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LANGUAGE GAMES AND ITS EFFECT ON THE UPPER BASIC STUDENTS PERFORMANCE AND RETENTION IN IGBO LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the language games and its effect on the upper basic students' performance and retention in Igbo Language. The quasi-experimental research design involving non-equivalent control group was used for the study. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The sample for consisted of ninety (90) JSS II students drawn from two intact classes in Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Pre-test and post-test were administered to all the groups (Experimental and control). A – 25 items Igbo Grammar Achievement Test (IGAT) which was validated by three experts from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki was used for data collection, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that students taught with language games achieved higher than those taught with the conventional method. Additionally, the study also revealed that the students in the experimental group significantly retained their knowledge in Igbo grammar than their counterparts in the control group. Based on these finding, relevant recommendations and suggestions were made.

Keywords: Language Games, Igbo Grammar, Students, Academic, Achievement.

Introduction

Language: Many scholars have tried to define language from different linguistic perspectives. Oyedeji (2018) defines language as a vehicle for conveying the culture and traditions of the people that owns it. In appreciation of the role of language in one's life, the Federal Government of Nigeria made it compulsory that one out of the three major languages in Nigeria (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) should be studied in secondary schools. The argument of some researchers (Nwigwe, 2020; 2021; Ndem, Nwigwe and Eze, 2020) is that the performance in Igbo language is poor because of lack of interest in the subject by both the students and teachers. They contended that appropriate method and media could change the negative attitude of the generality of the public towards the subject (Igbo language). Therefore, it is of importance to emerge novel teaching methods, which could result in graduating students who are able to comprehend the language and communicate efficiently.

Language games have been discovered to be an effective teaching strategy in this respect. Basically, a game is any contest (play) among adversaries (Bavi, 2018). When one or more players compete or co-operate for pay-off, a game manifest. From educational point of view, Sahar (2016) sees a game as an activity in which students use data and or skills in a competitive situation against themselves, each other, the teacher as a game master. Hence a game is educational when it is used to facilitate learning rather than only acting as entertainment stimulant. Harmer (2008), on the other hand defined game as an activity carried out by co-operating or competing decision-makers who wait to achieve their objectives following a set of rules.

Advantages of Using Games in Language Classroom

First, games create an interesting and fun learning atmosphere (Derakhan and Khatir, 2016) in which students are motivated to learn and participate in class (Quispe, 2016). Since games are based on actions rather than explanations, they capture attention and sustain motivation (Schifter, 2013). Games succeed in increasing student's interest in subjects which enhances their concentration during class. In addition to the aforementioned above, games usually have a clear and specific goal, for this reason, they trigger critical attention and motivation.

Secondly, when learners play games, they learn to evaluate, synthesize, analyze and organize information. Furthermore, when students are interested in the games and they feel the sense of friendly competition, they "grasp the complexity of problem-solving" and become more encouraged to think of different ways to solve the game (Mc Donald, 2017).

Thirdly, enjoyment is characterized as the "Core experience of all entertainment media, including games" (Quick et al, 2012). While playing games, learners do not think of their worries and escape daily routines, which gives them space to enjoy themselves. As stated by Giannakos (2013), enjoyment measures how the game helps achieve the objectives of the lessons and the usefulness of the game. Amusement, also, affects motivation (Iten and Petko, 2013). In other words, the greater the enjoyment that is experienced, the greater interest is invested in practicing a certain game.

In addition to what is mentioned above, games introduce friendly competition and it encourages co-operative group work and enhances group dynamics. This study focuses on the effects of language games on junior secondary students' academic achievement and retention in Igbo grammar.

Key:

O_1 = Pre-test for the experimental group

Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to determine the effectiveness of language games on JSS students' academic achievement and retention in Igbo grammar. Specifically, the study determined:

1. The pre-test and post-test mean achievement scores of students taught Igbo grammar with language games and those taught without it, the conventional method.
2. The post-test and retention of learning scores of students taught Igbo grammar with language games and those taught without it, the conventional method.

Hypotheses

HO1: There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean achievement scores of students taught Igbo grammar with language games and those taught without it, the conventional method.

HO2: There is no significant difference between the post-test mean and the retention mean scores of students taught Igbo grammar with language games and those taught without it, the conventional method.

Methodology

The design of this study is quasi-experimental research design. This involves using a non-randomized pre-test and post-test control group design. This means that the subjects were not randomly assigned to treatment conditions rather intact classes were used. The design is illustrated below:

O_2 = Post-test for the experimental group
X = Treatment condition (language games)
O_3 = Pre-test for the control group
O_4 = Post-test for the control group

C = No treatment (conventional method)

Purposive sampling technique was used to select two schools, public Junior Secondary in Ebonyi Local Government Area. The sample comprised ninety (90) JSS II students selected from the two public schools. The two schools were randomly assigned to experimental and control group and intact classes were used. Each group consisted of forty-five (45) JSS II students in each of the respective schools. The researcher developed games on infinitives and verbs, identification and word formation the instrument for data collection is Igbo Grammar Achievement Test (IGAT). The IGAT has three stages which includes; matching items, True / false (reading, comprehension) and writing task (using the new words in full sentences). The instrument IGAT originally having 30 items was validated by three experts, two in Igbo language education and one in measurement and evaluation in the Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

The IGAT items were reviewed based on the recommendations of the experts. After the review, 25 items out of the 30 original items survived. The experts validated the instrument on the basis of clarity, unambiguousness of words and content coverage.

Procedure

The study lasted for six (6) weeks. The first week was used to administer the pre-test measure on both the experimental and the control groups. This was given before the activity based on games (language games), in order to measure their knowledge level towards the new topic in Igbo grammar. Next, the experimental group was exposed to the treatment (language games), while the students in the control group were taught without game activities (conventional method). Both groups were subjected to post-test measure immediately after the treatment.

Two weeks after the post-test were administered and recorded, the retention tests were administered on the students to see how much of the learning in Igbo grammar they were able to retain. The tests were designed and administered by the researcher. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested with t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question I:

What is the pre-test and post-test mean achievement scores of students taught Igbo grammar with language games and those taught without it (conventional method)?

Table 2 shows that the experimental group had mean score of 25.3 in the post-test and a mean score of 28.2 in the retention test with a mean gain of 2.9, while the control group had a mean score of 18.25 in the post-test and a mean of 19.3 in the retention test with the mean gain of 1.05. These results show that students retained more knowledge in Igbo grammar when taught with language games than those taught without language games (conventional approach).

HO1: There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean achievement scores of students taught Igbo grammar with language games and those taught without it (conventional method).

TABLE I: Pre-Test And Post-Test Achievement Scores Of Experimental And Control Groups:

Group	N	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Gain scores
		$\bar{x}^1$ SD^1		x^2 SD^2		
Experimental	45	16.45	0.79	25.3	0.80	9.05
Control	45	15.25	0.79	18.25	0.81	3.00

Table I revealed that the group that were taught with language games (experimental) had a mean gain of 9.05 and the other group taught with conventional method (control) recorded a mean gain of 3.00. The outcome of the exercise suggests that language games is more effective than the conventional method in teaching of Igbo grammar.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

What is the post-test mean and retention of learning scores of student taught Igbo grammar with language games and those taught without it (conventional method)?

Table 2: Post-Test Mean Achievement And Retention Test Scores Of Experimental And Control Groups

Group	N	Post-test	SD	Post-test	SD	Mean Gain scores
		$\bar{x}$ scores		$\bar{x}$ scores		
Experimental	45	25.3	0.80	28.2	0.79	2.9
Control	45	18.25	0.81	19.3	0.78	1.05

TABLE 3: T-Test Comparison Of The Achievement Scores Of The Pre-Test And Post-Test Of Experimental And The Control Groups.

Group	N	Post-test		'ost-test			t-cal	t-critical	Sig.
		$\bar{x}_1$	SD^1	$\bar{x}_2$	SD^2	df			
Experimental	45	16.45	0.79	25.3	0.80	44			
Control	45	15.25	0.76	18.25	0.81	44	2.80	1.96	S*

Df = 88; t-critical = 1.96; t-calculated = 2.80. Thus, t-calculated is greater than the t-critical (2.80 >1.96), significant at P> 0.05.

The result of the t-test in table 3 showed that t-calculated (2.80) was greater than the t-critical at 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis one ($H0_1$) is not accepted, meaning that there is a significant difference between the mean achievement scores of the experimental and the control groups. This implies that when language games are used in teaching of Igbo grammar, the effects on students' achievement are felt.

$H0_2$: There is no significant difference between the post-test mean and the retention mean scores of students taught Igbo grammar with language games and those taught without it (conventional method).

TABLE 4: T-Test Comparison Of The Post-Test Scores And The Retention Mean Scores Of The Experimental And Control Groups

Group	N	Post-test		Retention-test			t-cal	t-critical	Sig.
		$\bar{x}_1$	SD[1]	$\bar{x}_2$	SD[2]	df			
Experimental	45	25.3	0.80	28.2	0.79	44			
Control	45	18.25	0.81	19.3	0.78	44	3.11	1.96	S*

Df = 88, t-critical = 1.96, t-calculated = 3.11.

t-calculated is greater than t-critical (3.11>1.96) Significant at P>0.05.

The result of the t-test in table 4 revealed that t-calculated (3.11) was greater than the t-critical at 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis ($H0_2$) was rejected, meaning that there is a significant difference between the mean retention scores of the experimental and the control groups. This implies that language games based learning enable the students learn and retain the target grammar (Igbo grammar) more quickly, than their counterparts who were not exposed to the same treatment condition.

Discussion of Findings:

In this study, language games was found to have significant effect on the achievement of students in Igbo grammar as the student exposed to language games achieved higher than those taught with the conventional method. The result on table showed that the experimental group had higher mean achievement score than their counterparts in the control group. Similarly, the result also showed that there is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught with language games. This means that language games is more suitable for Igbo grammar than the conventional method, in favour of those taught with language games. This means that language games is more suitable for Igbo grammar than the conventional method. This finding agrees with Yasmin and Mohammed (2019) and Uberman (2008) who in their separate studies found that language games promotes interest in language learning and thereby brings about high gain in students achievement. The study also found that students taught with language games significantly retained their learning more than

their counterparts in the control group taught with the conventional method. (without the use of language games). This implies that language games improved students' retention of learning (Igbo grammar) than the use of the conventional method. These findings are in agreement with Sahar (2016) and Ali and Elham (2015) who reported that game based learning method can bring competition, motivation and relaxed or stress-free atmosphere in language learning environment, so students can learn and retain target vocabulary more quickly and better.

The experimental group achieved higher than the control group because the language games might have concretized learning experience, stimulated students interests, thereby increasing their understanding of the Igbo grammar lessons better than those taught with the conventional method. Language games relies on the philosophy that knowledge is essentially social in nature where learners interact through communication and co-operation efforts. It allows a balanced development in the learner's psycho-mental and social skills.

Conclusion

The study was necessitated by the concern arising from the observed failures and lack of interest in Igbo language by both the students and the teachers. The findings of the study was that language games enhanced student's achievement in Igbo grammar. The implication of the findings is that language (Igbo) teachers need to re-assess their classroom instructional practices. Language instruction should be learner-centered. There is need to shift from classroom instructional practices that make learners passive to one that will actively involve learners as in language games. The complexity of language learning demands that the teacher should have different methods at his disposal and a number of skills at his command. Language teachers should be innovative in employing and exploiting different instructional strategies. As long as the language teachers continue to use ineffective teaching methods, the performance of the students would continue to be poor.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendation were made:

1. Igbo language curriculum should be reviewed to include the use of language games. This will expose students maximally to learn Igbo grammar and other aspects of the language without much stress.
2. Workshop and seminars should be organized for Igbo language teachers at JSS level on the use of games and techniques to acquaint them with the new trend of teaching Igbo grammar and other aspects of the language.

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