

## Effect of Role-Play Method on Primary School Pupils' Academic Achievement and Interest in English Studies in Anambra State

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### Abstract

The study investigated the effect of role-play method on primary school pupils' academic achievement and interest in English Studies in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study while two hypotheses were tested. The study adopted quasi experimental design and was carried out in public primary schools in Orumba North LGA of Anambra State. The population of the study comprised fifty-three (53) primary schools in the area comprised all the 1,302 primary five pupils. Out of the fifty-three primary schools, two primary schools were purposively selected. Simple random technique was used to select 82 primary 5 pupils made of 42 pupils for experimental group (19 males and 23 females) and 40 pupils for non-experimental group (21 males and 19 females). The instruments for data collection were English Studies Achievement Test (ESAT) and English Studies Interest Scale (ESIS). Validation of the instruments were determined by three experts who are lecturers, two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, and the other a specialist in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, all from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach alpha and Kuder-Richardson 20 which was found to be 0.94 and 0.88 for ESAT and ESIS respectively. The research questions were answered using mean while the hypotheses were tested using ANCOVA. The findings of the study revealed that role play method improves the academic achievement and interest of pupils in English Studies more than conventional method. The researchers recommended among others that teachers should utilize role play teaching method in teaching English studies in the classroom which would lead to increased interest and achievement of pupils.

**Keywords:** Role play, Academic achievement, Interest, English Studies

### Introduction

Education is very important for national development. It is a veritable tool for any nation's economic, social and political transformation (Ashipu, 2008). There are different levels of educational institution in Nigeria; among which is the primary level which lays foundation for other levels of education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, (FRN), 2013). According to FRN (2013) in its National Policy on Education, primary education is the education given to children aged 6 to 12 years. Egboosi and Offor (2016) stressed that whatever happens at this level can either make or mar the entire education enterprise. The aims of primary education in Nigeria are to inculcate permanent, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively, lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking; as well as promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity (FRN, 2013). These aims are achieved through instruction during the

teaching and learning process in schools where the teacher plays vital roles.

Teaching involves imparting knowledge as to how to do something. A person who teaches is called a teacher. Obidike (2017) posited that a teacher is someone who instructs others and provides guidance that facilitates learning in either formal or informal institutions. The instructional delivery strategies adopted by teacher to some extent enhance pupils' learning. Hence, methods adopted in teaching are numerous and are generally referred to as teaching methods. Teaching method refers to the style of instructional delivery adopted by a teacher. Shofoyeke (2014) opined that teaching methods can be defined as practical application of teaching principles based on the nature of the learner, the nature of the subject and their learning needs. Dorgu (2015) identified teaching methods to include; discussion method, the study-assignment method, seminar method, demonstration method and conventional method. There seems to be no perfect teaching method as all techniques usually have benefits and their drawbacks.

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Discussion method of teaching is a technique in which group discussion are used to reach instructional objectives. Its advantages include increasing student interest and utilizing students' knowledge and experiences while its disadvantages include consuming time and limits content (Omoro & Nato, 2014). The study assignment method involves the instructor assigning books and readings to it students leading to increase in coverage of material while posing evaluation problem (Asikhia, 2010). The seminar method involves an instructor working with groups to provide general guidance for an advanced study. The seminar method provides motivation and report while also posing difficulties for evaluation. The demonstration method involves an instructor actually performing the operation before the students. It saves time and can be presented to groups although the demonstration method requires special classroom arrangements. However, most primary school teachers in Anambra State seem to use conventional instructional strategies.

Conventional teaching method entails the use of board with chalk followed by dictation. This is supported by Achuonye (2015) who observed that conventional method is very prevalent in primary schools in Nigeria. The reasons for utilizing conventional teaching methods include; it saves time, permits flexibility, requires less rigid space, permits adaptability and permits versatility. Despite the reasons for utilizing the method, it has some disadvantages. In conventional method, learners are more passive than active, the cooperation and interaction between the teachers and the pupils are minimal. Yap (2016) stressed that in conventional teaching method, instructor initiate discussions in the classroom and focus exclusively on knowing the content in textbooks and notes. Similar to this, Feider and Silverman cited in Farha (2016) argued that conventional teaching method makes pupils uninterested in class, discouraged, bored and perform poorly in test. These short comings of the conventional method have led to some innovative teaching strategies such as role play.

Role-playing as a classroom activity is one of the teaching methods that has been emphasized and used in the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the changes in the educational system. These changes include the recent curriculum reforms and integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into pedagogy which helps to increase the motivation of pupils (Maha, Suad & Jamal, 2016). The concept of role-play teaching method in contemporary era has become an area of interest to both scholars and practitioners. According to Krebt (2017), role play teaching method is an approach that entails participation of individuals in simulated social situations that are intended to illustrate the roles and contexts that are direct to the real life. In the views of Al-Barri, Alqad, Al-Wa'ely, Khodair and Alshawashreh (2014), role-play is the teaching and learning method designed to help pupils to play dramatic role about a concept through pupils' own language or a language developed by others.

Contextually, role-play is an instructional approach in which pupils are assigned characters so as to exhibit the behaviours to improve understanding of a lesson. The importance of role-playing in the instructional process cannot be over-emphasized.

Role-playing as a teaching method helps pupils to have clearer understanding of issues under study. Craciun (2010) pointed out that role playing is the best way to develop the skills of initiative, communication, problem-solving, self-awareness, and working cooperatively in teams and these are above all certainly above the learning of mere facts which will help pupils be prepared for dealing with the challenges of the 21st Century. Through role-play, a wide variety of experience can be brought into the classroom which could help pupils develop fluency in speaking, increase their motivation and make learning more interesting, enjoyable and understandable. Fadilah (2016) opined that role-play gives pupils the opportunity to demonstrate how to use English Studies and other primary school subjects in real life situations. The subjects offered in Nigerian primary school are English Studies, Mathematics one Nigerian Language, Basic Science and Technology, Religion and National Values, Cultural and Creative Arts, Pre-Vocational Studies, French and Business Studies, among others. All these subjects are taught using English as a medium of instruction.

English language plays a crucial role in Nigerian educational system, not only as a medium of instructional delivery but also one of the core subjects in primary education level. English is the most commonly spoken language in the world; it is based on a simple alphabet, and it is fairly quick and easy to learn compared to other languages (Maha, et al, 2016). The role of English as second language is crucial in Nigeria which is a multilingual nation. English language is adopted in unifying multi-ethnic groups in Nigeria. Arguing in the same line, Oppong-Sekyere, Oppong-Sekyere and Akpalu (2013) posited that the adoption of the English language as an official language has helped to solve the problem which may have arisen in an attempt to choose one of the indigenous languages as a national or official language. Hence, utilizing English studies to check the academic achievement of pupils when using role play method becomes necessary due to some reasons such as. English being the medium of communication and other subjects can't be understood without proficiency in it and ability to communicate is a fundamental aspect of being educated. This reasons make English studies arguably the most important subject in the primary school level. Despite the importance of English Language, teaching the language presents some challenges.

These challenges have been pointed out by scholars. Maha et al, (2016) posited that learners face many problems in learning English such as the inability to master the speaking skill, which negatively affects learners' academic achievement and motivation towards learning a foreign language. Ubulom and Adoki (2016)

asserted that despite the importance attached to English Language as the official language of communication in Nigeria and given that it is a compulsory subject in Nigerian school system at all level, academic achievement level of primary school pupils seems to drastically drop on daily basis as many of them cannot write good letters, composition or do better in comprehension. The author added that there has been serious outcry about the poor academic achievement of primary school pupils particularly in written English in Nigeria.

The term academic achievement has been variously conceptualized, however, the multiplicity of the definition has always pointed at one direction; that it is determined by scores (grade) and instructional standards taught by the teachers. Ouma and Munyua (2018) defined academic achievement as the extent to which a pupil has achieved their educational goals, measured by examination or continuous assessment test through the grading system. Attesting to this fact, Karthigeyan and Nirmala (2012) defined academic achievement as the knowledge attained and skill developed in the school subject usually designated by test scores. It shows what a pupil has learnt and achieved. In the context of this study, academic achievement is the knowledge and skills acquired by a pupil which is usually indicated by examination scores. Role-play could improve pupils' academic achievement and arouse their interest in learning by providing an opportunity for them to experience life events in a physical way by dramatizing the concepts in English Studies.

The term interest has been variously conceptualized by different scholars and thus the multiplicity of definitions of the subject matter. According to Essien, Akpan and Obot (2015), interest is the focusing of the sense organs on or giving attention to some person, activity, situation or object. In the views of Agbaje, and Alake (2014) interest is a feeling of curiosity or concern about something that makes attention turn towards it. In the view of the researcher, interest is curiosity or attention developed by pupils as a result of learning experience. However, the poor performance of pupils in English studies in Orumba North, Anambra State calls to question their interest in the subject.

In Anambra State, pupils experience many problems in learning English studies such as inability to master the speaking skills which could negatively affect their academic achievement. This problem appears to be caused by conventional teaching method mostly used in primary schools to teach English studies leading to a reduction in learners' active participation in the instructional process. Children in primary schools enjoy being active and low participation could lead to them being uninterested in the lesson which could consequently translate to low achievement of pupils in English studies. This is the worry of the researcher and it is against this backdrop that the study seeks to ascertain if innovative strategy such as role-play method can have any effect on primary school pupils' academic achievement and interest in English Studies.

## Purpose of the Study

The general objective of the study was to find out the effect of role-play method on primary school pupils' academic achievement and interest in English Studies in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. Mean achievement scores of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and those taught using conventional method
2. Mean interest scores of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and those taught using conventional method.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the mean achievement score of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and those taught using conventional method?
2. What is the mean interest score of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and those taught using conventional method?

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and that of those taught using conventional method.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean interest scores of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and that of those taught using conventional method.

## Method

The study adopted a Quasi-experimental design and was carried out in Orumba North LGA of Anambra State. The population for the study was the 53 public primary schools in the area consisting of all the 1,302 primary five pupils made up of 598 males and 704 females. Simple random technique was used to select 82 primary 5 pupils made of 42 pupils for experimental group (19 males and 23 females) and 40 pupils for non-experimental group (21 males and 19 females). The instruments for data collection were English Studies Achievement Test (ESAT) and English Studies Interest Scale (ESIS) which were validated by three experts, two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, and the other a specialist in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, all from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The inputs, corrections and comments by the experts guided the researcher in modifying the final copy of the

instrument. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach alpha for ESIS and Kuder-Richardson 20 for ESAT. ESIS and ESAT yielded a coefficient of 0.94 and 0.88 respectively.

A one week intensive training was given to the research assistants who were the regular class teachers from the sampled schools teaching English Studies in primary five. The experimental group teachers were given detailed explanations on what role-play method is, the role-play in the lesson plan, how to incorporate the role-play techniques into the lesson and the general requirements of the research. The control group teachers were briefed on the general requirements of the research since they were required to use conventional method lesson plan to teach. By the end of the training, the researcher organized a micro teaching session for the participating teachers to ensure that they had mastered the instructional technique expected of them. The study lasted for four weeks using the normal period allocated for English Studies in the sampled schools to avoid altering the school timetable.

Other experimental conditions that were taken into consideration to avoid invalidity were; prior to the commencement of the experiment, the pupils in the schools chosen were assigned to experimental and control group respectively by flip of a coin. The researcher, with the aid of two research assistants (class teachers) subjected the two randomly selected groups to a pre-test on ESAT and ESIS. Thereafter, the experimental group was subjected to the treatment (role play) and control group to conventional method. The actual experiment was conducted by the trained assistants (class teachers). Experimental groups were taught using lesson plan on role-play method. After the treatment, the post ESAT as well as ESIS were administered to both the control and experimental groups.

The scripts were collected, marked and scored. Each of the 20 questions on the ESAT were scored 1 mark, giving a total of 20 marks. For the ESIS, each of the items has 4 options; positive items were scored as follows; E-4 points, S-3 points, R-2 points and N-1 point. The scores were reversed for negative items. A pupil's score was obtained by summing their score for all the items. The data was finally analyzed based on the scores using mean to answer the research question. If the mean of the post test is greater than the pretest, then it has a positive effect but if the mean of the post test is less than the pre-test, then it has a negative effect while ANCOVA was used to test the hypothesis. If the p-value < 0.05, reject H<sub>0</sub> and if p-value is ≥ 0.05, accept H<sub>0</sub>.

Result in Table 1 indicated that the pre-test mean achievement scores of pupils taught with role play method was 7.42 with standard deviation of 2.32 while the pre-test mean achievement score of pupils taught with conventional method was 7.60 with a standard deviation of 1.93. The mean difference of the pretest scores between role play and conventional method was -0.18 which indicates that the pupils were at relatively the same cognitive level before treatment. However, the posttest mean achievement score of the pupils taught with role play method was 12.94 with standard deviation of 2.17 while the post-test mean achievement score of those taught with conventional method was 9.76 with a standard deviation of 1.62. The achievement gain score for those taught with role play method was 5.52 while the achievement gains of those taught with conventional method was 2.16. This indicates that both methods improve the academic achievement of students but role play method with a mean difference of 3.36 enhances the mean achievement of pupils in English more than the conventional method.

### Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the mean achievement score of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and those taught using conventional method?

**Table 1:** Mean Achievement Scores of Pupils Taught English with Role play and Conventional Methods

Method	N	Pre Test		Post Test		Mean gain
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
Role play	42	7.42	2.32	12.94	2.17	5.52
Conventional	40	7.60	1.93	9.76	1.62	2.16
Mean Difference		-0.18		3.18		3.36

Key:  $\bar{X}$  = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = Population = 82

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and that of those taught using conventional method.

**Table 2:** Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) for the Effects of Role Play and Conventional Methods on Pupils' Mean Achievement Scores in English

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	372.626 <sup>a</sup>	2	186.313	26.387	.000
Intercept	1636.664	1	1636.664	206.771	.000
Pretest	10.476	1	10.476	1.380	.244
Group	462.099	1	462.099	54.753	.000
Error	640.524	77	8.318		
Total	18636.00	80			
Corrected Total	1112.800	79			

a. R Squared = .424 (Adjusted R Squared = .409)

**Research Question 2:** What is the mean interest score of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and those taught using conventional method?

**Table 3:** Mean Interest Scores of Pupils Taught English with Role-Play Method and Conventional Method

Method	N	Pre Test		Post Test		Mean gain
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
Role play	42	2.32	0.77	3.61	0.86	1.29
Conventional	40	2.62	0.54	2.53	0.64	-0.09
Mean Difference		-0.3		1.08		1.38

Key:  $\bar{X}$  = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = Population = 82

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the mean interest scores of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and that of those taught using conventional method.

**Table 4:** Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) for the Effects of Role Play and Conventional Methods on Pupils' Mean Interest Scores in English

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	.348 <sup>a</sup>	2	.174	21.142	.003
Intercept	189.607	1	189.607	27.121	.000
Interestpre	.223	1	.223	1.694	.195
Group	.156	1	.156	1.978	.164
Error	181.524	77	2.357		
Total	18636.00	80			
Corrected Total	181.634	79			

. R Squared = .476 (Adjusted R Squared = .460)

Data analyzed in Table 2 shows that the probability value associated with the calculated value of F (54.753) for the effect of method on the achievement of pupils is 0.000. Since the value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the mean achievement scores of pupils taught English using role play method and those taught using conventional method in favour of the group taught using role play method. This result indicates that role play method is superior to conventional method in enhancing pupils' achievement in English.

**Research Question 2:** What is the mean interest score of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and those taught using conventional method?

Result in Table 3 indicated that the pre-test mean interest scores of pupils taught with role play method was 2.32

with standard deviation of 0.77 while the pre-test mean achievement score of pupils taught with conventional method was 2.62 with a standard deviation of 0.54. The mean difference of the pre-test interest scores between role play and conventional methods was - 0.3 which indicates that the pupils had relatively the same interest before treatment.

However, the post-test mean interest score of the pupils taught with role play method was 3.61 with standard deviation of 0.86 while the post-test mean achievement score of those taught with conventional method was 2.53 with a standard deviation of 0.64. The interest gain score for those taught with conventional method was -0.09. This indicates that role play method enhances the mean interest of pupils in English while the conventional method reduces the interest of the pupils in English.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the mean interest scores of pupils taught English Studies using role-play method and that of those taught using conventional method.

Data analyzed in Table 4 shows that the probability value associated with probability value of F (9.789) for the effect of method on pupils' interest is 0.002. Since the value is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the mean interest scores of pupils taught English using role play method and those taught using conventional method in favour of the group taught using role play method. This result indicates that role play method improves pupil's interest in English more than conventional method.

### Discussion of the findings

#### Effects of Role Play and Conventional Methods on Pupils' Achievement in English

Findings on effects of role play and conventional methods on pupils' achievement in English showed that that role play method improved achievement of pupils in English Studies more than conventional method. The findings corroborate the findings of Al-Barri, Alqad, Al-Wa'ely, Khodair and Alshawashreh (2014) who found out that pupils who learn by dramatic role playing learn significantly higher more than their peers who learn by traditional methods. The findings are also in line with those of Yousefzadeh and Hoshmandi (2014) who found out that role playing method has increased the achievement of students as well as examination group students, ethical, practical, emotional and social skills. The findings also agree with those of Maha, Suad and Jamal (2016) who found out that role play improves the achievement of school pupils. The findings are also supported by Omoro and Nato (2014) who found out that conventional method improves student achievement tremendously at higher levels but only to a small level at the primary school level.

Findings from hypothesis on no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of pupils taught English using role play method and those taught using conventional method one shows that there is a significant difference in the mean achievement scores of pupils taught English using role play method and those taught using conventional method in favour of the group taught using role play method. This result indicates that role play method is superior to conventional method in enhancing pupils' achievement in English. The superiority of role play method is due to the fact pupils actively participate in it as opposed to conventional method which is teacher centered.

#### Effects of Role Play and Conventional Method on Pupils' Interest in English

Findings on effects of role play and conventional methods on pupils' interest in English revealed that role play increased mean interest of pupils in English while conventional method reduced the interest of pupils in English. The findings are supported by Asman (2016) who found out that role-play teaching method has positive effects on students' interest. The findings also agree with Isukpa (2014) that there is a significant difference in the mean interest scores taught using role-play method and lecture method in favour of the group taught using role-play methods. The findings are in line with Oppong-Sekyere, Oppong-Sekyere and Akpalu (2013) who found out that conventional method reduces interest of students in English which leads to poor achievement by the students. The findings are also in cognizance with Maduagwu, Carew, Fajonyomi and Maduagwu (2014) who discovered that low achievement of primary school pupils in Maiduguri could be linked to low interest as a result of the use of conventional method as well as low self-esteem.

Findings from hypothesis on no significant difference in the mean interest scores of pupils taught English using role play method and those taught using conventional method shows that the null hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the mean interest scores of pupils taught English using role play method and those taught using conventional method in favour of the group taught using role play method. This result indicates that role play method improves pupil's interest in English more than conventional method. Role play method increases interest of pupils more than conventional method because role play seems like play and games for pupils and at that age, games and play makes pupils very happy. Hence, role play enables them learn without them knowing that they are learning.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, it was concluded that role play method improves the academic achievement and interest of pupils in English Studies more than conventional method. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the mean achievement and interest scores of pupils taught English using role play method and those taught using conventional method in favour of the group taught using role play method. Today, teaching and learning focuses on the learner which emphasizes that the pupil think and are active in the learning process. There is greater demand for role play method as it enables pupil to be active in the classroom coupled with the fact it leads to increased achievement and interest of pupils in English studies. Hence, role play method of teaching should be supported with efforts so as to enhance achievement and interest of pupils in English studies.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Teachers should utilize role play teaching method in teaching English studies in the classroom which would lead to increased achievement of pupils.
2. State Government should organize workshops for training/retraining of English teachers on the use of role play teaching methods in the teaching and learning of English in the classroom so as to increase the interest of pupils in English studies.

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