

EFFECT OF PEER ASSESSMENT ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN IGBO LANGUAGE ESSAY WRITING IN NSUKKA EDUCATION ZONE, ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

Kanu, Ezinne Blessing; Uchenna Fabian Ude* & Chioma Onuka Uche

Department of Arts Education

Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

*Correspondence: uchenna.ude@unn.edu.ng

Abstract - The study investigated the effect of peer assessment on senior secondary school students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. One specific purpose, with corresponding research question and null hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted the quasi-experimental factorial research design, specifically, the pre-test post-test non-equivalent control group design. The population of the study comprised all the 3,357 senior secondary two (SS II) students in all the 62 public secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone. A sample of 111 SSII students in two intact classes from the schools was drawn for the study through multistage sampling procedure. The instrument used was titled: Igbo Language Narrative Essay Achievement Test (ILNEAT). The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Arts Education (Language Education Unit) and one from Science Education (Measurement and Evaluation Unit), University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test all the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study among others showed that peer assessment is more effective in improving students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing than the teacher assessment. Based on the finding, it was recommended among others, that Authorities should formally integrate peer assessment as a part of the curriculum in Igbo language essay writing in the secondary schools in Enugu State; Igbo language teachers should be provided with in-service training or professional development opportunities to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to implement effective peer assessment practices; Teachers should encourage a collaborative learning environment that promotes peer interaction and feedback in Igbo language by emphasizing peer learning and cooperative work.

Keywords: Peer assessment, achievement, Igbo language and essay writing

Introduction

Language is a unique attribute of human beings which they use to express feelings, thoughts and ideas. It facilitates interpersonal and ethnic cooperation. Onwubie (2016) observed that language is a system with which social groups co-operate and interact, which helps in the formation of thoughts and feelings. Egbe and Asadu (2020) opined that the need for communication is becoming important in the increasingly integrated global community where strong language skills are an asset that promotes lifelong communication. This explains why the knowledge of language is relevant in every society. In Nigeria, apart from the English language which is the official language, there are so many other languages spoken by different ethnic groups. Udoeye (2016) noted that there are about 450 languages spoken in Nigeria. Some of these languages are Tiv, Ibibio, Yoruba, Efik, Fulfulde, Hausa, Igala, Nupe, Idoma and Igbo.

Igbo language is the language of the Igbo people, an ethnic group of the South Eastern Nigeria. Chukwuma and Agbim (2020) indicated that Igbo language is spoken by an estimated 20 million Nigerians and primarily of the Igbo decent. The Igbo people are predominantly found in the five South Eastern states of Nigeria, which comprises the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. They are also found in parts of Delta, Bayelsa, Cross River and Rivers States. The use of Igbo language can be looked at through its varied area of communication, socialization and economic value, preservation of culture, building tool, personality development as well as vehicle for learning. Oluikpe (2014) noted that language planning in Nigeria has accorded three out of the numerous Nigerian languages the status of national languages with English language as the official language. The Igbo Language is one of the favoured languages and by its new status, it is expected to serve as the language of education at the primary level. Igbo language besides the other two major Nigerian languages, Hausa and Yoruba is recognized by the Federal Republic of Nigeria as a language of instruction and a subject in schools. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) stipulated that the language of the environment shall be the language of instruction at the lower basic education and a status of a subject at the middle basic education, upper basic education and senior secondary schools. With the importance attached to the status and study of Igbo language in Nigeria, educators have constantly reviewed the curriculum of Igbo language study for both the basic and senior secondary schools in order to allow comprehensive coverage of its teaching and learning. It is however, disappointing that not minding the importance and efforts made by teachers to improve the teaching and learning of Igbo language, students still record a low achievement in some aspects of written Igbo language examinations such as essay writing. What could be the reason? This may be as a result of how students' writings are assessed in terms of spelling errors, poor punctuations, use of clumsy sentence constructions or inability to logically present points in paragraphs.

Writing as one of the four language skills besides, listening, speaking and reading, has occupied an enviable place in Igbo language curriculum. It is a productive and expressive skill which demands that the writer organizes his/her thoughts clearly in a selected code that the reader will understand. It helps the learner to develop critical thinking, creativity, objectivity in the subject matter with the use of appropriate styles and dictions acceptable in a particular language. The importance attached to efficient writing by examination bodies such as West African Examination Council (WAEC) makes it imperative for writing to be taught properly. In external examinations such as West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and National Examination Council (NECO), essay writing constitutes a good part of Igbo Paper II. Essay writing is the act of putting ideas in a logical and well-structured manner in order to convey information. Ukwumaka (2016) defined essay writing as a means of creatively putting down one's ideas and thoughts in order to persuade readers. The writer of an essay must structure it in a manner that is coherent, interesting and makes sense to the reader. Because of the need for students to express themselves in a logical and coherent manner in Igbo language, essay writing has formed a crucial part of its content in secondary schools. Assessments of essay writing in internal and external examinations are based on four parameters such as content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy. This means that the concepts, knowledge or idea generated by the writer must be organized, as contain suitable words and sentences with appropriate observation of mechanics of writing like punctuations. Unfortunately, students do not usually get it right in the above mentioned

four areas, hence their inability to perform well in essay writing in Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) especially in Igbo language.

Achievement deals with the extent to which students have gained from a particular course of instruction. It is the ability to utilize one's effort, knowledge and skills to attain the stated objectives of an educational programme. According to Offorma (2016), achievement is the degree or level of success attained at the end of an academic endeavour. It helps in proper evaluation of students and in the diagnosis of their areas of strengths and weaknesses. However, there has been a decline in students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing over the years. The WAEC Chief Examiners (2019, 2020 and 2022) reported that poor mechanical accuracy, inability to use standard Igbo in writing, inability to meet up with the required essay length, and inability to explain the given proverb in essay writing resulted to candidates' poor achievement in the subject. Also, Umo and Chineke (2014) noted that poor achievement of students in Igbo essay writing can be linked to the inability of many students to write up to a required number of words, spelling errors, poor punctuation, poor articulation of ideas and inability to write with the official orthography. Assessment is a crucial component of any instructional process. It is a tool used to monitor the development and progress of students' learning. Supriyadi (2021) described assessment as a process of retrieving information in students' learning progress and achievement in school. The essence of assessment is to get feedback which is used to diagnose the student's area of strengths and weaknesses, and to determine how much the student has achieved in the teaching and learning process. Ukwuijie (2013) defined assessment as the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, the knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, practices or generally what behaviour a learner does or does not have, acquire or develop before, during or at the end of instruction, or a course of study. There are different techniques of assessment such as portfolio assessment, expert assessment, self assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment. Portfolio assessment is a collection of students' works that demonstrate progress and growth of individual ideas, skills and accomplishments over a specific period of time. In the same vein expert assessment is the process of seeking and obtaining feedback from professional instructors who have advanced or specialized knowledge and skills. On the other hand, self-assessment is the process of reflecting on one's own knowledge, skills and judging how well one performed in a task. Teacher assessment is a conventional assessment technique used by teachers in the teaching and learning process. In this type of assessment, students are not given the opportunity to be actively involved in the assessment of their own learning. They are passive rather than active in the marking and grading of their classwork, assignment or test. Omaka and Osuafor (2020) stated that students hardly see each other's marked work which would have helped them to learn from and support each other. This therefore, suggests an assessment technique that gives a central position to students, one of which is peer assessment. Peer assessment is a form of assessment that involves the students' active engagement in assessing their peers learning outcome. According to Almahasneh and Abdul-Hamid (2019), peer assessment is a communicative strategy that is used by teachers in language classrooms to actively engage students in the learning process by having them assess their peers' work based on the teacher's benchmark. The teacher drafts the assessment procedure which guides the students to assess their learning outcomes. Onwuka and Uloh-Bethels (2020) noted that students by their teacher's permission grade or assess works, assignments, tests or essays of their peers based on teacher-prepared assessment criteria. In view of the importance of peer assessment, perhaps, exposing students to peer assessment in Igbo language essay may

enable collaboration that will lead to a better communication skill and social interaction in the classroom.

The study is anchored on social constructivism theory by Lev Vygotsky(1968) because it guides in directing the study as far as variable of this study is concerned. He believed that lifelong process of development is dependent on social interaction and that social learning actually leads to cognitive development. The main concept of social constructivism is to engage learners in a real social context to enhance their learning. Vygotsky firmly believed that learning cannot take place outside a social context; there is an interwoven relationship between human cognitive aspects and social context. Knowledge develops from how persons in a society interact with one another. This theory helps to give a backup to the establishment of opportunities for learners to collaborate with the teacher and peers in constructing knowledge and understanding. It emphasizes the collaborative nature of learning under the guidance of a facilitator who is the teacher. To investigate the influence of peer assessment on achievement,Omaka and Osuafor (2020) carried out a study on the effect of peer assessment technique on secondary school students' achievement in Biology. The findings of the study revealed that students exposed to peer assessment technique performed better than those exposed to teacher assessment technique. In another study, Bokolo and Joe (2021) investigated the effect of peer assessment in Oral English achievement of senior secondary school students in Bayelsa State. Findings revealed that there is a significant difference in achievement of students in peer-assessment group. Thus, based on the reviewed literatures and the researchers' knowledge, there is a dearth of empirical works done on Peer Assessment on students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing. Hence, the need for this study on effect of Peer Assessment on senior secondary students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing in Nsukka Education Zone.

Statement of the Problem

Igbo language is recognized as one of the three major languages in Nigeria, and given the status of a school subject in the primary, secondary and tertiary levels where it is taken as a course of study. But despite the important place of Igbo language in Nigeria's educational and social spheres, secondary school students do not perform well in it. This poor achievement is especially noticeable in their poor writing skills. The students in an Igbolanguage class may feel some uneasiness and subsequently a lack of interest and anxiety whenever 'essay writing' is mentioned. The WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports of(2019, 2021 and 2022)have shown that the achievements of students in Igbo language in external examinations were below expectation. It was reported that the candidates were unable to write in standard Igbo language, meet up with the required essay length, and punctuate their sentences accurately. This drastically reduced their marks especially in essay writing which is a very important aspect of Igbo language. This problem could be as a result of the assessment technique used in assessing students' essay. The assessment technique used by Igbo language teachers in essay writing could be one that does not spur the students' interest in essay writing and may possibly create writing anxiety in them. Also, students' chances of collaborating and learning from each other's mistake may not be possible due the assessment technique used by the teacher. As it is generally speculated, if students are active in the learning process, they would learn better. Perhaps, the poor achievement of students in Igbo language essay writing can be blamed on the inability to use innovative assessment technique that could stimulate students' interest and engagement. Thus, the problem of the study put in question form is: What is

the effect of peer assessment on senior secondary school students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing in Nsukka Education Zone?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of peer assessment on senior secondary school students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Research Question

The study was guided by the following research question:

1. What are the effects of peer assessment and teacher assessment on the mean achievement scores of students in Igbo language essay writing?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis guided the study. The hypothesis was tested at a probability level of 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to peer assessment and those exposed to teacher assessment in Igbo language essay writing.

Methodology

The study employed a quasi-experimental non-randomised group design. It is a pre-test, post-test 2x2 factorial research design. According to Abonyi (2010), it is an experimental design which incorporates two or more independent variables in a single experiment and the effect of each independent variable is measured using different groups of participants. This study was carried out in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The Education Zone comprises three Local Government Areas, namely: Igbo-Etiti, Nsukka and Uzo-Uwani. The population of the study comprised 3357 senior secondary two (SS 2) students in all the 62 public secondary schools (53 of which are co-educational, while 9 are single-sex) in Nsukka Education Zone. The sample for the study comprised 111 SSII students in two intact classes drawn from two co-educational secondary schools out of the 62 public secondary in Nsukka Education Zone in 2022/2023 academic session. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to draw subjects. The instrument used was developed by the researchers which was called Igbo Language Narrative Essay Achievement Test (ILNEAT). The Igbo Language Narrative Essay Achievement Test (ILNEAT), was validated by three experts. Two lecturers from the Department of Arts Education (Language Education Unit) and one from Science Education (Measurement and Evaluation Unit), University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The researchers used mean and standard deviation to provide answers to the research question while analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypothesis formulated for the study at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

The result is presented in line with the research question and the null hypothesis that guided the study thus:

Research Question One (1): What are the mean achievement scores of students exposed to peer assessment and those exposed to teacher assessment in Igbo language essay writing?

Table 1: Pretest and posttest mean achievement scores of students exposed to peer assessment and those exposed to teacher assessment in Igbo language essay writing

Assessment Techniques	Pre-test		Post-test		Adjusted Mean Score
	N	\bar{X} SD	\bar{X} SD		
Peer Assessment (PA)	50	12.50 1.81	20.10 1.95		20.04
Teacher Assessment (TA)	61	11.87 1.64	13.16 1.46		13.19

Note: N = Number of Respondents, \bar{X} = Mean, SD = Standard deviation

The result in Table 1 shows the mean achievement scores of students exposed to peer assessment and those exposed to teacher assessment in Igbo language essay writing. The result shows that students who were exposed to peer assessment had a mean achievement score (\bar{X} = 12.50, SD = 1.81) at pretest and a mean achievement score (\bar{X} = 20.10, SD = 1.95) at posttest. While those exposed to teacher assessment had a mean achievement score (\bar{X} = 11.87, SD = 1.64) at pretest and a mean achievement score (\bar{X} = 13.16, SD = 1.46) at posttest. The posttest standard deviations of 1.95 and 1.46 for students exposed to peer and teacher assessments in Igbo language essay writing respectively, indicate that the achievement scores of students exposed to peer assessment were slightly widespread than the achievement scores of students exposed to teacher assessment. The adjusted mean scores of 20.04 and 13.19 for students exposed to peer and teacher assessments in Igbo language essay writing respectively, shows that students exposed to peer assessment had higher achievement score than those exposed to teacher assessment. This implies that peer assessment is more effective in improving students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing than the teacher assessment.

Hypothesis One

H0₁: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to peer assessment and those exposed to teacher assessment in Igbo language essay writing.

Table 2: Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of the difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to peer assessment and those exposed to teacher assessment in Igbo language essay writing

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared (η^2_p)	Dec.
Corrected Model	1384.327 ^a	4	346.082	150.072	.000	.850	
Intercept	280.861	1	280.861	121.790	.000	.535	
PreAchievt	55.376	1	55.376	24.013	.000	.185	
Groups	1090.614	1	1090.614	472.923	.000	.817	S
Gender	2.407	1	2.407	1.044	.309	.010	NS
Groups * Gender	1.112	1	1.112	.482	.489	.005	NS
Error	244.448	106	2.306				
Total	31078.000	111					
Corrected Total	1628.775	110					

Note: df = Degree of Freedom, F = F-ratio, Sig. = Significant/probability value, Dec. = Decision, NS = Not Significant, S = Significant

The result in Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to peer assessment and those exposed to teacher assessment in Igbo language essay writing, ($F(1, 106) = 472.923, p = .000, \eta^2_p = .817$). This is because the associated probability (Sig.) value of .000 is less than 0.05 level of significance at which the result was tested. Hence, the null hypothesis one (H0₁) which stated that no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to peer

assessment and those exposed to teacher assessment in Igbo language essay writing is rejected. Moreover, the effect size difference ($\eta^2_p = .817$), indicates that 81.7% variance exists between the mean Igbo language essay writing achievement scores of students exposed to peer assessment and those exposed to teacher assessment. This implies that there is a significant difference in their mean achievement scores.

Discussion

The finding of the study is discussed in line with the research question and hypothesis that guided the study. From the finding of this study, it was discovered that peer assessment is more effective in improving students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing than the teacher assessment. Further finding showed that there is a significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to peer assessment and those exposed to teacher assessment in Igbo language essay writing. In essence, the peer assessment technique was a better technique in improving students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing than the teachers' assessment technique. This finding is in line with the findings of some previous studies. For example, the finding agrees with the findings by Sharma, Jain, Gupta, Garg, Batta and Dhir (2016) which showed the significant improvement recorded in the academic performance of students after exposure to peer assessment. Likewise, Omaka and Osuafor (2020) revealed that students exposed to peer assessment technique performed better than those exposed to teacher assessment technique. The above finding showed that peer assessment is more effective in improving students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing than the teacher assessment could be due to the immediate and specific feedback students received from their peers. Peer feedback in this case may be more targeted and relatable, as students understand the challenges and perspectives of their peers better than teachers. It may also encourage active engagement and self-assessment as students take on the role of assessors. Thus, they would be motivated to acquire writing skills that may earn them more marks from peers and therefore may score higher than their counterparts exposed to teachers' assessment. This could explain why the finding of this study showed that peer assessment is significantly effective in improving students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing than the teacher assessment.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of this study it is concluded that peer assessment stands out as a more effective means of enhancing students' achievement in Igbo language essay writing when compared to traditional teacher assessment. Hence, educators need to consider implementing peer assessment strategies in the classroom to further enhance the learning experience and outcomes of students in Igbo language essay writing.

REFERENCES

- Abonyi, O. S. (2010). *Instrumentalization in behavioural research*. Enugu: Timex Publishers.
- Almahasneh, A. M. S., & Abdul- Hamid, S. (2019). The effect of using peer assessment training on writing performance among Arab EFL high school students in Malaysia. *Arab World English Journal*, 10(1), 105-115.
- Bokolo, F., & Joe, A. I. (2021). Effect of peer-assessment in Oral English achievement of senior secondary school students in Bayelsa State: Moderating effect of learning

- style. *Journal of Advances in Education and Philosophy*, 5(12), 415-422. DOI: 10.36348/jaep. 2021.v05i12.007
- Chineke, S. O., & Ugwuanyi, L.T.(2014). Teacher variables in employing innovative teaching methods in Igbo language in secondary schools: Implication for inclusion. *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences*, 7(2), 9-18.
- Chukwuma, O., &Agbim, C. W. (2020). An evaluation of the use of Igbo language for communication among residents of South-East Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, 16(23), 172-184.
- Egbe, C. I., &Asadu, E. U. (2020). The utilization of audio-visual resources in the teaching of oral English in secondary schools in Nsukka education zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Arts and Technology Education*, 11(2), 14-25
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2013). *National policy on education* (6th ed.). Lagos: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).
- Offorma, G. C. (2016). Gender issues in education. In G. C. Offorma (Ed.), *Women and development*. Nigerian Academy of Education Year Book 9. Nigeria: Divine Press.
- Oluikpe, E. N. (2014). Igbo Language research: Yesterday and today. *Language Matters: Studies in the Languages of Africa*, 45(1), 110-126.
- Omaka, N. T., &Osuafor, A. M. (2020). Effect of peer assessment technique on secondary school students' achievement in Biology in Awka Education Zone. *South Eastern Journal of Research and Sustainable Development (SEJRSD)*, 3(1), 57-77.
- Onwubie, B. C. (2016). Indigenous language and the preservation of African values: The Igbo example. *Journal of Religion and Human Relations*, 8(2), 230-238
- Onwuka, G. T., &Uloh-Bethels, A. C. (2020). Peer assessment and learner autonomy in Igbo and English language essay writing. *Journal of CUDIMAC*, 8(1), 102-116.
- Supriyadi, S. (2021). Peer assessment in writing expository essays: A research on tenth graders of vocational school. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 20, 134-142.
- Udoeye, I. E. (2016). The impact of national policy on education on multilingual proficiency in Nigeria. *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 4(3),14-22.
- Ukume, G. D., Ochogwu, C. E. &Ejembi, P. (2017). Harnessing two language games to enhance students' achievement in English vocabulary: Implications for innovation in second language teaching. *A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 14(4), 1-15.
- Ukwuijie, R. P. I. (2013). *Educational assessment: A sine qua non for quality education*. 108th Inaugural Lecture Series. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Ukwumaka, O. K. (2016). Effect of immediate feedback on senior secondary school students' achievement in essay writing in Lokoja Education Zone, Kogi State, Nigeria (Unpublished master's project). University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Umo, U. C., &Chineke, S. O. (2014). Effect of task-based language teaching method on students' achievement in Igbo essay writing. *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences*, 7(2), 129-134.
- Vygotsky, L. (1968). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wahyuni, S. &Umam, M. K. (2017). An analysis on writing anxiety of Indonesian EFL college learners. *JEELS*, 4(1), 103-126..
- West African Examinations Council. (2019, 2021, and 2022). *Chief Examiners' Reports Nigeria*. Lagos: West African Examination Press.