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RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF COLLABORATIVE AND COMPETITIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relative effectiveness of collaborative and competitive learning strategies on students' achievement in English Language in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and three null hypotheses were tested. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design using intact classes with a pre-test, post-test non-equivalent control group design involving 2x2 factorial model. A sample of 118 Upper Basic Two (JS2) English Language students from Awka Education Zones of Anambra State was used in the study. The instruments for data collection were English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) and was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instruments was established using Kudder-Richardson formula 20 which yielded coefficient of internal consistencies of 0.87 for academic achievement. Teachers were trained as research assistants and they administered the treatment on the students using the designed lesson plans. The method of data collection was by administering the ELAT as pretest and posttest. The data obtained were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed among others that collaborative and competitive instructional approaches are effective for improving students' academic achievement. However, collaborative instructional approach was more effective than competitive instructional approach in English language.

Keywords: Collaborative learning, Competitive learning, achievement, and English Language

Introduction

In contemporary Nigeria, education is equated with a good command of English language. In other words, an educated person is defined within the Nigerian context as one who has good knowledge of English language by way of spoken and written words. Thus, English language bestows some status on those who are proficient in it. It is no longer perceived as a borrowed language but has gained acceptance by a vast majority of Nigerians as part of our linguistic property.

Ike-Nwafor (2020) added that English language is at variance with our mother tongue, it is ebulliently used by Nigerians with creativity that is born out of a confident sense of ownership. English language is vital for national cohesion given that none of the indigenous languages has been able to successfully address the nation's linguistic diversity (Mekiliuwa, 2018). This explains why English language is deftly used by teachers in Nigeria schools as a language of instruction to serve the needs of a multi-lingual country that lacks indigenous official language.

English language is the medium of instruction in Nigerian schools. Similarly, Evue (2013) opined that, one of the reasons why English is so central to Nigeria's educational growth is because of its significant role as a medium of knowledge delivery in Nigerian schools. English and the use of English are mandatory in JAMB for all candidates seeking admissions into the universities. Moreover, Njoku (2017) pointed out that English language has not only engineered human development through education, it has, by extension, conferred on Nigerians other significant privileges both on the home front and the global scene (Hamisu, Sani, Umma and Maryam, 2018). English language is increasingly growing in strengths, pushing other world languages backward in the global space, opening new frontiers. Owolabi and Nnaji (2013) stated that, English is an irresistible language as far as development is concerned because for any nation particularly in Nigeria to be relevant and derive the maximum benefit from the opportunities that abound in every area of human need, for personal advancement and national development, English language is a sine qua non. It is in recognition of the laudable goals of the teaching of English language in secondary schools that the academic achievement of students is prioritized. A major way to establish whether or not students are learning and, by extension, attaining the laudable goals of English language in Nigeria is through their academic achievement in annual Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results.

Academic achievement is a measure of skills and knowledge acquired by students within a specified period of time in various fields of academic studies. Academic achievement is a description of the academic performance by means of validated measures. Kumar (2017) referred to academic achievement as students' accomplishment, participation, as well as attainment in academic subjects as measured by exams, tests, and grades. More often than not, academic achievement serves as a predicator for career growth, acceptance of change, adapting to new situations and the development of positive self-esteem and self-confidence (Latrintluangi, 2018). In secondary schools, academic achievement is measured based on formative and summative assessments that are conducted in three terms of an academic session. The achievement of secondary school students in English language in Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) examinations has been unsatisfactory. This is supported by the Registrar's Report of the National Examinations Council (NECO) supervised by State Ministry on Education which

revealed that students' performance in English language from 2019 to 2023 in Anambra State has been consistently poor. For instance, the results released by the National Examinations Council (NECO) from 2019 to 2023 revealed that 61.8%, 52.19%, 52.64%, 54.60% and 59.8% of the candidates that respectively sat for the examination in English language failed as they did not have credit passes in the subject (NECO statistics, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 as detailed in Appendix C, P. 97). The foregoing statistics show that much as there appears to be negligible increase in the pass rate of students in English language, the performance has been poor as it falls short of the minimum pass rate of 50%. Additionally, that of NECO is not any better as few students had credit in the subject from 2020 to 2022 (NECO Chief Registrar's Reports, 2020, 2021 and 2022).

It is interesting to note that learning strategies can positively or negatively impact on students' academic achievement. This is against backdrop that the use of strategy that promotes teacher's passage of instruction to the students goes a long way in influencing students' achievement in the subject (Falode, Adewale, Ilobeneke, Falode and Robinson, 2016). In other words, the use of an effective learning strategy/quest for a suitable learning strategy such as competitive and collaborative learning strategies guarantee the accomplishment of the expressed instructional goal.

Competitive learning strategy is an instructional strategy that promotes a win-lose situation where high-achieving students are positively re-enforced for reaching their goals while low-achieving students are encouraged to do better next time. Competitive learning strategy is about teaching students how to learn without fear of failure or letting their ego's become too involved. Students can access the joy of the moment, involvement, challenge, adventure, and suspense can be fun if students feel free and the situation support fun over comparison. Fun during this learning strategy occurs when students see that competition as the game, the fleeting reality and the learning relationships, and self-respect as the lasting reality (Okereke and Ugwuegbulam, 2023). Competitive learning can be interpersonal (between individual students), or intergroup (between groups) (Danjuma, 2015). Danjuma added that inter-personal competition is a model of competitive learning strategy that promotes 'intellectual contest' between individual students. In classes run through competitive learning strategy (intergroup), the teacher presents the lesson and heterogeneous teams of three or four put their efforts together and work on the introduced tasks to prove their superiority over other groups (Mardani and Jajanbazian, 2015). Mardani and Jajanbazian added that students try to internalize the material taught through teacher presentation, individual work, pair work, teamwork, and class wide discussions, followed by peer pre assessment and team evaluation. In the case of inter-personal competition, the students work individually on their own regarding a task with the aim of out-performing others. However, the focus of the present study will be on inter-personal competition (between individual students). This interpersonal competition could

influence retention. However, some students who are not favourably disposed to competitive learning could find interest in collaborative learning. This could be traced to the fact that collaborative learning provides students with the opportunity to work together, co-create understanding, and develop higher-level thinking skills compared to competitive (individual) learning (Appavoo, Sukon, Gokhool, and Gooria, 2019).

Collaborative learning is a learning strategy that includes a small group of learners working together in order to develop the educational experience to the maximum extent possible (Al-kaabi, 2016). Al-kaabi further stated that collaborative learning captures the work of individuals as members of groups in which each learner of the group is connected to mental, emotional, and behavioural functions to achieve the objectives of the community whose clear objectives help learners in the decision-making process. Collaborative learning strategy is a student-centered instructional strategy that offers the students the opportunity of interacting with their peers in a learning environment with a view to learning from each other. Additionally, collaborative learning strategy allows the students to be in constant consultation with their teacher. The approach of collaborative learning develops interaction in groups, promotes individual responsibility for learning and impacts meta-cognitive awareness (Irene, 2019). Irene added that the benefits of collaborative learning include increased cooperation, developed social skills, motivation and retention. Furthermore, collaborative learning enables the students to have the broader understanding of the subjects since they are able to collaborate in the learning process (Davidson and Major, 2014). Furthermore, while Iji, Ochu, Adikwu and Atamonokhai (2017) found that students of collaborative learning strategy had significantly greater mean achievement score than those of Traditional Lecture Method (TLM), Al-kaabi (2016) found that collaborative learning had no beneficial effect on the students' achievement scores for the midterm exam. Interestingly, achievement scores of students in English language could vary along gender lines.

Gender refers to the social role, responsibilities and behaviours believed to belong to males and females. Some scholars have looked at gender and achievement among students. For instance, Reardon, Kalogrides, Fayle, Podolsky and Zarate (2018) observed a significant difference in the performance of male and female students in favour of the females in essay writing. In similar vein, Akabogu and Ajiwoju (2015) found that gender had significant effect on students' achievement in English vocabulary in favour of females while Nwogba (2018) found that female pupils in both public and private primary schools achieved better than male pupils in English language common entrance examination. A cursory look at the afore-mentioned studies reveals that there appears to be consistency in the findings. However, none of the studies made allusion to the use of collaborative learning strategy to ascertain students' achievement in English language across gender lines. Thus, it will make for research worthiness to find out the

moderating influence of gender on achievement of secondary students in English language on exposure to collaborative learning strategy in Anambra State. More so, the relative effectiveness of collaborative and competitive learning strategies on the secondary school students' achievement in English language appears to be under researched to the researchers' knowledge. It is in view of the foregoing that the researcher investigated the focal topic in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

There is a consensus among educators that English language is an important and useful subject for development in every country. It is a key to communication along with other subjects. Despite the importance and popularity of English language among Nigerian students, it is very disappointing to note that students' achievement and retention in the subject at both internal and external examinations has remained consistently poor. Researchers asserted that for some years the percentage of students who obtained credit pass in English language at Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) in Nigeria has been low and their achievement is poor. However, NECO Chief Registrar's report 2023 stated that there is an improvement in the subject but the achievement of students is still not at its' best which is in line with the NECO statistic evidence from Awka Education Zone of Anambra State.

The students' poor achievement in English language which is noted in NECO Chief Registrars' report (2019-2023) is often attributed to a number of other factors. These include: method of instruction, lack of practical activities, lack of teachers' commitment to teaching, and lack of enough instructional materials. Some researchers were of the view that the kind of teaching methods teachers use whether used alone or combined, in one way promotes students' academic achievement and retention in school subjects. It is thought that recourse to a learning strategy that could ensure sufficient interaction among students, with teacher and instructional materials as well as giving students enough time at their own pace (competitive learning strategy) could improve students' English language achievement. In recent years, researchers' attention has turned to investigating the effect of some innovative learning strategies that will enhance students' achievement and retention in English language without investigating if there is a way the previous methods we had can be combined or manipulated to enhance students' achievement in English language.

Based on the forgoing, the researcher chose to apply the usage of two learning strategies: competitive and collaborative learning strategies in teaching some concepts in English language and varied them from other treatment groups in order to observe their effect on students' achievement. Although the strategies have been compared to other strategies, the two had not been compared together within this geographical area, and has not been used combined to teach English language for upper basic school students. To this background, it is imperative to investigate the relative effectiveness of collaborative and competitive learning strategies on secondary

school students' academic achievement in English language in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the difference between the mean achievement scores of secondary school students exposed to collaborative learning strategy and those exposed to competitive learning strategy in English language?
2. What is the difference between the mean achievement scores of male and female secondary school students exposed to collaborative and competitive learning strategies in English language?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of secondary school students exposed to collaborative learning strategy and those exposed to competitive learning strategy in English language.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of male and female secondary school students exposed to collaborative and competitive learning strategies in English language.
3. There is no interaction effect of learning strategies and gender on students' achievement in English language.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a quasi-experimental design using intact classes with a pre-test, post-test non-equivalent control group design involving 2x2 factorial model. A sample of 118 Upper Basic Two (JS2) English Language students from Awka Education Zones of Anambra State was used in the study. The instruments for data collection were English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) and was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instruments was established using Kudder-Richardson formula 20 which yielded coefficient of internal consistencies of 0.87 for academic achievement. Teachers were trained as research assistants and they administered the treatment on the students using the designed lesson plans. The method of data collection was by administering the ELAT as pretest and posttest. The data obtained were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Results

Research Questions 1: What is the difference between the mean achievement scores of secondary school students exposed to collaborative learning strategy and those exposed to competitive learning strategy in English language?

Table 1: Effect of Collaborative Learning and Competitive Learning Strategies on English Language Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students

Source of variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest mean	Gain Mean	Pretest SD	Posttest SD	Remark
Collaborative Learning	38	29.47	80.92	51.45	10.95	12.78	Effective
Competitive Learning	39	30.13	72.69	42.56	10.61	11.80	Effective

Table 1 reveals that the students taught English language with collaborative learning strategy had pretest mean score of 29.47 and posttest mean score of 80.92 with gained mean 51.45 in English language, while those in the competitive learning strategy group had pretest mean score of 30.13 and posttest mean score of 72.69 with gained mean 42.56. With posttest mean gain score of 51.45, collaborative learning strategy is effective in enhancing students' achievement in English language. Table 1 showed from the standard deviation scores that the spread of scores increased in both groups in moving from the pretest to the posttest with the competitive learning strategy group having the highest standard deviation.

Research Question 2: What is the difference between the mean achievement scores of male and female secondary school students exposed to collaborative and competitive learning strategies in English language?

Table 2: Influence of Gender on English Language Achievement of Secondary School Students Taught Using Collaborative Learning and Competitive Learning Strategies

Source of variation	Gender	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest mean	Gain Mean	Pretest SD	Posttest SD	Remark
Collaborative Learning	Male	18	29.17	81.39	52.22	10.06	11.61	Effective
	Female	20	29.75	80.50	50.75	11.97	14.04	Effective
Competitive Learning	Male	21	31.19	73.10	41.91	10.83	10.78	Effective
	Female	18	28.89	72.22	43.33	10.51	13.20	Effective

Table 2 indicates that collaborative learning strategy is effective in enhancing both male and female students' achievements in English language. Table 2 shows that the male

students had a pretest mean of 29.17 and posttest mean of 81.39 with mean gain of 52.22 while the female students had a pretest mean of 29.75 and posttest mean of 80.50 with mean gain of 50.75. With the mean gains, it is obvious that the male students slightly outperformed the female students when taught English language with collaborative learning strategy. Also, the table shows that the male students had a pretest mean of 31.19 and posttest mean of 73.10 with mean gain of 41.91 while the female students had a pretest mean of 28.89 and posttest mean of 72.22 with mean gain of 43.33. With the mean gains, it is obvious that the female students slightly outperformed their male counterparts in academic achievement when taught English language with competitive learning strategy. Table 2 also shows from the standard deviation scores that the spread of scores increased in both male and female in moving from the pretest to the posttest with the females having the highest spread of scores.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of secondary school students exposed to collaborative learning strategy and those exposed to competitive learning strategy in English language.

Table 3: ANCOVA on the Effectiveness of Collaborative Learning and Competitive Learning Strategies on English Language Achievement of Secondary School Students

Source	SS	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Corrected Model	2364.127[a]	4	591.032			
Intercept	65888.587	1	65888.587			
Pretest	1046.014	1	1046.014			
Method	1251.314	1	1251.314	8.769	.004	S
Gender	26.619	1	26.619	.187	.667	NS
Method * Gender	**4.644**	**1**	**4.644**	**.033**	**.857**	**NS**
Error	10274.185	113	142.697			
Total	466250.000	118				
Corrected Total	12638.312	117				

Table 3 indicates that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 117df denominator, the calculated F is 8.769 with P-value of 0.004 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis one is rejected. So, there is significant difference in the effectiveness of collaborative learning and competitive learning strategies on the English language achievements of secondary school students. Table 3 shows that collaborative learning strategy is more effective than competitive learning strategy.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of male and female secondary school students exposed to collaborative and competitive learning strategies in English language.

Table 4: ANCOVA on the Effectiveness of Collaborative Learning and Competitive Learning Strategies on English Language Achievement of Secondary School Students

Source	SS	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Corrected Model	2364.127[a]	4	591.032			
Intercept	65888.587	1	65888.587			
Pretest	1046.014	1	1046.014			
Method	1251.314	1	1251.314	8.769	.004	S
Gender	26.619	1	26.619	.187	.667	NS
Method * Gender	**4.644**	**1**	**4.644**	**.033**	**.857**	**NS**
Error	10274.185	113	142.697			
Total	466250.000	118				
Corrected Total	12638.312	117				

Table 4 also reveals that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 117df denominator, the calculated F is 0.187 with Pvalue of 0.667 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis two is accepted. So, gender had no significant difference on the achievement of students taught using collaborative and competitive learning strategies.

Hypothesis 3: There is no interaction effect of learning strategies and gender on students' achievement in English language.

Table 5: ANCOVA on the Effectiveness of Collaborative Learning and Competitive Learning Strategies on English Language Achievement of Secondary School Students

Source	SS	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Corrected Model	2364.127[a]	4	591.032			
Intercept	65888.587	1	65888.587			
Pretest	1046.014	1	1046.014			
Method	1251.314	1	1251.314	8.769	.004	S
Gender	26.619	1	26.619	.187	.667	NS
Method * Gender	**4.644**	**1**	**4.644**	**.033**	**.857**	**NS**
Error	10274.185	113	142.697			
Total	466250.000	118				
Corrected Total	12638.312	117				

Table 5 indicates that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 117df denominator, the calculated F is 0.033 with P-value of 0.857 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis three is accepted. So, there is no significant interaction effect of learning strategies and gender on the achievement of the students in English language.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from research question 1 in Table 1 reveals that the students taught English language with collaborative learning strategy had pretest mean score of 29.47 and

posttest mean score of 80.92 with gained mean 51.45 in English language, while those in the competitive learning strategy group had pretest mean score of 30.13 and posttest mean score of 72.69 with gained mean 42.56. With posttest mean gain score of 51.45, collaborative learning strategy is effective in enhancing students' achievement in English language. Table 1 showed from the standard deviation scores that the spread of scores increased in both groups in moving from the pretest to the posttest with the competitive learning strategy group having the highest standard deviation. This shows that secondary school students taught English language using collaborative learning strategy had a higher academic achievement than their counterparts taught English language using competitive learning method. This is in agreement with the findings of Ubong and Edidiong (2022) who found out that students' academic achievement was higher when taught Social Studies using collaborative learning strategy than students taught using lecture method.

More so, the findings of the study is in line with the findings of Anyebe, *et, al* (2019) who revealed that the mean academic achievement of students taught using collaborative learning strategy was significantly different in English composition than those in the conventional lecture method. The findings is also in consonant with the findings of Iji, *et al* (2017) who found out that students of collaborative instructional strategy had significant greater mean achievement score than those of traditional lecture method. In addition, Al-kaabi (2016) observed that collaborative learning strategy had significant effect on the students' proposal writing scores. In contrast, the findings is in disagreement with the findings of Ike-Nwafor (2020) who found out that teachers de-emphasized collaborative learning strategy as seen from respondents' responses on the interactive activities employed in learning English as a second language.

Findings from research question 2 in Table 2 indicates that collaborative learning strategy is effective in enhancing both male and female students' achievements in English language. Table 3 shows that the male students had a pretest mean of 29.17 and posttest mean of 81.39 with mean gain of 52.22 while the female students had a pretest mean of 29.75 and posttest mean of 80.50 with mean gain of 50.75. With the mean gains, it is obvious that the male students slightly outperformed the female students when taught English language with collaborative learning strategy. Also, the table shows that the male students had a pretest mean of 31.19 and posttest mean of 73.10 with mean gain of 41.91 while the female students had a pretest mean of 28.89 and posttest mean of 72.22 with mean gain of 43.33. With the mean gains, it is obvious that the female students slightly outperformed their male counterparts in academic achievement when taught English language with competitive learning strategy. Table 2

also shows from the standard deviation scores that the spread of scores increased in both male and female in moving from the pretest to the posttest with the females having the highest spread of scores. This is in line with the findings of Galle, *et al* (2020) who found out that male students performed better their female counterpart when taught using discussion method. The findings is also in line with the findings of Sunday, *et al* (2021) who found out that competitive learning strategy was gender friendly as both male and female students performed equally. Other researchers such as Ezenwosu (2020), and Carpenter, Crawford and Waden (2007) have reported that collaborative teaching impacted positively on students' learning. They emphasized that collaborative teaching offered practical benefits to students.

Findings from hypothesis 1 in Table 3 indicates that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 117df denominator, the calculated F is 8.769 with Pvalue of 0.004 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis one is rejected. So, there is a significant difference in the effectiveness of collaborative learning and competitive learning strategies on the English language achievements of secondary school students. Table 3 shows that collaborative learning strategy is more effective than competitive learning strategy. This is in line with the findings of Iji, *et al* (2017) who found out that there was a significant difference between collaborative learning strategy and lecture method. The researchers also found out that there was no significant difference between collaborative learning strategy and lecture method due to gender. This is in agreement with the findings of Umar (2015) who found a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental groups, with experimental group performing better. The researcher also found that both male and female students exposed to collaborative learning strategy performed better than their counterparts exposed to lecture method.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed a significant positive effect of collaborative and competitive learning strategies on students' achievement in English language in favour of the collaborative learning strategy. This led to the conclusion that collaborative and competitive learning strategies significantly and positively enhanced the students' achievement in English language. Also, there was no significant differences in the mean achievements of male and female students taught using collaborative and competitive learning strategies. Thus, both methods significantly improved the students' achievement in English language uniformly regardless of their gender. More so, there are no significant interaction effects of gender and teaching method as measured from the English language achievement test.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in the light of the above findings:

1. English language teachers should adopt collaborative and competitive learning strategies to involve students in the learning process actively and make them take more responsibility for their own learning.
2. The school administrators should provide facilities such as internets, library materials and well-equipped classrooms so that English language students could have enough educational resources in the course of collaborative learning.
3. Frequent training on how to use collaborative and competitive learning strategies effectively in teaching and learning English language should be organized for English language teachers by the government and stakeholders in education. Such training should be supervised and evaluated to make sure that English language teachers have mastered the strategies for use in the classroom.

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