



A Contrastive Analysis of Two Approaches in Teaching Basic Grammar in College of Education and Legal Studies, Nguru, Yobe State

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Abstract

This study aims to compare the feasibility of two approaches in teaching basic English in College of Education and Legal Studies Nguru, Yobe State, Nigeria. The study uses sector analysis and grammar translation method. In addition, this paper attempts to discover which one is more relevant to the linguistics and academic needs of the students offering English as a single major in College of Education and Legal Studies, Nguru. The subjects were divided into experimental and control groups. The two groups were exposed to treatment in form of intensive teaching using the 'sector analysis and grammar translation method' respectively. A pre-test was administered on the subjects and the result showed that there was no significant difference in their grammatical competence. However, the post-test showed that teaching basic grammar with the sector. However, the study emphasizes the importance of synchronizing the positive pedagogical attributes of the grammar translation method' with that of the sector analysis approach in teaching basic grammar (English) in a second language situation.

Keywords: Sector Analysis Approach, Grammar Translation Method, Basic Grammar, Legal Studies, contrastive analysis

1. Introduction

Language is a vital tool for existence in the world today and it is a binding force which holds humanity together, despite the socio-cultural or religious differences usually exhibited by man. The ability to communicate with language is hinged on the acquisition of basic language skills such as speaking, listening, writing and reading (Brown, 2001). Consequently, the survival chances of human beings in the modern world become high depending on the level of linguistic cum communicative competence that is attained. This attainment, logically, depends on the formal exposure of the individual in an academic environment to the various rules governing the use of target language, which is English, in this instance (Danner, 2005).

The learning of English as a second language at the tertiary level has numerous challenges and more times than not, the approach and methods employed by the language instructors go a long way in determining the level of success achieved by the learners. Consequently, Government and Non-Government agencies (including the Federal Government) take the pain, to ensure that the learners of English in all levels of education become averagely competent and efficient in the use of English. As reported by the (MDGP, 2008), there is an emphasis on the methodology of teaching the various aspects of English language. The concern of this paper is on English Grammar, and the relating methodologies specified in the manual aforementioned signifies a paradigmatic shift from the so-called 'old' method to 'new' ones.

Nevertheless, this study is interested in the utilization of two methods of teaching Basic English in the College of Education and Legal Studies Nguru, with a view to finding out which of these methods will be beneficial to the learners of English as a second language. Not only that, this study will also attempt to create a pedagogical roadmap for the lecturers in charge of Basic English courses in the College as regards the use of a more productive and a learner-centred approach beneficial to both teacher and learner.

The frequency of low level of proficiency in the use of basic English structures by undergraduates in College of Education and Legal Studies, Nguru is creating anxiety in the stakeholders saddled with the responsibilities of ensuring quality education for the learners. One of the reasons for the poor performance in basic grammar can be attributed to the use of inappropriate teaching methods in the basic English class, or rather, an over reliance on teaching methods that may be considered as not being learner-friendly. For instance, the provisional results of students that offered ENG-113: Basic Grammar for the 2020/2021 semester in the department of English showed a high level of grammatical incompetence as reflected in their dismal academic performance. This study intends to find out the suitability of two teaching methods as a means to arriving at a reasonable answer to the problem earlier stated.

Hence the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Are learners in the experimental group grammatically competent after being exposed to Sector Analysis Approach?
- 2) Are learners in the control group grammatically competent after being exposed to the Grammar Translation Method?
- 3) How the learners in the experimental group are grammatically competent than learners in the control group after treatment?

For some time now, the teaching of basic grammar in Colleges in Nigeria has been influenced by some traditional teaching methods such as 'Direct Method', the 'audio-lingual method' and instruction based on the 'lecturer-methods'. In Colleges of Education in Nigeria, the teaching



of English Grammar with the Grammar Translation method has been the predominant method widely used by language teachers until recently where the communicative language teaching approach has been suggested as a better language learning tool for undergraduates (Gogura & Agukwe, 2000). However, recent findings have also suggested the use of Sector Analysis as a new approach to teaching English Grammar. Therefore, this study is significant, because it expands on previous research on the use of appropriate teaching methods for basic English Grammar in College of Education and Legal Studies, Nguru.

In addition, this study aims to find out which one of the two methods; Sector Analysis or Grammar Translation Method is more suitable for basic grammar teaching in College of Education and Legal Studies, Nguru.

2. The Concept of Grammatical Structure

Basically, grammatical structures have played a central role in teaching and learning English and according to Brown (2001), are the foundation for the teaching of the other aspects of language. Grammar is generally thought of as a set of rules for selecting words and putting them together to make sense (Danner, 2005). A simple allusion is that if language is a building, the words are bricks and the grammar is the builders' plan. It is quite possible to have a thousand of bricks, not have a building without having plan. In the same vein, it is quite possible also, for a person to possess a thousand words in his lexicon and does not have the skill to put them together to form meaningful structures. Consequently, grammar can be considered as a framework to describe language (Brumfit & Johnson, 2000).

The teaching of grammar in second language learning situation, according to Meyer and Gallo (2012), should facilitate learning in various forms such as acquisition of implicit grammatical knowledge needed for effortless communication, provision of activities promoting exploration of the language, opportunities to make grammatical generalisation (mirroring the L1 grammar acquisition process). Thornbury (2001) states some rules about the teaching of grammar which involves the Rules of context, the Rule of use, the Rule of Economy, the Rule of Relevance, the Rule of Nurture, and the Rule of Appropriacy. According to him, these seven rules are interpreted according to the levels, needs, interest, expectation, and learning styles of the learners. In a broad sense, Ellis (2006) views grammar teaching as involving any instructional technique that attracts the learner's attention to some specific grammatical form in such a manner that would assist the learners to understand it with a view to internalizing it.

Over the years, a number of teaching methods, approaches and techniques have been suggested for the teaching of English grammar at various levels of education. This agitation for a more learner-friendly teaching method emanated from the fact that the Grammar Translation Method was based on the teaching of Latin which is a foreign language of education', commerce, religion and government in the sixteenth-century western world. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), by the nineteenth century, the approach was based on the study of Latin which had become a standard way of studying foreign languages in schools. This approach become known as Grammar Translation' Method. Previous on the Grammar Translation Method have been done by a host of researchers such as Stern (1992), Brown (1994), Cunnungham (2000), Austin (2003) and they all perceived the merits and demerits from various perspectives. Summarily put, the method exhibited certain features such as learning through detailed analysis of grammar, rules, reading and writing as the main focus, selection of vocabulary based on reading text, teaching words through dictionary study, memorization and bilingual word lists and translation as the central technique. Unlike the behaviourists, Austin (2003) represented the school of thought that was better than bad in the Grammar Translation Method. In his view, translation helps the learner understand the influence of one language on the other like potential errors caused by negative transfer from the L1. He, like others in his stead, believes that the learners will be able to explain why errors occur and try not to make the same mistake again.

On the other hand, the Sector Analysis, popularly called X-Grammar, came into existence through the work of late Dr. Robert L. Allen. This was made possible through the assistance of his graduate students who applied Sector Analysis to the classroom teaching of English. A host of researchers in the behaviourists' camp argues that most grammar books have attempted to use rules and terms appropriate for Latin grammar to teach English. Bryson (2000) observed that English is so complex and confusing for the one very reason that its rules and terminologies are based on Latin - a language with which it has preciously little in common, in the same vein, it is believed that learners of English as a second language tend to find it relatively difficult to learn basic English structures and within a short period too. Supporting this section, Harmer (2003) is of the opinion that learners of ESL need a technique that would open their minds to English. Going further, he opined that x-word changes grammar from a fragmented whole to unifying it into the system it really is.

3. Method

This research adopted the pre-test, post-test, quasi-experimental design. The quasi-experimental design was used in this study because random assignment of subject was not possible due to the use of intact classes in this study (Dawson, 1997).

The subjects consisted of two classes from the Department of English that offered ENG-113, Basic English, in the first semester of 2019/2020 academic year. The two classes comprised the experimental and control groups respectively. The two groups were taught by the Grammar Translation Method and the Sector Analysis Approach for ten weeks. Each lesson was held twice a week, and the course content for ENG 113 as contained in the College hand book (2017/2018) was strictly adhered to.

3.1 Instruments for the Study

Pre-test: The paper for this test comprises fifty multiple choice questions weighing 100marks. The content for the pre-test consisted of grammatical items such as concord, direct and indirect speech, active and passive voice, non-finite verbs and modal verbs.

Post-test: The paper is to test the subjects' grammatical competence after the experiment. The format of this paper is identical to the content of the pre-test. The post-text was conducted after ten weeks of intensive teaching involving the experimental and control groups.

3.1.1 Validity of the Instruments

The instrument was validated by research experts in the field of research and statistics at University of Maiduguri. A senior colleague in the Department of Languages and Linguistics and English and Literary Studies made some corrections in the draft of the pre-test paper and the corrections were reflected in the final copy. The final drafts of both pre-test and post-test were produced based on the modification of the experts.

3.1.2 Reliability of the Instruments

The reliability of the instrument was achieved by administering the test items on subjects in two senior secondary schools in Damaturu and Nguru, both in Yobe State. The reliability co-efficient of the test was discovered to be 0.95 using Kuder-Rechadern 21 (KR21).

3.2 Procedure of Data Analysis

The pre-test was administered during the first week of 2019-2020 academic year on the subjects before they were eventually split into the experimental and control groups. The test consisted of fifty multiple choice questions. Each of the five sections tested five grammatical items in sync with the five items contained in the course content of the grammar lesson. The second to ninth week (2-9 weeks) was used for intensive teaching of the five items contained in the test. The experimental was taught with the Sector Analysis Approach while the control group was exposed to the Grammar Translation method by the same lecturer and with the same lesson notes. The final stage comprised the implementation of the post-test on both groups of this study.

3.3 Data Collection

The tests are done under the supervision of the research assistants in the Department of English and the researcher. The scores are compiled for data analysis using SPSS 16.0.

4. Results and Discussion

In an attempt to reveal any significance difference in the effect of the two teaching methods on the experimental and control groups in terms of grammar competence, the result of the statistical analysis will be presented in relation to the two research questions.

Table 1(a): Grammatical competence of subject before experiment

Descriptive Statistics						
Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-call	t-table
Experimental	42	52.43	6.81	84	t= 1.28	Jan-98
Control	44	50.64	6.12			

Table 1(b): Grammatical competence of subject after experiment

Descriptive Statistics						
Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-call	t-table
Experimental	42	69.67	6.32	84	4.68	1.98
Control	44	61.14	10.22			

The result in table 1(a) and table 1(b) show that the pre-test average score of the experimental group is little lower than the average score of the control group. There is, however, no significant difference between the scores of the two groups. The t-call for both groups for pre-test scores signifies that the current level of grammar competence of both groups is not likely to influence the effect of the experiment.

Research Question 1:

Are learners in the experimental group grammatically competent after being exposed to Sector Analysis Approach?

Table 2: Grammatical competence through Sector Analysis Approach

Descriptive Statistics						
Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-call	t-test
Pre-test	42	64.19	7.71	82	8.36	1.98
Post-test	42	79.67	7.31			

The results in table 2 show that progress was made by the experimental group in the post-test with the mean score standing 79.67. This is an improvement over the pre-test score with a mean 64.19. The pre-test and post-test were designed identically and there was no difference in content, time, allocation and administration of both tests. This signifies that there is a significant difference in the average score before and after the experiment.

Research Question 2:

Are learners in the control group grammatically competent after being exposed to the Grammar Translation Method?

Table 3: Grammatical competence through Grammar Translation Method

Descriptive Statistics						
Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-call	t-test
Pre-test	44	57.32	6.27	86	3.97	1.98
Post-test	44	70.1	10.12			

The result in table 3 reflects a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test showing a level of effect of the Grammar Translation Method. The mean of 57.32 and 70.10 respectively shows that the teaching method had an effect on the subjects. This result can be interpreted as an improvement in the grammar competence of the control group.

Research Question 4:

Are the learners in the experimental group grammatically competent than learners with control group after treatment?

Table 4: Grammatical Competence of experimental and controlled groups of students

Descriptive Statistics for Post-test						
Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-call	t-test
Experimental	42	69.67	6.24	84	3.6	1.98
Control	44	61.14	11.23			

The result from the post-test in table 4 reveals an improvement in the grammatical competence in the experimental group over the subjects in the control group. The post-test was designed with a similar format for both groups. The average score of the experimental group is 69.69 while that of the control group is 61.14. The SD further suggests a significance difference between the grammatical competence level of the experimental and control groups.

5. General Discussion and Conclusion

The results from tables (1-4) show that the learners made significant progress in their use of grammar after being exposed to the Sector Analysis Approach for ten weeks. This is an indication that the Sector Analysis Approach to teaching basic English grammar had more pedagogical impact on the learners than the Grammar Translation Method which has been viewed by a host of behaviourists as inappropriate for present day learners of English.

Nevertheless, it is suggested that a synchronization of both method/approaches would yield better results in the English class since each method have their merits and demerits. In this case, the researcher is expected to build on the strength of both methods with the needs of the learners in mind.

In conclusion, this study has revealed the need to make the learning of English as a second language less-cumbersome and tasking. Instead, the use of simple but accurate pedagogical means to bring English grammar to the learners would attract their interest and curiosity. The beauty of this study is that new teaching innovations are beginning to evolve and the academic staff in various department in College of Education would now have the opportunity of benefiting from, and building on the findings of the study.

Resultantly, the students offering English as a single major in College of Education and Legal Studies, Nguru, Yobe State would perform better in the identification and usage of basic grammar structures of English as well as obtain good grades after being examined in Basic Grammar examination (ENG-113).

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