

## INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL LOCATION ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS TAUGHT ORAL ENGLISH WITH GAMES TECHNIQUE

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study was carried out to find out the influence of school location on the achievement of students taught Oral English with games technique. One research question and two null-hypotheses guided the study. The quasi-experimental research design involving non-equivalent control group was used for the study. The sample consisted 304 JS III students drawn from eight intact classes in Idah Education Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria. Pre-test and post-test were administered to all the groups (treatment and control). A 60-item Oral English Achievement Test (OEAT) was used for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study was that location had influence on students' achievement. The paper recommends, among others, that government should carry out proper monitoring and supervision of Oral English teachers in both urban and rural areas of Nigeria.*

**KEYWORDS:** School Location, Oral English, Games Technique, Students' Achievement

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### INTRODUCTION

Oral English, also known as spoken English, is the form of English used when people speak to one another. It is the way in which the English language is transmitted through a conventional system of sounds. Students who are learning English as a second language may have difficulties in Oral English because of the phonological differences between the English language and their mother tongue (Otagburuagu, Obah, Onuigbo & Okorji, 2007).

Traditionally, literacy was a significant indication of the educated mind. The educated man was cherished because of the knowledge and social prominence which learning and literacy gave. Since social and economic prominence which are associated with literacy were usually obtained through education and since educated men were only those who could read and write, much attention was paid to the written form of language. To many learners of English, therefore, what was actually important was the ability to read and write English very well. However, recent studies in linguistics have caused the re-evaluation of the relationship between the spoken and written forms of language. Emphasis has now shifted to communicative competence which subsumes such competence as grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competences (Izuagba, 2005). The spoken form of the English language is now attracting as much attention as the other forms of the language.

Writing on the importance of Oral English, Eyisi (2002) states that Oral English equips one with the ability to understand speakers of English whether they are Nigerians, British, Canadians or Americans. Competence in Oral English is a great asset to anyone who wishes to be relevant in the mainstream of international affairs. This is more so in Nigeria where there is need for communication between the speakers of over four hundred mutually unintelligible languages. Gimson (2004) states that the essence of the spoken component of the English language is to equip one with the ability to understand educated speakers of English and also

be understood by others. Gimson stresses that unless a learner expects to deal with English only in written form, there is no escape from the acquisition of at least the rudimentary elements of English pronunciation. The purpose of Oral English teaching and learning therefore is to ensure that students reach a level of communication fluency in the use of English in such a way that they can easily pass information in speech and readily retrieve same from speakers without loss of mutual intelligibility.

Oral English is so important that examination councils in Nigeria have made it a compulsory part of the English language examination. Idowu, Sogbesan, Adofu, Burgess & Burgess (2003: 139) comment that “The importance of speech to a learner of language has necessitated the inclusion of spoken English in the Senior Secondary School Examination. Oral English is compulsory and contributes to the overall marks obtainable in the examination.” The essence of making Oral English compulsory in SSCE is to impart to the students the ability to understand English and be understood by competent speakers of English within and outside Nigeria. Oral English, therefore, needs to be taught properly using innovative techniques.

In Nigeria, schools are located in both urban and rural areas. The location of a school is an important factor in learning and over the years there have been controversies on the question of whether school environments have influence on the behaviour and attainment of children who attend them. According to Uzoegwu (2010), the location of a school determines so many things that are important in learning such as learning facilities and environmental factors, infrastructures, number and quality of teachers and the class size. Adequate provision or lack of these facilities may improve or hamper learning by students. These may also affect the achievement of students in language learning. The location of a school can, therefore, influence a child’s knowledge of Oral English as well as the general knowledge and attitude to language learning.

Location refers to a particular place in physical space; in other words, the particular environment in which an activity takes place. In this case, it means the geographical environment in which schools are sited, i.e urban or rural. Urban or rural circumstances present different stimulations for the learner. The difference in school environment is expected to result in differential impact in the acquisition of skills in second language learning. The educational advantages of a school will be highly influenced by the urban or rural location. Ezewu (2007) states the obvious when he observes that the location of a school (urban or rural) affects a child’s ability to study and perform at the level expected of him. A stimulating school environment arouses the students to learn. Hence, the degree of interest a student derives from a learning environment affects his performance. Udosen and Afangideh (2007) and Bodunde (2010) report that environmental values such as peer group influence and school location are some of the factors that affect students’ proficiency and achievement in Oral English.

There are varying opinions about which group of students achieve higher than the other with regard to location. Uzoegwu (2010) in her study on the effect of school location on students’ achievement in English essay writing using co-operative learning method found that students in rural area have higher gain score than their counterparts in urban area. Bodunde (2010), in his own study on the effect of school location and influence of concentration on students’ proficiency in Oral English, however, reports that the students in urban area achieve higher than their counterparts in rural area. According to Bodunde (2010), the opportunity to use the English language in urban setting is higher than in rural setting. This serves as a motivating factor to learners in urban areas in enhancing proficiency. This is what Di-Pietro (2010) describes as an extra-grammatical factor motivating learners in language learning. Since there

seems to be no clear cut agreement on the influence of location on students' achievement, the present study seeks to investigate the influence of location on students' achievement using games technique.

A game is a contest between two or more participants. Webster's New World Dictionary (2007) defines game as any specific contest, engagement, amusement, computer simulation, or sport involving physical or mental competition under specific rules. Yannias and Goulka (2008) see it as a universal form of recreation generally including any activity engaged in for diversion or amusement and often establishing a situation that involves a contest or rivalry. Salen and Zimmerman (2007) view game to be a system in which players make decisions in order to manage resources through competition in the pursuit of a goal.

The definitions above have similarities. They coincide principally in three aspects: competition, rules, and amusement. They all view game as an exercise of voluntary control system in which there is an opposition between forces, confined by a procedure and rules in order to produce an outcome. The essence of game lies in out-stripping, in a friendly manner, someone else's performance. Attested to as early as 2600 BC, games are a universal part of human experience and present in all cultures. According to Soubeyrand (2010), the Royal Games of Ur, Senet and Mancala are some of the oldest known games. Today, there are a variety of games, ranging from competitive sports to board games, card, video, pencil and paper, guessing games etc.

Games technique is the use or adaptation of existing games for teaching and learning. It incorporates games mechanics into teaching and learning to make it more engaging. It involves three principal elements: competition, rules and enjoyment, which should be well established by the teaching/learning objectives. The goal is to maximize enjoyment through capturing the interest of learners. According to Vaillancourt (2014), the concept of games as a teaching technique was pioneered by John Dewey in 1944. Since then more researches have been carried out with regard to its application in different subject areas such as science subjects, Mathematics, vocabulary and grammar (Umo, 2004; Okoye, 2008; Denga, 2008; Huyen & Nga 2008). However, it appears not to have been applied in the teaching and learning of Oral English in Nigeria. This underscores the need for this study. The problem of this study, therefore, is: what is the influence of school location on the achievement of students taught Oral English with games' technique? The purpose was to determine the influence of school location on the achievement of students taught Oral English using games' technique. To guide the study, one research question and two null-hypotheses were formulated. These are:

### **Research Question**

What is the mean achievement score of students in urban and rural areas taught Oral English with games technique?

### **Hypotheses**

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of urban and rural students taught Oral English with games technique.

HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant interaction effect of method and location on the achievement scores of students taught Oral English with games technique.

## Method

The multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted to draw 304 JS III students from eight schools in Idah Education Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria for this study. In the first instance, stratified random sampling technique was used to draw four schools from each strata (urban and rural), making a total of eight schools altogether (four public and four private). The balloting procedure was used to draw the eight schools. The researcher wrote the names of all the public schools in the urban area on pieces of paper which were squeezed and dropped on the floor. Then four were picked at random. The same procedure was used to sample the four private schools in the urban area. This procedure was repeated all over again to sample public and private schools from the rural area for the study. Four intact classes in the schools sampled in each location were then randomly assigned to treatment and control groups respectively by balloting. Only mixed (co-educational) schools were sampled for the study since there were no single sex private schools in the study area.

The instrument for data collection was a 60-item multiple-choice Oral English Achievement Test (OEAT). It is an audio C.D which students were required to listen to while it was playing and then answer basic questions. Three words numbered A to C were written on paper but only one word out of the three was pronounced on the audio C.D. Students were then required to identify the word they heard on the C.D and write the letter of the alphabet that corresponds with the word pronounced. Each question correctly answered carries 1 mark, i.e. 60 marks. The instrument was face validated by three experts, two in Language Education and one in Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Content validation was done using table of specification. A trial testing of the instrument was carried out using a sample of 30 JS III students drawn from an equivalent group in Igalamela/Odolu Education Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria. The data obtained from the trial testing were used for both item analysis and in estimating the reliability of the instrument. The internal consistency of the test items was determined using Kuder Richardson Formula 20. The reliability co-efficient based on K – R 20 was 0.86.

Two weeks before the commencement of the experiment, the test instrument, Oral English Achievement Test (OEAT), was administered as pre-test on the 304 students sampled for the study. Since the test instrument was an audio C.D, it was not possible for the researcher to reshuffle the test items. This was why it had to be administered two weeks ahead of the commencement of treatment. The actual treatment session was conducted by the regular English Language teachers in their respective classes using the lesson plans prepared by the researcher which were validated along with the instrument. The major treatment was the teaching of Oral English. The experimental groups were taught with the lesson plans on games' technique while the control groups were taught with the lesson plans on the conventional method. The researcher regularly monitored the classes to ensure compliance with the procedure of instruction.

Four games developed by the researcher were used for the experiment. The games were the traditional non-computer type games that relied on props and teams and the creation of an entertaining learning environment that emphasized sound production, discrimination and placement. Specifically, they were pronunciation games that were anchored on a combination of flashcards and guessing games tagged 'sound production puzzle', 'sound placement puzzle', sound 'identification and discrimination puzzles'. Game one dealt with production of sounds. It was aimed at developing students' skills for the production of the sounds of English Language in such a way that a listener could understand the sounds so produced without doubts

as to the quality and meaning of the utterances. Games two and three dealt with identification and placement of sounds. They were aimed at developing students' skill for proper identification of vowel and consonant sounds presented to them by the teacher. It was a kind of guessing game. While game four dealt with discrimination of the sounds of the English Language. It was aimed at developing the ability of students to perceive similarities and differences between two or more speech stimuli. In this game, students learnt to attend to differences among sounds or to respond differently to different sounds. The treatment session lasted for six weeks. After treatment, the same test was re-administered as post-test on the two groups – treatment and control. The data were analyzed based on the research question and hypotheses. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation of the test scores. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses. They were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

The results of the study are presented below:

### Research Question

What is the mean achievement score of students attending schools in urban and rural areas taught Oral English with games' technique?

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the achievement scores of urban and rural students in the experimental group**

Location	N	Pretest		Post-test		Gain Score
		Mean	Stan. Dev.	Mean	Stan. Dev.	
Urban	151	30.69	8.04	37.15	8.24	6.46
Rural	153	30.98	8.57	43.17	0.13	12.19

Table 1 shows the mean achievement score and standard deviation of students in rural and urban schools in the experimental group. The result revealed that the urban students had the mean achievement score of 30.69 and standard deviation of 8.04 for pre-test; mean achievement score of 37.15 and standard deviation of 8.24 for the post-test. Similarly, the students attending rural schools had the mean achievement score of 30.98 and standard deviation of 8.57 for pre-test; mean achievement score of 43.17 and standard deviation of 0.13 for the post-test. The result on table 1 reveals that students attending schools in rural area with the gain score of 12.19 achieved higher than their counterparts attending schools in the urban area with the gain score of 6.49 in the post-test.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of urban and rural students taught Oral English with games' technique.



**Table 2: Summary of ANCOVA table for significant difference in the mean achievement scores of urban and rural students taught Oral English with games' technique.**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	30569.737 <sup>a</sup>	4	7642.434	248.668	.000
Intercept	256.317	1	256.317	8.340	.004
Pretest	25353.534	1	25353.534	824.949	.000
Groups	5662.024	1	5662.024	184.230	.000
Location	1024.112	1	1024.112	33.322	.000
Groups * Location	294.931	1	294.931	9.596	.002
Error	9189.302	299	30.733		
Total	437062.000	304			
Corrected Total	39759.039	303			

Table 2 shows Summary of ANCOVA table for significant difference in the mean achievement scores of rural and urban students taught Oral English with games' technique. The result revealed that the F-value for the location is 33.32 with the significant value of 0.00. This value of F is significant at 0.05. This is because 0.00 is less than 0.05, that is ( $p = 0.00$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null-hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected; hence, there is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of urban and rural students taught Oral English with games' technique in favour of rural students.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant interaction effect of method and location on the mean achievement scores of students taught Oral English with games' technique.

Table 2 is used to address this hypothesis. The result reveals that the F-value for the interaction of method and location (Groups \* Location) is 9.59 with the significant value of 0.02. However, this F- value is equally significant at 0.05. This is because 0.02 is less than 0.05, that is ( $p = 0.02$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null-hypothesis is not accepted. Hence, there is significant interaction effect of method and location on the mean achievement scores of students taught Oral English with games' technique.

### DISCUSSION

School location is found to have significant influence on the achievement of students taught Oral English with games' technique as the the rural students achieved higher than the urban students. This finding agrees with Uzoegwu (2010) who studied the effect of co-operative learning method on students' achievement in essay writing and found that students in the rural area had higher gain score than their counterparts in the urban area. This is contrary to popular belief that students attending schools in urban areas usually achieve higher because of their exposure to a variety of facilities. The implication of this finding is that, if students are exposed

to equal treatment with regard to classroom instruction in Oral English, there might not be much difference in their achievement irrespective of the location of the school – urban or rural.

To determine the significant difference in the mean achievement score of rural and urban students, the analysis of covariance results presented on table 2 shows that there was significant difference in the mean achievement score of urban and rural students taught Oral English with games' technique in favour of rural students. The result further revealed that there was significant interaction effect of method and location on students' achievement. This implies that when the method interacted with location the effect on students' achievement was felt. That is, the games' technique favours one sub-group better than the other.

This finding x-rays the neglect and deprivation that is obvious in the rural schools in Nigeria. Most teachers in rural areas are not committed to duty, hence the constant under achievement of students in rural areas. The commitment of the research assistants to the games' technique in this study has shown that rural students can perform well if given the enabling opportunity to learn like their urban counterparts. If strict check could be carried out on teachers in rural areas as it is usually done in urban areas, it would go a long way to bridge the gap between students in rural areas and urban areas.

## CONCLUSION

Students attending schools in rural area performed better than students attending schools in urban area. School location has significant effect on students' achievement in Oral English using games' technique. This finding implies that games' technique is more suitable for students in rural area than those in urban area.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The fact that rural students achieved higher than their counterparts in the urban area indicates that rural and urban students may be stimulated differently by their environment. Government should, therefore, pay attention to this factor.
2. Proper monitoring and supervision of teachers in the performance of their duties should be carried out as there seems to be negligence of duty on the part of teachers in rural areas in Nigeria.

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