

# Comparative Effects of Grammar Translation and Communicative Methods on Students' Achievement in English Language in Akoko Zone of Ondo State Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This Study designed, investigating Comparative effects of Grammar Translation and Communicative Methods on Students' Achievement in English Language in Akoko Area Educational Zone. Researcher adopted pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental control design. Subjects (One Hundred students) were divided into Communicative and Grammar Translation Methods classes respectively. Data collected were used to answer the research questions and Hypotheses Mean and Standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and ANOVA was used in testing the Hypotheses. The research concluded that the activities of Communicative method helped students perform better than their mates taught using GTM. Based on findings, it was recommended that Teachers of English Language, should endeavour to teach students, using the Communicative Method. State and Federal Ministry of Education should organize in-service training programmes for Teachers on the use of Communicative Method in teaching

**Key words:** grammar translation, comparative method, in-service, authors, training

## 1. Introduction

One of the best legacies Nigeria inherited from her colonial master (Britain) is the English Language. This language is the native language of the majority of the population of the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, South Africa and much of Canada. It is a language that is considered as the official language in Nigeria. The language of officialdom: law, jurisprudence, Education, language of interaction and language of instruction from the primary to tertiary institutions of learning. In fact, most Nigerians believe that English Language is the language of unity. It is the only language that binds Nigerians together as a Nation of about 250 million people since there is no common language, apart from Pidgin which has no orthography, codification and not considered as an official language. Therefore Pidgin cannot effectively perform the work of the English Language. Furthermore, English language serves a unique role of dignifying the elites, especially among those who speak it. They see it as a prestigious language. Indeed most Nigerians see English language as sine-qua-non to civilization in the country.

Seeking valuable methods for the effective teaching and learning of such an important language of National,

rather, international reputation like English Language, considered as an indispensable tool to National Development, especially in Nigeria, is inevitable.

Methods or approaches mean different things to different people, but in teaching, method means a set of teaching procedures to follow in teaching and learning. Language Teaching method may involve a special selection, graduation of materials, presentation and evaluation of what has been presented to determine whether the goals were achievable and achieved.

Methodologies could be defined as ways in which things are either done or imparted. Some methodologies may be apt for teaching second language learners and when such methodologies are used, learners may not learn enough to help them achieve much in the target language. There are many methods to choose from when preparing a lesson. Some methods may be effective in teaching some aspects of language while ineffective for others. The language teacher therefore, needs to evaluate the methods he wants to use before making use of them. As formulated by Larsen-Freeman (1980) the process the teacher should follow to determine the effectiveness are stipulated and they include determining: teachers and learners interaction, his goals and those of the learners, the nature of activities during the lesson, feelings of learners, the language and language skills among others. The strength of any profession is to have various practicable and effective methods, inventions, practices and approaches to solve problems. Professionals in Language teaching and learning are not at the back seat as regards this. The classroom teacher and the programme Coordinator have a wider variety of methodological options to choose from today than ever before. They can choose methods and materials according to the needs of learners, the preferences of teachers and the constraints of the school or educational setting (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

## **2. Grammar Translation Method**

This is a method of second language Instruction based mostly on the translation of passages from the native language into the target language. This method was first used in the teaching of classical languages, Latin and Greek and later for the purpose of helping students read and appreciate foreign language and appreciate foreign language Literature. It was believed that it is only through the study of the grammar of a second language that students could become more familiar with grammar of that language. Along the way, the teacher explains the grammar rules, etymology, syntax of the target language in a more linguistic process than the Communicative way. Using the native language, the teacher will explain to the students how words are formed, placed and used in the target language. In this method, code switching and code mixing are permissible. According to Richards and Rodgers (2020), the grammar-translation method is a way of studying language, that is approaching the language first through detailed analysis of its grammatical rules. Moreover, language learning is more of memorizing rules, vocabulary, tense verb, grammar and facts just to be able to manipulate the morphology and syntax of the target language. This is in accordance with the Mentalist theory that claims that language is governed by rules and is not a haphazard thing, but it lays emphasis on accuracy. Qingxue and Jin-fang (2007, p. 69) add that the students native language is maintained as reference system in the acquisition of the second language. Learners are passive in language learning and teachers are regarded as authorities. It was believed then that the best most effective way to teaching the grammar of a second language is through this (GT) Method.

## **3. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Method**

There are other methods that could be used in the teaching of grammar apart from the Grammar Translation

Method. One of such methods which is recent and highly advocated for, is the Communicative Language Method (CLT) This method is an approach that developed in part from Chomsky's writings on the nature of language, but actually famously supported by D. A Wilkins who developed the functional Notional Curriculum (Richards, 2006). The Communicative approach aimed at developing the learners competence to communicate in the target language with an enhanced focus on real life situations. Activities are focused on the development of fluency which is a vital part of the way of giving learners the opportunity to communicate meaningfully. Students are given room for activities and exercises ensuring that they learn in a more controlled manner focusing on the development of accuracy. Richards J. C. (2006) sees the teacher acting as a facilitator in the learning process. The Communicative approach emphasizes the ability to communicate the message in terms of its meaning, instead of concentrating exclusively on grammatical perfection or phonetics. Therefore, the understanding of the second language is evaluated in terms of how much the learners have developed their communicative abilities and competences. To this approach, using the language is as important as actually learning the language. It is a method Qing-xue and Jin-fang (2007, p. 71) opine, that sees the need to focus on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastering of structures. They go on to say that this method:

aims to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching... it encourages activities that involve real communication, carrying out meaningful tasks... Language learners are expected to be negotiators, teachers to be organizers, guides, analysts, counselors or group process managers.

Yanfei (2002, p. 1) adds that the goal of this method is that learners will be able to use language appropriately in any social context. They may be called to be secretaries of clubs, societies, parties and sometimes Masters of Ceremonies (MC) and they are expected to perform meritoriously as Language experts.

The grammar-translation and communicative methods are two out of the methods that can be used in teaching the grammar of English language. While the use of grammar-translation method dates back to the 17th century, the communicative method is a more recent method.

While the former is teacher centered, the latter is learner centered. The two may be seen as effective, but, there is the need to determine the effect of both grammar translation method and communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in students achievement in the grammar of English Language, in order to choose and use the better option as the case may be.

### **3.1 Scope of the Study**

The study investigated the performance of some senior secondary school (SSII) students in English language in co-educational schools in Akoko southwest zone. The investigation compared the achievement of students (male and female) who were taught grammar using the grammar-translation method with the achievement of those who were taught grammar using the communicative language teaching (CLT) method.

### **3.2 Research Questions**

The following research questions are used to address the problem of this study:

- 1) What is the effect of gender on students' achievement in English language?
- 2) What are the relative mean achievement scores of students taught in grammar using the communicative and grammar-translation method?

### **3.3 Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses will be tested at the 0.05 probability level.

- 1) There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught grammar using the grammar-translation method and the communicative method.
- 2) There is no significant interactive effect of method on students' achievement in grammar of English language.

#### **4. Method of Language Teaching and Learning**

According to Asher and James (1982), methods are the combination of techniques that are used and plasticized by the teachers in the classrooms in order to teach their students. For example, if a teacher has an approach that language is the art of communicating and learning a language, the meanings, functions and uses of language, the techniques will be based on the communicative language teaching and task based methods.

##### **4.1 Theory/Aim, Strengths and Weaknesses of the Grammar Translation Method**

Lee (2003), opines that the objective of grammar-translation is the acquisition of grammatical knowledge and the goal is to enhance mental discipline and intellectual development. Hudson (2001) states that one of the qualities of this method is that reference is made to the learner's mother tongue while he is being taught.

Qing-xue and Jin-Fang (2007, p. 69) postulate that the grammar-translation method emphasizes the teaching a second language grammar, that reading and writing are the major focus of this method and little or no systematic attention is paid to speaking and listening. Purwarno (2006, p. 2), while evaluating the grammar-translation method, sees the quality of referring to a mother tongue while teaching English language as a great advantage.

Grammar Translation Method is basically a method of teaching and learning second and foreign languages. Under this method, translation of text and study of grammatical rules and their practice are the main activities. In the class of GTM, use of target language is very less. However, code mixing and code switching may be pardonable if they can explain vividly what the teacher intends teaching the learners, but mostly, students are taught in the indigenous language or L1, vocabulary with their meaning in the form of list of selected words. Structure of tenses is taught by putting words together and instruction about forms and inflection of words are given. In this method, the teacher translates each word and phrase in the text into L1 of the learner. Then translation of several sentences is required by the students. The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) used in teaching English as a second language (TEFL) focuses on reading and writing. Language is taught through translation methods, contrasting and comparing the native tongue to the learned language in the periphery of Language analysis. GTM focuses on sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary and direct translations of the native language to English. The method requires few resources to teach, normally, like the use of textbooks or translated passages in most cases.

One of the strengths of the grammar translation method it is reducing Teacher' Stress. The resources for GTM are easier to come by than other approaches and generally require less teacher involvement. Class activities or learning games are rarely necessary, as students are translating text to another language directly. Teachers who are not fluent in English (but fluent in the other language that the students primarily use) can teach English using this approach, as the emphasis is not on the spoken word, but on translations. Communication between students and teachers are reduced with this method, which avoids misunderstandings and prevents language barriers that may occur in a method that focuses on teacher-student communication or verbal language learning.

It also focuses on Grammar, Sentence Structure and word Meanings, unlike a verbal approach to language learning, GTM focuses on the grammaticalness and grammaticality, that is, application of grammar and correct sentence structure. This is especially helpful in teaching students how to write and read in another language,

allowing them to explore interchangeable words and phrases (i.e., different words for different tenses) more effectively than a verbal teaching method. The approach is also easily applied and can be less stressful on students; verbal teaching methods do not describe the application of grammar and sentence structure as effectively as GTM does. Word meanings are also easily learned through direct translation — a foreign word can be compared to the native language quickly. The method of comparing/translation of the learned language with a native language provides reference for students.

One major weakness of the grammar translation method is in the area of Learner Motivation and Participation.

The GTM approach involves no learner participation and little teacher-student relationship. Students are required to learn from a textbook and use the same method throughout their learning. Because lessons using GTM are not interactive and engaging for students, they become more likely to lose interest in their subjects and learners are less motivated to learn.

Furthermore, the method does not require students to participate in any activities or communication with each other, so they will not learn how to use the language in a real-life conversation or situation, but will only understand how to translate one language to another.

Another weakness of the grammar translation method is reflected in Unnatural and Inaccurate Pronunciation.

As children, people generally learn how to speak before they learn how to write and read. In the GTM approach, this natural learning method is reversed. Students are only taught how to read and write the language. This can affect how they learn to speak the learned language. The mere application of grammar and sentence structure cannot adequately prepare them for realistic conversations or verbal communication, as no emphasis is given to spoken language in the GTM approach. Translations may also be inaccurate, as it is not always possible to simply translate one word or phrase accurately to another language (for example, the translation of “computer” in English to Latin is not possible, as there is no Latin word for Computer).

#### **4.2 Theory/Aim, strength and weaknesses of Communicative Method**

As the name implies, the central concept in communicative language teaching is “communicative competence” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 159). This covers both the spoken and written language and all four language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing). As Oxford states, the “development of communicative competence requires realistic interaction among learners using meaningful, contextualized language” (1990, p. 8).

Communicative approach focuses on producing communicative competency by using meaningful authentic language. Yang (2000, p. 85) states that this approach is seen as a way of improving the ability of students to use realistic English language. Schulz (2006, p. 252) generally emphasizes the necessity of large amounts of comprehensible input. He goes on to say that it is a method that also highly values, comprehending and expressing personal meaning more than grammatical accuracy. Yanfei (2002, p. 3) says that the goal of language teaching according to this method is being able to use language appropriately in a given social context. This is in agreement with one of the Theories of Teaching and Learning. It equally agrees with the National Policy on Education in Nigeria as far as teaching in the Secondary schools is concerned since the use of L2 progressively commences from Primary Four to the Higher institutions where the target language becomes the language of instruction and perhaps of interaction. Yanfei (2002, p. 3) further stresses that, it is a learner-centered approach method as students do most of the speaking in the classroom during a communicative exercise. As students do much of the speaking, they incorporate creativity into communicative competency. Yanfei (2002, p. 3) believes that in this method, the target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate. This is congruous with the

Mentalist approach of language learning and acquisition. Vocabulary is selected according to necessity in communication and grammar is taught in communicating with each other. Communicative method believes more in implicit grammar teaching rather than explicit grammar teaching. Qing Xue and Jin Fang (2007, p. 7) assert that this method makes language learning both interesting and interactive and it helps learners develop both linguistic and communicative competences.

One of the strengths in communicative language teaching is that of the increase of fluency in the target language. This enables the learners to be more confident when interacting with other people and they also enjoy talking more. One major weakness is that it is difficult for the teacher alone to check the language use of every student, especially in big classrooms which are common in most Nigerian schools, emanating from the unwillingness of many state governors in the country to employ enough qualified teachers. In this method, the students are allowed to make mistakes, but in order to improve and avoid making the same mistake in future, they need to be corrected by the teacher-preferably not while in the middle of a conversation. Therefore, it may not be helpful if there is only one teacher for one class. Another point concerning the teacher is that, how motivating or boring the lesson will be, depends on him. He, therefore, needs to prepare the material at home and as much as possible make it motivating and creative, so that students will find the tasks interesting and meaningful, thus making them eager to communicate with one another with confidence.

## **5. Effects of Teacher's Knowledge of Grammar on English Language**

Whilst teacher subject-knowledge is not the only factor that generates effective teaching, it does play a considerable part. Firstly, knowing a good deal about the parts of grammar offers teachers a lot more confidence than those who know little. So, even if the only purpose is to increase teachers' confidence, there is still the need for national training programme. Teachers would not just be taught the meta-language or grammar in this training, but would be assisted to recognize the functions of grammar in making meaning in a wide selection of materials, enabling students to notice the value well beyond testing purposes. Teachers need to develop a deep knowledge about language if they are to build conversations about how meanings are constructed by a particular grammar and word choices, in particular contexts and for particular audiences. Studies have established that teachers who were uncertain of their understanding of English grammar were didactic and teacher centered (Shulman, 1987). However, others tried to avoid teaching it whenever possible.

Borg, (2001) opines that if a teacher is not certain of grammar, he may choose to lecture rather than soliciting students questions which may lead him into unknown territory. He used Two teachers, one a native speaker and the other a non-native speaker, (who have taught English as a foreign language for upwards of 15 years) as samples. The techniques were observations and interviews. After observing these teachers teaching and interviewing them, Borg (2001, p. 27) shows that teachers' self-perception of their knowledge of grammar both in general terms and specific points in lessons, have impact on their work. From the behaviour of the teachers while teaching, Borg (2001) posits that the confident teacher (the native speaker) had a well-developed variety of instructional strategies for grammar work which he skillfully applied. He encouraged impromptu discussions formulating rules on the spot. The non-confident teacher (non-native speaker) used limited instructional repertoire for grammar work which he applied less skillfully. He minimized grammar and defers discussion. The result of this study shows that when a teacher knows grammar well, he teaches grammar better, but when he is not sure of his grammar, such a teacher avoids grammar teaching.

### **5.1 Design of the Study**

The study was done using a pretest and post-test quasi experimental control design group. This is to be able to see the effects of some types of treatment on a group, a way to carefully plan experiments in advance so that results are both objective and valid. This research design was used because the study has experimental and control groups since the study was aimed at finding out the effects of the two methods on students' achievement in English language.

### **5.2 Population**

The population of the study comprises of all SSS II -students in Secondary schools in Ondo Educational Zone. The SS II students have been chosen because they are about to write their senior-secondary school exam and are currently in their last phase of their senior secondary education. They, therefore, are presumed to have been exposed to adequate teaching and learning methods in English language.

### **5.3 Sampling and Sampling Techniques**

The sample for this study is SS II students drawn from a co-educational school in Akungba Akoko, and its environs in Ondo state. These schools were drawn by simple random sampling technique. The class of SSII stream was used. The SS II students were divided into two groups and each group was named the experimental and control condition respectively.

### **5.4 Validation of the Instrument**

The grammar questions used in the test battery for the assessment were developed by the researcher. Two teachers that teach English Language in secondary schools in the zone were used to validate the instrument. They were asked to critically study the items in terms of their suitability and appropriateness using the curriculum. They also vetted the answers. Below is the comment of one of the teachers.

“Generally speaking, the questions are within the standards of senior secondary students. The researcher’s comments on the errors in reference as well as the accompanying corrections are quite appropriate”

### **5.5 Experimental Procedure/Methodology**

One hundred Students from SS11 were selected using Simple Random Sampling Technique: They were divided into two groups of fifty in each. The Experimental group was taught using the Communicative Method and the second group Control group was taught using the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). After the teaching, students were subjected to the same Examination questions in the same environment, same examination conditions and supervisors. The answer papers were collected, marked by the researcher, the examiner.

### **5.6 Data Collection**

The data for this study was collected through the use of a researcher made test. This comprises of five theoretical questions which were given to both the treatment and the control groups. The tests were written in the English language and each group was required to briefly explain if they understood what was taught.

### **5.7 Data Analysis**

Mean scores were used to answer the research questions. The hypotheses were tested using analysis of Covariance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1: Does method has any influence on students academic achievement in Grammar when taught using communicative method?

**Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation Showing Difference in Achievement Scores Based on Method**

Method	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Grammar Translation	47	15.74	2.832
Communicative Method	3	17.33	0.577

## 6. Results and Discussion

The gathered data through the achievement tests conducted during the experiment were analyzed and interpreted within this section using descriptive and inferential statistics. Formulated null hypotheses were tested using PPMC. The results were all summarized in bar charts and tables below.

**Table 2 Frequency Distribution Showing Respondents' Age**

Age	Frequency	%
8–10 Years	47	15.74
11 Years and Above	10	10.0
Total	100	100.0

The age distribution revealed that 90% of the sampled respondents were within the age groupings of 8 and 10 years, while 10% were above 10 years of age.

**Table 3 Frequency Distribution Showing Respondents' Gender**

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	47	47.0
Female	53	53.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 3 and Figure 3 revealed that 47% of the respondents were male students, while 55% were females. This implied that both male and female students participated in the study.

**Table 4 Frequency Distribution showing Respondents' Research Groups**

Age	Frequency	%
Control group	50	50.0
Experimental Group	50	50.0
Total	100	100

### 6.1 Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the achievement score of Students taught grammar using communicative method and those taught with GTM.

**Table 5 Independent T-test Showing the Difference in Teaching Method on Academic Achievement**

	Research group	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	p
Academic Achievement	Control group	50.0	6.86	1.485	98	-20.189	< 0.05
	Experimental Group	50.0	15.84	2.773			



Table 5 indicated that the research groups had significant influence on academic achievement of students [ $t(98) = -20.189, p < .05$ ]. This was such that students taught with Grammar translation method (GTM = 6.86, SD = 1.485) performed less in grammar compared to their counterparts taught with communicative (CM = 15.84, SD = 2.773). This implied that there was significant difference between the two groups of students, therefore, the formulated null hypothesis 1 was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant interactive influence of method on academic achievement of students taught using communicative method in grammar of English Language.

## **6.2 Discussion of Findings**

Result revealed that the method employed in language teaching has a significant influence on students' academic achievement in English language. Table 5 revealed that students that were taught with communicative method (CM = 17.33) performed better than their counterparts who were taught with the Grammar Translation Method (GTM = 15.74). This means that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Method is effective for the teaching of Grammar in English language. These findings corroborate the submission of Yanfei (2002:3) which states that the goal of language teaching according to this method is being able to use language appropriately in a given social context. He further stresses that it is a learner-centered approach as students do most of the speaking in the classroom during a communicative exercise. As students do much of the speaking, they incorporate creativity into communicative competency. He believes that in this method, the target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate.

Vocabulary is selected according to necessity in communication and grammar is taught in communicating with each other. Communicative method believes more in implicit grammar teaching rather than explicit grammar teaching.

## **7. Conclusion**

Based on the findings from the study, the researcher drew the following conclusions. The interactive and students' activities oriented nature of the communicative method helped the students to do better in the learning of the grammar of English language. Students are free to ask questions from both their teacher and their classmates. However, it was found out that the more students are made to learn rules and apply these rules in the language learning situation using GTM, where interaction is not frequently permissible, performance is slow-pedaed or even hindered considerably.

## **8. Recommendations**

Since the heart of the research is the betterment of learners' results in English language especially in public examinations, and part of the focus of this study is to improve students' acceptable use of English language socially, the following recommendations were made based on the findings:

- 1) Teachers should begin to teach students English language using the communicative method. Though it takes more time, but when truly and properly used, it yields better results.
- 2) Principals of schools through "All Nigeria Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools", (ANCOPSS) together with State and Federal Ministry of Education can sponsor in-service programme for teachers on the use of the communicative method in teaching English since most of the teachers are only conversant with the grammar-

translation method.

3) The departments of language education in education faculties of our universities can be sensitized and encouraged to organize this programme. This will contribute in no small measure towards enlightening teachers and students alike on ways of teaching and learning English language through the communicative method.

4) Textbook writers are also encouraged to show samples of the usage of this method in their books. It is advisable for English language teachers to teach their students using the communicative method. Though the use of this method it is likely to reduce the power of teachers in the class, but the fact remains that the performance of students is likely to improve in the language.

5) Communicative method should be given a place in the teaching and learning of the English language in secondary schools.

6) In-service programme should be planned for teachers so that they will become more conversant with the method and suggestion was also made for planned inclusion of samples of the use of communicative method in textbooks by textbook writers. These suggestions, hopefully, will help, to improve and sustain students' performance in English Language.

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