

SPEAKING SUCCESS: EVALUATING HOW MANIPULATIVE DRILL ENHANCES STUDENT INTEREST IN ORAL ENGLISH IN ENUGU STATE'S TERTIARY CONTEXT

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Abstract

The role of the English language as a global means of communication has grown significantly, fostering mutual understanding between native speakers and non-native users worldwide. This transformation from a foreign to an international language has led to an increasing demand for proficiency, fluency, and effective communication in English, particularly evident in countries like Nigeria. In Nigeria, English serves a dual purpose as both a medium of instruction and a subject of study across all educational levels, including tertiary institutions, as mandated by the National Policy on Education. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council highlights the paramount importance of developing linguistic competencies, with a special emphasis on spoken English skills, encompassing articulation, pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation. However, oral English instruction often remains overlooked, relegated to introductory stages and lacking sustained attention throughout the curriculum. This discrepancy is problematic given the centrality of oral proficiency in language communication. Neglecting this aspect can hinder effective language use and comprehension, leading to potential misunderstandings and miscommunications. This paper underscores the need to elevate oral English education to a prominent position within the curriculum and advocates for its consistent incorporation as a fundamental component of language learning. By recognizing the indispensability of oral English, educators and policymakers can empower learners to become adept communicators and bridge the gap between language acquisition and practical application.

Keywords: English language, global communication, oral English, language proficiency, language education.

INTRODUCTION

The English language, apart from becoming a key element in the globalization process, has metamorphosed into an international language of communication (Uloh-Bethels and Offorma 2019). Emad(2010) notes that English has developed from a foreign to an international language, which plays a significant role in achieving mutual intelligibility and understanding between native speakers and other users of English in the world. Consequently, there is an increasing need for accuracy,

fluency and communicative competence in English language in almost all the countries of the world including Nigeria. English plays a dual significant pedagogical role in Nigeria; as a language of instruction and a subject of study. It is in this light that the teaching and learning of English has become obligatory at all levels of education including the tertiary institutions. This is as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (NPE) by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN, 2013).

The objectives of teaching English in Nigerian tertiary institutions, according to the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2017), include equipping students with the basic linguistic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing that will enable students to communicate competently in both the written and spoken forms of English. Of all these linguistic skills, speaking is the most important (Carte and Nuan, 2001). The speaking skill is taught at the tertiary institutions as the spoken or oral English. This is the aspect of English which deals with articulation and pronunciation of English speech sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation.

Oral English is very essential for all persons and for all purposes, as it enables one to use the English Language very well, almost like the native speakers. It is very necessary for learners of English Language to master the use of oral English well in order to be good models of the language. However, as important as the oral English is in the learning of English, it is still a neglected area in English language teaching which is only focused on the first year of study through the introduction of the target language alphabet and sound system and is given less importance after the introductory stage. Gilakjani (2012) noted that oral English is the basis of communication and should be valued in the same weight as other components and skills of language such as grammar and writing. It is also considered as a priority since language is fundamentally a medium of communication which should be understood by all. He also stressed that a person with an unintelligible pronunciation may run the risk of not being understood by others.

Factors contributing to lack of interest in the teaching and learning of Oral English range from those posed by the students, none use of appropriate technique, interference from the learners' first language and the complex nature of Oral English itself to the evaluation of proficiency in the skill. Ayuba (2012) added that it is neglected because of its complexity, dearth of scientific foundation, insufficient teaching materials, the absence of none native speakers with formal expertise in pronunciation and opposing ideas concerning the teaching of Oral English. Other facts of neglecting oral English in language classrooms arise from the teachers' doubt about how to teach it and lack of interest in the topics. Most learners believe that they do not need special lessons in Oral English as their productivity does not depend on the ability to speak. The introduction of speech organs which ought to have been acquired in the primary and secondary levels were not given much attention in the curriculum. The phonemes of the oral English were introduced without any teaching on their production for lack of time and facilities such as a standard language laboratory.

Where the teacher has to make do with open classrooms, a large number of students await him, and the proper assessment of the students' progress in pronunciation was almost impossible. In secondary school terminal exams like West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination

Council (NECO), General Certificate in Education (GCE), the Chief Examiners' reports on Oral English are overshadowed by the general reports on the English Language. Even as the Chief Examiners explain in details, the performances in grammar and writing, not much time was dedicated to Oral English so as to enable teachers and learners alike to know the aspect of failure to be able to channel their efforts toward them. For instance, the WAEC Chief Examiner's report (2015) pointed out in details, the students' inability to grasp the basic grammar such as tense, concord, spelling and complementation without any mention of students' performance in oral English.

Furthermore, most institutions, focus on grammar and syntax to the disadvantage of the oral aspect of the English language forgetting that proper pronunciation, not only makes our speech intelligible, but also establishes rapport with the listeners. Ayuba (2012) noted that the character of a man is either revealed or concealed through his speech unless, of course, he has the discipline to conceal his emotions. Good grooming is essential in the communicative life of an individual because one is addressed, not only the way one dressed up, but also the way one speaks. Most of these grooming are expected to take place in Oral English classes to learners for various educational sectors including teacher trainees in institutions of higher learning.

Part of their training includes oral English designed to enable them possess good mastery of communicative skills so as to attain certain levels of communicative competence. This oral English is taught through related courses like Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology, which has to do with the production of vowels and consonant sounds. The teaching of the production of the consonant and the vowel sounds includes the supra-segmental features of sounds and sound realization.

Oral English - Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology

Oral English is studied in institutions of higher learning at 100 level (year 1) through related courses such as – Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology, a course offered in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The introduction to Phonetics and Phonology (known as ENG 112 in Enugu State College of Education, Technical) is an aspect of Oral English taught in colleges of education in Nigeria. The objective of this course as stipulated by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) minimum standard are to expose students to relevant training in phonetics and phonology. It stressed the use of segmental and supra-segmental phonemes of English in the language laboratory and reduction, to the minimal level, the mother tongue (MT) interference in speech at the supra-segmental level (Federal Republic of Nigeria (2012).

The objectives as outlined by the NCCE have not in any way been achieved as the teaching of oral English is still neglected and ignored as could be seen in the continued poor performance of students in external examinations. This is attributed to the fact that not many oral English teaching strategies, techniques are available to teachers in the classroom. A pronunciation course is considered an elective course in colleges of Education. The argument, probably, could be that English pronunciation is not important at all, for very few tests would require students to show abilities related to pronunciation or speaking. Both students and teachers believe that spending time on pronunciation is useless because it would be difficult, if not impossible for students to hear differences in the production of minimal

pairs. Dalton (2002) opined that oral English is simply ignored in the curriculum of some colleges of Education and is even described as “the Cinderella of language teaching”. This means that an often low level of emphasis was placed on this very important language skill. The effect of this is serious slide in the performances of students.

Hence the purpose of this study is to find out the impact of Manipulative drill on students’ achievement in oral English as opposed to Word-Association drill. The study will examine the performances of students taught with each techniques, respectively.

The cause of this failure has also been attributed to the conventional technique of teaching adopted by teachers of Oral English. In the teaching of Oral English, so many techniques such as mobility, saturation, comparative and substitution drills have been introduced and adopted in the past. Among the various techniques of teaching Oral English is the Word-association drill also. In this type of drill, the teacher pronounces some vocabularies and the students repeat them or are asked to practice them. Then, the teacher writes down more vocabularies and pronounces the English phonemes. After the teacher pronounces one phoneme, the students are asked to predict what the phonemes are, based on the written words. The word-association drill as a technique does not provide the students enough varying opportunities to master the pronunciation activities as the students’ knowledge and mastery are only dependent on the model provided by the teacher. Once the teacher fails to give the accurate and appropriate novel utterances the students who are at the mercy of their teachers and who have little or no input continue in the perpetual communicative error. This is assumed to have contributed to the continued low performances of students in oral English examinations. When this occurs, it can be harder to train the students in a different method of speaking and methodology. Therefore, the need arises for a more effective technique of teaching oral English which manipulative drill can provide.

The rampant failure in the oral form of the second language or foreign language teaching has made it necessary to credit new techniques. The old written exercise has been supplemented by the oral exercises. There are techniques and devices to develop oral English: and there are others to develop reading and writing, but there is a particular one that will enable teachers achieve better academic performance which is Manipulative drill. Yu (2013) noted that prior to the formalization of language drills in language instructions good oral mastery through mere repetition has not been possible. It is in this context that the need for a discussion on Manipulative drills was felt to be essential.

The Manipulative Drill (MD) is primarily intended for oral practice. Language habits are acquired through prescription. If one wants to communicate in an effective manner, the manipulation of language structure is necessary. So language patterns are repeated to the point of memorization so as to establish them as habits. The Manipulative drill adopts the several procedures that are practical in nature including the following;

1) Emphasize the stressed syllable by using visual effects: thicken, capitalize, underline, or color the stressed syllable. For example, today to DAY today today_2) Use of Rubber Band- Pull a wide rubber

band between the thumbs while saying a word. Stretch it out during the stressed syllable but leave it short during other syllables.

3) Tapping, clapping or playing simple rhythm instruments. Give a strong beat on the stressed syllable and weak beats on the other syllables.

Successful language instruction expects an automatic use of language manipulation by the learners (Haycraft, 2012). In the Word - Association drill, without having a grammatical analysis the learner will respond by analogy, whereas in Manipulative drill unless the learner understands the features involved in the language manipulation he will not be able to give a correct and complete response. This understanding of the feature is what makes the learning internalized in the learner. Manipulative drill takes the learner into available procedure that helps boost his communicative competence.

In Manipulative Drill students first hear model dialogue either read by the teacher or on tape containing the key structures that are the focus of the lesson. They repeat each line of the dialogue individually and in chorus. The teacher pays attention to pronunciation, intonation and fluency. Correction of mistakes of pronunciation is direct and immediate. The dialogue is memorized gradually, line by line. A line may be broken down into several phrases or words if necessary. The dialogue is read aloud in chorus one half saying one speaker's part and the other half responding. The students do not consult their books throughout this phase.

The dialogue is adapted to the students' interest or situation through changing certain key words or phrases. This is acted out by the students. Certain key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as the basis for pattern drills of different kinds. These are first practiced in chorus and then individually. Drills are made use of to help the learners grasp the structural points and help them to internalize these structures. It is through constant repetition and manipulation that a language could be mastered and the features of the target language developed as habits. It is obvious that manipulative drill plays an extremely significant role in the language teaching. Just as the gradation of vocabulary and structure is essential in order to make the instructional materials more effective, it is equally essential, if not more, to present the drills and exercises in a graded manner from simple to complex. By so arranging, the learner will have the facility of mastering the simple or easier aspect first and gradually proceed to the complex or difficult aspect. In so doing, the learners will have very little to manipulate in the initial stages and the degree of manipulation gradually increases as one proceeds gradually from the simplest drill to complex and more complex ones include interest. Interest involves stored knowledge or cognitive representation stored from past experience and value or related emotional responses such as feelings of competence (Renninger 2015). Given the inherent linkages between these emotions and cognitive structures, interest and knowledge develop and influence how an individual engages in current and subsequent tasks. This resultant persistent interest affects the ease and likelihood that material will be encoded in the student's memory (Norman 2013). Despite the various approaches to the study of interest and accompanying components, one common assumption across the body of work is that interest is a phenomenon that emerges from an individual's interaction with his or her environment. Although interest has recorded

reasonable attention in the education literature for decades, Bulunuz (2017) said that the construct is relatively absent from the field of instructional communication

Interest deals with how pleasant and attractive a person finds a given activity. It is believed to be a very important factor in learning. Hornby (2001) defined it as the quality that something has when it attracts people's attention or makes them to want to know more about it. It goes hand in hand with motivation when one is interested in learning oral English for instance, one is motivated to learn it, and when one is motivated to learn one develops interest in learning it. So, interest can be seen as a motivational construct that spur one into activities.

So, teachers of oral English have to make their subjects as interesting as possible in order to stimulate and better hold their student interest and enhance their achievement. One of the ways of insurance this is the use of interesting and active learner-oriented instructional technique which the manipulative drill provides.

The strategy that can offer this opportunity of effective understanding of oral English may be constant manipulation. In all drills learners have no or very little choice over what is said, so drills are a form of very controlled practice. There is one correct answer and the main focus is on getting it right. That is on accuracy. There is also the possibility of groups or pairs of students engaging in language drills together. In using the manipulative drill as a technique, structural patterns that are capable of creating and developing unconscious correct habits in learners are presented. Drill that suit the interest and maturational levels of the learners and drill whose contents are related and sufficient to help learners internalize the chosen structures in oral English are also presented through the Manipulative drill. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the effect of Manipulative drill on Teacher Trainees' Achievement in oral English. Two research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

Research Questions

What are the mean interest ratings of students taught oral English using manipulative drill and those taught with word association drill?

Research Hypothesis

HO₁: There will be no significant difference in the mean interest rating scores of student taught oral English using manipulative drill and those taught using word association drill.

Research Method

The study employed the quasi-experimental research design. Specifically, it is the non-randomized, control group, pre-test, post-test design. This design was adopted because the students that were used for the experiment were already in intact classes and randomization would disrupt the existing structure in the school, thus posing some administrative problems.

Area of the Study

This study was carried out in Enugu State, Nigeria. Enugu state is located at the South East of Nigeria. It is bounded by five states- Anambra and Abia in the south, Ebonyi, Kogi and Benue states in the north. The residents were made up of mostly civil servants, business men and women and students.

The study was carried out at the Enugu State College of Education Technical, (ESCET). This institution was chosen because it is an educational institution that trains students who will become teachers of oral English on graduation and has Language Studies Department.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consists of all the year one students offering English in the Department of Language Studies of the Enugu State College of Education Technical. There are seventy-five (75) year one students from Enugu State College of Education Technical. This population is made up of 46 female and 29 male students.

Sample and Sampling Technique

All the seventy-five (75) year one students of language studies department, Enugu State College of Education Technical Enugu for the academic year were used for the study. The school has Language Studies Department. The criterion for this selection was based mainly on the higher institution in the state that has department of language studies. In assigning the experimental and control, the 53 students from Enugu State College of Education Technical who gained admission after one-year remedial course became the experimental group while the 22 students who gained admission through JAMB became the control group. Both groups possess the same intelligence quotient (IQ) this was achieved through the tossing of coin.

Instruments for Data Collection

The instrument used to collect data for the study was the Oral English Interest Inventory (OEII). The Oral English Interest Inventory (OEII) was a 20-item instrument developed by the researcher based on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains as they pertain to expressions of interest. The cognitive component had seven statements of interest and it dealt with the interest of the subject in knowing about oral English. The affective component had to do with the attraction or violence of the subject in the presence of the object of the interest it had six statements of interest. The psychomotor component, on the other hand, had seven statement of interest and it dealt with the actions towards to the object of interest. In all, OEII covered the general areas of student's interest in oral English. it consisted of ten positive and ten negative items. The instrument was constructed on a four point Likert type of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD).

Validation of the Instrument

The Oral English Interest Inventory (OEII) was subjected to face validation. However, (OEII) was further subjected to content validation. The instrument was presented to five specialists. Two of them are in Language Education; two in Educational Measurement and Evaluation and one from Educational Psychology.

For the face validation of OEII, the specialists were requested to examine the clarity of the instructions given; check the framing of the questions and their suitability to Year 1 students; determine whether the marking scheme is accurate; check the adequacy and relevance of the purpose research questions, hypotheses and lesson plans with regard to instruments; and suggest any modifications to improve the face validity of the instrument.

For the content validation of the OEII, the experts were requested to examine the test items generated in relation to the Test Blue Print and Table of Specification and make recommendations. The table of Specification/Test Blue Print contains columns for knowledge and comprehension (lower order level) and application (higher order level). These are the levels of cognitive domain contained in the achievement test.

Reliability of the Instrument

In order to determine the reliability of the instruments, the researcher administered the OEII to 20 students from Institute of Ecumenical Education Thinkers Corner Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria. The subjects were outside the area of the study within the same Enugu Urban Area. They possessed similar social and educational characteristics as those that were used for the study.

After administering the OEII the researcher determined the internal consistency of the OEII using Kuder-Richrdson's Formula ($K - R 20$). This formula is mostly applicable to tests that are dichotomously scored (Ezeh, 2003). The OEII instrument that was used in this study has dichotomously scored items. Hence, Kuder-Richrdson's Formula was found relevant.

Method of Data Analysis

In the analysis of data that were got from the OEII, 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 0.78 level of significance. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used as the statistical tool for testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

This section presents the analysis of the data collected in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Research Question One: What are the mean interest ratings of students taught oral English using manipulative drill and those taught with word association drill?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of interest ratings of students taught oral English using manipulative drill and those taught with word-association drill

Group	Pre-test			Post-test		
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean Gain
Manipulative Drill	53	28.94	5.65	52.37	10.89	23.43
Word-association Drill	22	28.85	5.56	48.80	5.76	18.95

Table 1 shows that the students who were taught oral English using manipulative drill had mean interest rating of 52.37 with a standard deviation of 10.89 at the post-test against their pre-test mean interest rating of 28.94 and standard deviation of 5.65 while those who were taught using word-association drill had mean interest rating of 47.80 with a standard deviation of 5.76 at the post-test against their pre-test mean interest rating of 28.85 and standard deviation of 5.56. Mean gain scores

of 23.43 and 18.95 for the two groups respectively imply that the students who were exposed to manipulative drill had higher post-test mean interest rating than their counterpart who were exposed to word-association drill. However, the post-test standard deviations of 10.89 and 5.76 for the students who were exposed to manipulative drill and those exposed to word-association drill respectively imply that the experimental group (manipulative drill) varied much in their individual interest rating than the control group (word-association drill).

Research Hypothesis

HO₁: There will be no significant difference in the mean interest rating scores of student taught oral English using manipulative drill and those taught using word association drill.

Table 2: Analysis of covariance of the effect of manipulative drill and word-association drill on mean interest ratings of students in oral English

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1140.958 ^a	4	285.240	4.356	.003	.199
Intercept	6096.718	1	6096.718	93.106	.000	.571
Pre-test	23.190	1	23.190	.354	.554	.005
Treatment	775.577	1	775.577	11.844	.001	.145
Gender	326.934	1	326.934	4.993	.029	.067
Treatment * Gender	544.295	1	544.295	8.312	.005	.106
Error	4583.709	70	65.482			
Total	192725.000	75				
Corrected Total	5724.667	74				

a. R Squared = .199 (Adjusted R Squared = .154)

Table 2 shows that the probability associated with the calculated value of F (11.844) for the effect of manipulative drill and word-association drill on mean interest rating of student in oral English is 0.001. Since the probability value of 0.001 is less than the 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis was rejected meaning that there is a significant difference in the mean interest rating of student taught oral English using manipulative drill and those taught with word-association drill in favour of the teacher trainees exposed to manipulative drill. Besides, the partial Eta Square value (effect size) of 0.145 that manipulative drill had low effect on the interest of student in oral English.

Empirical Studies:

Opara (2003) carried out a related research. The study examined the effect of pronunciation drills on secondary school students' achievement in reading. To guide the study, four research questions were formulated. The questions examined such variables as gender, location and ability. A sample population of 240 boys and girls which represented the study population of 2,750 was used. The students were purposively selected from two co-educational schools representing the urban and rural secondary schools in the area. A pre-test and post-test was administered to the control and

experimental groups used for the study. The mean performance of each group was computed and the hypotheses tested using analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA). The result showed that there was a significant effect of drill on the achievement of students taught reading using drill as technique. This indicates that drill as technique enhanced students' performance.

In another research, Rentel and Kennedy (1992) investigated the effects of pattern drill on the phonology, syntax and reading achievement of rural Appalachian children. The study examined the effectiveness of pattern drill relative to the reduction of phonological grammatical variations from the standard South Midland dialect and the promotion of reading ability. The sample consisted of 120 rural Appalachian first grade students enrolled in six intact classes. For six weeks, three randomly assigned classes received patterned instruction designed to modify subjects' rural Appalachian dialect. The remaining three classes served as controls. Post-testing consisting of frequency of phonological and grammatical variations from standard provided by a panel of judges was administered. Scores on the word reading achievement test were analyzed initially by a 2x3x3 mixed model analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). Results indicated that subjects that received patterned drill practice were better able to approximate the grammatical patterns of the standard South Midland dialect.

Discussion of the Findings:

Evidence from this study shows that students in the experimental group who were taught oral English using manipulative drill (MD) obtained a higher post-test mean interest rating than those in the control group who were taught the same oral English using Word-association drill (WAD). The findings presented in table 1 indicate that those taught with MD had a post-test mean score of 52.37, while those taught with the WAD had 47.80. Similarly, those taught with MD had a mean gain score of 23.43, while those taught with the WAD had a mean gain score of 18.95. The difference between those mean scores was statistically significant as shown by the result presented in table 1

The effectiveness of the MD over WAD is not farfetched as the MD does not abstract statement and memorization of the phonemic symbols. Rather, students are presented with familiar drilling exercise where intonations were patterned with practical exercises. They use them in context and have the chance of acquiring them. In other words, they unconsciously acquire the intonation pattern as well as the rhythm of the language in authentic discourse.

The result of this study also goes to corroborate the monitor theory as propounded by Krashen (1982) which states that adult second language learners approach second learning by either acquiring it or learning it but that acquisition is superior to learning. The MD creates a variety of learning experiences for the learners to explore the language and acquire it just as children do. However, it also provides the learner with the rules which complement and polish what they had been exposed to through the acquired system. But learning of rules is never given first priority. This approach has been found to be superior to the WAD which focuses chiefly on rote repetition of sounds as produced by the model which is usually the teacher that are often forgotten.

Conclusion

On the strength of the findings of the study, the following conclusions are hereby drawn. The MD has facilitative effects on Students' interest in oral English. Students taught oral English using the MD achieved significantly higher than those taught with the Word-association Drill (WAD). This means that the MD proved superior to the significant influence on students' interest in oral English.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby made in line with the findings and implications of the study:

The results of the study have shown that the Manipulative Drill (MD) has significantly positive effect on students' interest in Oral English. Thus, Oral English teachers should adopt the approach as an alternative to the word-association Drill (WAD) Oral English.

Workshops, seminars and conferences should be regularly organized for English language teachers by education authorities such as Universities, College of Education, Ministries of Education Post Primary Schools' Management Board and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) on the use of MD in teaching Oral English

English teacher preparation programmes in College of Education and Universities should include their relevant courses on methodology the use of MD in teaching Oral English so that students will be trained on how to use this approach in teaching Oral English on employment.

Curriculum developers for secondary schools such as the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should incorporate the MD as an effective approach in teaching Oral English in the next review of the curriculum as well as carry out further research on other areas of the Oral English where the MD could be applied.

Textbook writers especially in Oral English should develop new textual materials that are MD complaint.

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