



Research Paper

Immersive Learning on Students' Interest in English Grammar in Senior Secondary Schools in Abia State

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Abstract

The study investigated the use of Immersive learning on Students' Interest in English grammar in Umuahia North Local Government of Abia state, Nigeria. The independent variable of the study was immersive learning strategy while the dependent variable was performance. The study had two objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses. Two-group pretest-posttest-quasi-experimental research design was used. The population was two thousand and ten (2010) senior secondary students. A sample size of one hundred and thirty-eight (138) students from two (2) co-educational schools with intact classes were purposively selected. In addition, the subjects selected were randomly assigned to groups: one, the experimental group (immersive-learning) and one, the control group (lecture strategy). The instrument used was English Grammar Interest Inventory. The reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach Alpha which yielded an index of 0.79. Face, construct and content validity were conducted for the instruments. A criterion mean of 2.5 was used. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and analysis of covariance was used for hypotheses using SPSS at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the immersive learning strategy is highly effective; as those exposed to it improved significantly in their grammar performance, but gender did not significantly influence students' interest in English grammar. It recommended that teachers should infuse the immersive learning strategy into their teaching approach. The research has provided empirical review on language which had never been reported in Language Education, University of Port Harcourt Rivers state, Nigeria.

KEY WORDS: Immersive Learning, Interest and English Grammar

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I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a medium of communication and a powerful gift that binds human beings together. People cannot interact and express themselves meaningfully without it. In order to communicate effectively using language, there should be the proper selection and arrangement of words together in a manner that makes sense both in speech and in writing. That is why Onuigbo (2005) avers, "whether we acquired or learnt English is immaterial; but the material thing is that for us to make use of it effectively, one must have a sound knowledge of its grammar." Learning grammar could be likened to learning driving; a learner who is able to name all the parts of a car does not imply that he can drive it; hence the knowledge of the parts is not useful, rather emphasis should be on building structure and how to use grammar well, not its knowledge of the rules.

No language can exist without its grammar. Just like safety belts on an aircraft or in a vehicle are designed to secure the driver, pilot or a passenger against harmful movement that may result during a sudden stop so it is with the grammar of a language. It is the hinges that allow the free flow of understanding in communication. Grammar is the "mechanics" and "calculus" of language (Egbe, 2015). For this writer, grammar makes language so essentially a human characteristic since man is not merely "homo loquens" (a language-speaking human being) but also "homo Grammaticus" (a grammatical human being)". Thus, the above summarises that grammar is the principle and set of rules that guide the choice of words and its

arrangement in a sentence for purpose of effective and meaningful communication. It is impossible for learners to communicate effectively in English without first knowing its grammar. Its knowledge enables them to rectify errors and enhance their written work. A second language learner cannot correctly learn a new language solely by unconscious absorption; rather grammar provides a reliable reference point when our language habits fail us. In senior secondary schools' curriculum, grammar instruction is broken down into different topics but the knowledge of the tenses which is the focus of this study is a must-have for students if they desire to be proficient in the English Language and excel in other subjects that they offer in school since practically English is the medium of teaching in secondary schools in Nigeria.

In reality and in the past, the most efficient technique to learning a language is to join a community where the target language is used to communicate in a real-life setting (Mesmrise.blog, 2021). However, the need to travel abroad to complete the English language is demanding and tasking especially in this COVID 19 era; therefore, learners are called to remain in the same setting while acquiring a whole lot of communicative competence in English. No doubt, the world is becoming more digitally oriented; so conventional classroom-based learning where a teacher stands in front of the class is becoming a thing of the past. Creating a participatory classroom atmosphere in which educators facilitate active immersive learning may be extremely useful to the learners' growth; since it can broaden their knowledge base and improve their practical abilities. 'If you want to learn a language, you have to surround yourself with it and use it,' I'd often say. 'Speak, listen, respond – communicate' (Kozlova, 2021).

It is worthy to note that immersive learning has shown to be a highly successful method for many learners to advance their knowledge and abilities over time (Flemming, 2021). That is why with the advances in ICT and multimedia, it is now possible to construct linguistically rich learning environments. For instance, multimedia such as, videos, CDs, YouTube and TV shows, posters, visuals, English books, web sites, songs, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AU), Mixed reality (MR), 3D immersive learning and mobile devices (more modernized ones) can all be used to provide a rich learning environment. They all play a big part in learning a new language. A note-worthy characteristic is the fact that immersive learning creates a highly engaging environment for learners, both electronically and physically. A learner may use technology to digitally reproduce a variety of actual situations that are not accessible within the confines of a traditional classroom setting. In fact, the virtual material is so motivating; it leaves a lasting effect on the minds of the students. It is based on this, that this study intends to find out the effect of immersive learning on senior secondary school students' interest in English grammar.

Interest is the sense of striving to focus on something or wanting to get connected with and learn more about something (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). In other words, it is a strong motivating factor that energizes learning, determines academic and professional successes. When something appeals to you, it draws your attention to it, making you want to learn more about it or continue doing it. If a student is interested in any subject, such a student will spend more time studying that subject. Such devotion of time to the learning of the subject most likely leads to greater success. It is based on the above that the study explored the effect of Immersive Learning (IL) on students' interest in English grammar.

Statement of the Problem

Irrespective of the crucial role grammar plays in making communication in English language more meaningful, the researcher has observed over the years that a lot of students view its teaching as boring and frustrating, if not outright horror. This experience makes them lack the desire to attend English Language classes and even when they do, they lack concentration and very inactive during grammar lessons. The worst is made explicit as one engages in conversations with them; their code mixing and the poor application of tenses have become a thing of concern. These ungrammatical statements which they utter and their use of pidgin' language are extremely worrisome. These students find it difficult to interact among themselves in simple English or engage in meaningful conversations both within and outside the classroom; their complaint has always been that they prefer attending classes in other subjects to English Language class if not that English is a compulsory subject. Besides the issue of their loose grasps of English grammatical structure, the chief examiners of WAEC lament yearly over the poor performance of candidates in English grammar. For example, in 2013, 25.64% passed at credit level, 32.48% in 2014, 30.32% in 2015, 35.02% in 2016, 41.52% in 2017, 38.9% in 2018, 42.05% in 2019 and 40.82% in 2020 (WAEC, 2020). One wonders if class activities that are dominated by the teachers describing the grammatical principles in isolation of all other language skills and then instructing students to do exercises based on the grammar rules, without designing a teaching strategy that incorporates interactive activities that make grammar class unthreatening, entertaining, and relaxing could cause their lack of interest and performance in English language. This sad situation depicts to a large extent why adequate attention should be given to the teaching and learning of English grammar. So, this study explored Immersive Learning (IL) on senior secondary school students' interest and performance in English grammar. It also explored classroom practices in this regard via immersive language tools.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of Immersive Learning on students' interest in English grammar in senior secondary schools, in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State.

Specifically, the objectives of this study were to:

1. ascertain the effect of Immersive learning and lecture strategies on the interest of students taught grammar using Immersive learning and Lecture strategies;
2. investigate the influence of gender on the interest of students taught grammar using Immersive learning strategy.

Research Questions:

The following research questions were answered in this study

1. What is the effect of Immersive learning and Lecture strategies on students' interest in grammar?
2. What is the gender difference in the interest of students taught grammar using Immersive learning strategy?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses, which were tested at 0.05 level of significance guided this study:

1. There is no significant difference in the effects of Immersive learning and Lecture strategies on students' interest in grammar.
2. There is no significant gender difference in the interest of students taught grammar using the Immersive learning strategy.

Related Literature Review

Immersive language learning (ILL) means completely surrounding oneself with one's new language. It is a form of experiential learning where the learning processes involve deep engagement and absorption with the target language through all the senses (Muslem & Abbas, 2017). In the view of Marisa (2021), it means absorbing words and making connections with them until you ultimately understand their meanings. Engaging in a setting that will help students communicate and interact competently with more people in more places in an increasingly independent world community is the mission of IL (Al-halawachy, 2019). This may be accomplished through cultivating a diverse collection of teaching approaches, techniques, tactics, and activities that teachers can use to assist students in comprehending both the second language and its subject.

Contributing to this concept, Davies et al. (2019) states that ILL entails entirely immersing oneself with the language being learned; it could be teaching maths, science, and other subjects to school-aged students through the medium of that language. For others who are not in school, this entails incorporating the language into their daily lives since the aim of learning the language is to enable learners "read, speak, write and listen in English" (Muslem & Abbas, 2017). This method of teaching and learning English or any language in the world has been used for more than thirty-five years (Muslem & Abbas, 2017). Indeed, IL may take many forms, ranging from increased use of language learning technology applications to increased use of language learning materials such as viewing films and television or listening to radio broadcasts in that language (Robertson et al., 2019). All these provide the immersive learning environment, which accelerates the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary.

The term **interest** is an individual's instant feeling of being fascinated by an item as well as longer enduring sentiments that the thing is pleasurable and worth further examination (Harackiewicz *et al.*, 2016). According to them, it is a powerful motivational process that energizes learning, guides academic and career trajectories, and is essential to academic success. These researchers cited Dewey who stressed that educational activities should arouse and stimulate an individual's immediate needs. One technique that can pique students' interest is to organize learning activities in such a manner that they are visually appealing. It is easier for us to pay attention and digest information quickly if we are interested in what we are learning. Grammar is not an easy subject. Various studies have proved that grammar is complicated to learn (Saputri, 2020). In this case, students' interest has a big influence on their learning process. With interest, the students can enjoy the learning process because it is an impulse that comes from within a person, where someone can be attracted to something without coercion.

Concept of Gender

Gender is a term that refers to the economic, social, political, and cultural characteristics and possibilities that come with being female or male (Chukwuemeka, 2023). To this researcher, it is a socio-cultural representation of certain features and duties assigned to specific groups of individuals in relation to their sex and sexuality. Due to the complexity of learning a foreign language, a variety of distinct elements must be addressed during the process (Alipour et al, 2012); and gender is one of the elements that influences how people learn and teach.

Females, according to Egbe (2015) acquire language and linguistic expression more quickly than males; they are more inclined in expressing themselves in the second language among English as a Second Language students. This amazing attitude encourages long-term learning. Following the same line of thought, Igbokwe (2007), observes that female secondary school pupils in language classes are more relaxed than men. This relaxation may have a favorable impact on learning. Due to the variance in data on which gender performs better in language, it appears that the precise role of gender on language interest is unknown; hence, further research on the nature of students' achievement by gender, particularly in Nigeria, is required. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine gender variations in the interest of students in English grammar learning using IM-learning.

The **lecture** technique of instruction is the earliest type of instruction used in educational institutions. This teaching approach is a one-way information transfer route. It is a typical teaching approach that is not seen to be effective in developing critical and intellectual skills in pupils (Sharifzadeh *et al.*, 2021; Abedi *et al.*, 2019).

Engagement Theory

This theory was developed by Kearsley and Shneiderman (1998). It is a learning theory that is one such product of our technologically advancing society. According to Isaacson (2009), this theory advocates the meaningful engagement of students in learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks. This school of thought was derived from constructivism's fundamental ideal that learning occurs during meaningful engagement with others, thus creating a community of learners. Engagement theory is translated into the classroom through three basic principles consistent with constructivist beliefs and molded from particles of other epistemologies: active learning, problem-based learning and case-based learning.

Implications of Engagement theory to the present study

In fact, a significant amount of research demonstrates that educational technological tools can usefully support the engagement of learners. The pedagogical benefits of using multimedia technologies when teaching especially at secondary school level is encouraging. It has been shown that students learn better from computer-based instruction containing words and graphics rather than words alone in academic learning. Consequently, to boost the interest and morale of the learners towards performing optimally in their studies, immersive M-learning is one of the engagement strategies that can sustain the interest of students in their collaborative and personalized learning.

Interest of Male and Female Students in English Grammar Via Immersive and Lecture Strategies

Gender is one of the variables that has attracted the attention of researchers, who have carried out experimental studies to discover its influence on students' performance in various aspects of the English language. Bothered by the view that females develop more interest than males in language using technology, Lodhi *et al.* (2019) carried out quantitative research which investigated students' attitudes, their interests and difficulties regarding the concept of computer assisted language learning at intermediate level. A self-reported questionnaire (SRQ) was designed and administered to obtain the objectives of the study. The sampling statistic comprised of 300 students with equal gender from public and private colleges. The collected data was statistically analyzed by running descriptive statistic technique. The findings revealed that male students had more positive attitude towards Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) as compared to their female counterparts. However, it was also revealed that male students found CALL interesting for the development of language proficiency while female students faced more difficulties in using computer technology for English Language learning. The results provide ideas, paths and suggestions to the future researchers to undergo further investigations in developing computer mediating language learning programs for the benefits of learners and learning. This study is similar to the present study in interest and the gender variables under investigation. But it differs in the approach employed and instrumentation. Both studies also differ in the aspect of English being studied and the nature of research subjects being used.

II. Research Methodology

Two-group pretest-posttest-quasi-experimental research design was used. The population was two thousand and ten (2010) senior secondary students. A sample size of one hundred and thirty-eight (138) students from two (2) co-educational schools with intact classes were purposively selected in Umuahia North Local Government Area, which was the area of the study. In addition, the subjects selected were randomly assigned to groups: one, the experimental group (immersive-learning) and one, the control group (lecture strategy). The instrument used was English Grammar Interest Inventory. The reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach Alpha which yielded an index of 0.79. Face, construct and content validity were conducted for the instruments. Before treatment commenced, the English Grammar Interest Inventory graded on a modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), was

administered as pre-test to the two groups in each of the sampled schools to ascertain their base line. The treatment lasted for one month. The students learnt with the researcher's instructional package which includes English grammar video clips from YouTube, those designed from the students' English text book and discussion with online teachers and peers. For the control group, the lecture method of teaching grammar and answering questions were maintained. After the treatment session, the same instrument, with numbers re-arranged, was administered to the subjects to obtain the post-test scores. The data obtained were used in answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses. A criterion mean of 2.5 was used. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and analysis of covariance was used for hypotheses using SPSS at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1. What is the effect of Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies on students' interest in grammar?

Table 1.1: Mean and standard deviation of the effect of Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies on students' interest in grammar

Items		IL (n=70)			LM (n=68)		
		\bar{x}	SD	Decision	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
Interest in the in the concept	1.It emphasizes the practical application of grammar in writing and communication.	3.04	0.69	Agree	2.51	0.92	Agree
	2.Help students see the relevance of grammar skills in their daily lives.	3.20	0.71	Agree	2.88	0.94	Agree
	3.Grammar is a fundamental aspect of mastering the English language.	3.21	0.54	Agree	2.84	0.75	Agree
	4.Allows for more effective and confident communication in both written and spoken forms.	3.11	0.50	Agree	2.84	0.64	Agree
	5.Understanding grammar rules can help students express themselves more clearly and confidently.	2.87	0.72	Agree	2.84	0.77	Agree
	6.Knowledge of English grammar can also help students appreciate the nuances of literature and poetry.	2.99	0.63	Agree	2.81	0.87	Agree
	7.Grammar improves students' ability to analyze and interpret texts.	3.23	0.73	Agree	2.88	1.06	Agree
Interest in the strategy of instructional delivery	8.IL is engaging and interactive.	3.23	0.73	Agree	2.06	0.96	Disagree
	9.IL provides opportunities for students to practise grammar in context.	3.29	0.59	Agree	2.38	1.05	Disagree
	10. IL incorporates real-life examples and scenarios.	3.00	0.66	Agree	2.40	1.02	Disagree
	11.IL uses multimedia resources.	2.91	0.70	Agree	2.38	0.99	Disagree
	12.IL provides individualized feedback.	3.00	0.57	Agree	2.22	0.96	Disagree
	13.IL creates a supportive learning environment that fosters curiosity and exploration.	3.23	0.73	Agree	1.96	0.91	Disagree
	14.IL enhances students' understanding and retention of knowledge.	3.29	0.59	Agree	2.32	1.01	Disagree
Grand Mean		3.11			2.52		

Criterion Mean = 2.5, Mean: < 2.5 = Disagree, Mean: ≥ 2.5 = Agree

Table 1.1 shows the effect of immersive learning and lecture strategies on students' interest in grammar. The result revealed that the majority of the students taught English Grammar using an immersive learning strategy agreed to all the items based on their level of interest in the concept and the strategy of instructional delivery, with their mean scores greater than or equal to the criterion mean of 2.5.

On the other hand, the majority of the students taught English grammar using the lecture strategy agreed to all the items based on their level of interest in the concept, with their mean scores being greater than or equal to the criterion mean of 2.5, while they disagreed with the strategy of instructional delivery, with their mean scores being less than the criterion mean of 2.5.

Consequently, the response grand mean of 3.11 for students taught English grammar using an immersive learning strategy and the response grand mean of 2.52 for students taught English grammar using the lecture strategy imply that students taught with an immersive learning strategy had a higher level of interest while students taught with the lecture method strategy had a lower level of interest.

Hypothesis 1.1: There is no significant difference in the effects of Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies on students' interest in grammar.

Table 1.3: Summary of Independent t-test on the difference in the effects of Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies on students' interest in grammar

Strategy	n	\bar{x}	SD	df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Sig.	Decision
ILS	70	43.60	5.35	136	8.28	1.96	0.00	Reject: H ₀₄
LS	68	35.32	5.67					

Table 1.3 indicates that $t_{cal} = 8.28$, $df = 136$, and $t_{tab} = 1.96$. Therefore, since $t_{cal} > t_{tab}$ and $P < 0.05$, then there is a significant difference in the effects of IL and L strategies on students' interest in grammar. Hence, null hypothesis four is rejected at a 0.05 level of significance. This result implies that the interest of students in the experimental group differs significantly from those in the control group, providing evidence that the intervention had an effect on the outcome variable being measured.

Research Question 2: What is the gender difference in the interest of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning strategy?

Table 2.2: Mean and standard deviation of the gender difference in the interest of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning strategy

	Items	Male (n=36)			Female (n=34)		
		\bar{x}	SD	Decision	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
Interest in the concept	1.It emphasizes the practical application of grammar in writing and communication.	3.06	0.63	Agree	3.03	0.76	Agree
	2.Help students see the relevance of grammar skills in their daily lives	3.33	0.68	Agree	3.06	0.74	Agree
	3.Grammar is a fundamental aspect of mastering the English language.	3.25	0.44	Agree	3.18	0.63	Agree
	4.Allows for more effective and confident communication in both written and spoken forms.	3.06	0.48	Agree	3.18	0.52	Agree
	5.Understanding grammar rules can help students express themselves more clearly and confidently.	2.89	0.62	Agree	2.85	0.82	Agree
	6.Knowledge of English grammar can also help students appreciate the nuances of literature and poetry.	2.94	0.48	Agree	3.03	0.76	Agree
	7.Grammar improves students' ability to analyze and interpret texts.	3.31	0.67	Agree	3.15	0.78	Agree
Interest in the strategy of instructional delivery	8.IL is engaging and interactive.	3.31	0.67	Agree	3.15	0.78	Agree
	9.IL provides opportunities for students to practise grammar in context.	3.25	0.44	Agree	3.32	0.73	Agree
	10.IL incorporates real-life examples and scenarios.	3.08	0.44	Agree	2.91	0.83	Agree
	11.IL uses multimedia resources.	2.89	0.62	Agree	2.94	0.78	Agree
	12.IL provides individualized feedback.	2.94	0.48	Agree	3.06	0.65	Agree
	13.IL creates a supportive learning environment that fosters curiosity and exploration.	3.31	0.67	Agree	3.15	0.78	Agree
	14.IL enhances students' understanding and retention of knowledge.	3.25	0.44	Agree	3.32	0.73	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.13			3.10		

Criterion Mean = 2.5, Mean: < 2.5 = Disagree, Mean: ≥ 2.5 = Agree

Table 2.2 shows the gender difference in the interest of students taught grammar using the IL strategy. The result revealed that the majority of the male students taught English grammar using an immersive learning strategy responded to all the items based on their level of interest in the concept and the strategy of instructional delivery, with their mean scores greater than or equal to the criterion mean of 2.5.

Also, the majority of the female students taught English grammar using the immersive learning strategy responded to all the items based on their level of interest in the concept and the strategy of instructional delivery, with their mean scores greater than or equal to the criterion mean of 2.5.

Consequently, the response grand means of 3.13 for male students and 3.10 for female students who learned English grammar using an immersive learning strategy imply that the immersive learning strategy was effective in enhancing the student's interest in understanding of English grammar, regardless of their gender.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant gender difference in the interest of students taught grammar using the Immersive Learning strategy.

Table 2.4: Summary of Independent t-test on the gender difference in the interest of students taught grammar using the Immersive Learning strategy

Gender	n	\bar{x}	SD	df	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	Sig.	Decision
Male	36	43.86	4.60	68	0.42	2.00	0.68	Retain: H_{05}
Female	34	43.32	6.11					

Table 2.4 indicates that $t_{cal} = 0.42$, $df = 68$, and $t_{tab} = 2.00$. Therefore, since $t_{cal} < t_{tab}$ and $P > 0.05$, then there is no significant gender difference in the interest of students taught grammar using the IL strategy. Hence, null hypothesis five is retained at a 0.05 level of significance. This result implies that the interest of male and female students in the experimental group does not differ significantly, providing evidence that the intervention had an effect on both male and female students alike.

III. Conclusion

The findings of this study led to the following conclusions:

It was concluded that the immersive learning strategy is more effective than the lecture strategy in teaching grammar to students, as it resulted in a significant improvement in their interest mean scores. Therefore, the effectiveness of the instructional delivery strategy for English grammar could be attributed to the immersive learning strategy, which allows students to actively engage in the learning process, interact with the material, and apply it in real-life situations, leading to better retention and application of knowledge.

IV. Recommendations

Considering the findings, discussion and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Abia State Ministry of Education in collaboration with the school managements should prepare plans according to their locality in order to favor and support students through immersive learning so as to promote a more engaging and effective learning experience tremendously.
2. Teachers should consider using immersive learning strategies to enhance student's interest and engagement in English grammar lessons, as it could lead to better learning outcomes and higher levels of satisfaction with the instructional delivery.

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