
Variation in Nigerian undergraduate competence in English writing based on ethnic group

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate variation in Nigerian undergraduate students' competence in English writing based on their ethnic grouping. The study is guided by EAP and ethnolinguistic repertoire theories. It adopted a descriptive type of quantitative research design in the process of data collection using a stratified purposive sampling strategy. The samples include a total of 402 heterogeneous students (134 each from Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá ethnic groups). In essence, two research instruments were used in this study, including descriptive writing and an adapted rubric. A one-way ANOVA parametric test was carried out. The findings reveal a statistical level of variation across the three ethnic groups (N=402, F=21.89, df=2, p=.000). Thus, the results indicate that ethnicity plays a crucial role on the Nigerian student's competence in English writing. The pedagogical implication of this study suggests developing Nigerian undergraduate students' emotional, cognitive and behavioural dispositions and developing their mind settings (having a set of right attitude) to practice and learn English writing.

Keywords: Competence, Descriptive writing, English writing, Ethnic group, Second language

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1. Introduction

The principal concern of this study was to investigate variation in Nigerian undergraduate students' level of competence in English writing based on their ethnic groups. In essence, this study argues that the need for competence in English writing amongst students differs in terms of situational and contextual settings because students around the globe aim to attain competence in English writing not only for the function of gaining a degree but also for participation in social and institutional life (Akhter, 2022; Ajunge, 2020; Amri, 2017; Anyanwu, 2016; Akinyeye, 2015; Carter, 1997; Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Jones & Mixon, 2020; Kuhon, 2020). Competence in English writing shapes a student's ability to express grammatical patterns in the use of vocabulary (words), linguistic units (phrases, clauses and sentences) and mechanical structures, with spelling, paragraphing, punctuation marks and other forms of orthographic rules (Adebileje & Akinola, 2020; Maiyafe, 2018; Mee, 2014; Pape & Featherstone, 2006). Competence in English writing, once again, is aimed to get access to the transdisciplinary system in order to be part of integral acculturation, bilingualism and trans-cultural means of contact of globalised nations (Ogunjobi & Akindutire, 2020; Ogwudile, 2020; Opoola, 2020). What is even more striking is that writing has been argued to be the most difficult language skill mastered by students both in the first language (L1) and second language (L2) situations, because it is not naturally acquired, but rather competence in it is gained through practice (Coulmas, 2003; Grabe & Kaplan, 2014; Kamal, 2004; Mustapha, 2017). For these reasons, a competent piece of writing has to conform to the conventions of English syntax and usage (Chomsky, 1957), too. It has to contain ideas that both ground and situate

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maturity (Adamu, 2017), performance (Kuhon, 2020; Mee, 2014; Sa’ad & Usman, 2014), linguistic awareness (Bahr et al., 2020; Berutu et al., 2020; Muhammad, 2017b) and social communication (Anyanwu, 2016; Chika, 2016; Emeka-Nwobia, 2020; Jones & Mixon, 2020; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Lim, 2020). In this study, ethnic group represents the student’s cultural system of life (such as the political, the socio-economic, religion, norms and culture, mode of organization, among others), aesthetics, the pattern of language (at the MT or L1 level), and environment (such as geographic location) of a specific group of people that distinguish them from their neighbours. Ethnic group also expresses the student’s identity, experiences, social growth and cultural ethics. In this case, the Hausa, the Igbo and the Yorùbá are the major ethnic groups in Nigeria and distinct native languages, identities and social groups with different cultural ethics that are allowed to operate side-by-side with the English language in “administrative and classroom activities as approved by the Federal Government Decree of 1979” (Muhammad & Nair, 2015: 323). This rested on the fact that Nigeria as a country is estimated to have over “500 ethnic groups or rather national languages or MT” (Deuber, 2006: 262), so this makes it a densely complex multilingual country and of course, ethnicity is considered as a significant factor that might challenge the classroom and academic activities of Nigerian students. Thus, students’ ethnic group orientation is argued to exert variation in the case of the L2 writing process, as L2 students seem to “build from knowledge *implicitly* through exposure to texts, and also make *explicit* use of model texts to build knowledge of generic structure” (Ansarin & Rashidi, 2009: 55). However, very few studies were found to be interested in critically examining the role of ethnicity on the competence of Nigerian students in English writing in the broadest sense as situated in this study (Aor, 2021; Damkor & Terna, 2021). As a result, the research question that guided this study is presented below:

RQ-1. *Is there any significant level of variation in the overall mean scores for competence in Nigerian undergraduate English writing based on their ethnic groups?*

Given the descriptive nature of the research methodology adopted for this study, a null hypothesis is required as a guide for parametric tests being the “critical aspect of quantitative research that argues no significant relationship or (little) difference between variables” (Gay et al., 2012: 59). So, the null hypothesis (Ho1) used to test RQ-1 in this study states that:

Ho1. *There is no significant level of variation in the overall mean scores for competence in Nigerian undergraduate English writing based on their ethnic groups.*

So, looking at the research question and the null hypothesis presented above, we have to take into consideration that English has existed in Nigeria as a Second Language (L2) and as an official one. Moreover, it is used as a “medium of instruction in all learning subjects with the exceptions of Arabic, Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá” (Mustapha, 2017: 128).

2. Conceptualising competence in English writing

This study set to investigate Nigerian undergraduate student’s variation in English writing competence that characterises “mature writing and the external influences that determine their development” (Adamu, 2017: 79). The term “competence” has been expanded to incorporate components to meet the needs of students in the stage of L2 learning. In other words, an understanding of competence in English writing stems from arguments raised by scholars, including Hymes (1964), Chomsky (1965), Hymes (1980) Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Hymes (1994), Hedge (2000) and Celce-Murcia (2007), among others, in providing their ideas from a linguistic, pragmatic, discourse, communicative, metacognitive, sociolinguistic, strategic, socio-cultural, rhetorical, L2 acquisition, psycholinguistic, pedagogic and communicative language teaching (CLT) dimensions that span from the 1960s to the present day. Since then, there has been a growing interest by researchers in issues that concern competence as a powerful means for analysing and understanding student ability, performance, awareness and maturity not only in English oral forms but also in writing conventions or graphemes (Amri, 2017; Hymes, 1971). Thus, the evolution of the term “competence” as presented in Figure 1 below:

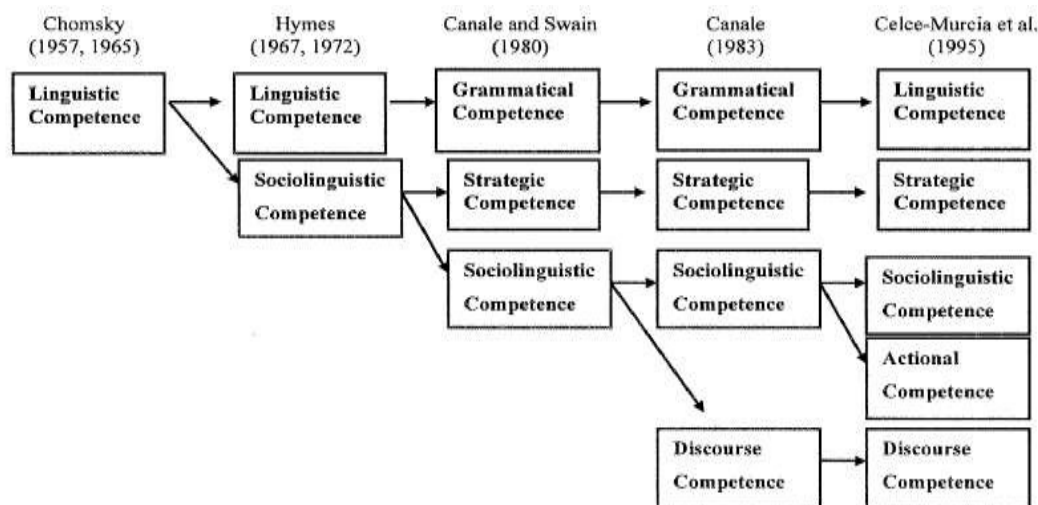


Figure 1: Chronological evolution of the term “competence” adopted from Bhattacharyya (2014: 83)

Figure 1 above suffices to say that despite the recognition of different forms of competence, there are limited studies on the construct of ethnic groups and L2 writing as used by undergraduate students in Nigerian settings. At the same time, a growing body of research suggests that competence in writing requires “background knowledge of what to write about, followed by knowledge of particular text that has a social function and patterns of organisation with a system of language, and known as discourse competence” (Aunurrahman et al., 2017: 72). Thus, in the context of this study, a student considered competent in English writing needs to exhibit knowledge of English syntax, appropriate use of language and mechanical structures required in writing (Hymes, 1980; Jones, et al 1999). However, studies have indicated that Nigerian L2 students lacked the required level of competence in English writing because findings from some existing studies reveal that students showed a low level of communicative ability to express their ideas fluently in English writing (Adebileje & Akinola, 2020; Akinyeye, 2015; Anyanwu, 2016; Kazeem & Suleiman, 2020; Maiyafe, 2018; Wayar & Saleh, 2016). Furthermore, some researchers voice their discontent over those students who have managed to proceed to universities in Nigeria and face great difficulty to “express their ideas, emotions and feelings fluently in English writing and consequently, graduate with mediocre classes of degrees” (Mustapha, 2017: 127-128). Mustapha further reveals the 2010 *Annual Report of the Kano Educational Resources Department* reported that:

After six years of in senior secondary school and given a paper that conformed to standard, many of the candidates still performs poorly, the candidates response to the questions shows that quite a number of them were not adequately exposed to writing skills (Mustapha, 2017: 129).

These challenges encountered by students writing in English, when given a global view are not centered on Nigerian students alone, but also existing studies have established that students in Ethiopia (Beleta & Kebede, 2022), Indonesia (Aunurrahman et al., 2017) and Malaysia (Mee, 2014) to mention some few countries, have been observed to encounter challenges writing in L2. Mee argued that:

The status of English is considered as an L2 in the country been the students are mostly biological origins of Malay, Indian and Chinese ethnic groups, however, they lacked proper competence in English and they failed to master the four basic language skills (including writing, reading, listening, and speaking). The students fare badly in English, due to poor vocabulary and lack of exposure in everyday communication. This has forced the government on a new policy that makes English mandatory pass subject at the university level (Mee, 2014: 31).

To be more specific, not just the students, it was further buttressed, even “researchers are influenced by their native language writing culture” (Ansarin & Rashidi, 2009: 52). Another fundamental worrying problem concerning Nigerian students’ competence in English writing has been their “dependence on teachers even at the higher level of education” (Mustapha, 2017: 128). Teachers have been doing their best, and students have to try their part. However, it has been observed that despite teaching grammar (syntax, morphology and semantics) to Nigerian students at “pre-university and degree levels so extensively, they are unable to produce grammatically correct sentences” (Mustapha, 2017: 128). Mee also stated that teachers “without a high command of English language has been facing difficulty in teaching English to young learners and as a result, the teaching of English language has turned out to be boring and uninteresting” (Mee, 2014: 31). In some instances, Nigerian students’ competence in English writing has been related to issues that concern language transfer, also known as the MT or L1 interference, where speakers or writers apply their L1 or MT to L2 learning. Basically, interference refers to ‘transfer’, which occurs as a result of MT influence when acquiring L2, is governed by the learner’s perception about what is transferable and their stage of development in L2 learning.

Moreover, it has been argued that a specific Nigerian undergraduate student’s ethnic group orientation often play a role in weakening their communicative competence in English. This is because for a student that belongs to the discourse community of the Hausa ethnic group uses L1 in the form of “interpersonal communication, trading communication, religious preaching, the social structure in which those who use the language enjoy privileges in local transaction” (Wayar & Saleh 2016: 45) and to some extent for instruction purposes more than English. Even so, Patrick et al. (2013) surveying the four (4) ethnic groups of the Hausa, the Igbo, the Tiv and the Yorùbá stressed the theoretical interference of the MT on the English pronunciation of senior primary school pupils in Nigeria. The findings revealed that the ethnic groups have the categorical passive inference of bilabial plosive voiced and voiceless alveolar plosive and short vowels of English sounds. The Hausa ethnic group replaced /p/ with the /f/ sound; /v/ is replaced with /b/. The Igbo ethnic group replaced /e/ with /i/; fricative voiceless /o/ with alveolar voiceless /t/. Then, the Yorùbá ethnic group replaced /c/ with /sh/ and /z/ with /s/. Then, the Tiv ethnic group replaced lateral /l/ with retroflex /r/. Therefore, they recommend that English teachers pay more attention to handling the Nigerian learner's way to develop such ESL skills. So, in the long run, the turning point for this study is based on the mainstream EAP theory and that of ethnolinguistic repertoire. The EAP theory is situated on the front line of the inventive practice of teaching and learning in L2 situations, which oversees issues relating to proficiency, tests, performances, competencies and the target language use in writing utilising the cognitive, behaviourist, and linguistic orientations to the concepts of language learning and teaching (Flowerdew, 2005; Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Hyland, 2003; Ibbotson, 2013; Jordan, 2002). To further highlight the significance of the EAP theory, Besnesch (2008: 11) outlined the seven steps that pay more attention to assessing ESL/EFL learners’ needs in language pedagogy, including:

- (a) Specifying the learners’
- (b) Analysing their needs
- (c) Specifying their enabling objection
- (d) Identifying their selective or evolving learning materials

- (e) Identifying their needs for appropriate teaching strategies
- (f) Exploring their learning activities
- (g) Evaluating their needs through revision and provision of feedback on the learner's situational needs.

Primarily, the EAP theory is considered one of the most prominent and active English language learning and teaching theory with its focal target and influence to “help students perform well in their academic course, particularly English language learning” (Benesch 2008: xvi). On the other hand, the ethnolinguistic repertoire theory is defined “as a fluid set of linguistic resources that members of an ethnic group may use variably as they index their ethnic identities. This construct shifts the analytic focus from ethnic ‘language varieties’ to individuals, ethnic groups, and their distinctive linguistic features” (Benor, 2010: 159). The theory is influenced by constructivist work in “sociocultural linguistics” and solves five theoretical problems with the notion of ‘ethnic language variety’ as a bounded entity:

- (a) Intra-group variation.
- (b) Intra-speaker variation.
- (c) Out-group use.
- (d) Delineating the ethnic group.
- (e) Delineating ‘ethnolect’.

Benor (2010) further stresses that the ethnolinguistic theory addresses problems by first examining an ethnic group's distinctive language use for a better understanding of the group's activities, ideologies, allegiances, contacts with other groups, boundaries between insiders and outsiders and, especially, variation within the group. Second, the theory enables a comparison across ethnic groups in terms of their level of language use, whereas focusing on the individual does not. The theory identifies reasons why some groups may have more distinctive repertoires than others; it looks into residential separation as possible explanations, thereby considering the educational and economic implications of different ethnolinguistic repertoires being evaluated differently. Also, it explores how a “group's repertoire crystallizes, often after migration or colonization; how features are added to and removed; how (if) people who use the repertoire come to be seen as speakers of a dialect; and how a repertoire changes as its speakers integrate into other groups” (Benor, 2010: 161).

3. Research methodology

This study was carried out to examine the role of ethnicity on Nigerian undergraduate competence in English writing and adopted a descriptive type of quantitative research design via a parametric test (Dörnyei, 2011; Johnson, 2013). The parametric test provided us with the inferential statistics that best explains the student's statistical level of significant difference to test their level of competence in English writing. In the case of a sampling strategy, a stratified purposive sampling technique was used to attain four hundred and two (402) samples of students at the undergraduate level from Bayero University, Kano (BUK). That is, 134 samples of heterogenous students each from Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá ethnic groups attained across the university levels (Level 100-400) during the 2014/2015 academic session. BUK is a public university located in Kano state – a state in northern Nigeria, and is one of the most prolific second public universities in the western northern region of the country. BUK was first established from “Abdullahi Bayero College (ABC), a reputable college in northern Nigeria that was founded in 1977 and was upgraded to a fully-fledged university backed by the promulgation decree no 79 of 1979 in the year 1984” (Aliyu et al., 2015: 2). In conformity with Nigerian Federal Government initiatives, BUK was built up as one of the zeniths of learning, which have the momentum to provide the fountain of L2 and MT knowledge. BUK goes by the Curricular of British System (CBS), which stresses on “classical humanism, reconstruction of scientific and vocational system with special focus placed on the acquisition of writing competence” (Kamal, 2004: 8). BUK is known for its reputation of providing the best quality of tertiary education “making it a world-class citadel of learning through service to the society and humanities at large” (Aliyu, 2015: 1).

Two (02) research instruments guided this study; descriptive writing and an adapted rubric. The first one, descriptive writing – is a type of essay writing task or composition or a genre that consists of a question to paint an image that is vivid and moving in the mind of the reader about their university (Ajunge, 2020; Amri, 2017; Berutu et al., 2020). The students were asked to describe their university in terms of its roads, buildings, trees and other forms of visible environmental serene. Beside that, the purpose of the writing task was to gather their background information and seek out details that involve their complex cognitive activities of symbolic conditions based on a logical and rational appeal that is a recursive, creative, and generative process that could also be regarded as a matter of their level of sentence arrangement, awareness to vocabulary, paragraphing, capitalization and other forms of writing skills are portrayed (Aunurrahman et al., 2017; Ramadian et al., 2019). The writing task required about ninety minutes (90 minutes) to complete. Before the writing task, the students were told that their participation was voluntary and their writing samples remained private and confidential. Beside that, they were grouped in a one-thousand-seated theatre and the researcher stayed in with the help of six research assistants throughout the writing task to ensure that they did not face any difficulties. Moreover, the students were asked to be honest in the writing tasks, so they were monitored closely and were not allowed to use any form of reference materials, such as their smartphones, dictionaries, and so on.

The second instrument used in this study is the adopted rubric that entails ten (10) features of English writing skills. The rubric was adapted from Muhammad (2017a) and ascribes key grids, which enable holistic and analytic evaluation of English writing. The repertoires considered in the adapted rubric include strategies of writing an introduction, cohesion and coherence, descriptive word, figurative language, grammatical function, mechanical structure, parts-of-speech, sentence structure, vocabulary and conclusion. In this way, the adapted rubric gives raters an analytic grading for a holistic rating measure of the L2 writing repertoires to generate statistical scores. To sustain the validity of the research instruments, an inter-rater reliability test was carried out and the findings indicated high inter-rater reliability

between two raters (lecturers), with a significant Pearson correlation of $r=.901$, $p=0.01$. The reliability test indicates that the adapted rubric is highly reliable, the essay question clear and easily understood by the participants and can be used positively (Lazaraton, 2000; Schneider & Grigonyte, 2016; Tavakoli, 2012). The grouped frequency of the 402 samples of descriptive writing that reflects the student’s overall scores are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Grouped frequency of the students score

Scores	Grades	Attainments	Percentage%
30-40	A	5 students	1.24 %
26-29	B	31 students	7.71 %
25-20	C	156 students	38.81 %
15-19	D	127 students	31.59 %
10-14	F	83 students	20.65 %
Cumulatively		402 students	100%

Table 1 reveals that only 5 students (1.24%) achieve a score of 31-40 marks; 31 (7.71%) scored 26-29 marks; 156 (38.81%) averagely scored 25-20 marks; 127 (31.59%) managed 15-19 marks and 83 (20.65%) scored 10-14 marks. These scores were coded in the SPSS spreadsheet measured in the form of Hausa (1), Igbo (2) and Yorùbá (3), as the “categorical, continuous, nominal scores or distribution” (Creswell, 2014, p. 129-130). Largely, analysis of variance of one-way ANOVA is a “parametric test of significance used to determine whether a significant difference exists between two or more means at a selected probability level” (Gay et al., 2012: 359). Thus, the one-way ANOVA was utilised in this study in generalising their overall mean scores of English writing based on ethnic group.

4. Ethnic group variation in English writing

As stated earlier, in this study for writing to be termed “competent”, a student must be able to shape and express grammatical patterns, such as the use of vocabulary (words), linguistic units (in the forms of phrases and clauses as well as sentences) and mechanical structures (including use of spelling, paragraphing, punctuation marks and other forms of orthographic rules) in writing. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the level of significant variation in the overall mean scores for competence in the Nigerian undergraduate student’s English writing based on their ethnic groups (Khany & Tazik, 2018; Lindstromberg, 2016; Scholfield, 1991). Considering Research Question-1 and the Null-Ho1 test, the statistics of the student’s overall mean scores for competence in English writing according to ethnic groups are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: The Mean statistics of the overall score according to their ethnic groups

Ethnic Groups	N	Mean	SD	SD Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Mini.	Maxi.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Hausa	134	20.14	4.04	.349	19.45	20.84	10	32
Yorùbá	134	17.54	4.63	.400	16.75	18.33	10	30
Igbo	134	16.78	4.39	.379	16.03	17.53	10	31

Level of significance is at $p<0.05$

Table 2 above shows that the sample consists of three major groups, including the Hausa=134, the Igbo=134 and the Yorùbá=134. The findings for the overall mean scores reveal that the students belonging to the Hausa ethnic group achieved the highest mean scores (Mean=20.14, SD=4.04). They are followed by the Yorùbá group (Mean=17.54, SD=4.63), and the lowest overall mean scores is attained by students belonging to the Igbo ethnic group (Mean=16.78, SD=4.39). These findings are parallel to Muhammad (2020), who found that Nigerian undergraduate students belonging to the Igbo ethnic group showed a very low level of competence in English writing, as they achieved the lowest overall mean scores and committed a high rate of language errors in processing grammatical functions (in the use of tenses, articles, subject-verb agreements, adjuncts and aspectual forms in the formation of clauses), sentence structure (in the textual precision of simple, compound, complex, compound-complex and semantic rules of clauses) and mechanical accuracy (in case of punctuation marks, spellings and capitalisation systems of acronyms, personal nouns and abbreviations). He cited an example with linguistic attributes of the Igbo language does not have a zero morpheme as those of English and this adds to their challenge when it comes to competence in English writing. He further buttressed that the “use of English in Nigeria has been extended to regional levels, such as Hausa-English, Igbo-English, Yorùbá-English, Pidgin-English, Nigerian-English, and so on” (Muhammad, 2020: 46). This, makes the construct of competence in English writing challenging to Nigerian L2 students.

The one-way ANOVA level of significant variation for competence in English writing in the overall mean scores is presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3: The one-way ANOVA test comparing the overall mean scores variation

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	834.84	2	417.42	21.89	.000
Within Groups	7606.97	399	19.06		
Total	8441.81	401			

Level of significance is at $p<0.05$

The results of the one-way ANOVA test in Table 3 shows a statistically significant difference in the overall mean scores for competence in English writing (N=402, F=21.89, df=2, $p=.000$). So, the results have rejected the null

hypothesis Ho1 and th answered Research Question-1. These results are parallel to Oniemayin (2009), who argued that the students belonging to the Hausa ethnic groups are subjected to qualitative training that originate right from the time of British colonies. She buttressed that the Hausa ethnic group did not openly welcome British rule. Therefore, the British had to adopt indirect rule in that region, with a lesser option than to provide qualitative and well furnished western schools in order to derive their attention. Moreover, the one-way ANOVA test was further supported by the Tukey HSD test presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4: The Tukey HSD statistics of the overall scores across their ethnic groups

(I) Ethnic	(J) Ethnic	Mean Diff.	SD Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Hausa	Igbo	3.37*	.533	.000	2.11	4.62
	Yorùbá	2.60*	.533	.000	1.35	3.86
Igbo	Hausa	-3.37	.533	.000	-4.62	-2.11
	Yorùbá	-.761	.533	.328	-2.02	.497
Yoruba	Hausa	-2.60	.533	.000	-3.86	-1.35
	Igbo	.761	.533	.328	-.493	2.02

Level of significance is at $p < 0.05$

Table 4 derived multiple statistical results from the Tukey HSD. It indicates that the undergraduate students belonging to the Hausa ethnic group attain higher mean scores than those students belonging to the Igbo ethnic group (Mean difference=3.37, Standard Error=.53, $p=.000$) and the difference is significant. The Hausa ethnic group also performed significantly higher than Yorùbá students (Mean difference=-761, Standard Error=.533, $p=.33$). The Igbo ethnic group scored a significantly lower mean than the Hausa students at a very statistically significant level (Mean difference=-3.37, Standard Error=.53, $p=.000$). The mean score of the Igbo is also lower than the Yorùbá (Mean difference=-7.61, Standard Error=.53, $p=.33$) but the difference is not significant. On the other hand, the Yorùbá scored significantly lower than the Hausa students in the overall descriptive writing (Mean difference=-2.60, Standard Error=.53, $p=.000$). The Yorùbá students performed better than the Igbo students in their overall descriptive ESL writing skills (Mean difference=.76, Standard Error=.53, $p=.33$) but the difference is not significant. Figure 2 systemises these results by giving a pictographic view as presented underneath:

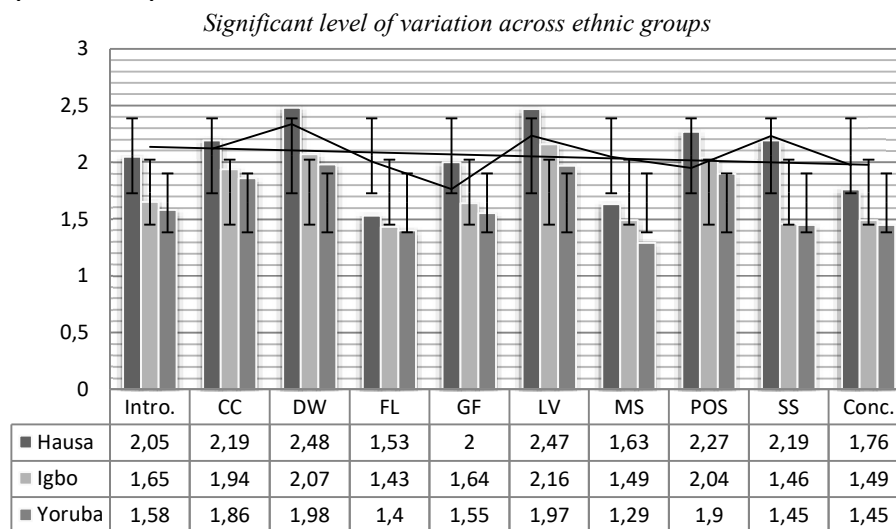


Figure 2: The Nigerian undergraduate student’s overall mean scores in descriptive writing across the ethnic groups

Basically, Figure 2 signifies that Nigerian undergraduate from the Hausa ethnic group attain an overall high mean scores of the writing repertoires adapted from the rubrics. More specifically, Figure 2 highlights that the students belonging to the Hausa group were more competent in the repertoires of introduction (Hausa=2.05, Igbo=1.65 and Yorùbá=1.58), cohesion and coherence (Hausa=2.19, Igbo=1.94 and Yorùbá=1.86), descriptive words (Hausa=2.48, Igbo=2.07 and Yorùbá=1.98), figurative language (Hausa=1.53, Igbo=1.43 and Yorùbá=1.40), grammatical function (Hausa=2.00, Igbo=1.64 and Yorùbá=1.55), lexis-vocabulary (Hausa=2.47, Igbo=2.16 and Yorùbá= 1.97), mechanical structures (Hausa=1.63, Igbo=1.49 and Yorùbá=1.29), parts-of-speech (Hausa= 2.27, Igbo=2.04 and Yorùbá=1.90), sentence structures (Hausa=2.19, Igbo=1.46 and Yorùbá=1.45) and conclusion (Hausa=1.76, Igbo=1.49 and Yorùbá=1.45). Findings of the RQ-1 and the results of the Ho1 test showed a statistical level of variation in the English writing of the Nigerian undergraduate students belonging to the three ethnic groups and the results indicated that ethnicity plays a crucial role in their level of competence in English writing.

Basically, scholars assert that one kind of variation noticed in early human history in sociolinguistics, is the way people differ in their writing, which relatively depends on where they come from, and where they belong to in their society” (Stoikov, 2020). So, in the case of variation, the results of the one-way ANOVA test and the Tukey HSD Post-Hoc test in this study showed Nigerian students belonging to the Hausa ethnic group achieving an overall high mean scores, followed by those of Yorùbá and Igbo ethnic groups. These findings failed to agree with a number of existing

study findings that identified that students belonging to the Yorùbá ethnic group achieved high mean scores than the students belonging to the Hausa and Igbo ethnic groups. Specifically, it has been mentioned that students belonging to the Yorùbá ethnic group are more academically inclined and have developed their learning system through which a student is “shaped beyond examination status, but to the end product, that is, to administrative achievement” (Muhammad & Nair, 2015: 327).

4.1. Contributions of the study

The findings identified in this study contribute significantly to the methodology, theory and pedagogical practices that have led to the need for quality classroom instruction in English writing in Nigeria. Mainly, the methodology adopted in this study made a significant contribution to the existing literature in descriptive research design by way of inferential statistics to carry out a one-way ANOVA analysis to study variation in English writing of students. Thus, it contributes to testing the statistical level of variation for a synchronic descriptive linguistic analysis. The theoretical contribution of this study gave us an overview of how the variation of ethnic groups influences the competence of students. It also contributes in highlighting how the EAP theory and the ethnolinguistic repertoire, theory provided us with a pervasive need for effective counselling and creating strategies for developing Nigerian students’ competence in English writing. In other words, this study has contributed to our understanding that the analysis of variation in English writing as an L2 activity in Nigeria has a special focal point in relating language use and its major concerns is to descriptively address sociolinguistic patterns of social variables, such as ethnicity, gender, educational status, class, race, age, learning styles and region (geographic locations, rural or urban areas), among others in L2 situations. Therefore, the results identified in this study have practically contributed in strengthening sociolinguistic views that competence in L2 situation is influenced by the ethnic group background of the students.

4.2. Implications of the study

The pedagogical and practical implications of this study suggest that one of the best possible ways to improve Nigerian undergraduate student’s competence in English writing is by allowing the students to:

Acquiring a set of right attitude (i.e., developing a student’s emotional, cognitive, and behavioural disposition to practice and learning), and developing their mind settings in order to produce optimistic and challenging students in learning the target language. Basically, with positive attitude and mindset rightly fixed, formal learning in class will be much easier, enjoyable and livelier. At the end students will gain lots of benefit in learning the language and realise the importance of the language learned in real life context (Mee, 2014: 32)

In this manner, instructors, teachers, lecturers, parents and even the society, in general, are required to advise, guide, monitor and counsel Nigerian undergraduate students on the need for competence in English writing as an L2 activity. Potentially, this may be achieved through coordinating voluntary cooperative lessons, engaging in Student Team Achievements Division (STAD) and any other type of enhanced strategies for pedagogical input in order to create conducive avenues that would improve the competence of the students in English writing. Moreover, the pedagogical implication of this study suggest that the students should engage on cognitive learning strategies, such as personal practice, collaborative, constructivist, socio-constructivists, meta-cognitive, socio-cognitive, cooperative and implicit-task schemes in order to retain their competence in English writing through learning and practice.

4.3. Recommendations of the study

This study is expected to be useful to the UNESCO, Federal Ministry of Education (FME), National Universities Commission (NUC), Nigerian Education Resource and Development Council (NERDC), Universal Basic Education (UBE), National Association of Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP), National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NCMLA & NE) and the General Studies Unit (GSU), among others. In the process of language policy and implementation, Nigeria should formulate strategic rules that mandate each and every average Nigerian undergraduate to partake in academic writing clubs. This can be effortlessly encouraged by strategising each and every academic department in the university to formulate coordinators that control, sort out, instruct, expose and structure the Nigerian students English writing in accordance with his or her area of specialisation. In that capacity, international boards in the semblance of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) boards, to mention but a few, obviously seem to forget about Nigerian undergraduates thirst for strategic development and for funding opportunities that will strengthen their discourse competence in ESL writing skills. In most cases, these boards are mostly engrossed with solving epidemic issues in the country. Basically, the funding from these boards should be targeted to aid helpful situations to the necessary basic literacy skills (towards developing the competence of Nigerian undergraduate students in writing, reading, speaking and listening). It can be in the provision of learning amenities, strategic structures, organising workshops to both instructors and students, providing scholarships to students and their instructors, among others, for an effective learning and development of student’s competence.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of ethnicity in improving competence in English writing by Nigerian undergraduates. In this study, issues relating to L2 acquisition, L2 learning, L2 writing, language competence and performance, ethnolinguistics and pedagogy remain critical. Thus, part of the limitations of this study is that it

could only adopt the descriptive research design in the process of data collection and analysis. Future studies should focus on exploratory and convergent designs of mixed-method research to investigate English writings by Nigerian undergraduate students. In the event of data analysis, we could only employ a one-way ANOVA test for quantitative analysis, thereby reporting the descriptive statistics, statistical level of variation and the Tukey HSD post hoc multiple comparison test of variation. This relates to Lindstromberg (2016) who argued that the mean-based parametric tests, such as ANOVA, correlation coefficient, t-test, MANOVA, chi-square, post hoc multiple comparisons, ANCOVA, were among the most frequently used statistical techniques in English pedagogical research and classroom activities. Other statistical approaches rely heavily on non-parametric tests, such as Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks, which have been in widespread practice for several generations. However, Factor analysis, multiple regression, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), MANCOVA, regression analysis, Kruskal-Wallis test, discriminant analysis, log-linear analysis and path analysis have received less attention in English pedagogy. So, future studies should use other forms of the parametric test, as suggested, to examine Nigerian students' writings. Despite these limitations, this study has contributed to specifying the academic issues relating to L2 acquisition and learning, English language usage in Nigeria, competence, and performance, ethnolinguistics and the pedagogic issues that remain critical in the Nigerian academic setting.

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Bayero University Kano is set along Awanzo road. If you start walking from (Kofar Kabusa) go on straightly off to (Bakar Lamba). Beside you right hand there's short long fence starts from (Bakar Lamba) when you reached bus stop you can see L's gate know as entrance and exit gate L's main gate. It has Brown colour paint.

If you entered it you can see many things starts from University mini stadium, sport complex, new juma'at mosque, garden off to new senate buildings. It contains many faculties such as Earth & Environmental Sciences, Engineering, Education, E.T.C.

Bayero University is a only federal University at Kano State that is killy to be good University in my society. From senate building B.U.K starts with bookshop, faculty of art & Islamic study, library, from right side there's vie mosques, Musa Abdullahi Auditorium, Department of Economics, on left hand site of Economics department there's ends of faculty of art & Islamic study, at there there's many class rooms, theatres. Among these theatres there's AAF which GSP1401 taking place and home test of GSP1401^{also} taking place about Bayero University, Kano description.

Behind faculty of art & Islamic study there's long way which can reached you to microfinance bank, further more faculty of agriculture, Students affairs & faculty of computer. On behind of faculty of agriculture there's a good one faculty known as faculty of Earth & Environmental Sciences which contain many Department such as Quantile Surveying, URP, Geography etc