



**EFFECT OF COMPETENCY-BASED INSTRUCTION ON
PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS OF ENGLISH IN INTONATION
PATTERN IN UNIVERSITIES IN KATSINA STATE**

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Abstract

The study employed quasi experimental research design guided by the objective to ascertain the mean performance score of students of English taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction and those taught using language laboratory instruction. Two universities were selected, one as experimental and one as control groups. The experimental group was taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction while, the control group was taught using language laboratory instruction. One hundred and eighteen (118) B.A. Ed. English three hundred level students constituted the study population. Eighty (80) students were purposively selected as samples. Intonation Competency Performance Test (ICPT) was used as the research instrument and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.96. T-test was used in testing the hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that students taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction performed significantly better than those taught using language laboratory instruction.

Key Words: Competency-Based, Instruction, Intonation

Introduction

The need for fluency and competency has always been the focus of meaningful language instruction in the Nigeria education system. Students at the universities who are being trained as prospective teachers are expected to demonstrate mastery and command of the language of instruction in order to be successful in classroom interaction and other relevant daily activities. Competency in language expression requires mastery of a number of concepts and content areas of which intonation pattern cannot be reckoned with. In Nigeria, English language is the official language of instruction in the institution of learning. This implies that, students who study English in the



universities are studying it as a second language. To this effect, mastery in the pronunciation of the correct intonation pattern is consciously or unconsciously affected by the interference of the first language. This interference is commonly noticed in pronunciation of the intonation pattern which is believed to be missing in most indigenous languages in Nigeria (Kabir & Zakari, 2022). It is pertinent to emphasize the relevance of intonation in the mastery and fluency in speaking. It is the intonation pattern that determines how, when and where to put emphasis and raise or lower a voice in speech. Perhaps, fluency of expression in English could be realized with mastery of the intonation pattern. To speak English with mastery and fluency, one needs to raise or lower his/her voice depending on the issues or circumstances. It is the intonation pattern that determines the modalities for raising or lowering of voice in speaking English (Haigar, 2020, Larry, 2020 & Ibrahim, 2023).

It should be noted that, most of the indigenous languages in Nigeria do not have the intonation pattern of English. In other words, while circumstances of definite feelings, certainty or uncertainty, excitement, inquiry and the likes determine the nature of the voice in speech (falling, raising or a combination of the two); to most indigenous languages of Nigeria this is not the case. The only thing that determines their voice is the tone and state of mind (Kabir, 2019).

Students who study English language as an area of specialization in the universities should be trained on the skills to speak English fluently and effectively (Kabir & Dada, 2021). They should also be made aware of the missing intonation pattern of English in their own first languages. This will enable them to strike a balance between the language they are studying and their first languages and that in the final analysis, can sustain the interference of their mother tongue in learning the correct intonation pattern of English. There is no doubt; this interference that results to misrepresentation and mispronunciation of the intonation pattern by students of English in the universities creates a vacuum that needs to be filled so as to achieve the competency expected of all language students. It is the attempt to fill this gap and achieve the competency required by students of English in the universities that prompted this study.

In fact, the improvement of instruction has been the goal of meaningful curriculum programmes (Guskey, 2019). Although there are varieties of approaches to improving the instruction, in most cases, instruction can be characterized by the task of setting the objectives, teaching content based on the objectives and evaluating the performance. This process is indeed the most commonly used in most educational institutions in Nigeria, especially the universities. It is worthy to note that, there are several alternative approaches to what was currently obtainable in our citadels of learning. Individualised instruction is a typical example of such approaches. Individualised instruction comprises of a number of approaches such as: the competency based/ mastery



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instruction, the personalized instruction, the audio-tutorial instruction and the computer assisted instruction among others.

Learners today are diverse in their academic needs, backgrounds and abilities. That is why, it is imperative that instructions should meet them where they are so as to maximize their learning potentials and mastery. One way to do this is to utilize individualised instruction of which competency-based approach is at the center stage. Competency-based instruction refers to the use of strategies, resources and assessments to meet the needs of a particular learner. This process ensures that a learner is getting the proper guidance, flexibility and learning support to expand opportunities for academic growth (Davies, 2020). Competency-based instruction is an instructional strategy which maintains that learners must achieve certain level of mastery in a prerequisite content area before moving forward to learn the subsequent content area. In other words, competency-based instruction is a strategy of teaching and learning exercise expected to bring students to a level of mastery in the learning of any particular skill, content or subject area. Adepoju (2002) in Adeyemi (2018) maintained that competency-based instruction is designed towards making learners perform well on an academic task. Bergmann (2022) maintained that in a situation where a learner failed to achieve the designed mastery after the test, additional learning support will then be given as well as reviewing the process and the content after which, the individual learner will be tested again. This cycle continues until the learner accomplishes competency and may then move on to the next stage.

The basic assumption of the competency-based instruction is that almost all learners can learn the essential knowledge and skills within a curriculum when the learning is broken into its component parts and presented sequentially (Adam, 2022). To implement this approach effectively, instruction should address a number of challenges. The first challenge is to divide the content and or skill into small units which can be presented sequentially using relevant functional and effective teaching strategies. The next step is to assess the learners themselves. Assessing the learners encompass their prior experience, interest and aspirations. The data obtained will help determine where in the sequence of the curriculum and the broken units, the instruction should begin. Effective assessment will enable you as the teacher to link the instructional objectives to the learning activities and the needs of the learners.

The next challenge will be how to address the variations in students learning. For those who quickly grasp concepts, you will need to promote learning by developing relevant enrichment opportunities. This will allow these students to be engaged in an appropriate higher level learning activities while, simultaneously allowing you to expand and extend the learning opportunities to those students who need more time to master the basics. To increase the effectiveness of the instructional process and subsequently the students learning, an instructor should engage in formative evaluation. Formative



evaluation is an on-course frequent assessment of students learning that will enable adjustment of instruction to meet the individual needs of learners (Mamman, 2021).

After series of on-course assessment, the approach then needs to prepare summative evaluation on each unit, content or objective. The result of the summative evaluation may likely reveal that some students still have not reach the mastery/competency level of the basic knowledge or skill within the time framework provided. In this situation therefore, you will need to develop creative ways for re-teaching and re-presenting alternative learning opportunities and or extending practice and strategies such as after school corrective instruction, peer or cross –age tutoring.

Competency-based instruction is an instructional approach in which content, method and pace of the learning are based upon the abilities and interest of each learner. It is therefore a learner centered approach. Casey (2018) lamented that in the competency-based learning process, the curriculum content will be the same for all learners, but the individual learning profile and plan for each learner may vary. This is because each learner progresses through the material at a different speed and according to his/her own learning needs and abilities. In this approach, a learner might master content quickly or require longer time to master and progress through a given topic, skip topics that cover information already mastered or repeat topics when the need arises. The features of the competency-based instruction as identified by Ogan (2012) and Maggins (2022) are so encompassing and elaborate. In this approach, all learning experiences are clearly communicated to learners including long term expectations such as graduation requirements and competencies; to the short term expectations such as specific learning objectives for a unit or course as well as other learning experiences such as the expected competency performance levels of grading and reporting success. All forms of assessment are competency based and success is defined by the achievement of expected competencies and not relative measures of performance or student to student comparison.

In the competency-based instruction, academic grades communicate learning progress and achievement to students and are used to facilitate and improve the learning process. Students are given multiple opportunities to improve their work when they fail to meet the expected standard or mastery. In this approach, students can demonstrate learning progress and mastery in multiple ways such as differentiated assessments, personalized learning options or alternative learner pathways. Students are also given opportunities to make contributions to the design of learning experiences and pathways (Telimoye & Georgina, 2015). Competency-based instruction help to personalized learning experiences of students through individual assessment, feedback, and corrective and or enrichment exercises. The approach caters for individual differences of students. Each student can learn and progress at his/her own



pace. The approach places premium on the learning process rather than the test scores. This help to improve the depth of knowledge, mastery and retention capabilities of learners.

In the competency-based instruction, the amount of time (pace) designed for students to master a particular content is imperative. There are two basic extremes when pace of instruction is considered. The first is when someone other than the learner, usually a teacher controls the amount of time spent on learning the material. In this scenario, specific due dates are defined before instruction begins (Bergmann, 2022). This is currently the predominant model in most educational systems. The other extreme would be if the learner had exclusive control over the pace of instruction without time limit. However, between these two extremes are situations where control of the pace of instruction is shared or negotiated not necessarily equally, by the teacher and the learner.

As theories of learning and instruction develop and mature, more and more considerations are given to the way in which learning occurs. In an attempt to account for the way students learn, teachers may apply a combination of theories and principles in preparing instruction. This process can influence whether instruction is designed for one homogenous group or is flexible in anticipation of individual differences among learners. The instructional method in the competency-based instruction is usually designed to address individual learner characteristics. To put this in a clear picture, the instructional method can be considered in extremes. In the first extreme, one instructional method will be used for all students. On the other extreme, a specific instructional method is used for each individual student. Between the two extremes lie situations where learners are arranged into groups according to their characteristics. These groups can vary in size with the instructional method tailored to each group based on its uniqueness (Adam, 2022).

Competency-based instruction helps to bridge the gap between above average, average and below average students in the instructional process (Adeyemi, 2018 & Gusky, 2019 & Beulah, 2021). This could be made possible by creating small units with clear objectives. That is, each section has clear objectives for completion and works for the prior section. It is usually in line with less to a more complex learning content. For example, in the intonation pattern, it starts with students' identification of the symbol(s) of intonation, types of intonation, the correct pronunciation of the intonation in words and in sentences. In the competency based-instructional process, students learning experiences are assessed before, during and after exposure to the learning materials.

The pre-assessment will help determine learner's prior experience which has direct bearing to the topic under discussion. As the assessment is a continuous process, tests will also be given during the classroom interaction in an attempt to determine learner's mastery of the content being taught. This will enable the



instructor to adopt or replace the pedagogy being employed. On the other hand, assessment after the instruction will provide the basis for learner's competency and whether they have mastered each intonation pattern's pronunciation and can therefore proceed to the next or otherwise. It should be noted that, for a student to be classified as competent, he/she ought to have mastered a particular intonation pattern by identifying its phonetic symbol and its correct pronunciation at 90% in the inter-language level (Casey, 2018). Students who were assessed below the competency level will then be exposed to corrective exercises and enrichment opportunities. These corrective exercises include more practice on the intonation pattern or presenting it in a different way.

Based on the foregoing perspectives, it is endorsed that in any attempts that are geared at improving students' academic performance, the relevant instructional method can never be over emphasized. Method of instruction is highly considered as the process of classroom interaction (Dada, 2016) which to some extent contributes to the effectiveness or otherwise of any teaching learning process. In the act of learning, learners obtain content, knowledge, skills and develop work habit and practice the application of all these by demonstrating competency which should manifest through performance in real life situation. Performance represents a set of strategies for the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills through tasks that are meaningful and engaging to learners (Nnamdi, 2023). Teachers can therefore determine the extent to which learners acquire and mastered relevant curriculum content by assessing their performance.

Research findings have revealed incessant failure of students in English language especially, phonology of English (Bell, 2017; Wakawa 2017 & Kabir & Dada, 2021). The first semester result of forty eight B.A.Ed. students in ENG 312 (Phonology of English) for 2021/2022 academic session in the Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Federal University Dutsinma revealed that only 5% of the candidates obtained 70% and above of the scores. This technically suggest that 95% of the candidates failed to reach competency level which requires 90% score and above. It is worthy to note the fact that these students were taught using language laboratory instruction. In this regard, attempts should be made to improve students' mastery that will in turn enhance their performance. On this note, this study assesses the degree to which competency-based instruction enhances performance of students of English in the intonation pattern in universities in Katsina state.

The following objective guided the study:

Examine the mean performance score of students of English taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction and those taught using language laboratory instruction in universities in Katsina state.

The study answered the following question:



What is the mean performance score of students of English taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction and those taught using language laboratory instruction in universities in Katsina state?

The study formulated the following hypothesis:

There is no significant difference between the mean performance score of students of English taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction and those taught using language laboratory instruction in universities in Katsina state.

Methodology

The study is a quasi-experimental design with pre-test, treatment and post-test. The study was guided by the objective: to examine the mean performance score of students of English taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction and those taught using language laboratory instruction in universities in Katsina state. The research question and hypothesis were in line with the objective of the study. Two universities were selected, one as experimental and one as control groups. The experimental group was taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction while, the control group was taught using language laboratory instruction. A total of one hundred and eighteen (118) B.A. Ed English three hundred level students constituted the population of the study. Eighty (80) students were selected as samples. Intonation Competency Performance Test (ICPT) was used as the research instrument. The instrument contains twenty five multiple choice items. An SPSS package on Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used in analyzing the test and re-test scores of the items. The instrument yielded reliability coefficient of 0.96. The instrument is hence adjudged reliable and can test competency.

At the initial stage, pre-test was administered to both groups to ascertain the entry learning experience of the participants. After which the groups were exposed to the treatment. The treatment was designed to cover the following units: identification of the symbols of intonation, the types of intonation, the correct pronunciation of each intonation and the identification of each intonation in words and in sentences. Participants in the experimental group were tested after each unit for competency. They are expected to pass at 90% and above before they proceed to the next unit. Those that failed to obtain the minimum benchmark of 90% were exposed to corrective exercises and enrichment opportunities. After six weeks of treatment, a post-test was also administered. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question while, t-test for independent samples was used to test the hypothesis. Probability level of 0.05 was used to retain or reject the formulated hypothesis.



Results

Table 1: Mean performance score of experimental and control groups

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	Mean Gain.
Experimental	40	90.141	3.342	49.899
Control	40	40.242	3.435	

Table 1 revealed that there is a statistical difference in the mean score and standard deviation between the experimental and control groups in the intonation pattern. The experimental group has mean score of 90.141 and the standard deviation of 3.342, while the control group has mean score of 40.242 and the standard deviation of 3.435. A mean gain of 49.899 was calculated in favor of the experimental group. This finding implies that students taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction performed significantly better than those taught using language laboratory instruction.

Table 2: t-test analysis of mean performance score of experimental and control groups

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	p-value
Experimental	40	90.141	3.342				
Control	40	40.242	3.435	78	29.06	2.58	0.000

Table 2 revealed the t-test analysis of mean performance score of experimental and control groups taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction and language laboratory instruction. The table revealed that P-value= 0.000 is less than the alpha 0.05. The t-calculated 29.06 is greater than the t-critical 2.58 at degree of freedom of 78. The hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the mean performance score of students of English taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction and those taught using language laboratory instruction in universities in Katsina state is rejected. This means that there is significant difference between mean performance score of students of English taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction and those taught using language laboratory instruction in universities in Katsina state. The difference is in favor of the experimental group.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that there is significant difference between mean performance score of students of English taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction and those taught using language laboratory instruction in universities in Katsina state. Students taught intonation pattern using competency-based instruction performed significantly better than those



taught using language laboratory instruction. This finding agrees with the findings of Haigar (2020), Larry (2020) and Ibrahim (2023) which revealed that competency-based instruction facilitates learning of phonology of English and intonation pattern in particular. In their separate findings, Ogan (2012), Telimoye and Georgina (2015) revealed that competency-based instruction enhances students' academic performance. After revealing the efficacy of competency-based instruction on students' academic achievement, Bergmann (2022) recommended that educational curriculum should be designed in such a way that sufficient time is allocated for individual student in order to attain mastery of the learning task. This study finding has also justified the findings of Adeyemi (2018), Gusky (2019) and Beulah (2021) which revealed that competency-based instruction bridged the gap between above average, average and below average students in the instructional process. This is evident in the mean performance score of the experimental group of 90.141.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that competency-based instruction is more effective than the language laboratory instruction in teaching intonation pattern in universities in Katsina state. The study therefore concluded that competency-based instruction effectively enhances students' academic performance in the intonation pattern than the language laboratory instruction.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusion drawn, the study recommended that competency-based instruction should be employed in teaching intonation pattern in universities in Katsina state and in Nigeria. This could be made possible through the following:

- a. Advancing the recommendation of the use of practical activities in the teaching and learning of phonology of English in the universities by the National Universities Commission (NUC) to be supplemented by demonstration of mastery as competency-based instruction had revealed to be achievable.
- b. Constituting a committee of curriculum experts, language specialists and all other stakeholders in education to come up with an integrated curriculum design that will blend practical activities, language laboratory and competency-based learning in the Nigerian universities.



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