Enriching the Teaching/Learning of Segmental and Supragemental Phonology through Orelancards

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Abstract :*Test of oral English has been reported by chief examiners to be an area where students perform poorly. This has contributed immensely to students' poor performance in English Language in public examinations. Studies on card games in other aspects of English Language have revealed them as effective. However, scholars have not delved into the use of card games in the teaching and learning of test of oral English. This study therefore examined the effects of ORELANCADRDS on students'achievement in segmental and suprasegmental phonology (test of oral English). A quasi-experimental design was used involving a pretest, posttest control performed on Senior Secondary Schools in Ogun State. Treatment was at two levels- the group engaged in the use of pronunciation cards and the control group. Gender was at two levels male and female and school location – urban and rural. A total of 540 students participated in the study. The instrument was Oral English Language Cards – (**ORELANCARDS**). Three hypotheses were tested using the T-Test/Score of Deviation Method to measure the variability of the conditions at 0.05 Level of significance. Results show that there is a significant main effect of treatment of the new method over the conventional. Applying the new method in gender and schools' locations showed no significant difference, implying effectiveness in both situations. Findings have positive innovative implications for oral English teaching in secondary schools.*

I. Introduction

The teaching and learning of English among speakers of other languages according to Jenkins (2009) dates back to the late 15th century and was done to further trading and commercial interests, promote empire, to facilitate the everyday survival of refugees and other migrants or for a combination of these causes. In order to achieve their goal, it was considered essential for these 'non-native speakers' to approximate as closely as possible to the native standard, particularly with regard to pronunciation and this led to the acceptance of a prestige accent in the 20th Century called Received Pronunciation (RP); a standard that is giving way to Estuary English according to Banjo (2012).

The importance of pronunciation cannot be over-emphasised in human speech. This is because good pronunciation is the key to intelligibility. Walker (2002) supports this view when he states that when words are inappropriately pronounced, a lot of confusion could arise that will lead to wrong decoding of message, which will in turn render the flow of communication ineffective.One of the problems that stand out in the teaching and learning of English Language in Nigeria is the disparity between English and the mother tongue phonological system. Sogbesan (1993), submits that this implies that the average child's acquisition of English Language sound is secondary to the mother tongue phonetic system he or she initially acquired.

In English for instance, the phonemic system has 44 distinctive sounds which are not all present in many Nigerian languages. It has therefore been observed that while students effortlessly and accurately pronounce English phonemes that are present in their L_1, they mispronounce the unfamiliar phonemes or substitute them with the nearest sounding phonemes from their mother tongue. This according to Bandele (2005) is as a result of the fact that the average Nigerian student entering secondary school has often fossilized in the linguistic system of his mother tongue or first language (L_1).

This leads to the problem of mother tongue interference which manifests in the form of phonographic problems making speech drills difficult. These problems faced by the Oral English learners are compounded by the fact that they have few models to look up to even among teachers, with many of these teachers still using traditional teaching methods.Again, English suprasegmental features like sentence and word stress, technically referred to as isochronicity of stress, intonation, rhythm, and general accent are misused by learners because they differ extensively from many Nigerian Languages where stress does not occur but have regular spacing of syllables called isochronicity of syllables, Banjo (2012). This may account for why stress is one of the aspects of the English Language which students find very stressful. Language interference has been identified as a problem area for the learner-user of English Language in Nigeria. Such interference according to Esmeraldoarat(2013), is as a result of the presence of two or more language codes in the brain or memory of the Nigerian learner-user of English like other bilinguals in the world.This implies that the teacher sometimes faces a brick wall in making students adjust to oral English forms especially in cases of interference.

Most schools, especially those that are solely financed by government cannot afford to provide modern language learning equipment like language laboratories equipped with projectors. Again, in a situation where there are more than fifty students in an English Language class, knowledge dissemination, and effective classroom management will be difficult, (Aremu, 2001). This calls for urgent intervention through a teaching strategy, with teaching aid that is inexpensive and that students can effectively and eagerly use.

Pronunciation games serve as innovative teaching strategy, likely to improve students' pronunciation output. Except in the classroom, games are a regular part of students' lives. Students access games daily on the internet, computers and cell phones. Most teachers do not use games as part of their educational repertoire, though games, according to Marzano (2014), accounts for twenty percentile gain in students' achievement especially when popular games are adapted for classroom use. Students' performance in pronunciation test will likely affect their performance in other aspects of English, which is not just a core subject but a compulsory one.

Pronunciation games are invaluable materials for classroom use because they are designed to raise learners' awareness of various aspects of English pronunciation, provide avenue for inconsequential competition, examine important content in a lively and enjoyable atmosphere and stimulate analysis of core concepts. Hancock (2009), states that pronunciation is often taught through the teacher providing a model for learners to listen to and repeat, but valuable as this is, it neglects a need many learners feel to understand what they are doing. Kito and Kitao, (1996) posit that making learners read oral English from texts (which is common practice) may not help learners to perfectly master articulatory skills.

Shelley (2008) and Marzano (2014) see English games as tools which, if correctly used, take the stress out of learning a language and help pupil succeed by learning naturally. Learning through games therefore provides the needed diversity and eliminates the boredom that comes with the monotony of sticking only to the conventional teaching techniques. Activities therefore reduce learners' dependence on the teacher as a model. One of the advantages ofthe pronunciation gameis that it could be adapted for individual activities or it could involve learners working in groups or it could be used in whole class activities according to the need of the learners and preference of the teacher or students. Pronunciation games can be adapted to fit into any academic level or the level of individual learners. The games engage students in a challenge and, at the same time highlight various aspects of pronunciation. Another good thing about pronunciation card is that they could be very durable especially if they are laminated and very well kept.

Again, Eames (2014) opines that games are effective because they have qualities that excite participants, some of which include their having elements of discovery, adaptability, feedback, repetition, group consensus, learning in context, physical response and accuracy through peer correction.Language card games have been developed by scholars like, Shelly (2008), and JoAnne (2013) who found them to be effective in enhancing learners' achievement in English Language grammar and vocabulary respectively. However, the card games were not based on the oral aspect of English Language. Though Hancock (2009)andSchiller (2013) have developed oral English cards and found them to improve learners' performance, these were made for pupils at the primary level with English Language as their $L_1$and not senior secondary school students in Nigeria. Scholars such as, Ariza (2001), Leo (2010) and Turner (2010) have developed various language games (not cards alone) for the development of speaking skills and found them to be helpful in enhancing teenagers' interaction in English. Case (2013) developed card games based on different aspects of English, not specifically on test of oral English, for learners with English as their L_2.This work therefore, determined to what extent the use of Oral English Language Cards game(ORELANCADRDS – developed by the researcher), enhances students' achievement in test oral English in senior secondary school.

Gender and school location are factors that have been reported to influence language learning. Leo (2010) and Karami (2013) emphasise that females are more proficient in language than their male counterparts,while O'Sullivan (2000) and O'Loughlin (2002), report no difference between males and females in language achievement. On the influence of school location on students' achievement, scholars also have conflicting reports. Umo (2001), report that urban learners perform better at language games than rural ones.However, Evans and Esch (2005) and Gileece (2014), report no significant influence of schools school location on students' achievement in Language. The contradictory reports on the relationship of both gender and school location of language achievement necessitate further research work in these areas. Hence, the effects of both gender and school location on learning test of oral English with ORELANCARDS are also considered in this work.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers have observed that there are a lot of odds against the Oral English learners since they are not native speakers. Many students are not introduced to test of Oral English until they are in JSS1. There are no language laboratories or teaching facilities/aids that can make students easily grasp what they are being taught. Most words are not spelt according to pronunciation and this poses a difficult problem to learners. Moreover, most students have the problem of mother tongue interference since English is a second language for most of

them. This interference manifests in the form of phonographic problems which make speech drills a difficult task. With the myriads of problems faced by the Oral English learners and with few models to look up to even among teachers, coupled with the fact that most teachers still use the traditional methods in disseminating knowledge, there is the problem of underachievement in oral English especially in segmental and suprasegmental aspects. Scholars like Aremu (2001) and Animasaun (2002) developed card games that were reported to have positively influenced students' achievement in Mathematics, but there is a paucity of research work on card games in test of oral English. Ali (2006), worked on computer assisted language learning game (CALL) for the development of oral skill among English Language learners.However, considering the lack of constant electricity, coupled with the fact that most students, particularly in public schools do not have computers, this work is based on a card game – ORELANCARDS, that can be easily accessible and used at any time without the need for electronic gadgets or the compulsory need of a guide.This makesORELANCARDS a ready tool for concretizing knowledge.

Hypotheses
This study tested the following null hypotheses:
H_{O1}: There is no significantdifference in oral English achievement of experimental and control group.
H_{O2}: There is no significantdifference in oral English achievement of male and female students.
H_{O3}: There is no significantdifference in oral English achievement of students from rural and urban schools.

II.   Methodology

The researcher adopted a pre-test, post-test control group, quasi-experimental design. There were experimental and control groups. The experimental group was exposed to phonological instruction through the use of card games while those in the control group learnt phonology through conventional teaching method.

Sample
The subjects for this research were drawn from senior secondary school two students. Stratified random sampling procedure was used in picking ten (10) schools that participated in the study. Five schools were drawn from urban and five from rural areas. 54 students from each of the schools were randomly selected, trained and tested with both the conventional method and the Card Game. They were all subjected to similar conditions in terms of the environment, learning and testing facilities and timing.The game is targeted at students in Senior Secondary School who have been introduced to test of Oral English or anybody who wants to learn English phonetic symbols and other aspects of English phonology using the game method.

The instruments used to carry out this research include:
1.   Oral English Achievement Test (Oeat).
2.   **ORELANCARDS:** This Is The Name Of The Card Game The Researcher Used. It Is An Acronym For Oral English Language Cards.

Instructional Guide in the use of ORELANDS
It is a game of cards containing the 44 phonetic symbols. There are two words labelled A and B and the participant will name which of the words has the given phonetic symbol.Cards with underlined parts of words with options as suggestive answers are provided. Students are required to name options with the underlined consonant or vowel sounds. Where players are to indicate suprasegmental features like stress and rhyme, no part of the words are underlined.

For students to be able to pronounce the phonetic symbols properly and identify words where they will be used in transcription; differentiate between vowels and consonants; show that they understand the different types of vowels and consonants and for participants to test their knowledge of segmental and supragemental features of English Language phonology.

There are different scoring procedures for Vowel and Consonant sounds.
If a candidate picks a vowel sound card, he or she should answer the following questions.
1.   Which of the words has the symbol? (i.e. A or B) = 1 mark for a correct answer.
2.   Say if it is a vowel or consonant. For correct answer give 1 mark
3.   Say whether it is a front, back or central vowel. For correct answer give 1 mark.
4.   Say whether it is vowel no, 1, 2 etc. Give 1 mark for correct answer.
5.   Say whether it is a short vowel, a long vowel or a diphthong. Give one mark.

Thus a player who scores all the answers on a vowel card gets five marks.

N.B. Inside the cards, vowels are represented by letter v and consonants by letter c.

The questions that a player should answer in a consonant card are:

1. Which of the words has the given symbol?
2. Say whether it is a vowel or consonant?
3. Mention the place of articulation.
4. State the manner of articulation of the sound.
5. State whether the sound is voiced or voiceless.

Learning Aspects of Students Developed by ORELANCARD

1. Affective Domain.

When used particularly by groups of students, it encourages team spirit. Lack of cooperation within groups will lead to unnecessary waste of time.It tests how students react to volunteers (who answer questions) when they fail questions in their groups. It tests for students who have the courage to volunteer to answer questions. It tests for those who may want to open cards for answers. (Negative trait – cheating).It tests how students react to success or failure.

Cognitive Domain

By the end of the game students should be able to assess their level of mastery in the knowledge of English phonology.

Psychomotor Domain

Students are expected to improve their skills in pronunciation.It provides them with hands-on exploration and manipulation material.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

The pronunciation game was pre-tested in two schools outside the ones selected for the study. The instrument was given to 45 SSII students in Ibadan, who were not part of the participants of this study. Using Cronbach Alpha measure, the coefficient of the items was established at 0.74.

Achievement test in Oral English was given to experts in test of oral English to ensure that the questions are standard. It was administered to 46 SSII students in Sagamu who were not part of the study. Using test re-test a co-efficient of 0.76 was obtained, establishing that the instrument is reliable.

The principal moderator variables which the researcher identifies as capable of intervening between the independent and dependent variable are: (a) School location- thus it determined if students in the rural or urban area will respond better with resultant higher scores after exposure to the pronunciation card games. (b) Gender is another moderator variable which led to finding out if male students will do better than female students and vice-versa in their achievement scores.

The data collated were analysed using t-test Analysis and Deviation Method to measure variability and to test the hypotheses. The level of Significance of 0.05 was chosen for the testing. The T-score was adopted since the population size of our target is 540 which isgreater than 30.

H_{O1}: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the students exposed to the Pronunciation Game (new method) and the mean score of those exposed to the conventional method**.**

T-Test Analysis Of Difference Between Two Means For The New And Conventional Methods

	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	N	STANDARD ERROR	t-Cal	t-Crit
New Method	67.2	13.4	540			
Conventional Method	47.4	15.6	540	0.87	22.37	12.064

Table 1: T-Score for the New Method and Conventional Method

Since the Calculated Value (t-Cal = 22.37) is significantly greater than the Critical Value (t-Crit = 12.064) at 0.05 level of significance. The Null Hypothesis, $H_{01}$is rejected in favour of the Alternative Hypothesis H_{a1} and it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the mean score of the students exposed to the Pronunciation Game (New Method) and the mean score of those exposed to the Conventional Method. This means that the students tested having been exposed to the two methods performed significantly better with the Card Game (New Method) as opposed to the Conventional (Old Method).

H_{O2}: There is no significant achievement mean difference in Pronunciation Test mean scores of male students and those of female students using the new method.

T-Test Of Difference Between Two Means For Male And Female Students

	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	N	STANDARD ERROR	t-Cal	t-Crit
Male	61.0	13.8		1.05	5.57	9.011
Female	71.0	10.2	270			

Table 2: T-Scores for the Male and Female Students

From table 2, the Calculated Value (t-Cal = 5.57) is smallerthan the Critical Value (t-Crit = 9.011) at 0.05 level of significance. The Null Hypothesis, $H_{02}$is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant achievement mean difference in Pronunciation Test mean scores of Male students and those of Female students using the New Method. This implies thatthe new method is as effective for boys as when applied to girls.

H_{O3}: There is no significant achievement mean difference in Pronunciation Test mean scores of students in urban schools and those in rural schools using the new method.

T-Test Of Difference Between Two Means For Urban And Rural Schools

	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	Population	STANDARD ERROR	t-Cal	t-Crit
Urban	59.5	12.4				
Rural	66.7	14.2	270	1.15	-6.26	9.011

Table 3: T-Scores for the Male and Female Students

The Calculated Value (t-Cal = -6.26) in table 3 is smaller than the Critical Value (t-Crit = 9.011) at 0.05% level of significance. The Null Hypothesis, H_{03} is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant achievement mean difference in Pronunciation Test mean scores of Urban and Rural Schools using the New Method. This implies thatthe new method is effective for both urban and rural schools.

III. Discussion Of Results And Educational Implications

On the main effect of treatment, the results for the post test and experimental group (New Method) are better than the controlled one which shows that the game has a significant effect in improving the achievement of students and creating interactive environment. This result corroborates Ariza (2001) and Turner (2010), who report that language card games are effective in improving learners' achievement in oral English. Some of the educational implications are that ORELANCARDS are potentially effective in concretizing knowledge in the area of test of oral English, leading to better achievement among learners. A mastery of phonology requires lots of drills and ORELANCARD game affords learners the opportunity of constant practice in and out of the classroom and for them to study as individuals and in groups. Again, the use of the game will help learners take charge of their own learning, thus easing the work of the teacher. This is in line with Shelly (2008)'s emphasis on the importance of getting learners involved in the teaching/learning process. Moreover, the fact that ORLANCARDS do not need electricity to be used and maintained, make them readily available and inexpensive to both learners and users. Test of orals is perceived as abstract and thus difficult for learners and even some teachers. The use of this game as instructional material removes the seeming "abstractness" of the content, concretizing it and providing hands on material that makes this aspect of the English Language more attractive.

Both gender and school location did not have significant effect on students' achievement. This concurs with Simpson (2006), who reports no significance difference between male and female orin school location among language learners. The result on gender corroborates those of O'Sullivan (2000) and O'Loughlin (2002) but differs from thatofKarami (2013) who reports better language proficiency of females than males. On school location, the result differs from that of Umo (2001), who report that urban learners perform better at language games than rural ones, but corroborates Evans and Esch(2005) and Gileece(2014) who report no significant difference between rural and urban schools in achievement in Language.

The implication of the result is that treatment is effective for both male and female students and rural and urban schools. Thismeans that both male and female, and rural and urban learners should be exposed to the use of ORELANCARDS. Though, teachers have employed various strategies to teach test of oral English, there have been reports of students' under-achievement in this area. The use of this game will help belie the strain of learning and complement teachers' efforts because of the opportunity for constant re-learning that the game provides, making concepts and examples fossilized in learners as they engage in the game.

IV.   Conclusion

There are very few games used in language teaching especially in Test of Orals. The language game is the researcher's own creation built from a study of certified language games. It will be an innovative addition that will boost Oral English teaching whenever the games are used as instructional materials. It is also expected that ORELANCARD game will build more inspiration in teachers and learners as it facilitates the teaching/learning experience and makes oral English less abstract. It incorporates the element of involvement and discovery as students will discover their areas of difficulty, and help them to work as a team and as individuals and help teachers pay attention to details, as they can use them to consolidate learning especially in any area of the Oral English paper where students may be weak. Again, it is expected to assist students in achieving success by providing them with hands-on exploration and manipulation and to reinforce knowledge of basic concepts and pronunciation drills.It is recommended, especially for teaching in secondary schools and helpful for the teacher as procedure for language acquisition.

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