

Senior Secondary School Teachers and Students' Perceptions on The Teaching and Learning of English Language Grammar in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Grammar forms a central component of language mastery, yet research has not sufficiently addressed how teachers and students' perceive grammar teaching, particularly within the Nigerian educational context. This study investigated the perceptions of English Language teachers and students regarding the teaching and learning of grammar in senior secondary schools. The study population comprised 136 students and 24 teachers selected from four senior secondary schools in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire titled Perception of Grammar Teaching in Secondary Schools (PGTSS) and analysed using simple percentages and chi-square statistics. Findings revealed significant differences between teachers' and students' perceptions of grammar instruction, despite their shared cultural and educational backgrounds. These perceptual variations were influenced by factors such as previous language-learning experiences, levels of linguistic proficiency, academic needs, and career aspirations. The study highlights critical pedagogical implications for English as Second Language (ESL) learning, emphasizing the need for learner-centred strategies that bridge perceptual gaps between teachers and students to improve the effectiveness of grammar teaching and learning.

Keywords: Teachers, students, perception, grammar, English Language teaching, ESL.

Introduction

Language is a distinctive human system of communication that is spoken, heard, written, or read. It is the means through which individuals identify with their communities and participate in societal activities. Without language, one becomes alienated from social and intellectual interactions. It is the principal vehicle for knowledge transmission and the foundation of educational development. Adenuga and Oloko (2024) describe language as the cement that holds the curriculum together, and the bedrock of human thought. This aligns with the view of Lyons (1981), who stresses that language forms the basis of all human interaction and thought. In Nigeria, English has established itself as the official language, playing dominant roles in education, governance, media, commerce, and inter-ethnic communication. English remains the lifeblood of the entire education system; without linguistic competence in English,

students from junior secondary to tertiary institution cannot contribute meaningfully to academic or intellectual discourse. Similarly, Odebunmi (2001) corroborates that English serves as the primary medium of instruction from primary to tertiary levels, a position also supported by Bamgbose (1995) and Adegbija (2004), who assert that English remains indispensable to national mobility and socio-economic participation. Consequently, English is recognised as the most crucial subject in the Nigerian educational system.

Curriculum developers have recognised that the comprehensive objective of second language teaching is to enable learners to acquire functional knowledge of grammatical rules and structural patterns, thereby enhancing their communicative competence in speaking and writing. Ayodele (2001) reviewed several linguistic studies on Nigerian youths' proficiency in English and observed that mastery of English directly

correlates with overall academic success. English proficiency determines not only students' access to higher education but also their performance in other subjects.

Despite this centrality, poor performance in English Language examinations has become a persistent concern among educators and policymakers. Olaofe (1991) laments the alarming rate of students' failure in English, citing evidence from the 1989 SSCE and IJMB examinations. Agbaje (2001) similarly reports a decline in standards between 1991 and 1996, a trend corroborated by WAEC Chief Examiner's Reports (2002, 2003, 2010, 2015), which consistently describe many students' essays as structurally weak, and grammatically deficient. Studies of (Adebayo, 2018; Adedayo & Ayoola, 2020) further confirm recurring weaknesses in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure among secondary school learners. Grammar, in language, represents the foundation and its teaching has long been a subject of theoretical and pedagogical debate. It encompasses morphology, syntax, semantics, phonology, orthography, and pragmatics. It also reflects prescriptive conventions that govern correctness and acceptability in language use. Osoba and Adenuga (2006) also note that effective grammar teaching positively influences learners across proficiency levels, improving both their writing skills and lexical choices. This is affirmed by Nassaji and Fotos (2011), who argue that focused grammar teaching enhances accuracy, fluency, and linguistic awareness in second language learners.

Since WAEC and NECO began assessing grammatical functions explicitly, arguments have persisted between psycholinguists (Chomsky, 1965, 1992) and sociolinguists (Hymes, 1972) regarding the appropriate emphasis on grammar teaching. Okoh (2003) observes that while Chomsky and transformational-generative grammarians' privilege innate linguistic competence and structural knowledge, systemic functional linguists such as Halliday (1978) prioritise meaning-making and the social context of language use. While, Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Ellis, 2006; Long, 2015 centre on whether grammar should be taught explicitly, inductively, or through communicative tasks. In summary, grammar is the set of structural rules governing the formation of words, phrases, and sentences in a language. Grammar plays a crucial role in meaning construction and communication. However, the controversy surrounding its teaching remains unresolved (Ellis, 2006; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Ozokwo (2007), remarks that no aspect of English Language teaching in Nigerian schools has generated as much debate as grammar teaching. While several scholars have examined teachers' attitudes toward grammar teaching Phipps, R., & Borg, S. (2009), relatively few studies have explored students' perceptions, particularly in comparison with those of their teachers. This gap necessitates empirical investigation.

Statement of the Problem

Persistent underachievement in English Language among Nigerian secondary

school students continues to generate widespread concern among researchers, educators, and policymakers. WAEC Chief Examiner's reports and several empirical studies have consistently indicated that students exhibit recurring weaknesses in grammar, a core component of English Language proficiency. Since grammar supports effective communication, inadequate mastery of grammatical structures negatively affects students' performance in both spoken and written English, and by extension, their overall academic achievement. Despite the recognised centrality of grammar in English Language teaching, the classroom reality suggests a disparity between what teachers emphasise and what students perceive as important or useful. While some teachers consider formal grammar teaching essential for linguistic accuracy, many students often view grammar as abstract, difficult, or irrelevant to their immediate communicative needs. These divergent perceptions may influence the effectiveness of grammar teaching, the level of learner engagement, and ultimately, learning outcomes.

However, existing research has focused predominantly on teachers' attitudes toward grammar teaching, with limited attention given to students' perspectives, particularly in comparison with those of their teachers. This gap is especially pronounced within the Nigerian context, where contextual, cultural, and pedagogical factors uniquely shape grammar teaching. The present study is therefore necessitated by the observed discrepancies in teachers' and students' perceptions of grammar teaching and learning,

and the need to understand how these perceptual differences may contribute to persistent challenges in English Language performance in senior secondary schools.

Research Questions

- What are the perceptions of senior secondary school teachers and students regarding grammar teaching and learning in English Language?
- To what extent do teachers and students find the teaching and learning of grammar engaging and interesting?
- Which aspects of English grammar do students consider most accessible in the learning process?
- Which aspects of English grammar do students perceive as most difficult or challenging to learn?
- Is there a significant relationship between teachers' and students' perceptions of grammar teaching at the senior secondary school level?

Significance of the Study

This study offers valuable insights into the perceptions of senior secondary school teachers and students concerning the teaching and learning of English grammar. By identifying areas of convergence and divergence in these perceptions, the study will assist English Language educators in refining instructional practices to better reflect students' learning needs, preferences, and challenges. In particular, the findings are expected to support efforts aimed at improving students' interest, engagement, and motivation

in learning grammar within the Ijebu-Ode educational context of Ogun State, Nigeria. Beyond its local relevance, the study contributes to the broader discourse on effective English as Second Language (ESL) pedagogy. It highlights the necessity of bridging perceptual gaps between teachers and learners; as such gaps often influence the success of grammar teaching and overall communicative competence. The study also provides empirical evidence that can guide curriculum developers, teacher educators, and policymakers in strengthening grammar teaching in Nigerian schools. Ultimately, the findings serve as a springboard for further research into grammar pedagogy, learner perceptions, and language learning strategies at the secondary school level.

Results of Findings

Table 1

SN	Students' Response	Freq		%		Freq		%		Freq		%			
		SA	%	A	SD	D	%								
1.	<i>Students' Perception of the Difficulty of Grammar in English Language Learning</i>	90	72.6	34	27.4									124	100
2	<i>Students' Perceptions of Methods Used in Teaching Grammar</i>	83	66.9	37	29.8	1	0.8	3	2.4	124				100	
3	<i>Students' Views on the Adequacy of Practice Provided</i>	42	33.9	69	55.6	6	4.8	7	5.6	124				100	
4	<i>Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Correction of Errors</i>	66	53.2	36	29	7	5.6	15	12.1	124				100	
5	<i>Enjoyment of Grammar Relative to Other English Language Components</i>	16	12.9	27	29.8	20	16.1	61	49.2	124				100	
6.	<i>Students' Perceptions of the Teaching of Lexis and Structure</i>	44	35.2	37	29.6	15	12	29	23.2	124				100	
7	<i>Availability of Instructional Resources</i>	29	23.4	50	40.3	24	19.4	21	16.9	124				100	
8	<i>Influence of Teachers' Attitude and Method</i>	60	48	33	26.4	21	16.8	11	8.8	124				100	
9	<i>Timeliness of Marking and Returning Exercises</i>	2	1.6	9	7.2	82	65.6	32	25.6	124				100	
10	<i>Frequency of Grammar Exercises Compared to Other English Tasks</i>	16	12.8	16	12.8	46	36.8	47	37.6	124				100	
11	<i>Students' Comfort with Grammar vs. Other English Activities</i>	33	26.4	48	38.4	16	12.8	28	22.4	124				100	
12	<i>Students' Opinion on Removing Grammar from SSCE</i>	20	16	26	20.8	51	40.8	27	21.6	124				100	

The responses on the first question reveal a vast majority (72.6%) of the students strongly agreed that grammar is a difficult aspect of English Language learning, indicating a generally high level of perceived difficulty. The majority of students (96.7%) also agreed or strongly agreed that the methods used by their teachers help them understand grammar better. This indicates perceived methodological effectiveness. Most students (88.8%) in the third response agreed that teachers provide sufficient practice during grammar lessons. A high proportion (82.2%) of students acknowledged that teachers correct their grammatical errors in class in the fourth question while (65.3%) students reported that they enjoy grammar less than other aspects of English Language. The sixth question revealed that students generally agreed (64.8%) that lexis and structure are not frequently taught while a slight majority (63.7%) believed their schools provide adequate resources for grammar instruction. Most students (74.4%) in the seventh question agreed that teachers' attitudes and teaching methods influence their interest in learning grammar. A significant majority (91.2%) disagreed that teachers delay marking grammar notes and exercises. Most students (74.4%) agreed that teachers' attitudes and teaching methods influence their interest in learning grammar. And a significant majority (91.2%) disagreed that teachers delay marking grammar notes or exercises. Most students (74.4%) on the eleventh question indicated that they do fewer grammar exercises compared to other English Language exercises. Lastly a majority (64.8%) felt more

comfortable with other English tasks than with grammar exercises.

Analysis of Teacher's Questionnaire

What is your area of specialisation in English Studies?

Table 2

Teachers' Areas of Specialisation in English

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Language	12	48
Literature	3	12
Both	10	40
Total	25	100

Table 2 shows areas of teacher's specialization. Twelve (48%) of English teachers specialized in Language, three (12%) specialized in Literature, while ten (40%) of the teachers specialized in both language and literature teaching.

What are your major areas of interest in English grammar?

Table 3

Teachers' Major Areas of Interest in English Language Teaching

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Morphology	44	44
Syntax	36	36
Semantics	20	20
Total	25	100

Table 3: This table reveals teacher's major area of interest in English grammar. Forty-four (44%) of teachers have interest in morphology, thirty-six (36%) in syntax, and twenty (20%) in semantics.

What is the class population of your students?

Table 4

Teachers' Reports on Class Population

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20	2	8
30	1	4
35	1	4
40	1	4
44	1	4
45	7	28
50	1	4
60	1	4
66	1	4
70	1	4
75	2	8
100	2	8
137	1	4
200	1	4
300	1	4

This table reveals the densely populated class teachers faced on every occasion of teaching grammar with the average population of students in class is 45.

Given your class size, what number of grammar exercises can you effectively administer and evaluate each week?

Table 5

Teachers' Perceptions of the Number of Grammar Exercises Manageable per Week Given Class Size

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
2	9	36
3	2	8
4	2	8
5	8	32
7	2	8
10	1	4
50	1	4
Total	25	100

This table reveals that majority of teachers admitted they give two exercises to students considering the class size.

Do you make use of teaching aids for teaching English language grammar?

Table 6
Teachers' Use of Teaching Aids for Grammar Instruction

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	5	20
No	20	80
Total	25	100

The eighty per cent of teachers do not use teaching aids to enhance teaching of grammar while 20% of teachers do make use of teaching aids.

Do you have enough resources (audio/ visual materials) for the teaching of grammar?

Table 6
Teachers' Access to Instructional Resources for Teaching Grammar

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	5	20
No	20	80
Total	25	100

Majority of the teachers do not have resources for the teaching of grammar.

Do you have a well-equipped library to enhance students' interest in grammar?

Table 7
Availability of Library Facilities to Support

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	7	28
No	18	72
Total	25	100

Majority of the teachers do not have well equipped library in their schools to facilitate students' interest in grammar.

Do you have access to Chief Examiner's Report in English Language?

Table 8
Teachers' Access to the Chief Examiners' Reports in English Language

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	9	36
No	16	64
Total	25	100

Discussion of Findings

A review of the English Language curricula at the junior and senior secondary levels, developed by the Nigerian Educational

Research and Development Council (NERDC), reveals that grammar components focus heavily on syntax with minimal coverage of morphology. The only morphological aspects covered include word classes and limited content on affixation. This study reaffirms that grammar encompasses the systematic study of the rules governing sentence structure, syntax, and semantics within a language. It also confirms that grammar remains one of the most challenging aspects of language learning. The findings suggest a strong interrelationship among grammatical variables improvement in one (e.g., syntax) positively influences others (e.g., morphology and phonology). Syntax, being superordinate, subsumes both morphology and phonology (Wales, 1989; Halliday, 1992). Consequently, pedagogical emphasis should be placed on syntax in order to strengthen learners' communicative competence.

The findings of this study revealed notable differences in the perceptions of senior secondary school teachers and students regarding the teaching and learning of English Language grammar in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. These differences provide important insights into the dynamics of grammar pedagogy in ESL contexts and reinforce earlier scholarly observations on the complex nature of grammar instruction.

First, the results showed that teachers generally held more positive perceptions of grammar instruction than students. Many teachers viewed grammar as the backbone of English Language proficiency and considered its explicit teaching indispensable for

developing communicative competence. This position aligns with earlier assertions by Osoba and Adenuga (2006) and Ayodele (2001), who emphasised that a strong grammatical foundation promotes both accuracy and fluency in language use. Students, however, expressed mixed feelings toward grammar learning. While some acknowledged its importance for academic success, others described grammar lessons as abstract, technical, or overly rules-driven. This divergence may stem from differences in linguistic maturity, prior exposure to formal grammar, and the perceived relevance of grammar to students' immediate communicative needs (Ellis, 2006; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004).

The study further revealed varying levels of interest in grammar instruction. Teachers generally reported enthusiasm for teaching grammar, often viewing it as a structured and manageable aspect of the curriculum. Students, however, exhibited lower levels of interest, particularly when instructional approaches relied heavily on rote learning or decontextualised rule memorisation. This supports Ellis, R. (2006) submission that student interest and learning improve when grammar teaching involves meaningful tasks rather than rote memorization. The discrepancy in interest levels suggests the need for more interactive, student-centred approaches such as task-based instruction, guided discovery, or communicative grammar teaching.

Regarding the specific aspects of grammar perceived as accessible, the findings indicated that many students found grammar

learning necessary but not always engaging, citing teaching methods and the abstract nature of certain grammatical structures as barriers to sustained interest. This aligns with previous research suggesting that student engagement with grammar is strongly influenced by instructional strategies and learner-friendly materials (Adeosun, 2014; Soneye, 2017). The study further revealed that students found basic grammatical components such as parts of speech and basic sentence structure relatively easy to understand. These components are typically introduced early in the curriculum and reinforced through repeated exposure, which may explain their accessibility. Conversely, students identified more complex areas such as concord, tense and aspect, clauses, and transformational structures as particularly challenging. These findings are consistent with the WAEC Chief Examiners' reports (2002, 2003), which frequently highlight persistent errors in concord, tense sequencing, and sentence construction among Nigerian students. The difficulty may also reflect insufficient scaffolding, ineffective instructional delivery, or students' limited exposure to grammatically rich language environments.

A significant relationship was found between teachers' and students' perceptions of grammar instruction. This result suggests that although the two groups differ in the intensity and nature of their views, their perceptions are nonetheless interconnected. Teachers' beliefs about grammar often shape their classroom practices, which, in turn, influence students' learning experiences and attitudes. This outcome aligns with Borg's (2006) position that

teachers' beliefs play a central role in shaping learners' perceptions and outcomes. The perceptual gaps identified in this study further reveal that when instructional approaches do not adequately reflect students' needs, learners may develop negative attitudes that hinder effective grammar acquisition.

Overall, the discussion highlights a critical implication: the success of grammar instruction in Nigerian senior secondary schools depends on harmonising teachers' pedagogical orientation with students' learning expectations. This reinforces the argument of Ozokwo (2007) that grammar remains controversial largely because its teaching often fails to connect theoretical linguistic structures with students' communicative realities. Bridging this divide demands intentional efforts by teachers to adopt flexible, context-responsive instructional methods that situate grammar within meaningful communicative practices.

Recommendations

In English as a Second Language (ESL) context, grammar teaching should focus on enhancing communication skills rather than teaching grammar in isolation. Teachers must adopt interactive and contextualized instructional strategies to make grammar learning more meaningful. Based on the findings of this study on the perceptions of senior secondary school teachers and students regarding the teaching and learning of English Language grammar in Ijebu-Ode local Government, Ogun State, the following recommendations are made:

Teachers should integrate learner-centred strategies such as group work, games, digital tools, and real-life language use to make grammar instruction more engaging.

Regular workshops and professional development programs should be organized to equip teachers with innovative approaches to grammar instruction.

Grammar should be taught in meaningful contexts rather than in isolation to improve student understanding and retention. Teachers should vary instructional strategies to meet the diverse learning needs and abilities of students, especially in challenging areas such as clauses and concord.

Curriculum planners should ensure periodic review and update of grammar content to reflect contemporary language use and global communication demands.

Schools should provide access to digital platforms and multimedia resources that enhance students' comprehension of abstract grammatical concepts.

Conclusion

This study examined the perceptions of senior secondary school teachers and students regarding the teaching and learning of English Language grammar in selected schools in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. However, several inhibitive factors were identified as constraints to effective grammar teaching. These include teacher and student laxity, lack of instructional materials, the technical nature of grammar, limited instructional time, infrastructural decay, overcrowded classrooms, low learner motivation, poor linguistic expression, and

first language interference. The findings revealed clear perceptual differences between both groups, despite their shared educational context. Teachers generally demonstrated favourable attitudes toward grammar instruction and viewed it as an indispensable component of English Language teaching and learning. Students, however, expressed more mixed perceptions, shaped by their learning experiences, linguistic proficiency levels, and the extent to which instructional approaches supported their understanding. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to promote effective grammar instruction and improved learning outcomes. The study further revealed that while students found basic grammatical concepts relatively accessible, they encountered considerable difficulty with more abstract and structurally complex aspects such as concord, tenses, clauses, and transformational relationships. These areas of difficulty correspond with longstanding challenges highlighted in national examination reports and underscore persistent gaps in students' grammatical competence. The significant relationship observed between teachers' and students' perceptions indicates that the beliefs and practices of teachers directly influence learners' attitudes, and consequently, their performance.

Overall, the study concludes that effective grammar instruction in Nigerian secondary schools requires a deliberate effort to bridge the perceptual divide between teachers and students. Addressing this gap necessitates the adoption of more interactive,

context-responsive, and learner-centred teaching strategies that make grammar meaningful, engaging, and relevant to students' communicative needs. By aligning instructional methods with students' learning preferences, English Language educators can foster improved motivation, deeper understanding, and enhanced grammatical proficiency among learners. Ultimately, strengthening grammar pedagogy will contribute significantly to improving students' overall performance in English and supporting broader educational achievement in Nigeria.

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