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EFFECTS OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING ON PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS' ACHIEVEMENT IN LEARNING ENGLISH CONSONANT SOUNDS IN PANKSHING LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study investigated the effects of Task-based language teaching on primary school pupils' achievement in learning English language consonant sounds in Pankshin Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria. Quasi-experimental research design was used specifically the pretest and posttest non-equivalent control group. The population for the study comprised of all the public primary four pupils in Pankshin Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria. 54 pupils were selected using the simple random sampling technique participated in the study. The pupils were classified into experimental and control groups. Only the experimental group received the six-week long task-based language teaching while the control group received their usual classroom teaching but with the same contents with that of the experimental group. The Test of Oral English sound (TOES) was used to collect data for the study. The data obtained were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tool based on the research questions and hypotheses. The research questions were answered using the mean and standard deviation while the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study revealed that Task-based language teaching significantly improved the pupils' ability to identify and articulate the voiced English consonant sounds. Therefore, the study recommended that teachers should incorporate modern teaching approach such Task-based language teaching in teaching oral English in primary schools in order to improve their pronunciation and oral skills in English language.

Key words: Task-based language teaching, Jolly phonics, Achievement, consonant sounds

Introduction
The primary education in Nigeria plays a crucial role in shaping the educational foundation of children. It is the early and formal education children receive in Nigeria. It is designed to provide basic literacy and essential life skills to pupils at the primary school level. English language is one of the basic subjects taught at that level and all other levels of education in Nigeria. English language is not only taught as a subject but serves as the medium for teaching other subjects as well. English language is a global language, playing a significant role in international communication, business, education,

science, technology, and entertainment. Thus, proficiency in it is crucial for educational advancement in Nigeria and a good grasp of its oral form by pupils at early stage enhances their English language development.

Oral English is that aspect of English language that gives premium to appropriate articulation of English sounds and words in speech or conversation. Pangket (2019) stated that oral English involves pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary usage and ability to communicate and comprehend spoken English. It is concerned with how organs of speech such as teeth, mouth, lips, tongue, nose and vocal cords are used to produce English sounds in communication. Oral English has to do with the ability to communicate effectively and fluently in English through speaking and listening. Botman (2019) asserted that oral English is that area of language that concerns itself with the standard pronunciation of English sounds and it is an aspect of English that is mostly neglected by both teachers and learners in terms of teaching and learning.

Oral English is divided into segmental and suprasegmental phonology. Both aspects of oral English are crucial for teaching pupils the sounds of English language. The segmental phonology is concerned with the study of the individual sounds of the English language that make up words in English which include consonant and vowel sounds which can be combined in various ways to form syllables and words. While suprasegmental focuses on features that extend beyond the individual sounds which include intonation, stress, and rhythm (Zahid, 2021). The study of consonant sounds as part of the segmental phonology which is the focus of this study helps in enhancing children's phonemic awareness which is the ability to hear, identify and articulate individual sounds in

spoken words. These skills are essential for improving pronunciation, developing reading skills, spelling skills and to foster social interaction among pupils. English consonants are those sounds that are produced with little or no obstruction of air flow in the vocal cords. They are classified as voiced and voiceless sounds and these sounds can appear at the initial position (beginning of a word), medial position, (middle of a word) or final position (ending of a word). The voiced consonant sounds are those that are pronounced with little or partial vibration in the vocal cords which are: **/b/, /d/, /g/, /v/, / ð/, /z/, /ʒ/,** /dʒ/, **/m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /l/, /r/, /w/, and /y or j/** while the voiceless consonant are sounds that are pronounced with no vibration or without any obstruction in the vocal folds which are: **/p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, /h/, and /tʃ/** (Roach, 2010). Each of these classified sounds offers unique insights into how the English sounds are used in speech. These sounds according to Botman (2019), present range of challenges to learners of English as second language. One of the challenges is the absence of some these sounds in the native languages of second learners of English and also lack of one-to-one correspondence between the English sounds and its letters creates dynamism in the learning of English sounds.

The challenges face by pupils in Nigeria when learning oral English are multifaceted as many pupils in Nigeria come from environments where English is not the primary language spoken at home or in their communities. As a result, they often have limited exposure to English before formal education begins. This lack of foundational or background knowledge can hinder their ability to communicate effectively in English, leading to difficulties in pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and sentence structure. Mother tongue interference also presents another problem to pupils when learning a second

such as English language. This occurs when pupils apply the knowledge or rules and structures of their native languages to English. This can lead to various issues, such as incorrect pronunciation, grammar mistakes, and inappropriate word choices. For instance, tonal languages may affect how pupils perceive and produce English sounds, leading to misunderstandings and miscommunications. Therefore, pupils may struggle with the nuances and complexities of English pronunciation as a second language because English language sound system differs significantly from their first languages.

Inability of primary school pupils to identify and articulate English language sounds in form of omission of consonants at the initial, medial and final positions during speech or in English words are serious communication problems that learners of English language are faced with in Nigeria, Pankshin Local Government Area inclusive. For instance, baseline findings by the researcher revealed that most pupils with linguistic backgrounds in Ngas, Mupun, Mhichip, Tel and many other tribes in Pankshin LGA find it difficult to articulate certain consonant sounds in words most especially fricative and affricate sounds such as the /tʃ/ sound as in "church", "match" "watch" instead of pronouncing the words as /tʃɜ:rtʃ/, /mætʃ,//wa:tʃ/ respectively, these forms are pronounced /ʃɔ: ʃ/, /maʃ/, /wɔʃ/ instead. In addition, articulation of dental fricatives is another noticeable problem that learners of English within the study area and many learners of English are faced with in Nigeria. For instance, the voiced and voiceless dental fricative sounds /ð/ and /θ/, are mostly substituted with an alveolar sound /d/. These are few out of the many cases of pronunciation problems associated with oral English among the pupils learning English in Pankshin Local Government and Nigeria at large.

Oral skills deficiency can inhibit effective language learning because engaging in oral activities fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills and also helps pupils to learn how to articulate their thoughts logically and coherently. Difficulty in learning to speak also puts learners into an unpleasant learning situation as such experience creates a feeling of frustration and lack of confidence when speaking, and eventually makes the learners reluctant to speak or express themselves in the classes or public places.

Academic achievements of pupils have great influence on their educational progression. It refers to the extent to which learners have attained their educational goals after exposure to learning experience and it has always been of special interest to parents, educational stakeholders, and the society at large. The academic achievement trend of public primary school pupils in Nigeria has become a major source of concern for all and sundry. According to Muazu, Menakaya and Odezue (2024), there is persistent poor achievement of pupils in externally written examinations like National Common Entrance Examinations and end-of-term examinations in Nigeria, especially in English language and mathematics. Statistics from the National Examination Council (NECO) Chief Examiner's Report (2023) and (2024), the body responsible for the conduct of National Common Entrance Examination into Unity Schools in Nigeria indicate that pupils perform poorly in terms of verbal aptitude test. The statistics revealed that just 41% and 38% of the pupils passed English in 2023 and 2024 respectively. This conspicuously reveals the dwindling achievement of public primary school pupils in oral English in Nigeria, particularly in Plateau State.

In spite of the use of the traditional methods of language teaching and learning such as

the grammar-translation method, direct method, reading aloud and lecture method in improving the teaching and learning of oral English and other aspects of English language over years in Nigeria, these methods have not solved the oral English problems among public primary pupils as the problems persist and this has retarded the educational progression of many young learners in Nigeria, especially in Pankshin Local Government Area. Hence the need to introduce modern approach such as Task-based language teaching (TBLT) to improve pupils' achievement in identification of voiced and voiceless consonant sounds and articulation of voiced and voiceless consonant sounds at the initial, medial and final positions in English language words.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an approach to language teaching that focuses on real-life communication tasks rather than isolated language forms. TBLT is also known as Task-based Instruction (TBI) and it has to do with engaging students in meaningful and practical activities which require them to replicate or use in real-life communication. TBLT as an approach to language teaching focuses on getting learners to involve in a particular or wide range of activities with a target of meeting their learning need(s). It can be used to teach different categories of learners depending on their learning needs. Task-based language teaching holds 'tasks' or 'activities' which when learners get involved in it has its primary principle to achieve learning goals or outcomes. In doing this, pupils are expected to be given tasks or assignments to complete based on the expected learning objectives. Tasks in TBLT are not limited to specific tasks as there are wide range of activities which the approach embraces such as phonic-based problem solving activities, pronunciation activities, sound scavenger hunt, sound sorting, role-play, discussion activities,

excursion, field-trip and a lot more. Iveson (2019) posited that TBLT has been proven to be one of the most effective language teaching approach for children since it encourages learners to actively participate in the learning process through meaningful tasks/activities. The essence of involving learners in the learning tasks is to make the learning experiences real, permanent and to use the skills developed in real-life communication.

This study investigated TBLT with specific focus to phonic-based problem-solving task to develop primary four pupils' achievement in Pankshin Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria. Phonic-based problem-solving task focuses on using specific phonic sounds to engage pupils in meeting particular learning need. The objective is to involve learners to practice target phonic sounds until they able to use them confidently when speaking English. These activities will be designed to incorporate jolly phonics activities with focus on pronunciation to improve the pupils' identification and articulation skills in English voiced consonant sounds.

Statement of the Problem
The state of public primary school pupils' achievement in English language, particularly in oral English in the National Common Entrance Examination (NCEE) has become an issue of great concern to parents, Government and major stakeholders in the education sector in Nigeria as many pupils in public primary schools in Nigeria, specifically Pankshin Local Government Area, Plateau State performed below expectations in their academic achievement in the 2023 and 2024 examinations (NECO, 2023 & NECO, 2024). The Chief Examiner's report from the National Examination Council the body responsible for the conduct of the National Common Entrance in Nigeria revealed that public primary pupils in

Pankshin Local Government Area performed poorly in English examinations during the 2023 and 2024 National Common Entrance Examinations (NCEE). The statistics indicated that just 41% and 38% of pupils passed English in 2023 and 2024 respectively. The statistics signifies consistent poor achievement of primary school pupils in the Local Government Area in verbal aptitude test during the examinations. The inability of primary school pupils to express themselves fluently, coherently and accurately with confidence has raised concern by teachers, parents, academics, stakeholders and the general public in Nigeria.

Many reasons have been observed to be responsible for the poor achievement of pupils in oral English. Some of these reasons are poor teaching methods, mother tongue interference, lack of appropriate use of instructional materials, lack of language laboratory, inappropriate assessment methods, and government policy among many others. These factors to a large extent affect the effective teaching and learning of oral English in primary schools in Nigeria and it is a disturbing trend that deserved attention from all stakeholders in the educational system. Though, many studies have been conducted on TBLT with more focus on the secondary and tertiary students and little or none on primary pupils in Nigeria, hence the need for this study to bridge the gap. The far-reaching question to be answered at the end of this study is that; what is the effects of Task-based language teaching on primary school pupils' achievement in English voiced fricative sounds in Pankshin Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Research Questions
The following research questions were raised to guide the researcher in the study:
1. What are the pre-test and post-test achievement mean scores of primary four pupils in identifying voiced fricative consonant sounds in the experimental and control groups?
2. To what extent is the pre-test and post-test achievement mean scores of primary four pupils in articulating voiced fricative consonant sounds in the experimental group and control group?

Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:
1. There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test achievement mean scores of primary four pupils in identifying voiced fricative consonant sounds in the experimental and control groups.
2. There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test achievement mean scores of primary four pupils in articulating voiced fricative consonant sounds in the experimental and control groups.

Methodology
The research design used in carrying out this study was the quasi-experimental research design, specifically, the pretest and posttest non-equivalent group. Flick (2018) stated that non-equivalent research design plays an important role in addressing research questions in a situation where random assignment is practically impossible. Therefore, the study made use of intact classes as experimental and control groups.

The population for the study consisted of all the primary four pupils in public primary schools in Pankshin Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria. There are 243 public primary schools in Pankshin LGA,

Plateau State, however, 38 schools out of 243 schools do not have primary four while 205 schools have primary four with a total number of 5242 pupils that qualified for the study. The choice for selecting this population was based on the fact that most of the pupils falls within the range where they are still developing their cognitive and linguistic skills, making it ideal or appropriate for the study.

The sample for the study comprised of two public primary schools in Pankshin Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria tagged as school 'A' and 'B'. The study sample consisted of 54 pupils. 29 pupils in school A which was the experimental group while 25 pupils in school B which was the control group. These pupils are homogeneous in terms of first language (L1) backgrounds, second language (L2) proficiency, and previous learning experience in oracy skill.

Simple random sampling technique was used to select the two schools out of the two hundred and five schools that have primary four arms to serve as sample for the study. The instrument used for data collection was the "Test of Oral English Sounds" (TOES). The Test of Oral English Sounds (TOES) was subjected to content validity where two experts from English Education Unit in the Department of Arts Education and one expert from Research, Measurement and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Educational Foundations both of Faculty of Education the University of Jos validated the instrument to ensure that it adequately reflects the variables which the study intends to measure.

A pilot study was conducted using two public primary schools with two intact classes in Pankshin Local Government Area which were not be part of the main study but the school and the pupils shared some linguistic characteristics. The study employed split-half coefficient reliability to ascertain the reliability of the instrument (TOES). In doing this, the test was divided into two halves using odd and even items. Pretest and posttest were administered to the two groups. The pretest was administered during the first week after which a treatment for the experimental which took six weeks was done. After the treatment, a posttest was administered to the two groups.

The data collected was analysed using the descriptive and inferential statistical tools based on the research questions and hypotheses. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. An inferential statistic of ANCOVA was employed to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. This was done to set the bases for the researcher to either reject or retain the null hypotheses.

Results
Research Question One
What are the pre –test and post-test achievement mean scores of primary four pupils in identifying voiced fricative consonant sounds in the experimental and control groups

Table 1: Results of the Analysis of Primary Four Pupils' Achievement Mean Scores in Identifying Voiced Fricative Consonant Sounds in the Experimental and Control Groups

Group		N	X	SD	Mean Gain	Mean Difference
Experimental	pre –test	21	4.71	2.23		
	post test	21	14.28	1.31	9.57	
Control	pre test	25	5.04	2.24		6.96
	post test	25	7.32	2.60	2.28	

The result of the analysis from Table 2 revealed that the experimental group had a pre – test mean score of 4, 71, SD= 2.23 and a post-test mean score of 14.28, SD = 1.31 higher than the pre-test and a mean gain of 9.57, while the control group had a pre-test mean score of 5.04, SD = 2.24and a post-test mean score of 7.32, SD=2.60, higher than the pretest with a mean gain of 2.28. The results indicate a mean difference between the experimental and control

groups of 6.96. This implies that task-based language teaching (TBLT) helped to improve primary four pupils' achievement in identifying fricative voiced consonant sounds more than conventional method

Research Question Two

What are the pre-test and post-test achievement mean scores of primary four pupils in articulating voiced fricative consonant sounds in the experimental and control groups?

Table 2: Results of the Analysis of Primary Four Pupils' Achievement Mean Scores in Articulating Voiced Fricative Consonant Sounds in the Experimental and Control Groups.

Group		N	X	SD	Mean Gain	Mean Difference
Experimental	pre –test	21	5.14	2.15		
	post test	21	14.29	1.31	9.15	
Control	pre test	25	4.92	2.58		6.37
	post test	25	7.92	2.43	3.00	

The results of the analysis from Table 4 revealed that the experimental group had a pre-test mean score of 5.14, SD = 2.15 and a post-test mean score of x 14.29, SD = 1.31 higher than the pre-test with a mean gain of 9.15, while the control group had a pre-test mean score of 4.92, SD = 2.58 and a post-test mean score of 7.92, SD = 2.43 higher than the pre-test with a mean gain of 3.00. The result indicates a mean difference between the experimental and control groups of 6.37 in favour of the experimental group. This implies that task-based language teaching improves primary four

pupils' achievement in articulating fricative voiced consonant sounds more than conventional method.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the pre –test and post test achievement mean scores of primary four pupils in identifying voiced fricative consonant sounds in the experimental and control groups. Table 8 presents the summary of analysis on pretest and posttest of primary four pupils' achievement mean scores in identifying voiced fricative sounds.

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Table 3: Summary of ANCOVA Analysis on the pre-test and post-test of Primary Four Pupils' Achievement Mean Scores in Identifying Voiced Fricative Consonant Sounds in the Experimental and Control Groups

Source	Type sum of square	df	Mean square	F	Sig	Partial Eta squared
Corrected model	553.916a	2	276.958	60.274	.001	.737
Intercept	9220.501	1	922.501	200.763	.001	.824
Pre identification of voiced fricatives	.142	1	.142	.031	.861	.001
Group	549.456	1	549.456	119.578	.001	.736
Error	197.584	43	4.595			
Total	5823.000	46				
Corrected total	751.500	45				

a R squared = 0.737 (adjusted R squared 0.725

Analysis of covariance was conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference in the posttest achievement means score of pupils between the experimental and control groups. Table 8 showed that f (1, 43) =119.578 p< 0.000 partial n2=.736. Since the p- value of 0.000 is less than the significant level of 0.05 with an effect size 73.6, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that there is a significant effect of task-based language teaching on pupils' achievement in identifying voiced fricative consonant sounds. The result further showed an adjusted R squared value of .725 which means that 72.5% of the variation in the dependent variable which is achievement of primary four pupils is explained by the variation in the treatment which is task-based language teaching while the remaining 27.5% is due to other factors not included in the model. It can be concluded that the increase in the pupils' achievement in identifying voiced fricative consonant sounds in the experimental group is due to the use of task-based teaching approach.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post –test achievement mean scores of primary four pupils in articulating voiced fricative consonant sounds in the experimental and control groups. The summary of analysis on pretest and posttest of primary four pupils' achievement mean scores in articulating voiced fricative sounds are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of ANCOVA Analysis on the pre-test and post-test of Primary Four Pupils' Achievement Mean Scores in Articulating Voiced Fricative Consonant Sounds in the Experimental and Control Groups

Source	Type II sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig	Partial Eta
Corrected model	468.376a	2	231.688	56.854	.001	.726
Intercept	1083.927	1	1063.927	261.075	.001	.859
Prearticulation of voiced fricatives	.893	1	.893	.219	.642	.005
Group	463.371	1	463.371	113.706	.001	.726
Error	175.232	43	4.075			
Total	6030.000	46				
Corrected total	638.609	45				

a R Square =0.726(Adjusted R square = 0.713

Analysis of covariance was conducted to ascertain whether there is a significant difference in the pretest and posttest achievement mean scores of pupils in voiced fricative consonant sounds in the experimental and control groups. Table 10 showed that f (1, 43) =113.706 p> 0. 000 partial n^2 =0.726 Since the p –value of 0.00 is less than the significant level of 0.05; we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant effects of task-based language teaching on primary four pupils' achievement in the articulation of voiced consonant sound. The result further showed an adjusted R squared value of .713 Which means that 71.3% of the variation in the dependent variable which is achievement of primary four pupils in articulation of voiced consonant sound is explained by the variation in the treatment, task-based language teaching while the remaining 28.7% is not part of the model.

Summary of Findings
Based on the results of the analysis, the following are the findings of the pilot study:
1. Task-based language teaching significantly improved primary four pupils' ability to identify voiced fricative consonant sounds more than conventional method.
2. Task-based language teaching helped to improve primary four pupils' ability to articulate voiced fricative consonant sounds more than conventional method.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that task-based language teaching which incorporate jolly phonics activities such as sound blending, sound hunt and sound sorting should be effectively used in teaching oral English at the primary school.

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