) in the table was scored by a subject from an elite home. In the same vein, seven of the children from elite homes scored B2 (very good), which was exclusive to this class of children. Out of the 52 subjects that scored B3 (good), 34 were from elite homes while 18 were from non-elite homes. 12 subjects from elite homes had C4 (credit), the same number from semi-elite homes had the grade; while 11 from non-elite homes had the grade. 7 subjects from elite homes had C5 (credit), while 16 and 18 from semi-elite and non-elite homes respectively had the grade. Finally, it was observed from the table that 5 subjects from elite homes had C6 (credit), while 7, each from semi-elite and non-elite homes, had this grade. In actual fact, the SSCE results of our subjects can be said to justify Bernstein's argument about social class and performance in school, as our subjects from elite homes were the only ones that scored the two highest grades in the English language in their results. In other words, the distinction category in the table was dominated by children from elite homes. Similarly, a critical observation of the table shows that, very few of the children from the elite homes were found in the last credit (C6) category. As a matter of fact, this category was dominated by children from semi-elite and non-elite homes.

From the following, therefore, it is evident that children from the elite homes, by virtue of their background, have access to 'Standard' English

better than their counterparts from semi-elite and non-elite homes, as evident in their performances in their SSCE results. It is also obvious that the home plays a very vital role in the child's mastery of the English language in Nigeria. If this were not to be so, the much difference spotted in the performances of the categories of children identified in this work would not have existed. After all, the majority of them were products of private school educational system. This, one would expect, should have created an equal platform for them to learn the English language. Although some other factors such as attitude (towards language) and aptitude are vital to the learning of languages in general and second languages in particular, the home factor is very significant.

Observations, Conclusions and Recommendations

From the foregoing, the following are our observations, conclusions and recommendations:

1. Parents in Nigeria, irrespective of their educational qualifications, prefer to send their wards to private schools;
2. Many children now have access to the English language even before starting school (perhaps as a result of globalisation);
3. The table showing the SSCE grades of our subjects in English shows that children from elite homes have upper hands relative to their counterparts from semi-elite and non-elite homes at pre-tertiary institution level of education. This is in consonance with Bernstein's argument (1962a, 1962b, 1971 and 1973) on language and social class. This is where the attention of the English language teachers is highly needed. It is important for teachers to understand the fact that they are dealing with students and pupils from different social backgrounds or classes. Hence there is a need for them to handle their classes and teachings in such a way that children from English-deficient homes are taken care of. In other words, special attention should be given to such children in their teaching activities. If this is borne in mind and taken care of, perhaps the existing gap in the perfomance of students in their final year examination results (SSCE as shown above) would be bridged.
4. Also, proprietors of private schools in the country need to change their orientation on the assumption that just any "graduate" can teach the English language, as has been observed in the country. This is very important in view of the fact that many Nigerians, irrespective of their educational qualification status, want their wards to attend private schools. It will be an act of disservice to the children, the parents and the whole learning exercise in the country if incompetent individuals are saddled with the responsibility of handling the teaching of the language in schools.

5. Equally, perhaps the picture painted in the data presentation section of this work is an indictment of the government of the country at various levels on their attitude to funding education in the country. If things were "normal" in the government-owned schools, perhaps the rate at which parents and guardians crave for private school education in the country would not be this alarming (as shown in data presentation). Ironically, these private schools charge higher than their public counterparts, yet they keep having high patronage from people. The government needs to take the funding of education at this level as a matter of priority, and ensure competent teachers, and particularly the English language teachers are recruited in schools, since the country has resolved to make the language her official language. This is very necessary in the nation's bid to produce individuals, irrespective of their social background, who are equipped with the knowledge needed to particaipate in social, economic, industrial and political activities of the country, to mention a few.

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