



The Impact of Verb Tenses Instruction on Students' Academic Achievements in Essay Writing in Senior Secondary Schools in Bauchi State, Nigeria

Isah Abubakar KUMBI, Shuaibu ADAMU, Adamu USMAN
Department of English,
Adamu Tafaw Balewa College of Education, Kangere, Bauchi State

ABSTRACT

This work investigates the impact of verb tenses on the achievements of students essay writing in six selected secondary schools in Bauchi state. Principally this study aims at unveiling how teachers teach essay writing paired with verb tense instructions, with the view of finding out if the tense instruction improves students essay writing in English language. The reason for this work is connected with the poor writing habits of students, right from secondary schools up to tertiary institutions, which may be as a result of poor reading habits and poor grammar and punctuation instructions. The significance of this study is unveiling the importance of tense instructions in relation to students' achievements in essay writing. Methodologically, the design of this study shall be a mixed research design, as it involves both quantitative and qualitative approach. The population entails all the senior secondary students (1500) and English teachers (20) in the selected senior secondary schools. The 306 students and 19 teachers is drawn using simple random sampling sample technique and the sample size is estimated using the research advisor table of sampling (2006). Test and questionnaire were the methods of data collection. The data gotten through test is analyzed using students' T-test by excel, as well as error analysis, while data collected through questionnaire is analyzed using tables and mean. The theoretical frame work used was error analysis and communicative teaching theory. The findings of this work showed that there is significant relationship between communicative language teaching, verb tense instruction and students' performances in essay writing, meaning communicative language teaching and verb tense instruction enhance students' performance in essay writing thus, improving their performances. The findings would be useful to both teachers, students, researchers, government and relevant education agencies as it would be used to solve students' essay-tenses related problems and as well how to improve it. By extension, this study is of benefit to curriculum developers as well as planners in Nigeria and the world at large as it would help in proper placement of tenses and essay writing in the syllabus.

ARTICLEINFO

ArticleHistory
Received: July, 2022
Received in revised form: July, 2022
Accepted: July, 2022
Published online: September, 2022

KEYWORDS

Verb Tenses, Academic Achievement, Essay Writing, Secondary Schools, Bauchi State.

INTRODUCTION

Language is generally used for the purpose of interaction among people in the society. It is also used to differentiate people by

sex, age and social status within a particular society. Language serves as a tool for development in every society. It develops nations or societies socially and particularly for the



purpose of interaction within and outside a particular society. Through choice of words and forms of speeches, language can be used to differentiate gender or age. The languages that a person uses can be differentiated into L1 and L2, which is first and second languages. First language is also known as mother tongue meaning our language or the language a child first comes in contact with depending on the environment he/she is born and raised while second language is a language that is later learnt at adult stage. In Nigeria, English is used as a second language. It is adopted as the national language due the multilingual nature of the country. Today English is used in Nigeria as a language of law, politics, commerce, education and international relations. This makes it possible for every average literate Nigerian to use English language in its spoken and written form. For this to be realized, emphasis needs to be laid on the literacy skills including grammar for it to be done well.

For the reason that English in Nigeria is a second language which is acquired after the mother tongue, there are bound to be peculiarities in the syntactic, lexical and semantic level of language use. This is a consequence of languages in contact as opined by Bamisaye (2010): In almost all cases, the two languages first (Nigerian language and second English) exhibit a lot of structural differences. Consequently, most Nigerian learners and users of English face a lot of difficulties because the English language is learnt at a later stage as a second language, the Nigerian users of English Language commit errors at the levels of grammar, lexis and syntax. All these levels of errors result from interference which is caused by the contact of the different languages, where the linguistic system of one language is transferred into the other in the process of producing the latter which is the second or target language. This means that if an individual already has a

language there is bound to be the problem that arises from languages in contact when learning the second language.

The proponents of error and contrastive analysis in Applied Linguistics, such as Lado (1957), Corder (1974) in Kekere-Ekun, J., Udvebure, A.A., and Egele F.A (2010), claim that a systematic comparison of the learners' mother tongue and the second language at all levels of structure will generate predictions about the areas of learning difficulty in the second language. The theory claims that where the structure of the second language differs from that of the mother tongue, we should expect difficulty in learning the second language. Where the structures of the languages are similar, however, no difficulty or error is anticipated. Lado (1957), puts it that We assume that students who come in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult. Thus, there is no doubt that, in the course of learning a second language, learners are bound to commit errors. This is as a result of the fact that learning a second language and indeed a foreign language entails some difficulties. These difficulties have been traced to a number of factors. The issue here, however, is not to identify why learners have difficulties in learning a second language. Rather, we are concerned with why we have to study learners' errors.

However these errors are said to occur frequently on the spoken and most importantly written English of most Nigerian learners as a second language speakers. Students are bound to make errors in their written language (essay) more frequently. Most of these errors are grammatical (tense errors) which greatly affect students, leading to poor outcome. This claim was affirmed by WAEC chief examiner (2020), who claimed only 45% of students passed WAEC



in 2019 with five (5) credits including English and mathematics. This figures increase significantly to 50%. According to the chief examiner, the failure is caused partly by poor comprehension and essay writing, which is attributed to tense and punctuation errors.

However, due to the above problem the researcher attempts to write the research that has the purposes of finding the effects of instructional methods on teaching verb tenses on students' achievement in essay writing in some selected senior secondary schools in north eastern Nigeria. The researchers hoped the study results could give positive output for improving students' standard in tenses and essay writing.

Research Questions

The following will be the questions that this research aims at answering:

1. Does tense instruction enhance students' performances in essay writing?
2. Does communicative language teaching improve students' performances in verb tenses and students' Essay writing?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between verb tense instruction and students' performances in essay writing.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between communicative language teaching and students' performances in essay writing.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between paired instruction (verb tenses and essay writing) and students' performances in essay writing.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a survey design. The population of the study is 168 respondents which consists of academic librarians from selected public universities libraries in Southern

Nigeria. The census sampling technique was used since the population is in a few hundreds. A well-structured questionnaire was used as a research instrument to collect data on librarians' levels of awareness, their attitude, purpose of use of open access materials. The instrument was validated by experts in test and measurement in librarianship before administered to respondents. The subtypes of OA (e.g. Gold, Green, Libre, Gratis) preferably accessed by librarians were explained by author in a separate sheet attached to the research instrument for clarity in making their choices. Three (3) point Likert scale (agree, undecided and disagree) was used for respondents attitude and purpose towards used of open access journal (in accordance with Bashorun, 2016 and Coonin & Younce, 2010) and for the preferred type of open access level of accessibility policy. For the type of open access materials, a two point Likert scale of Yes or No was used. A criterion mean (percentage) of 2.0 (66.7%) was allocated for the three point scales while a 1.5 (50%) mark for used of open access material type. The level of awareness on the availability and accessibility of open access for research activity was rated using six (6) point scale where one (1) represented 'not aware or no awareness' and six (6) connoted 'very highly aware'. Similarly, a complementary 6 point scale was assigned for frequency of research publication with one point for 'no paper published' and six for 'one or two papers monthly'. A total of 104 copies of the questionnaire administered were returned and analyzed representing a response of 62%. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, statistical means, standard deviation, percentages. Inferential statistics was employed in testing the three hypotheses.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in the Tables below;



Table 1: Mean Response of Tense Instruction for Enhancing Students' Performance in Essay Writing

S/No.	Items	Mean (x)	Decision Rule
1.	Teachers use tense instruction to enhance students' essay writing	3.16	Agreed
2.	Tense instruction enhances students achievement in essay writing	4.53	Agreed
3.	Paired instruction (essay/tense) improves grammaticality in essay writing	4.42	Agreed
4.	Paired instruction (tense/essay) reduces common tense errors in students' essay writing	4.26	Agreed
5.	Tense instruction improves concord in students' essay writing	4.79	Agreed
6.	Tense instruction improves expression of ideas in students' essay writing	4.05	Agreed

Source: Field survey, 2022

From the table above, it is clear that tense instruction enhances students' performances in essay writing. This can be deduced from the grand mean of 4.20 with a

standard deviation of 2.05 and a decision rule which is strongly agreed. Decision rules for all the statements as answered by the teachers are agreed and strongly agreed.

Table 2: Mean Response of Communicative language teaching for improving students understanding of verb tenses/essay writing.

S/No.	Items	Mean (x)	Decision
1.	Communicative language teaching is suitable for teaching English language in tertiary institutions	4.37	Agreed
2.	Communicative language teaching helps in managing language class rooms with higher population	4.37	Agreed
3.	Communicative language teaching enhances students' performances in verb tenses	4.79	Agreed
4.	Communicative language teaching enhances students' performances in essay writing.	4.84	Agreed
5.	Communicative language teaching is suitable for paired instruction	4.11	Agreed

Source: Field survey, 2022

The table above indicates that communicative language teaching is an interesting method which improves students' understanding of verb tenses/essay writing with a grand mean of 4.50 a standard deviation of 2.12. The decision for the items under these research questions are agreed and strongly agreed, proving the main assertion that communicative language teaching enhances

students' performances in verb tenses and essay writing.

Conclusion

This research unveils various tense errors made by senior secondary students in their written essays. In a bid to reduce such errors, the researcher tests various ways of reducing such errors which are mostly as a result of non-mastery of the rules of the target language, particularly English tenses. The



researcher therefore concludes that communicative language teaching as well as verb tense instruction will go a long way in reducing such errors in students' essay writing. Also, paired instruction of verb tense and essay writing is seen as a very good way of enhancing students' performances in students' essay writing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher makes the following recommendations;

- 1- Teachers should use communicative language teaching in teaching verb tenses and essay writing, as it gives room for students to communicate freely and come up with better ideas to write.
- 2- Curriculum planners should make provision for paired instruction, that is teaching tenses and essay writing simultaneously as it will go a long way in improving students' expression in essay writing.

REFERENCES

- Aronoff, M. 2011. *The gradual emergence of phonological form in a new language*. 29. 503 – 543.
- Bhat, Shankara D.N.(1999). *The prominence of tense, aspect and mood*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Brown, H. D. (2000) *Principles of language and teaching*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Buyl, A., &Housen, A. (2015). *Developmental stages in receptive grammar acquisition: A processability theory account*. *Second Language Research*, 31(4).doi:10.1177/0267658315585905
- Corder, S. P. (1974). *The significance of learners errors*. *Error analysis*.(Ed.) J. C. Richard. London:
- Jenifer Mond, (2010). *A Review of Verb Tense*. Victoria. University of Houston.
- Kekere-Ekun, J., Udvebure, A.A., and Egele F.A (2010), *an analysis of syntactic problems in the essay of selected secondary students in Akoko Edo LGA*.multi disciplinary journal of research and development vol. 15 no 3.
- Kavaliauskiene, G. (2009). Role of the mother tongue in learning. *English for specific purposes world*. 1(8)
- Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistic across culture: Applied linguistics for language teachers*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Oyedokun-Alli, W. A. (2014). An error analysis of the use of English modifiers among Yoruba bilinguals. In: *British journal of English linguistics*. 2(3): 1-15.
- Richards, J. C. (1992). A Non-Contrastive approach to error analysis. *English Language Teaching*.
- Ridha, N. (2012). The effect of EFL learners' mother tongue on their writings in English: an error analysis study. *Journal of the College of Arts. University of Basrah*. 60: 22-45.
- Sawalmeh, M. H. M. (2013). Error analysis of written English essays: the case of students of the preparatory year program in Saudi Arabia. In: *English for specific purposes world*. 40(14): 1-17.
- Uboh, V. (2004). Errors in English complementation patterns among the NCE students of the Federal College of Education, Zaria. Unpublished MA thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
- Wilkins, D. (1972). *Linguistics in language teaching*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Wilkins, D. (1972). *Linguistics in language teaching*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Yuan, F. (2011). A Brief Comment on Communicative Language Teaching. *Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 2(2), 428-431.