

Effects of Functional-Notional Approach on Male and Female 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.

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.

A striking cause of poor achievement of students in English language has been traced to their poor knowledge and use of the English grammar. This is noted in WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports (2018) which stated that candidates' poor results in Paper 2 aspect of the English language (Essay writing, Comprehension and Summary) was mainly because the candidates were unable to apply the grammatical rules of the language in writing effectively. As a result, many errors occurred in their English language expressions and these errors impaired the intelligibility of their answers to questions in the examination which culminated to their achieving poorly in the language and other subjects whose answers were expressed in English. The candidates' poor achievement has become a source of worry, not only to teachers but also to other stakeholders in education. This calls for a necessity to help students understand the rules of grammar and their applications in language usage.

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 and 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 and 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.

Unfortunately, many Nigerian secondary school teachers still rely mostly on grammar teaching through Conventional Teaching Method (CTM) which is noted to be devoid of learner centeredness. Due to incessant use of the Conventional Teaching Method by language teachers, students fail massively in English language because the Conventional Teaching Method is teacher-centered (Babalola & Ayinloye, 2012). Conventional teaching method centres on the teacher's doling out instruction on grammar to students, who listen passively, instead of improving social interaction among students by encouraging collaborative activity-based learning process (Paul, 2013). This is what Functional-Notional Approach encourages. Collaborative activity-based learning process is vital for the construction and sharing of grammar knowledge among learners.

In teaching the grammar of the English language, teachers adopt one approach or another.

Students' inability to attain the expected level of achievement in the English language is linked to their lack of grammatical competence in writing effectively. A remarkable pitfall of students in grammar is their inability to apply the rules of concord and tenses correctly in sentences. Their persistent wrong application of the rules of concord and tenses make their English language expressions incomprehensible. In WAEC Chief Examiners Reports, it has been discovered that students' poor achievement in English language is due to the poor use of grammar in answers to questions. The students' poor achievement in English language is a source of worry to all stakeholders in education because of deficiency in English language culminates to deficiency in other subjects which are learnt through the English language.

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. One of such documented studies is the study conducted 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. The results showed that the students taught with FNA achieved better in English grammar than those taught with conventional approach. The present study is related to that by Ozoemene (2015) because both are similar in some aspects when looking at the topic, like students' achievement in English grammar.

Research Question

The following Research Questions guided the study:

1. What is the achievement mean scores of male and female students taught English grammar using Functional-Notional Approach (FNA)?
2. What is the interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on students' achievement mean scores in English grammar?

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses guided the study at 0.05 level of significance.

HO₁ There is no significant difference in the achievement mean scores of male and female students taught English grammar using the Functional-Notional Approach.

HO₂ There is no significant interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on students achievement in English grammar.

II. METHODOLOGY

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.

III. RESULTS

Research Question 1

What is the achievement mean score of male and female students taught English grammar using Functional-Notional Approach?

Table 1: Achievement Mean Result Based on Gender

Method	Male			Female		
	N ₀	X	SD	N ₀	X	SD
Functional-Notional Approach	24	34.08	3.79	43	34.53	4.06

Based on the results in Table 5, male students have achievement mean score of 34.08 with a standard deviation of 3.79 while female students have achievement mean score of 34.53 with a standard deviation of 4.06. Therefore, female students performed better than male students. It also means that Functional-Notional Approach enhances female students’ achievement more than the male students.

Research Question 2

What is the interaction effect of Teaching Methods and gender on students’ achievement mean scores in English grammar?

Table 2: Achievement Mean Results on Interaction Effect of Teaching Methods and Gender.

Methods	Male		Female	
	N ₀	X	N ₀	X
Functional-Notional Approach	24	34.08	43	19.63
Conventional Teaching Method	27	34.53	39	20.85

Results in Table 2 show the interaction effect of Teaching Methods (Functional-Notional Approach and Conventional Teaching Method) and gender on students’ achievement mean scores in English grammar. Based on the table the male students taught with Functional-Notional Approach have achievement mean score of 34.08 while female students taught with Functional-Notional Approach show achievement mean score of 19.63. Then the male students taught with Conventional Teaching Method show achievement mean score of 34.53 while the female students taught with the same Conventional Teaching Method show achievement mean score of 20.85. Based on the results, it means that there was no interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on students’ achievement mean scores in English grammar.

Hypothesis 1

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the achievement mean scores of male and female students taught English grammar using the Functional-Notional Approach.

Table 3: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Results on Achievement Based on Gender.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean square	F	Sig of F	Alpha Level
Covariates	699.396	1	699.396	138.126	.000	
Pretest	699.396	1	699.396	138.126	.000	
Main Effects	2.214	1	2.214	.437	.511	
Gender	2.214	1	2.214	.437	.511	0.05
Explained	701.610	2	350.805	69.282	.000	
Residual	324.061	64	5.063			
Total	1025.672	66	15.540			

- Not Significant at P > 0.05

The result in Table 3 shows that the significance of F (0.511) is greater than alpha level of 0.05, hence, HO₅ is not rejected. This means that there is no significant. Hence, there is no significant difference in the achievement mean scores of male and female students taught English grammar with Functional-Notional Approach.

Hypothesis 2

HO₂: There is no significant interaction effect of Teaching Methods (Functional-Notional Approach and Conventional Teaching Method) and gender on students’ achievement in English grammar.

Table 4: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Result on Achievement Based on Interaction between Teaching Methods and Gender.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean square	F	Sig of F	Alpha Level
Covariates	2773.736	1	2773.736	612.867	.000	
Pretest	2773.736	1	2773.736	612.867	.000	
Main Effects	5158.668	2	2578.334	569.913	.000	
Gender	80.074	1	80.074	17.693	.000	
Methods	5078.594	1	5078.594	1122.134	.000	
2-Way Interactions	48.544	1	48.544	10.726	.001	
Gender and Methods	48.544	1	48.544	10.726	.001	0.05
Explained	7980.949	4	1995.237	440.855	.000	
Residual	579.307	128	4.526			
Total	8560.256	132	64.850			

- Significant at $P < 0.05$

The result in Table 4 shows that the significance of F (0.001) is less than alpha level of 0.05, hence, H_0 is rejected. This means that there is a significant interaction effect of teaching methods (Functional-Notional Approach and Conventional Teaching Method) and gender on students' achievement mean scores in English grammar.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study regarding the differences in achievement of male and female students taught English grammar using FNA and CTM show in Table 1 that the achievement mean score of 34.08 was recorded by the males, while 34.53 was recorded by the females. This shows that the females achieved slightly higher than the males, but this was not found to be statistically significant in the test of hypothesis. In other words, both males and females were almost at par in their achievement in English grammar. This finding disagrees with Umo (2001) and Uzoegwu (2004) who found out in their studies that gender was a significant factor in students' achievement in language. Umo (2001) found out that the female students significantly performed better than the male students in Igbo grammar, while Uzoegwu (2004) came to the conclusion that the male students achieved higher than their female counterparts in essay writing in the English language.

However, the result of this study agrees with the findings of Oluikpe (2004), Igbokwe (2007) and Egbe (2011). The result in Table 3 of this study also shows that there was no significant difference in the achievement mean rating scores of male and female students in English grammar. This means that FNA had the same positive effect on male and female students. This is as a result of active participation of both the males and females in the lessons.

Moreover, the findings of the result agree with the postulations of Achievement Goal Theory by Ames (1988), Dweck (1986), Nicholls (1984) and Maehr (1993) that learning process should be mastery goal oriented.

Results in Table 2 show the interaction effect of Teaching Methods (Functional-Notional Approach and Conventional Teaching Method) and gender on students' achievement mean scores in English grammar. Based on the table the male students taught with Functional-Notional Approach have achievement mean score of 34.08 while female students taught with Functional-Notional Approach show achievement mean score of 19.63. Then the male students taught with Conventional Teaching Method show achievement mean score of 34.53 while the female students taught with the same Conventional Teaching Method show achievement mean score of 20.85. Based on the results, it means that there was no interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on students' achievement mean scores in English grammar.

The result in Table 4 shows that there is a significant interaction effect of teaching methods (Functional-Notional Approach and Conventional Teaching Method) and gender on students' achievement mean scores in English grammar. The study revealed that there is a significant interaction effects of teaching methods and gender on the achievement mean scores of students' English grammar.

Implications of the findings

The findings of this study have implications for language education especially with regard to the effect of gender on students' language attainments. The finding that gender was not a significant factor in students' achievement in English grammar implies that it would not be necessary to provide different curriculum materials and teaching approaches for males and females in schools.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Functional-Notional Approach has significant effect on female students' achievement mean scores in English grammar more than male students taught with Functional-Notional Approach. There is no interaction effect of teaching methods Functional-Notional Approach and Conventional Teaching Method and gender on students' achievement mean scores in English grammar.

There is no significant difference in the achievement mean scores of male and female students taught English grammar. There is a significant interaction effect of teaching methods ((Functional-Notional Approach and Conventional Teaching Method) and gender on the achievement mean scores of students in English grammar.

Gender had no significant influence on students' achievement in English grammar. The interaction effects of teaching methods and gender on students' achievement were not statistically significant.

VI. 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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