



EFFECT OF COMPUTER-BASED INSTRUCTION ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN PRONUNCIATION OF VOWELS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN ABUJA

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of computer-based instruction on secondary school students' achievement in pronunciation of vowels of the English language in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The sample for the study consisted of 160 SSS2 students from two co-educational schools in Gwagalada Area Council. The experimental group comprised 78 males and females while the control group comprised 82 male and female students. The research design for the study was quasi-experimental. A multi-stage random sampling technique was used. Both the experimental group and control group were given the same English vowels achievement test questions, but the difference is that while those in the experimental group were taught vowels of English with CBI, those in the control group were taught vowels of English using the conventional method. The instrument used for data collection was the English Vowels Achievement Test (EVAT) which was marked over fifty. Mean was used to answer the research questions while ANCOVA was used to test the hypothesis at $P < 0.05$. From the results obtained, it was found that students in the experimental group had significantly higher Achievement scores in Vowels of English than their counterparts who are in the control group. Also, gender had a significant effect on the achievement of students in vowels of English. Based on the findings, it was recommended that English language teachers should adopt computer-based instruction in teaching vowels of the English language.

Keywords: *English in Nigeria, Computer-based instruction, gender, vowels*

Introduction

The importance of the English language as a medium of communication cannot be over-emphasized. As far as English language remains Nigerian's official language and the language of instruction in the nation's schools, it will continue to be ranked as the most important subject in our educational system. The government of Nigeria considers the English language as a core subject in the school curriculum and a major medium of communication both within and outside the school system. The National Policy on Education, of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) demands the ability to communicate effectively at the primary level and out of school. The policy demands that the medium of instruction at primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years and from the fourth year, the English language shall be taught as a subject and used progressively as a medium of instruction. The English language is also the index for measuring the quality of any senior school certificate examination result, as it is the subject that candidates must pass if their overall success in the examination is to have any value (Mohammed, 2020).

It follows, inexorably, that how well students progress in their academic pursuits is determined to a large extent by their level of proficiency in English. This supports the observation of Moin, Patra, Mitra & Dutta (2019), that if students are deficient in the language of instruction which is English, they will not perform well in the various school subjects that are taught with the language. This may explain why the English language was regarded by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, (NERDC) in 2007 as the *primus inter pares* (first among equals) among the core subjects in the secondary school curriculum.

The aim of teaching the English language at all levels of education is to give students permanent literacy and the ability to communicate effectively. Also, it is to guide the learners to understand the four language skills namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The listening skill as the first of the four major language skills is the key and gateway to language learning and it is very vital and fundamental in the

process of language acquisition. The three other skills, speaking, reading, and writing build upon it and are more or less dependent on it (Sucharitha, 2022). As the child consolidates his listening skills, he moves into the speaking stage which will enable him to join his speech community. A user of a language is said to be competent if he is able to use the four basic skills effectively.

The study of English vowels is a crucial component of oral language learning for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. It provides them with the opportunity to understand and produce accurate word pronunciations. Since English originates from Britain, ESL learners aiming to pronounce words correctly, similar to native speakers or ensuring international intelligibility, need to be familiarized with the various vowel sounds and their articulation (Hyder, 2021). The significance of proper pronunciation in the learning of the English language cannot be emphasized enough. It is undeniably crucial for effective oral communication, both in educational settings and professional environments. Pronunciation encompasses the production of sounds that convey meaning. This involves being mindful of the specific sounds of a language, as well as aspects of speech beyond individual sounds, such as intonation, stress, rhythm, and vocal projection (Bamidele, Ali & Agbo, 2023). According to Omachonu and Offorma (2020), speaking English fluently requires not only a solid grasp of grammar and an extensive vocabulary but also the ability to speak smoothly and expressively with accurate pronunciation.

Teaching and learning have undergone significant transformations in the digital age, with technology-enriched instructional innovations, particularly computer-based instruction (CBI), playing a crucial role. Countries worldwide are emphasizing the integration of computer-based instruction in language classrooms. This shift is driven by the fact that contemporary society is increasingly reliant on digital devices, making it essential for students who will live and work in the digital world to be familiar with such technology. Computer-based instruction is seen as electronic tutors that can deliver personalized learning experiences, accurately tracking learners' interests, knowledge, attitudes, and

skills. This perspective provides a pedagogical rationale for introducing computers into the school curriculum (Mwihia, 2020).

Incorporating computer technology as a tool for teaching English vowels can serve as a way to integrate technological intervention into language classroom instruction. The introduction of computer-based learning environments has demonstrated its ability to foster student-centered language learning, encourage cooperative learning, and facilitate greater interaction between teachers and students (Ghavifek & Rosdy, 2015). The authors argue that computer-based instruction allows students to actively engage in the learning process. Additionally, Okika (2021) states that immediate feedback provided by the computer tends to enhance student motivation and active participation, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes.

Apart from the teaching method, research has implicated the close connection between gender and achievement. Gender is another variable that affects teaching and learning. The methodology of instruction used may not be received in the same way by both genders. Gillanders and Franco (2020) defined gender as a cultural construct developed by society to distinguish the roles, behaviour, and mental and emotional characteristics between males and females. Smith (2019) also agreed that gender is a learned socially constructed condition ascribed to males and females. The distinction is usually made between gender and sex. While sex is biological, gender is socio-cultural. The roles ascribed to different sexes may be the same in some societies but may differ in others. This may also affect learning outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Learning English proves challenging for students, with vowel sounds emerging as a particularly troublesome area. This difficulty becomes pronounced during exams like the Senior School Certificate Examination and National Examinations Council (NECO), as students struggle with distinguishing between English sounds and those of their native language, leading to unclear articulation (Hyder, 2021). The

WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports (2022) have linked students' inadequate performance in English language vowel sounds to instructional methods, prompting a call for methodological adjustments. Interestingly, the prevalent approach employed by teachers in Nigerian secondary schools seems to be the conventional method. This approach emphasizes defining and describing vowel sounds while minimizing student involvement in sound production during instruction. Based on the teacher's observation, the conventional method renders English vowel classes academic, technical, mechanistic, and excessively abstract, leading to student disinterest rather than engagement. Furthermore, conventional methods enable students to grasp a significant amount of content within a limited timeframe. However, these methods often result in students lacking proficiency in generating accurate, spontaneous speech and fluid, phonetically precise sounds as required in English vowel examinations. Despite numerous researchers advocating for the adoption of computer-based instruction in English vowel teaching due to its potential advantages.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to find out the effects of computer-based instruction on secondary school students' achievement in pronunciation of English language vowels in Gwagalada Area Council, Abuja, FCT. Specifically, the study objectives were to:

- find out the mean scores of secondary school students in the experimental group who received Computer-based Instruction and the control group who received the conventional method in front vowels of the English language;
- establish the difference in the mean scores of male and female secondary school students in the experimental group who received computer-based instruction (CBI) and the control group who received conventional method (CM) in front vowels of the English language;

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the course of this study:

- i. What is the difference in the mean scores between secondary school students in the experimental group who received Computer-based Instruction and the control group who received the conventional method in front vowels of the English language?
- ii. What is the mean scores achievement of male and female secondary school students in the experimental group who received CBI and the control group who received CM in front vowels of the English language?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide this study:

H_{01} . There is no significant difference in the scores of secondary school students in the experimental group who received computer-based instruction and the control group who received the conventional method in front vowels of the English language.

H_{02} There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female secondary school students in the experimental group who received CBI and the control group who received the conventional method in front vowels of the English language.

Literature Review

Learning English poses a significant challenge for students, with vowel sounds presenting a daunting hurdle. This challenge becomes especially evident during exams such as the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination Council (SSCE), where students grapple with differentiating between English sounds and those of their native language, resulting in unclear articulation (Oladayo 2019). The WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports (2022) have attributed students' insufficient performance in English vowel sounds to instructional methods, prompting a need for methodological adjustments. Notably, the prevalent approach adopted by teachers in Nigerian secondary schools appears to be conventional, focusing on defining and describing vowel sounds while minimizing student involvement in sound production during instruction (Bamidele, Ali & Agbo, 2023). This method renders English vowel

classes as academic, technical, mechanistic, and excessively abstract, often leading to student disinterest rather than engagement. While conventional methods facilitate the comprehension of a significant amount of content within a limited time frame, they frequently result in students lacking proficiency in generating accurate, spontaneous speech and fluid, phonetically precise sounds, as required in English vowel examinations.

Researchers have long been focused on understanding the reasons behind poor performance in oral English, particularly about vowels. It has been noted that the inadequate quality of English language teachers, ineffective teaching methods, insufficient language laboratories, unfavourable learning environments, and gender differences contribute to the under performance in English vowel pronunciation (Ossai & Agadobi, 2019). The authors further observed that the absence of modern teaching resources, inadequate coverage of course content, teachers' shortcomings in delivering effective instruction, and students' inability to grasp and internalize what is being taught are challenges in the teaching and learning of the English language. Consequently, it can be inferred that these same issues are affecting the teaching and learning of English vowels.

Consequently, Fereshtch and Davood (2017) asserted that vowels in English are very complex aspects of language learning. Therefore, the main focus in modern teaching and learning environment is the learner himself who is responsible for his knowledge. He can learn better if he has an active role in class. Moreover, with the significant growth of technology, its application and importance in teaching and learning English has increased. In teaching vowels of English, the teacher has many teaching methods to adopt to enhance effective teaching and learning. Any teaching method chosen by the teacher should make learning activities active and practical rather than passive and theoretical. It should give students opportunity to practice what they are learning in a real context and appeal to all their language skills. There is a general belief that the method chosen by English language teachers to a large extent determines students' performance in the language. Mwihiya, (2020) believed that the

method of teaching used is indispensable in the teaching-learning process of English as a second language. This view is reinforced by Omachonu and Offorma (2020), who stressed that the teaching method used by the English language teacher can affect students positively because it is a weapon for enhancing the language ability of his students.

Apart from the teaching method, research has implicated the close connection between gender and achievement. Gender is another variable that affects teaching and learning. The methodology of instruction used may not be received in the same way by both genders. Gillanders and Franco (2020) defined gender as a cultural construct developed by society to distinguish the roles, behaviour, and mental and emotional characteristics between males and females. Omachonu and Offorma (2020), also agreed that gender is a learned, socially constructed condition ascribed to males and females. The distinction is usually made between gender and sex. While sex is biological, gender is socio-cultural. The roles ascribed to different sexes may be the same in some societies but may differ in others. This may also affect learning outcomes.

Commenting on gender and language learning, Mwihia, (2020) asserted that there is a difference in the thought process of females which has implications for language learning. The author is of the view that females are faster in the acquisition of language and language expression than males. Among English as a Second Language (ESL) students, females are more disposed to express themselves in the second language. This positive disposition favours permanent learning. The author further noted that females secondary school students tend to be more relaxed in a language class than males. This relaxation may influence learning positively.

In Nigeria, there are conflicting reports on whether gender plays a significant role in language achievement. Some researchers like Omachonu and Offorma (2020). Bamidele, Ali, and Agbo (2023) claimed that the female gender performs better than the male in language. However, other researchers like Wahyuningsih (2018), and Ali (2016) found out that the males perform better than the females in language. Yet,

other studies by Mwihia, (2020), Rasckh and Saeb (2015), and Coates (2016) did not establish any significant difference in the achievement of males and females in language. Based on this disparity of findings on which gender performs better in language, it seems that the exact influence of gender on language performance is not clear; hence, further studies are needed on the nature of students' performance by gender, especially in Nigeria.

Methodology

The researcher adopted a quasi-experimental design, it is a non-randomized, control group, pre-test, and post-test design. This design was adopted because the students that were used for the experiment were intact classes. Randomization would disrupt the existing structure of the school, thus posing some administrative problems. The experimental group was taught using computer-based instruction while the control group was taught using the conventional method. The population of the study consisted of all the 12, 350 (Male) and 11, 075 (Female) Senior Secondary School class two (SSSII) students in public secondary schools in Abuja, FCT in the 2022/2023 academic session. (Education Resource Centre, Abuja, FCT). SSII students were used for the study because they have finished their Junior Secondary School and are in the penultimate years of their secondary school. The sample consisted of 160 SSII students from two co-educational upper Senior Secondary Schools in Abuja, FCT in the 2022/2023 academic session. Two intact classes were drawn from each of the schools (One experimental and one control group respectively). The sample size that was used for the experimental and control groups were the number of students in the intact classes. The experimental group was made up of eighty-four (84) students while the control group was made up of seventy-six (76) students. Multiple-stage sampling technique was used in drawing the respondents. One instrument was used to collect data for the study: the English Vowels Achievement Test (EVAT). The English Vowels Achievement Test (EVAT) is a 50-item dichotomously scored instrument that was adopted by the researcher, which tests students in various ways, and questions on vowels of English

were majorly tested. The English vowel achievement test was further subjected to content validation. It was presented to the two supervisors and other two experts in English Language education, faculty of education, university of Abuja, FCT. The test has two parts. Part A provides for the bio-data of the research subjects (1-5), while part B is the actual test of 50 items (1-

50), and 50 marks are allotted to it. The actual test was drawn from the Senior Secondary School education curriculum on the English language for SSII and the Abuja, FCT Uniform Scheme of work on the English language for SSII. Mean was used to answer the research questions while ANCOVA was used to test the hypothesis at $P < 0.05$.

Results

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the mean gain scores difference between secondary school students in the experimental group who received computer-based instruction and the control group who received the conventional method in front vowels of the English language?

Table 1: Mean analysis of the achievement scores of students in front vowels of the English language before and after exposure to CBI and CM

Methods	N	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean gain
		\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	
Computer -based instruction (CBI)	84	3.08	1.11	5.88	1.44	2.80
Conventional method (CM)	76	3.84	.49	4.45	.89	.61

Table 1 shows that the students who were exposed to computer-based instruction (CBI) had a pre-test mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 3.08$, $SD = 1.11$) in front vowels of English language, while those exposed to conventional method (CM) had a pre-test mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 3.84$, $SD = .49$) in front vowels of English language. This indicates a slight difference in the pre-test scores of the students exposed to CBI and those exposed to CM. However, at the post-test, students who were exposed to computer-based instruction CBI) had a mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 5.88$, $SD = 9.67$) in front vowels of the English language, while those exposed to the conventional method

(CM) had a mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 4.45$, $SD = .89$) in front vowels of the English language. Mean gain scores of 2.80 and .61 for the students exposed to CBI and those exposed to CM respectively indicate that the CBI group had higher post-test mean achievement scores in front vowels than the CM group. However, the post-test standard deviations of 1.44 and .89 for the students exposed to CBI and those exposed to CM respectively, indicate that the individual scores of the students exposed to CBI differed more from their mean achievement score in front vowels than those of the students exposed to CM.

Research Question Two: What is the mean scores achievement of male and female secondary school students in the experimental group who received CBI and the control group who received CM in front vowels of the English language?

Table 2: Mean analysis of the achievement scores of male and female students exposed to CBI and those exposed to CM in front vowels

Treatment	Gender	N	Mean	Pre-test	Mean	Post-test
				Std. Deviation		Std. Deviation
Computer-based instruction (CBI)	Male	29	3.07	.96	6.10	1.57
	Female	55	3.09	1.19	5.76	1.37
Conventional method (CM)	Male	35	3.66	.68	4.26	.85
	Female	41	4.00	.00	4.61	.89

Table 2 shows that male students who were exposed to CBI had pre-test mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 3.07$, $SD = .96$) and a post-test mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 6.10$, $SD = 1.57$) in front vowels of English language, while the male students who were exposed to CM had a pre-test mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 3.66$, $SD = .69$) and post-test mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 4.26$, $SD = .85$) in front vowels of English language. On the other hand, the female students who were exposed to CBI had pre-test mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 3.09$, $SD = 1.19$) and a post-test mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 5.76$,

$SD = 1.37$) in front vowels of English language, while the female students who were exposed to CM had a pre-test mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 4.00$, $SD = .00$) and post-test mean achievement score of ($\bar{x} = 4.61$, $SD = .89$) in front vowels of English language. This means that the while male students of the CBI group had higher post-test mean achievement score in front vowels than the female students of CBI group and the female students of CM group had higher post-test mean achievement score in front vowels than the male students of CM group.

Testing of Hypotheses

The null hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANCOVA statistics. All tests were conducted at a $P > 0.05$ level of significance.

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the gain scores of secondary schoolstudents in the experimental group who received computer-based instruction and the control group in front vowels of the English language.

Table 3: Analysis of covariance of the effect of computer-based instruction and conventional method on students' achievement in front vowels

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	86.314 ^a	2	43.157	29.811	.000	.275
Intercept	320.206	1	320.206	221.185	.000	.585
PreFrontVowel	4.313	1	4.313	2.979	.086	.019
Treatment	55.773	1	55.773	38.525	.000	.197
Error	227.286	157	1.448			
Total	4640.000	160				
Corrected Total	313.600	159				

a. R Squared = .275 (Adjusted R Squared = .266)

Table 3 revealed that there is a significant difference in the gain scores of secondary school students in the experimental group who received computer-based instruction (CBI) and the control group (CM) in front vowels of the English language in favour of those exposed to CBI, $F(1, 157) = 38.525, p = .000$. This implies that the null

hypothesis is rejected since the associated probability value of .000 is less than the .05 level of significance. The inference drawn is that CBI is more effective in enhancing students' performance in front vowels of the English language than the conventional method (CM).

H_{02} : There is no significant difference in the mean gain scores of male and female secondary school students in the experimental group who received CBI and the control group in front vowels of the English language.

Table 4: Analysis of covariance of the difference in the mean gain scores of male and female secondary school students in the experimental group who received CBI and the control group who received CM in front vowels

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	91.799 ^a	4	22.950	16.038	.000	.293
Intercept	325.200	1	325.200	227.258	.000	.595
Pre Front Vowel	5.258	1	5.258	3.674	.057	.023
Treatment	57.849	1	57.849	40.426	.000	.207
Gender	.075	1	.075	.053	.819	.000
Treatment * Gender	5.425	1	5.425	3.791	.053	.024
Error	221.801	155	1.431			
Total	4640.000	160				
Corrected Total	313.600	159				

a. R Squared = .293 (Adjusted R Squared = .274)

Table 4 revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean gain scores of male and female secondary school students in the experimental group who received CBI and the control group in front vowels of the English language, $F(1, 155) = 3.791, p = .053$. This implies that the null hypothesis is not rejected since the associated probability value of .053 is greater than the .05 level of significance. Thus, students' performance in front vowels of the English language as a result of their exposure to CBI and CM is not dependent on their gender.

Discussion of Findings

The evidence from this study shows that students in the experimental group who were taught vowels of English using computer-based instruction (CBI) obtained a higher post-test mean score than the control group who were

taught the same vowels of English through the conventional method. The findings presented in Table 1 indicated that those taught with the (CBI) in front, vowels of English had a post-test mean score of 5.88 in vowels of English, while those exposed to the conventional method (CM) had a mean achievement score of 4.45.

Furthermore, on the effectiveness of computer-based instruction, the result of this study agrees with earlier studies by Jacqueline (2018), Julius (2019), Lashly (2017), and Isaac (2016). These empirical studies revealed that computer-based instruction brings about better performance of students in vowels of English and other areas of the English language.

The result of this study has shown that gender had a significant effect on students' achievement in vowels of the English language. The findings of this study regarding the

achievement of male and female students taught vowels of English using CBI and the conventional method showed that the mean achievement score of 6.10 in vowels of English was recorded by male students. These findings agreed with the findings of Omachonu and Offorma (2020), which indicated that gender was a significant factor in students' achievement in vowels of English.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made. Computer-based instruction has facilitative effects on students' achievement in vowels of English. Students taught vowels of English using computer-based instruction achieved significantly higher than those taught with conventional methods. Gender has a significant effect on senior secondary school students' achievement in vowels of English. The male students had a higher mean score than their female counterparts in front vowels of the English achievement test.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study;

1. Secondary school teachers should make use of computer-based instruction in teaching vowels of English.
2. Seminars, conferences and workshops should be organized so as to train teachers on the use of computer-based instruction in second language teaching and learning.
3. Teacher trainers in the various universities and colleges of education should incorporate computer-based instruction as a useful technique in second language teaching and learning and train the teacher trainees on how to use the method.

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