

Effects of Functional-Notional Approach on Senior Secondary School Students' Achievement in English Grammar in Enugu Education Zone

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of Functional-Notional Approach (FNA) on male and female students' achievement in English grammar in Enugu Education Zone. The researchers adopted a quasi-experimental research design. This study was carried out in secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone. The population of the study was four thousand and ninety (4,090) senior secondary school II (SS II) students in the 31 public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State 2019/2020 academic session. The sample for the study comprised one hundred and thirty three (133) SS11 students in four intact classes which were drawn from four co-educational secondary schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to sample the size of the study. The instrument used was English Grammar Achievement Test (EGAT), it is a 50-item dichotomously scored instrument and it was validated. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was conducted with 30 SS11 students outside the area of the study, using Kuder-Richardson's Formula ($K - R 20$), for EGAT a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was got showing that the instrument was reliable. The research questions were answered using mean scores and standard deviation, while the hypothesis was tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The results indicated that FNA had significant effect on male and female students' achievement in English grammar. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the study provided empirical evidence of the efficacy of FNA in enhancing students' achievement in English

grammar. By implication, if teachers of English language adopt FNA and practice it in their various schools, students' achievement in English grammar may improve. It was, therefore, recommended among others that English language teachers should adopt Functional-Notional Approach (FNA) as an alternative to the Conventional Teaching Method (CTM) in teaching English grammar.

Key Words: Functional-Notional, Approach, Achievement and English grammar

I. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, much emphasis is placed on the teaching and learning of the English language at the secondary school level because of its importance in the country. One of the important goals of education as contained in the National Policy on Education is to provide all secondary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background, (FGN, 2014). It also notes that English language shall be studied as a subject in the secondary schools and be used as the medium of instruction. The English language is also a gateway from secondary to tertiary education as it is a prerequisite for admission into higher institutions in the country (Emaka-Nwobia, 2015). Students have to achieve in the English language at least at credit level in Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) to be admitted in the universities and other higher institutions of learning (Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), 2017). Therefore, students are expected to properly learn and have the goal of achieving at

credit level in the language, in their final examinations.

It is sad to note that despite the importance accorded the English language in academics, series of teaching efforts to achieve the aims, secondary school students still achieve poorly in the English language, especially at the Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) organized by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) in 2015. Available statistics on students' achievement in May/June 2014 to 2017 West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) indicates that the percentage of students that had credit pass and above in English language was 26.07% in 2014; 20.78% in 2015; 38.83% in 2016 and 24.59% in 2017. These poor results show that students' achievement is consistently below the expected standard. This is confirmed by Dopemu (2011) who notes that the achievement of students in English in Senior School Certificate Examinations is so poor and notes that Nigerian students have been continuously rated the lowest achievers in comparison with students in other participating countries in the West African Examinations Council (WAEC).

Grammar is the aspect of English language taught in secondary schools. It deals with the system of rules and principles of speaking and writing. Grammar is a set of rules dealing with the syntax and morphology of a language (Nordquist, 2018). Grammar is essential for speaking, reading and writing comprehensible expressions (Tuan & Doan, 2010). Mastery of grammar determines competence in the language (Akinbode, 2008). Deficiency in English language is an immense limitation to any student who needs to survive in a society such as Nigeria (Gambari, Gbodi&Olumba, 2012). The limitation is affirmed by (Egbe, 2015), who asserts that students in Nigeria lack good knowledge of the English grammar and so they are deficient in relevant English speaking, reading and writing skills even after completing secondary education. This suggests that students' proficiency in the English language depends on their ability to learn and use the grammatical structures of the language properly.

Teaching students effectively entails using appropriate approach which will make them achieve better in learning. Students learn in diverse ways, through social interaction; reasoning logically and intuitively; memorizing and interacting; reflecting and acting (Akanwa&Obinna, 2014). Though the much students learn and achieve in the class can be determined by their ability. Teachers' use of

appropriate approach also help immensely in learning aspects of grammar.

The problems associated with the Conventional Teaching Method could be the cause of poor achievement of students in grammar, especially in the areas of agreement and sequence of tenses which are the focus of this study. This is confirmed by Egbe (2015) who affirms that conventional teaching method of instruction does not help learners to construct their own meaning which not only leads to loss of interest and low achievement in grammar but also incapacitates learners from developing required grammar skills relevant for effective communication. It is therefore pertinent that teachers should make use of instructional approach that will stimulate students' interest and enable them to achieve and fully participate in grammar learning process so that they will be able to construct error free language expressions.

Achievement is regarded as an acquisition or attainment of set goals. It could be an act of reaching a desired target by exertion and a distinguished successful accomplishment. In educational parlance, therefore, achievement can be said to be attainment of learning objectives by exertion. From a cognitive stance, Ganai and Muhammad (2013), see achievement as a construct which should refer to the various stages of knowledge acquisition whose end product is a highly structured mental modal built after seasons of practice. For Kpolovie, Joe and Okoto (2014), achievement is the student's ability to study and remember what he or she studied and be able to communicate such in speaking and writing. In order to enhance students' achievement in English language, there is need to fully engage them during instructional process and to increase their competence in grammar, appropriate approach should be adopted which encourages learner autonomy in the learning process and enables learners to freely collaborate with one another and their teacher. Therefore, the problem of this study is: what could be the effects of Functional-Notional Approach on senior secondary school students' achievement in English grammar in Enugu Education of Enugu State?

The Monitor Theory was propounded by Krashen (1982). It states that "a learner's learned system acts as a monitor to what he/she is producing". In other words, while only the acquired system is able to produce spontaneous speech, the learned system is used to check what is being spoken. Monitor theory is in tandem with the Functional-Notional Approach (FNA). Functional-Notional Approach holds that the functions of

language used in the real daily life are most important and it is essential for a language learner to take part in the everyday language activities such as giving directions, buying a ticket, bargaining or consoling and so on.

Several research works conducted by renowned linguists in the area of language education lent credence and relevance to the present study whose focus is on strategies of improving linguistic achievements among learners in the secondary school. The study by Ozoemene (2015) investigated the effect of the Functional-Notional Approach (FNA) on student's achievement in English grammar using a quasi-experimental design. The researcher used a sample of 162 JSS11 students from three junior secondary schools in Owerri North local government area, Imo state, Nigeria. It was a non-equivalent control group quasi experimental design. The subjects were grouped into experimental and control group quasi experimental design. The subjects were grouped into experimental and control and they received instruction with Functional Notional Approach and Grammar Translation Method (Conventional Approach) respectively. Data collected with English Grammar Achievement Test (EGAT) and analysed with mean, standard deviation and ANCOVA.

In relation to Ozoemene's study, Egbe (2015) conducted a study to ascertain the effect of Integrative Language Teaching Approach (ILTA) on the students' achievement and interest in English grammar, using a non-randomized quasi experimental design, ten research questions and ten hypotheses guided the study. The sample was 296 students SS11 students, from thirty (30) public secondary schools in the area. The subjects were grouped into experimental and control and were given instruction with ILTA and Form Based Approach (FBA) respectively. Data were collected with EGAT and EGII and analysed using mean, standard deviation and ANCOVA. The findings showed that ILTA group achieved significantly higher than FBA group.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the effects of Functional-Notional Approach on students' achievement in English grammar.

Research Question

The following Research Question guided the study:

1. What are the achievement mean scores of students taught English grammar using Functional-Notional Approach (FNA) and Conventional Teaching Method?

Hypothesis

One null hypothesis guided the study at 0.05 level of significance.

HO₁ There is no significant difference in the achievement mean scores of students taught English

grammar using the Functional-Notional Approach (FNA) and those taught with the Conventional Teaching Method.

Methods

The study adopted a quasi-experimental research design. The specific design the researcher employed in the study is the non-equivalent pre-test/post-test control group design. The population of the study included all the four thousand and ninety (4,090) senior secondary school class two (SS 11) students in the 31 public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. The sample for the study comprised one hundred and thirty three (133) SS11 students in four intact classes which were drawn from four co-educational secondary schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to sample the size of the study. The instrument used was English Grammar Achievement Test (EGAT). The standardized English Grammar Achievement Test (EGAT) is a 50-item dichotomously scored instrument, which tests students in various ways questions on agreement and sequence of tenses can be. The items are based on English grammar topics taught during the experiment. The instrument was validated by three specialists. Two specialists from the Department of Arts and Social Science Education and one in the Department of Science Education, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Ebonyi State. Test re- test was employed to establish the reliability of the instrument. Twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered on students in Udi Education Zone on two occasions at interval of one week. The researcher determined the internal consistency of the EGAT using Kuder-Richardson's Formula ($K - R 20$). For EGAT a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was got showing that the instrument was reliable. Data collection was done by the research assistants. The researcher trained the research assistants on how to perform the experiment. The entire 133 copies were duly completed. In analysing data got from the English Grammar Achievement Test (EGAT), mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used as the

statistical tool for testing the hypothesis because the design of the study satisfies its three preliminary assumptions.

1. What are the achievement mean scores of students taught English grammar using Functional-Notional Approach (FNA) and Conventional Teaching Method?

Table 1: Achievement Mean Result of Students Based on Teaching Methods.

Methods	No	X	SD
Functional-Notional Approach (FNA)	67	34.37	3.94
Conventional Teaching Method (CTM)	66	20.35	3.91

Based on the results in Table 1, students in Functional-Notional Approach group have achievement mean score of 34.37 with a standard deviation of 3.94 while students in the Conventional Teaching Method group have achievement mean score of 20.35 with a standard deviation of 3.91. Therefore, students in Functional-Notional Approach group performed better than those in the Conventional Teaching Method group. It also means that Functional-

Notional Approach enhances students' achievement more than the Conventional Teaching Method.

HO₁ There is no significant difference in the achievement mean scores of students taught English grammar using the Functional-Notional Approach (FNA) and those taught with the Conventional Teaching Method.

Table 2: Analysis of Covariance ANCOVA Results on Achievement Based on Teaching Methods

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean square	F	Sig of F	Alpha Level
Covariates	2773.736	1	2773.736	551.276	.000	
Pretest	2773.736	1	2773.736	551.276	.000	
Main Effects	5132.426	1	5132.426	1020.062	.000	
Methods	5132.426	1	5132.426	1020.062	.000	0.05
Explained	7906.163	2	3953.081	785.669	.000	
Residual	654.093	130	5.031			
Total	8560.256	132	64.850			

Significant at P < 0.05

The result in Table 2 shows that the significance of F (0.000) is less than the alpha level of 0.05, hence, HO₄ is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference in the achievement mean scores of students taught English grammar with Functional-Notional Approach and those taught with Conventional Teaching Method in favour of Functional-Notional Approach.

II. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Result shows that students in the experimental group who were taught English grammar using the Functional-Notional Approach (FNA) obtained a higher achievement mean score than those in the control group who were taught the same English grammar using the Conventional Teaching Method (CTM). Based on the results in Table 1, students in experimental (who were taught with Functional-Notional Approach) group have achievement mean score of 34.37 with a standard deviation of 3.94 while students in the control (who

were taught with Conventional Teaching Method) group have achievement mean score of 20.35 with a standard deviation of 3.91. Therefore, students who were taught with Functional-Notional Approach group performed better than those that were taught with Conventional Teaching Method group. It also means that Functional-Notional Approach enhances students' achievement more than the Conventional Teaching Method

The result shows that there is a significant difference in the achievement mean scores of students taught English grammar with Functional-Notional Approach and those taught with Conventional Teaching Method in favour of Functional-Notional Approach. The result of this study is in tandem with the findings of Egbe (2015), Kpolovie, P.J., Joe, A.I. and Okoto, t. (2014), and Ganai, M.Y. and Muhammad, A. (2013) on the effectiveness of the FNA in teaching English grammar and other areas of the English language.

Implications of the findings

The findings of this study have provided empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the Functional-Notional Approach (FNA) in enhancing students' achievement in English grammar more than the Conventional Teaching Method (CTM). The approach the teacher adopts in teaching a subject or a language skill goes a long way in determining the extent of students' achievement in it. It also implies that the FNA is a more effective approach for the teaching and learning of English grammar than the CTM. The efficacy of the FNA over the CTM is not surprising because the FNA does not encourage abstract statement and memorization of grammatical rules.

The result of this study also goes to corroborate the Monitor Theory as propounded by Krashen (1982) which states that adult second language learners approach second language learning by either acquiring it or learning it, but that acquisition is superior to learning. The FNA creates a variety of learning experiences for the learners to explore the language and acquire it just as children do

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Functional-Notional Approach has significant effect on students' achievement mean scores in English grammar. The group taught with Functional-Notional Approach showed significantly higher achievement mean scores in English grammar than the group taught with the Conventional Teaching Method.

There is a significant difference in the achievement mean scores of students taught English grammar using Functional-Notional Approach and those taught with Conventional Teaching Method in favour Functional-Notional Approach.

The Functional-Notional Approach has facilitative effects on secondary school students' interest and achievement in English grammar.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. Thus, English language teachers should adopt the approach as an alternative to the Conventional Teaching Method (CTM) in teaching English grammar.
2. Secondary school students should be helped to acquire the necessary language skills such as verbal communication, discourse as well as linguistic skills which they require to improve their communicative competence and be able to apply such skills in context of situations as it relates to their social and academic environment.

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