Grammatical Errors of Student Teachers: Effects on English Language learning among Secondary School Students in Ekiti State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The English language has its grammar governed by rules. Speakers of the language have to make concerted effort to learn how words are put together to form sentences to enable them to effectively communicate in the language. Student teaching is a college-supervised instructional experience; usually the culminating course in a university or college undergraduate education or graduate school program leading to teacher education and certification. This study focuses on grammatical errors of student teachers: the effect on English language learning. The main purpose of the study was to analyze the effect of grammatical errors committed by student teachers on learning English language. Normative survey method was adopted. One hundred (100) senior secondary school students and twenty (20) student teachers took part in the study. The researchers developed a questionnaire comprising of 120 multiple choice questions. Scoring key for the items of questionnaire was prepared. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard deviation) and inferential analysis (t-test and F-test). Based on the findings, suggestions and relevant recommendations were made.
Key Words: *English language, Grammatical errors, Secondary School Students, Student teachers.*

INTRODUCTION

English Language is a world Language and in Nigeria, it is more or less an all-purpose language. Obadare (2019) asserts that it is the language of instruction in schools, language of government, the press, language of politics, of commerce, of law, of education, of religion, of judiciary of mass media. Awonusi (2004) asserts that the domestication of the English Language in Nigeria for over four centuries, particularly its use in the educational system and colonial administration, over a century ago has resulted in the use of the language, in the country, in domains different from those of the native speakers of communities like the USA, the UK and Australia. In addition, English Language without mincing words plays a dominant role in a country of over 500 indigenous languages and according to Mohammad (2015) individual interactions within and across the country is possible through the use of English Language. It is indeed a unifying factor in all spheres. Danfulani (2019) asserts that many students find it difficult to express their opinions with all sense of clarity. It is germane that every individual should be assiduous to attain proficiency in the use of the Language since it is the language of Instruction at the secondary and tertiary levels of education. Oluwole and Olarewaju (2018) opine that English Language occupies an irreplaceable place in Education. The language is so important that a student who is deficient in it ends up being maimed academically. There had been attendant poor performance of students in the subject and observations, experience and research evidences abound to corroborate the poor performance of students in the Language.

Statement of the Problem

It is no longer news that mass failure in English language by candidates in the senior school certificate examination in Nigeria is pervasive and there is urgent need to assess the level of understanding and usage of English language by teachers in training because according to Adelabu in Obateru (2018) the problems of teaching and learning of English are grouped into two; teacher and school related problems and students related problems. Moreover, Blackie in Adebajo (2009) submits that poor teaching which results in poor students' performance is not only bothered on the lack of teaching ability or unsuitable methods of pedagogies but lack of knowledge of English. Ademokoya (2008) asserts that the success of any educational system depends greatly on the teacher who guides, directs and organizes all the activities involved in the teaching and learning process. It is on this premise that this study focused on grammatical errors committed by student teachers and its attendant effects on English language learning among senior secondary school students in Ekiti State.

Poor Performance

Obadare (2019) asserts that the poor performance of students in English Language standardized examinations has become one of the notorious problems of Nigerian education today. He further asserts that an important language of this nature must be taught and learnt well but the yearly poor performance of students has been a source of concern for teachers, parents and even the students. Many Nigerian students are deficient in the use of English even up till the completion of their SSCE level. Adebajo (2009) submits that mass failure of students in school certificate examination and failure to attain a credit pass in English has become an issue of great concern. It is even more disturbing that majority of the candidates for each years' examination are those who have been repeating the examination over a period of time. Wilkins in Adebajo (2009) asserts that the teacher is an important variable in any language-learning situation. The teacher's skill is a function of his proficiency and the knowledge of his expertise in methods and techniques of language teaching.

Grammar in English Language

Grammar refers to the rules that govern the way a language works. Kirkpatrick (2009) asserts that good or correct English is often regarded as grammar of English. The grammar of English Language refers to rules governing the language. Faniran (1986) submits that there is no doubt that a firm grasp of the basic elements of English grammar is necessary before anyone can hope to speak or write correct, error-free English.

Grammatical Errors

Faniran (1986) believed that the standard of English language among senior secondary school students has fallen. He further opines that this is because students no longer take the study of grammar of English language serious. Errors can hinder understanding while repeated errors become confirmed and unless the learner is made aware of them, he cannot learn from them.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the grammatical errors committed by student teachers and their attendant effects on English language learning. Specifically, the study is set;
-        To find out the significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language with respect to Gender.
-        To find out the significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language with respect to medium of instruction.
-        To find out the significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language with respect to classes in which the sample of students studied.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.
Is there any significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language with respect to Gender?
Is there any significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language with respect to medium of instruction?

Research Hypotheses

There is no significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language between Boys and Girls.
There is no significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language with respect to medium of instruction
There is no significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language and its effects on students in SSS 1, SSS 2 and SSS 3 classes.

METHOD

This study was a classroom based action research. The sample for the study consisted of 100 secondary school students and 20 student teachers in Ado Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Random sampling method was employed by the researchers to obtain the desired sample. The social demographic variables used in the study were gender, medium of instruction and classes in which the sampled students were selected.

Table 1: Sample selection for the study

s/n	Variables	Students		Teachers
1	Gender	Boys	55	20
		Girls	45	
2	Medium of Instruction	Teacher centered method	50	10
		Learner centered method	50	10

3	Class	S S S 1	30	6
		S S S 2	35	7
		S S S 3	35	7

The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured 120 multiple choice questions to elicit information on grammatical errors committed by student teachers and its effects on English language learning. The distributions of questions in the questionnaire with respect to structure are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Distribution of questions in the questionnaire

s/no	Nature of Questions	Number of questions
1	Questions concerning to Verb	30
2	Questions concerning to Noun	20
3	Questions concerning to Adverb	25
4	Questions concerning to Preposition	25
5	Questions concerning Articles	20
	Total	120

Before the commencement of the test, instructions regarding each aspect of the question paper were explained to the students in clear terms so as to avoid confusion while answering the questions. 120 minutes was the allotted time limit for answering the test. The answer scripts were collected and collated after the test and were appropriately marked and scored with the aid of grading key prepared by the researchers. Permission was sought for from the principals of each school for administration of the questionnaire on SSS1, SSS2 and SSS3 students. Awareness about the instrument was given to the students. A general introduction for filling up the items in the questionnaire was given to the students. The data was then collected from the students and scoring was done. Scoring key for the items of the questionnaire was prepared. For each correct response one mark was given and for each wrong response zero mark was given. The total scores of students were determined.

Data Analysis
The data were analyzed by using relevant statistical techniques like Mean, Standard deviation, t-test and F- test. The usual levels of significance viz. 0.05 levels and 0.01 levels were followed.

RESULTS
This section presents the results of the analysis in line with research questions and hypotheses. Table 3 below shows the descriptive analysis of significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language with respect to Gender and medium of instruction.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation values of variables of secondary school students regarding grammatical errors committed in English language with respect to gender and medium of instruction.

Variables	Group	N	Mean	SD
Gender	Boys	55	26.23	4.976
	Girls	45	27.53	6.796
Medium of Instruction	Teacher centered method	50	29.07	4.584
	Learner centered method	50	30.57	5.679

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation values of variables of secondary school students regarding grammatical errors committed in English language with respect to gender. The results revealed that boys had mean score of (26.23) and corresponding measure of variability of (4.976) in English language while the girls have mean score of (27.53) and measure of variability of (6.796) correspondingly. Also, the table shows the mean and standard deviation values of variables of secondary school students regarding grammatical errors committed in English language with respect to medium of instruction. The results revealed that students that were exposed to teacher centered method of teaching had mean score of (29.07) and corresponding measure of variability of (4.584) in English language while the students that were exposed to learner centered method of teaching have mean score of (30.57) and measure of variability of (5.679) correspondingly. Summarily, the descriptive analysis of the study revealed that the grammatical errors committed by student teachers had more effect significantly on boys than girls in English language learning as the mean score of girl was higher than the mean score of boys by (1.30). Also, the effect of the grammatical error was more pronounced when learners are subjected to leaner centered pedagogy than when they were subjected to teacher centered pedagogy as the mean score of the latter was greater than the mean score of the former by (1.50) which is very significant.

Hypotheses Testing
H_{o1}: There is no significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language between boys and girls.
To test this hypothesis, boys and girls' mean scores were computed and compared for statistical significance at 0.05 levels. The result is presented in Table 4 as follows;

Table 4: t-test summary of mean scores of students in English language.

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	p
Gender	Boys	55	26.23	4.976	98	2.04	1.98	0.06

Girls	45	27.53	6.796				

$p < 0.05$

From Table 4, when the mean scores of boys and girls was subjected to t-test analysis, the table revealed that the mean scores of boys (26.23) was less than the mean scores of students girls (27.53) with a mean scores difference of (1.30) which was not marginal. Their measure of variability has a difference of (1.82). It was equally shown that the calculated t-value (2.04) was greater than the critical t-value (1.98) at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there was significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in teaching English language between Boys and Girls at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected.

H_{o2}: There is no significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language with respect to medium of instruction
To test this hypothesis, the mean scores of students exposed to teacher centered method and students exposed to learner centered method were computed and compared for statistical significance at 0.05 level. The result is presented in Table 5 as follows;

Table 5: t-test summary of mean scores of students exposed to teacher centered method and learner centered method

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	p
Medium of Instruction	Teacher centered method	50	29.07	4.584	98	3.16	1.98	0.17
	Learner centered method	50	30.57	5.679				

$p < 0.05$

From Table 5, when the mean scores of students exposed to teacher centered method and students exposed to learner centered method was subjected to t-test analysis, the table revealed that the mean scores of those in teacher centered group (29.07) was less than the mean scores of students in learner centered group (30.57) with a mean scores difference of (1.50) which was not marginal. Their measure of variability has a difference of (1.095). It was equally shown that the calculated t-value (3.16) was greater than the critical t-value (1.98) at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there was no significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language with respect to medium of instruction at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected.

H_{o3}: There is no significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language and its effects on students in SSS 1, SSS 2 and SSS 3 classes.

In order to test the hypothesis, mean scores of students in SSS1, SSS2 and SSS3 and the input of their teachers were computed and compared for statistical significance at 0.05 level. The result is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: ANOVA mean scores of students with respect to their classes and teachers' input

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Sum of Squares	F-ratio	P
Between Group	241.378	2	120.689	3.94	0.721
Within Group	5425.400	118	30.652		
Total	5666.778	120			

p>0.05

The result in table 6 indicates that there was significant difference in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language and its effects on students in SSS 1, SSS 2 and SSS 3 classes at 0.05 level of significance (0.721). Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION

From the descriptive and inferential analysis and interpretation above, it was obvious that a significant difference was found in the grammatical errors committed by student teachers and its attendant effects on students learning English language. The effects was more glaring among boys than girls and also among the students exposed to teacher centered method comparatively with those exposed to learner centered method when they are quizzed on questions pertaining to Verb, Noun, Adverb, Preposition and Article. The study analysis also revealed that significant difference existed in the commitment of grammatical errors by student teachers in English language and its effects on students in SSS 1, SSS 2 and SSS 3 classes. This indicated that grammatical errors committed by student teachers during teaching had adverse effects on students learning English language in senior secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

The main focus of this study was to examine the grammatical errors committed by student teachers and its attendant effects on English language learning. The findings of the study indicated that significant difference existed among boys and girls who were exposed to teacher centered method and learner centered method in SSS 1, SSS 2 and SSS 3 in Ado Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Hence, the study concluded that a grammatical error of student teachers has adverse effects on English language learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study.

· The results of this study has shown poor standard of knowledge of grammar. Student teachers should endeavour to improve themselves in syntax and should be encourage teaching English effectively to their students.

· Correct use of grammar in English should be taught intensively through drilling and meaningful repetition.

· The curriculum constructors should modify the syllabus constructively to enhance the level of knowledge of English in general and English grammar in particular in the secondary school students.

· Generally in their text book, grammar exercises were taught to the students to do those exercises. Student teachers should endeavour to give more examples on their own that make students learn more about articles, prepositions, verbs, adverbs and nouns in grammar of English language.

· Student teachers should be well trained in secondary English classes. Student teachers should get special training such as how to make the students to learn grammar.

· School management should arrange the remedial teaching after school hours and thus help to develop the grammatical knowledge in the students.

Suggestions for further Research

The present study was limited to students selected from SSS 1, SSS 2 and SSS 3 in Ado Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Comparative studies of similar kind may be undertaken with different classes and in different items with a larger sample. Study may also be conducted to know the effect of grammatical errors in language on academic achievement of students.

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