



## Effect of Games on Teaching Pronunciation on JSS Students' Achievement in Oral English in Imo State, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** This study was designed to examine the effects of games on teaching pronunciation on students' achievement in Oral English in Owerri Municipal Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. The quasi experimental research design was adopted. Two hundred and twenty seven subjects were used for the study. Pronunciation Achievement Test (PAT) was used as pretest and posttest. The reliability of the instrument was estimated at 0.74 using Kuder Richardson formula 20 (KR-20). Three hypotheses were used to guide the study which were tested 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that there was significant difference in the achievement of students taught pronunciation using games and those taught using drill. It also showed that there was no significant difference in achievement of male and female students taught using pronunciation games and those taught using drill, there was significant difference in achievement in Oral English among students of different school types taught using pronunciation games and those taught using the drill method. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the use of pronunciation games is more effective than the use of drill method. It was recommended among others that the English Language teachers should use language games in teaching students, so as to create varieties in their everyday task as well as arouse their interest in learning.

**Keywords:** Oral English, pronunciation games, drill.

### 1. Introduction

English language is one of the widely used languages in the world. It is used by most developed and economically developed countries in the world which has made it the second most spoken language in the world after Chinese (Ebernard, Gray & Charles, 2017). It is the language widely used in the internet.

All these have given English language the status of a world language. It has become a global language and the most studied language especially in countries where it was language on colonization such as Nigeria and Ghana.

Nigeria, a multi lingual nation has about five hundred (500) indigenous language. English language is used as an official medium of communication, a de facto lingua franca in Nigeria. As a lingua franca, it is the language of unification, the language of administration, law and diplomacy, world trade politics and intra and inter-ethnic medium of communication.

The English language occupies a central position in the school system. It is a core subject which is required for admission into higher institutions and for occupation and employment. It is a core subject from pre-primary to Lower Basic level and the language of instruction from Upper Basic to the tertiary level. This means that the Nigerian child's access to cultural and scientific knowledge of the world is largely through the English language. In line with this, the examination bodies such as the West African Examination Council (WAEC), the National Examination Council (NECO) and the Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) made English a core subject in their examinations. A critical analysis of West African Senior School Certificate results from 2012-2017 attest to poor performance of students in English language.

Many are of the view that secondary school leavers cannot speak English language correctly (Achebe, 2004, Eyisi, 2006 and Obiunu, 2019). This could be because Oral English is not given adequate attention in classroom teaching. This has caused students' inadequate exposure to Oral English as teachers pay more attention on the written form. Moreover,

English Language Paper 3 (Oral English) is in objective form. There is the need for emphasis to be laid on the teaching of Oral English. This is because good pronunciation skills give confidence and mastery to students as they communicate effectively inside and outside the classroom. One of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills needed by the students to function effectively in the society is good communication skills. These are seen in students' writing and speech. There is need for students to be articulate in their speech and pronounce words correctly so that they can be understood since the essence of communication is for mutual intelligibility. The central role that English plays demands urgent effective ways through which it can be taught to enhance proficiency in its use.

Teachers therefore need to enhance their teaching in order to give learners with varied talents and abilities to acquire relevant skills. The speech aspects of the English language in the secondary school are called Oral English. This is an important paper (Paper 3) in West Africa School Certificate Examination. The skills needed for good performance in Oral English are not the exclusive monopoly of phoneticians. These skills are recognition of phonetic symbols, proper articulation of sounds, application of stress and intonation which are accessible to anyone who wishes to learn effectively to communicate a message to someone through speech.

Many language teachers neglect the listening and speaking skills and deficiency in any of these could affect one's proficiency in all. Unfortunately, many students are unable to acquire skills needed to perform well in Oral English. Cele-Murcia, Briton and Godwin (2010) see Oral English as the production of the sounds used to make meaning. To Richard (2017), it is the act or manner of speaking a word which has been generally agreed upon as a sequence of sounds for speaking a language. There are two major features of Oral English, which are segmental and supra-segmental features. Eysi (2006) pointed out that Oral English seems to be the centre of our education woes and students generally have poor communication skills which could be one of the contributory factor for the falling standard of education in all areas of inquiry.

Teachers generally use the drill method (which is the conventional/traditional method) in teaching Oral English in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. The use of drills is derived from the structuralists' approach to language learning that represents the view that language is systematic, discrete and describable in terms of contrastive

elements. The teacher has many drills such repetition drill, substitution drill, transformation drill at his/her disposal.

Language games can be additional aid at the disposal of the English Language teacher. A game is a form of play governed by certain rules or convention. Language games contribute to language proficiency by getting the learners to use language during the games. Pronunciation games are essential for promoting competence at the receptive and the productive levels of language learning (Byrne, 2000). Darfilal (2015) found that the use of games enhanced students' interest in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class and students were motivated to learn and class was fun. Anyaegbu, Ting and Li (2012) investigated how the use of games could motivate, engage and arouse interest in their students. Their study found that the use of games motivated their students to learn English and brought about high achievement. Obiazu (2012) examined the effects of manual games on students' achievement in vocabulary. Results obtained showed that the use of games contributed immensely to students' achievement in learning English Language.

Some variables are identified as affecting students' achievement irrespective of the methods adopted by the teacher and these include among others sex and school type. Language acquisition theorists claim that female learners display more mastery of language learning proficiency (Ehrlich, 2001 and Ofuani, 2014). Adrienne and Benjamine (2014), Babalola and Oyinloye (2012) and Kiram and Sulaiman (2017) studies revealed that female students were more proficient in English Language than their male counterpart when exposed to effective methods. Zoghi, Kazemi and Kalen (2013) found that the difference between male and female students' achievements in English Language was not significant. Joseph (2012) and Ofuani (2014) found that school type had significant effects on students' achievements in language learning. However, Osa-Omoregie (2017) and Kang'ahi (2012) found no significant school type effects on students' language learning.

The purpose of this study was to find out the effects of games on teaching pronunciation on Junior Secondary School students' (JSS) achievement on Oral English in Owerri Municipal Local Government Area in Imo State, Nigeria. The study also sought to find the effects of sex and school type on students' achievement in Oral English.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Students' performance in English Language in Senior Secondary School Examination (SSCE) has been on decline. This poor performance is a concern to parents, teachers, the government and even to the students. It is believed that if every aspect of English Language is properly taught, students' performance could improve. In Nigeria, Oral English has been relegated to the background as many students claim that it is not taught by their teachers. Elugbe (2006) opines that Oral English is introduced belatedly; even after it has been introduced its teaching lacks the use of appropriate strategies. Teachers also seem to neglect this aspect of the English Language probably because they do not think of it as an important aspect in the teaching and learning of English Language. Many teachers seem not understand the rudiments of effective teaching of Oral English. Could this negligence be one of the reasons why students perform poorly in speaking good English? If Oral English is properly taught using well known strategies, could this enhance the overall performance of students in English? Will the use of pronunciation games in English Language classrooms make learning more effective and the class livelier? Will it help the teacher to develop fun ways of teaching Oral English? Will pronunciation games make students more attentive and active in English Language classrooms? Therefore, this study intends to find out the effects of pronunciation games on students' achievement in Oral English.

### 3. Hypotheses

To carry out this study, three hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- There is no significant difference in the achievement in Oral English of students taught using pronunciation games and those taught using the drill method.
- There is no significant difference in the achievement in Oral English of male and female students taught using pronunciation games and those taught with the drill method.
- There is no significant difference in the achievement in Oral English among students of different school type taught using pronunciation game and those taught using drill method.

### 4. Method of the Study

The study was a quasi-experimental design which used a non-randomized pre-test, post-test control group using a 2 x 2 x 3 factorial design. A sample of two hundred and seventy two (272) JSS II students

drawn from a population of two thousand and twenty seven (2,027) students that was used. The stratified random sampling technique was used. First, public schools were divided into strata (all boys, all girls and coeducational). One school from each stratum was selected. Two intact classes were randomly selected from each school. One class was used as the experimental group while the other was used as the control group. The schools were labelled as I, II and III, and the two intact classes were labelled A and B. The subjects in class A made up of the experimental group and were taught with the selected pronunciation games (odd-one-out, minimal pair, slap and rhyming pair memory games). While the subjects in class B made up the control group and were taught with the drill method.

The instrument for data collection was Pronunciation Achievement Test (PAT) developed by the researchers. PAT was made up of two parts (Sections A and B). Section A solicited bio data information from the respondents, Section B was made up of twenty multiple choice objective test items comprising of short vowels, long vowels and plosive consonant sounds. The students were required to underline the appropriate options from the options provided. PAT was first used as pre-test and reshuffled and used as the post-test.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, a table of specification was used. This was to ensure that all the items in the instrument aligned with the skills associated pronunciation learning and also to test all levels of knowledge. To ensure the reliability of PAT, it was trial tested on twenty (20) JSSII students in a school that was not part of the study. The scores obtained from the administration of this test was estimated using Kuder Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20) and a reliability coefficient of 0.74 was obtained.

#### 4.1 Method of Data Collection

The pre-test was administered by the researchers with the help of the class teachers on the first day of interaction. The researchers explained part A of the pre-test to the students. The instrument was collected after the stipulated time on the same day. The post-test was administered (six weeks) after the administration of the pre-test) on the last day of treatment session and collected immediately after.

Mean, standard deviation and ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) were used. Also, Post Hoc Analysis was carried out using Scheffe's Test (for hypothesis three). All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**5. Results**

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in Oral English achievement of students taught using pronunciation games and those taught with drill method.

**Table 1:** Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Students Taught Oral English with Different Method

Method	N	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Difference Between Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Gain
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Games	140	9.51	2.154	15.57	2.357	6.06
Drill	132	9.73	2.296	12.27	2.442	2.54
Total	272	9.62	2.222	13.97	2.911	4.35

Table 1 shows that the Pretest mean score of students taught with the drill method was higher (9.73) than those taught with games (9.51), while for the posttest mean score of student taught with games was higher (15.57) than those taught with Drill (12.27). Table 1, however, shows that there were mean gains across the two methods. Students in the experimental group taught using Games at pretest and posttest means of (9.51 and 15.57) respectively and had a higher mean score gain of (6.06). The students in the control group taught using Drill had pretest and posttest mean scores of ((.73 and 12.27) respectively and had a lower mean gain of (2.54).

To determine if there was significant difference in students' achievement in Oral English, Univariate Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used because there were differences in the mean scores of both the experimental and the control group in the pre-test. The summary of analyses is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Summary of ANCOVA for the Effects of Methods with Scores of Pre-test Achievement Test in Oral English as the Dependent Variable

Source	Type III Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	9.45.840	2	472.920	94.174	.000
Intercept	1414.812	1	1414.812	281.735	.000
Pre-Test	203.143	1	203.143	40.452	.000
Method	781.082	1	781.082	155.538	.000
Error	1350.865	269	5.022		
Total	55357.000	272			
Corrected Total	2296.702	271			

Table 2 shows method effect of  $F(1, 269) = 781.082, p = .000$ , testing at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of .000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05 showing significance. So hypothesis 1 which states that there is no significant difference in the achievement of students taught pronunciation with Games and those taught with the Drill method was rejected. It was concluded that there was a significant method effect on students achievement in Oral English with those taught using Games performing better than those taught with drill.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in Oral English achievement of male and female students taught using pronunciation Games and those taught using drill. The descriptive statistics of students classified by method by gender are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Mean and Standard Deviation for the Effects of Method by Sex on Students' Achievement in Oral English

Method	N	Pre-Test		Post-Test		
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Games	Male	70	9.47	2.363	15.29	2.560
	Female	70	9.54	1.934	15.89	2.115
	Total	140	9.51	2.154	15.57	2.357
Drills	Male	63	9.65	2.186	12.16	2.457
	Female	69	9.81	2.403	12.36	2.443
	Total	132	9.73	2.295	12.27	2.442

Table 3 shows that male students in the experimental group taught using Games have pre-test and post-test mean scores of 9.47, 15.29 and standard deviation of 2.363 and 2.560 respectively, While the female students have pre-test and post-test mean scores of 9.54 and 15.89 with standard deviation of 1.934 and 2.115 respectively. This shows that the female students in the group taught with games outperformed the males in both pre-test and post-test.

The table also shows that the male students in the group taught using drill (control group) have pre-test and post-test mean scores of 9.65 and 12.16 with standard deviation of 2.186 and 2.457 respectively, the female students have pre-test and post-test mean scores of 9.81 and 12.36 with standard deviation of 2.403 and 2.442 respectively. This also shows that the female students in the group taught with Drill performed better than their male counterparts.

To determine whether the difference in the mean scores of male and female students taught using Games (male: 15.29, female: mean = 15.89) and those taught with Drills (male: 12.16, female: mean = 12.36) were statistically significant, ANCOVA was used because there were differences in the mean scores of male and female students taught using THE different methods. This is summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Summary of ANCOVA Analysis of the Mean Effect on Sex on Students' Achievement in Oral English

Source	Type III Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	160.930 <sup>a</sup>	2	84.965	10.747	.000
Intercept	1544.342	1	1544.342	195.333	.000
Pre-Test	163.065	1	163.065	20.625	.000
Sex	5.171	1	5.171	.654	.419
Error	2126.773	269	7.906		
Total	55357.000	272			
Corrected Total	2296.702	271			

*a. R square = .074, adjusted R square = .067*

Table 4 shows sex effect of  $F(1, 269) = .654, P = .419$  testing at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value (.419) is higher than the alpha level. These results suggest that sex has no significant effect on students' achievement in Oral English. Therefore, hypothesis 2 which states that there is no significant difference in the achievement of male and female students taught pronunciation with games and those taught with drill method is retained.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in achievement in Oral English among students of different school types taught using pronunciation games and those taught with the drill method.

The descriptive statistics of students, classified by method and school type are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Mean and Standard Deviation for the Effect of School Type on Achievement

Methods	School Type	N	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
			Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Games	All Boys	44	9.50	2.538	14.32	2.409
	All Girls	43	8.98	1.871	14.77	1.810
	Coed	53	9.94	1.955	17.26	1.619

	Total	140	9.51	2.154	15.57	2.357
Drill	All Boys	31	9.19	1.922	11.06	1.787
	All Girls	37	9.35	2.519	11.69	1.872
	Coed	64	10.22	2.257	13.19	2.665
	Total	132	9.73	2.295	12.27	2.443

Table 5 shows that in the group taught with games, students from all boys’ school have pre-test and post-test mean scores of 9.50, 14.32 and standard deviation of 2.538, 2.409 respectively. Those from all girls have pre-test and post-test mean scores of 8.98, 14.77 and standard deviation of 1.871 and 1.810 respectively while those from coeducational have pre-test and post-test mean scores of 9.94, 17.26 and standard deviation of 1.955 and 1.619 respectively. This shows that the students from all boys school performed better than those from all girls and coeducational school in pre-test. While with the post-test scores, students from coeducational school in the group taught with games performed better than those from all boys and all girls’ schools. Table 5 also shows that the group taught with drill, students from all boys’ school have pre-test and post-test mean scores of 9.19, 11.06 and standard deviation 1.922, 1.787 respectively. Those from all girls’ school have pre-test and post-test mean scores of 9.35, 11.68 and standard deviation of 2.519 and 1.872 respectively. Also, students from coeducation school have the mean scores of 10.22, 13.19 and standard deviation of 2.257 and 2.665 respectively. This shows that students in coeducational school in the group taught with drill outperformed the students from all boys and all girls schools in both the pre-test and post-test.

To determine if there were significant differences of main effect of school type on students’ achievement, the data collected from the 272 respondents were analysed using ANCOVA because there were differences in the mean scores of students taught using different method at pre-test. This is summarized in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Summary of ANCOVA of Main Effect on School Type on Students’ Achievement in Oral English

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
Corrected Model	144.191 <sup>a</sup>	3	114.730	15.748	.000
Intercept	1643.946	1	1643.946	225.647	.000
Pre-Test	105.186	1	105.186	14.438	.000
School Type	179.433	2	89.716	12.314	.000
Error	1952.511	268	7.285		
Total	55357.000	272			
Corrected Total	2296.702	271			

*a. R square = .150 (Adjusted R squared = .140)*

Table 6 shows that the main effect of school type is  $F(2, 268) = 12.314, P = .000$ . Testing at an alpha value of 0.05, the p-value (.000) is less than the alpha level (0.05), this shows significance. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significance in achievement in Oral English among students of different school types taught using pronunciation games and those taught with the drill method is rejected. Consequently, there is significant main effect of school type on students’ achievement in Oral English.

To determine the direction of significance among the three school types, a post-hoc analysis was conducted using Scheffe’s multiple comparison since the subjects in three groups (75, 80 and 155) were unequal. The result is summarized in Table 7.

**Table 7: Scheffe's Post-hoc Analysis for the Direction of Significance Based on School Type Effect on Students' Achievement in Oral English**

(i) School Type	(J) School Type	Mean Difference	Std Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	All Girls	-.3642	.4453	.715	-1	.7300
All Boys	Coed.	-2.0609 <sup>a</sup>	.40911	.000	3.0679	-1.0539
	All Boys	-.3642	.44453	.715	-.7300	1.4584
All Girls	Coed.	-1.6967 <sup>a</sup>	.40125	.000	-2.6843	.7090
Coed.	All Boys	2.0609	.40911	.000	1.0539	3.0679
	All Girls	1.6967 <sup>a</sup>	.40125	.000	.7090	2.6843

*Based on observed means: The error term is mean square (Error) = 7.649*

*\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.*

In Table 7, two mean differences were found to be significant at 0.05 level, namely, the mean difference between coeducational school and all boys' school (mean difference = 2.06) and that between coeducational school and all girls' school (mean difference = 1.67). The difference between the mean scores of coeducational and all boys cannot be lower than 1.05 and can be as high as 3.07. Similarly, the difference between coeducational and all girls cannot be lower than .71 and can be as high as 2.68.

## 6. Discussion

The findings for hypothesis one in this study revealed that students taught with pronunciation games performed significantly better than students taught with drill. The use of pronunciation games involve students carrying out collaborative team work, which has many features associated with effective instruction such as interactive dialogue and demonstration, role play and think-pair-share strategies. The use of pronunciation games gave students the opportunity to collaborate, where students with high and moderate abilities supported those with low pronunciation skills through constructive group activities and brainstorming.

Furthermore, the students exhibited high enthusiasm in learning the task presented; learning was fun. The students also had competitive spirit. The findings of this study substantiated the claims of Anyaegbu, Ting and Li (2012), Obiazu (2012) and Darfilal (2015). These researchers pointed out that the use of games in teaching motivated students to learn. The better performance of students taught using games could be attributed to the fact that it is a student-centred method which is essential for developing learners' command of the sound system of the target language. This brings about lively classroom environment that enhances achievement in learning.

The findings for hypothesis two revealed that sex had no effect on students' achievement in Oral English. However, it is generally believed that female students

are more proficient in language learning than their male counterparts but this was not the case in this study. The result of this study is in consonance with the findings of Zoghi, Kazemi and Kalan (2013) who reported that sex has no significant influence on academic performance of students in English language. The findings of this study is at variance with the findings of Adrienne and Benjamin (2014), Babalola and Oyinloye (2012) who opined that female students are more proficient in English Language than their male counterparts.

The findings of hypothesis three revealed that school type has significant effect on students' performance in Oral English, with students in coeducational schools performing better than students in all-boys and all-girls schools. This is contrary to expectation where it is believed that students from all-girls school would perform better in Oral English than students from all-boys and coeducational schools. The finding of this study is in agreement with the findings of Kanlayanee (2012) who found that students in coeducational schools perform better than those in single-sex schools. Ofuani's (2014) study, although in support of the influence of school type on students' performance in English is at variance with this study as she found out that students in all girls schools performed better than students in all boys and coeducational schools. This finding is not in agreement with the findings of Kang'ahi (2012), Joseph (2012) and Osa-Omoregie (2017) who found no significant effect of school type on students' achievement in English Language.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was concluded that the use of pronunciation games is more effective than the drill method in the teaching of Oral English. It was also concluded that sex has no effect on students' performance in Oral English. School type has significant effect on students' performance in Oral English with students in coeducational schools performing best.

It was recommended among others that:

- Teachers should teach Oral English as they teach other component areas of the language.
- Teachers should use games in teaching pronunciation in order to arouse students' interest in learning.
- Curriculum planners should revisit English language curriculum with a view of developing student-centred and activity orientated curriculum, which will enhance students' active participation in teaching/learning process.
- Teachers' knowledge should be updated through inservice training, seminars and workshops.

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