



Research Paper

Effects of Functional-Notional Approach on Male and Female Students' Interest in English Grammar In Enugu Education Zone

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of Functional-Notional Approach (FNA) on senior secondary school students' interest in English grammar for reducing emerging challenges in Education delivery. The researchers adopted descriptive survey research design such that a portion of a bigger population was sampled for study and the findings generalized to the entire population. 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) SSII 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 Interest Inventory (EGII), it is a 20-item instrument and it was validated. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was conducted with 30 SSII students outside the area of the study, using Cronbach Alpha to determine the reliability of EGII and the temporal stability yielded 0.87. The research question was 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 students' interest in English grammar. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the study provided empirical evidence of the efficacy of FNA in enhancing students' interest in English grammar. By implication, if teachers of English language adopt FNA and practice it in their various schools, students' interest 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, Interest and English grammar

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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 interest and 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 capture their interest and 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.

From the foregoing, the researchers in this study are taking a stand with the functionalists and focusing the study on the need to produce language users who will be able to use the English language to perform social and interactional functions in given situations. This approach is quite opposed to the Conventional Teaching Method which produces only users of 'bookish' English. The Functional-Notional Approach lays emphasis on communicative competence in language teaching. It employs the application of language functions to teach the real communication in the classroom. The teacher focuses on inculcating the social aspects of the language in the learner, as well as the roles of the individual learners in language interaction. In essence, Communicative Language Teaching is the broad view of Functional-Notional Approach. It has been recognized as the popular social network in the globe especially among students (Statista, 2017). Therefore, the language class is one of more student-talk, less teacher-talk. The purposes and processes of verbal interaction are expressed through role-play, group activity, seeking and getting information, and non-verbal stimuli including visuals, gesture and mime.

In order to stimulate students' interest 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' interest 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).

A number of studies have investigated the effect of different methods on students' interest in English and other school subjects. Torty (2010) investigated the effect of the collaborative learning method on students' interest in English language tenses. Specifically, the study was interested in finding out the difference in the mean interest scores of students taught English language tenses using the collaborative learning method and those taught using the lecture method. The design of the study was the quasi-experimental research design. The sample consisted of 217 senior secondary Two (SS II) students drawn from six intact classes in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone through stratified random sampling technique. The instruments used for data collection was the English Language Interest Inventory (ELII). Mean, standard deviation and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were used to analyse the data collected. The result showed that interest was a significant factor in students' learning English language tenses.

A study on two instructional modes was carried by Mc-Okoronkwo (2019) to determine the effects of two instructional WhatsApp Modes on Secondary School Students' Interest in English grammar in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. The study employed a quasi-experimental design and was guided by ten (10) research questions and ten hypothesis, pretest and posttest non randomized 2x2x2 factorial design was used. A sample of one hundred sixty two (162) SS11 students in four intact classes in four co-educational secondary schools in urban and rural area were drawn through purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The subjects were assigned to experimental group 1 (WACAM) and experimental group 2 (WACM). The instruments used were English Grammar Interest Inventory (EGII) which was analysed with mean, standard deviation and ANCOVA. The results showed that students who were taught English grammar through WhatsApp chats-audio mode (WACAM) had more interest in learning

Research Question

The following Research Questions guided the study:

1. What is the interest 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' interest mean scores in English grammar?

Hypotheses

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

H₀₁ There is no significant difference in the interest mean rating scores of students taught English grammar using the Functional-Notional Approach.

H₀₂ There is no significant interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on students interest mean scores in English grammar.

II. Methods

The survey design was adopted for the study. 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 Interest Inventory (EGII), it is a 20-item instrument. EGII covers the general areas of students' interest in English grammar. It consists of 10 positive and 10 negative items. The instrument was constructed on a four-point rating scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). 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 two sets of scores were correlated using Cronbach Alpha statistics. The correlation coefficient value was 0.98 and was considered high enough to adjudge the instrument as reliable. Data collection was done by the researchers. The entire 133 copies were duly completed. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The response options of SA, A, D and SD were assigned values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. A criterion mean of 2.50 was established by dividing the sum of the values by 4. Mean scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as significant and therefore concerned while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as insignificant and therefore unconcerned. The t-test statistic was employed in testing the null hypothesis at .05 level of significance.

Table 1: Interest Mean Result Based on Gender

	Male			Female		
Method	No	X	SD	No	X	SD
Functional-Notional Approach	24	71.45	4.59	43	68.02	5.16

Based on the results in Table 1, male students have interest mean score of 71.45 with a standard deviation of 4.59 while female students have interest mean score of 68.02 with a standard deviation of 5.16. Therefore, male students performed better than female students. It also means that Functional-Notional Approach enhances male students' interest more than the female students.

Research Question 2

What is the interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on students' interest mean scores in English grammar?

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

Methods	Male		Female	
	No	X	No	X
Functional-Notional Approach	24	71.46	43	68.02
Conventional Teaching Method	27	52.78	39	53.64

Results in Table 2 show the interaction effect of Teaching Methods (Functional-Notional Approach and Conventional Teaching Method) and gender on students' interest mean scores in English grammar. Based on the table the male students taught with Functional-Notional Approach have interest mean score of 71.46 while female students taught with Functional-Notional Approach show interest mean score of 68.02. Then the male students taught with Conventional Teaching Method show interest mean score of 52.78 while the female students taught with the same Conventional Teaching Method show interest mean score of 53.64. Based on the results, it means that there was interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on students' interest mean scores in English grammar.

Hypothesis 1

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

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

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean square	F	Sig of F	Alpha Level
Covariates	7.130	1	7.130	.304	.583	
Pretest	7.130	1	7.130	.304	.583	
Main Effects	280.176	1	280.176	11.959	.001	
Gender	280.176	1	280.176	11.959	.001	0.05
Explained	287.306	2	143.653	6.132	.004	
Residual	1499.381	64	23.428			
Total	1786.687	66	27.071			

- Significant at P < 0.05

The result in Table 3 shows that the significance of F (0.001) is less than alpha level of 0.05, hence, HO₁ is rejected. This means that there is a significant. Hence, there is a significant difference in the interest 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 and gender on students' interest mean scores in English grammar.

Table 4: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Result of Interest on Significant Interaction of Teaching Methods and Gender.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean square	F	Sig of F	Alpha Level
Covariates	203.659	1	203.659	12.308	.001	
Pretest	203.659	1	203.659	12.308	.001	
Main Effects	8331.631	2	4165.815	251.752	.000	
Methods	8272.602	1	8272.602	499.936	.000	
Gender	59.028	1	59.028	3.567	.061	
2-Way Interactions	180.097	1	180.097	10.884	.001	
Methods and Gender	180.097	1	180.097	10.884	.001	0.05
Explained	8715.387	4	2178.847	131.674	.000	
Residual	2118.057	128	16.547			
Total	10833.444	132	82.072			

- 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, HO₂ is rejected. This means that there is a significant. Hence, there is a significant interaction effect of teaching methods (Functional-Notional Approach and Conventional Teaching Method) and gender on students' interest mean scores in English grammar.

III. Discussion Of Findings

Based on the results in Table 1, male students have interest mean score of 71.45 with a standard deviation of 4.59 while female students have interest mean score of 68.02 with standard deviation of 5.16. Therefore, male students performed better than female students when taught with Functional-Notional Approach.

The findings of this study pertaining to no significant difference in the mean interest rating scores of male and female students in English grammar did not agree with the findings of Torty (2010), MC-Okoronkwo, J.E. (2019), Gambari, A.I., Gbodi, B.E. and Olumba, R.N. (2012) that there is no significant difference in the interest of male and female students taught using different modes.

Also, in the course of teaching grammar rules with FNA the students showed more interest because they participated more actively and were able to produce their own examples of sentences showing grammar rules.

Based on table 2 the male students taught with Functional-Notional Approach have interest mean score of 71.46 while female students taught with Functional-Notional Approach show interest mean score of 68.02. Then the male students taught with Conventional Teaching Method show interest mean score of 52.78 while the female students taught with the same Conventional Teaching Method show interest mean score of 53.64. Based on the results, it means that there was interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on students' interest mean scores in English grammar.

There is also a significant interaction effect of teaching methods (Functional-Notional Approach and Conventional Teaching Method) and gender on students' interest mean scores in English grammar as shown in Table 4.

Implications of the findings

The finding that gender was not a significant factor in students' interest and 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. It also implies that there should be no segregation or assertion of superiority or inferiority of one gender over the other. Rather, both males and females should consider themselves as equally endowed to achieve highly if they pay keen interest in the lessons and engage in all class activities. Also, the no interaction effect of instructional approach and gender on students' interest and achievement in English grammar, which this study established, implies that the FNA alone rather than any other factor, resulted in the difference, thus fortifying the efficacy of the FNA as an instructional approach in the teaching and learning of English grammar.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendation

On the strength of the findings of this study, the following conclusions and recommendations are hereby drawn: The male and female students maintained almost the same level of interest in English grammar. The interaction effects of teaching methods and gender on students' interest and achievement were not statistically significant.

English language teachers should adopt a strategy whereby both male and female students are exposed to equal learning experience in the classroom. They should apply some techniques to motivate the boys and the girls and take care of their different learning needs.

V. Summary and Conclusion

Functional-Notional Approach has significant effect on male students taught English grammar more than female students taught English grammar with FNA. There is also interaction effect of teaching methods FNA and CTM and gender on students' interest mean scores in English grammar.

There is a significant difference in the interest mean scores of male and female students taught English grammar with Functional-Notional Approach. This shows that the male students performed better than female students. There is also a significant interaction effect of teaching methods (Functional-Notional Approach and Conventional Teaching Method) and gender on students' interest scores in English grammar.

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