



## Differential Effect of Role Play Method and School Location on Senior Secondary School Students' English Language Skills Acquisition in Awka Education Zone

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### Abstract

Skill acquisition is an essential requirement for successful living and survival in the evergrowing world of technological changes. It is a sine qua non in education; but majority of secondary school students do not have much practice in the classroom and this affects their acquisition of the language skills that lay the foundation for good education and effective socialization. The quest and concern to ameliorate the situation prompted this study to examine the differential effect of role play method and school location on secondary school students English language skills' acquisition. Two research questions and two hypotheses were used in the study. Quasi experimental involving 2x2 factorial designs was employed. Sample consists of 180 students drawn from 4,024 SS2 students in the 62 public secondary schools in the Zone using multi-stage sampling. English Language Skills Acquisition Test (ELSAT) validated by education experts and found reliable using Kendal-W for essay/letter writing type questions and Cronbach Alpha for multiple choice and oral/speaking questions was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions and ANCOVA for hypotheses testing. The findings revealed among others that students in experimental group acquired the language skills more than those in the control group. The findings further indicated that students in both urban and rural schools in the experimental group had great improvement in their language skills acquisition though the students in the urban schools outperformed those in the rural schools

after the experiment. This showed that school location is a significant factor in students' acquisition of English language skills when role play method is used.

**Key words:** Language; Skills acquisition; Role play; School location; Traditional lecture method

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### INTRODUCTION

Skill simply means competence that has been acquired by training, schooling or practice and is essentially used in every discipline especially in education. People with good personal skills can communicate ideas and as well listen to others attentively. Skills for communication is as well the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing which is the essence of teaching languages in schools. Primarily, language is used for communication and is one of the essential features of human existence. Language is actively used everywhere and as such it is taught in schools at all levels. No classroom activities or interactions take place without the use of language either in verbal or non-verbal forms. In other words, meaningful teaching and learning activities can only be achieved through the use of language. As it is, language may be taught to native speakers as their first language or native tongue, that is the language used by those with whom or by whom they are brought up from infancy. On the other hand, language is equally taught to non-native speakers and this is regarded as second language learning. In Nigeria, English language is taught as a second language, which is L2 language.

In Nigeria, English language is generally used for teaching and learning activities at all levels of education. Besides, it is a core subject at the primary and secondary schools in the country. Its teaching in Nigerian schools dates to pre-colonial period and it has since then been preferred to be used by teachers than other native languages despite the official statement by Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in the National Policy on Education that apart from the first three years of a child's life in the primary school, the rest of the child's life at other levels of education and all academic activities must be done in the English language. Schools still insist on using English language the first day children set their feet on the school. This explains why everybody wants to be a fluent user of English language. In this computer age, English language is bound to expand its domains of use everywhere as it is equally an international language with billions of speakers all over the world (Educational Testing Service-ETS, 2020). In spite of this importance attached to English language in the country and in the world, the researchers observed that students' performance in English language for five consecutive years-2015/16- 2019/20 as well as their general usage of it in communication has not reached the level of expectation in Nigeria; considering its long period of teaching and learning along with several functions it performs in the country. This is evident in the May/June West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) analysis of English language in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State for the stated years along with the general WAEC Chief Examiner's report of 2016-2020 (Sidmach Technologies, 2021; WAEC, 2016-2020). There is an indication for improvement. The shortcoming may have been due to students' lack of exposure to practical use of the language in the classroom as obtained in the real life situations which affects their acquisition of the language skills as reflected in the totality of the students' performance in external examination and functionality with the language. It is only when the language skills are properly learnt that adequate usage of it in academic works and life functionality becomes easier for students and many people. This is because most academic and life activities have their nucleus in the mastery of English language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Listening skill is a fundamental and an important skill to develop. It is a receptive and basic skill that involves ability to listen to self and others which affects all areas of our lives, both public and personal. Sevik (2012) defined listening skill as the ability to pay attention, provide feedback and avoid distraction which can be acquired through effective teaching.

Speaking skill is another primary and productive skill which involves delivery of the language through the mouth. It allows people to communicate effectively and requires steady practice as well as exposure to the

language. Most daily life activities will remain crippled without employment of the speaking skill. BINUS University (2018) emphasized that speaking is dependent on the context or situation such as physical environment, participants as well as the purpose and it requires fluency, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation among others. Ikwuka (2016) opined that speaking is context bound, this means that its form and meaning depends on the contexts in which the participants (speakers and listeners), their collective experiences, the physical environment and the purpose for speaking. These two skills form the foundation for the acquisition of the secondary skills of reading and writing. Reading is a secondary, receptive as well as a productive skill through which the eyes move quickly to assimilate text. It is productive when one reads aloud. Dwi (2014) stated that it is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbol in order to construct or derive meaning. The essence of reading is comprehension without which it becomes meaningless. It involves getting meaning from printed/written words, identifying punctuation marks, differentiating between a phrase, a clause and a sentence and so on. Writing skill is a productive as well as a secondary skill which involves the ability to develop the correct form of language either at a sentence or discourse level. According to Okari (2016) it is the ability to initiate, evolve ideas and use certain revising and editing practices to develop them in a given context. It is therefore worth noting that the four language skills are separate but interconnected as well as complementary. The teaching and learning of each one either necessitates or enhances the other. In fact, Wandera (2012) advised that teaching activity should highlight all the language skills as they form the foundation for effective language skills acquisition. In this case, a suitable teaching method may be required as opposed to what is obtainable in our school system, where the general method of teaching seems to be the traditional lecture method.

Traditional lecture method is a teacher centered method which makes students to be non-participatory in the classroom. Students remain passive in the classroom and thus do not have the opportunity for practical use of the language in the classroom as required in real life situations. They merely respond to questions as directed by the teacher. Crawford (2014) lamented that this method has continued to be widely used in the school system due to its effectiveness in teaching large group of students as obtained in Nigerian public schools. Considering this situation, the issue of students' inability to acquire the language skills due to inadequate engagement in class activities may continue to linger. Consequently, a more learner centered method of teaching such as role play method (RPM) may be required in line with current world needs for proper acquisition of language skills, which will enable students to squarely face the growing world challenges that majorly center on communication.

Role play method is a learner centered method with learning activity where students are expected to act specific roles through saying or doing what one would be required to do or say in a particular situation. Hence, students are allowed to practice using the language in various contexts of life in the safe situation of the class under the guidance of the teacher. Altun (2015) explained that role play method enables students to gain familiarity with the vocabularies of the language and as well master its skills. It fosters and boosts interaction in the class and makes learning to be grounded in reality. Afdilah (2015) added that the use of role play activities develops language skills which enhance other academic activities and prepares students for adept life functionality. Role play method requires students' active participation in presenting instructional activities in the classroom by taking up roles through which they acquire the skills of the language.

Acquisition of the skills of the language is indicated in the students by their ability to use the language adequately in different life functions especially in academics and for communication. In academics, it is shown by the scores obtained by the students, which is the standard for measuring their knowledge and learning in a particular situation or subject. This is usually done in the forms of quizzes, tests and examinations that may be standardized or teacher-made. Thus, students' acquisition of English language skills could be determined through their performance in English language skills acquisition test after they have been exposed to role play method. This has been done by a number of researchers, but there seems to be differing results concerning the effects of role play method on students' performance in some subjects both within and outside Nigeria.

Researchers such as Isukpa (2014) investigated the effect of role play method on students' achievement and interest in Christian Religious Studies in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi Central Education Zone using quasi-experimental design, and reported that the students in experimental group taught CRS with role play method did better than those in control group taught the same subject with traditional lecture method. There is also a significant difference in the mean interest scores of students taught CRS using role play method. Islam and Islam (2015) examined the effectiveness of role play method in enhancing the speaking skills of the learners in large classroom with tertiary level students and concluded that there was learners' improvement in speaking skill with the use of role play method. Again, Rashid and Qaisar (2017) conducted a study on role play: a productive teaching strategy to promote critical thinking on fourth grade elementary students from one English classroom of a public school in Lahore as a case study and found out that role play method is a productive and viable teaching method in developing students' critical thinking. Binta

(2012) in an action research on the effectiveness of role play technique in teaching dialogue in Durga private secondary school, Rajbiraj reported that the use of role playing technique is an effective means in developing the speaking skill as well as equipping learners to speak with confidence and improve interpersonal skill. Another study carried out by Neupane (2019) on the effectiveness of role play technique in improving speaking skill in English language with X grade public school students from Lamjung district using experimental approach revealed that students in the experimental group taught with role play method performed better than those in the control group taught with traditional grammar based technique. Esmail, Amin Saed and Parivash (2017) concluded in their investigation on the effect of role playing tasks on speaking ability of Iranian pre-intermediate ESP learners in Maritime University, Iran that the treatment with role playing activities enhanced speaking ability of the learners. Similarly, Krebt (2017) examined the effectiveness of role play technique in teaching speaking for Iraqi EFL college students and found out that the use of role play method greatly improved the performance of the experimental group taught with role play method compared with those in the control group taught with the traditional method. Bhattacharjee (2014) observed in the investigation of the effectiveness of role playing as a pedagogical approach in Construction Education educators in achieving educational objectives in a Midwestern University that role playing meets the needs of the construction management educators by offering to the students an active learning environment that balance theory with practice; as well as equip the student with necessary skills to be successful in their chosen profession. Hidayati and Pardjono (2018) investigated the implementation of role play method in education of pre-service vocational teacher with classroom action research consisting 2 cycles in Surabaya University in the subject of teaching and learning strategy and established that there was enhancement of students' learning achievement in the mastery of learning models through role play. However, Seli (2019) examined the effect of role play and self-confidence on broadcasting students' speaking skill and established that students taught with role play method did better than those taught with presentation method; but there was no interactional effect between teaching technique and students' self-confidence towards English speaking skill of broadcasting students. Likewise, Puyate and Emeli (2017), conducted a quasi-experimental study on the effect of role playing teaching strategy on academic achievement of students in learning Simple Blue Print Reading at Gbarainwei secondary school in Bayelsa State and found out that students in the experimental group taught with role play method performed better than those in the control group taught with traditional lecture method. However, they reported that there is no statistical

significance in the reading performance of the two groups. Thus, the inconclusive nature of the effect of role play method on students' performance and achievement in academics, prompted the researchers to carry out this study in Nigeria using secondary school students in Awka Education Zone. They equally sought to find out the effect of school location on secondary school students' acquisition of English language skills using role play method.

Location of a school is a very big factor in language teaching and learning as it can positively or negatively affect the acquisition of language skills. School location implies where a school is situated and the surrounding factors such as noise, crowding and quality of neighborhood. Akinyele (2011) observed that the immediate environment of a learner plays a fundamental role in his socialization and can affect the academic achievement. The importance of examining English language skills acquisition in relation to location of a school is based basically on the notion of differences between urban and rural schools in the learning of English language. Location of schools is therefore a factor in this study because it may be that the place where a school is located may result in differences in English language skills acquisition when role play method is used due to the existing elements found in the locality. There are some studies that have been carried out on school location and academic performance but no consensus had been reached concerning it.

Such studies include Keshta (2013) who conducted study on teachers' perception in using educational drama and role-playing in teaching English language in Gaza governorates, whose first language was Arabic and found out that there was statistically significant differences in English teachers' perception of the use of educational drama and role-playing in teaching English language attributed to the place where the institution belong signifying that location of school influences the teaching of English language with the use of educational drama and role-playing. Abamba (2021) examined the effects of school location on secondary school students' academic achievement in Physics based on the 5E learning cycle in Delta state, Nigeria and found out that there is no significant difference between the achievement of rural and urban students taught Physics using 5E learning cycle. This indicated that location of the school had no influence on students' achievement. In addition, Uzoamaka and Ajiwoju (2015) carried out a study on the effects of gender and school location on students' achievement in English language vocabulary in Junior Secondary Schools in Akoko South Education Zone, Ondo State and established that school location had significant effect on students' achievement in English language vocabulary in favour of students from rural schools. On the contrary, Akogwu (2020) examined location as a

factor on students' achievement in English language essay writing in senior secondary schools in Obio/Akpor local government area of River state and revealed that there is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students taught English language essay in schools located in the urban area as opposed to their counterparts in the rural schools. Similarly, Gwaza (2020) investigated on the effects of school location on the academic performance of students in essay writing in senior secondary schools in Katsina-Ala local government area of Benue State and found out that the students in urban schools outperformed their counterparts in rural schools. However, the earlier study of Yadikar (2004) on the effects of role-play activities on ninth grade students' achievement and attitudes towards simple electric circuits revealed that that school location had no influence on students' achievement. This inconclusiveness of the effect of school location on students' performance in English language learning also provides the need for this investigation. It was based on this disparity that the researchers delved into this study to determine the differential effect of role play method and school location on senior secondary school students' English language skills acquisition in Awka education zone of Anambra State.

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## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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- What are the English language skills acquisition mean scores of students taught English language using role play method and those taught using conventional lecture method.
- What are the English language skills acquisition mean scores of students from urban and rural schools taught English language using role play method and those taught with conventional lecture method?

## Hypotheses

- There is no significant difference in the English language skills acquisition mean scores of students taught English language using RPM and those taught with conventional lecture method.
- There is no significant difference in the English language skills acquisition mean scores of students from urban and rural schools taught English language.

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## METHOD

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A pretest, posttest quasi-experimental design involving 2x2 factorial design was adopted in this study using intact classes. The intact classes for the study were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught using Role play Method (RPM) while the control group was taught using Conventional Lecture Method (CLM). At the onset of the experiment, pretest was administered to both groups,

after which the experiment was carried out and posttest was administered at the end. The study was carried out in four senior secondary schools of two urban and two rural schools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 4,024 SS2 students in the 62 public secondary schools in the Zone. The choice of these schools is based on the nature of people residing, working, schooling and transacting businesses in the area that require good English language skills for their daily activities.

The sample size of the study was 180 SS2 students consisting of 87 from urban and 93 from rural schools. Multi-stage sampling procedures of stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used for the study. Stratified technique was used to select two urban and two rural schools (four schools) from the senior secondary schools in the two selected local government areas of one urban and one rural in the five local government areas that made up the education zone. Simple random sampling was used to assign the schools into experimental and control groups, and for the selection of the four intact classes. Experimental group comprised 87 students (42 from urban and 45 from rural) that was taught English language using role play method; and the control group consisted of 93 students (45 from urban and 48 from rural) that was taught the same subject using traditional lecture method. Data were collected using English Language Skills Acquisition Test (ELSAT). The lesson

plan and marking guide were prepared by the researchers for both the experimental and the control groups. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, along with two experienced senior secondary school English language teachers from Anambra State. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Kendal-W for essay/letter writing type questions which yielded acceptable intra reliability indexes of 0.97 for comprehension, 0.90 for essay/letter writing and 0.81 for summary and inter reliability indexes of 0.92, 0.90 and 0.82 respectively. Cronbach Alpha was used for multiple choice and oral/speaking questions which yielded reliability indexes of 9.7 for multiple choice questions and 7.6 for oral/speaking test. Besides, certain variables such as experimenter bias, teacher variable, experimental mortality, effect of pretest on posttest and Hawthorne effect were controlled to enable the researchers examine the differential effect of role play method. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses.

## RESULTS PRESENTATION

- What are the English language skills acquisition mean scores of students taught English language using role play method and those taught using traditional lecture method.

**Table 1**  
Mean English Language Skills Acquisition Scores of students taught English Language with Role play method (RPIM) and those taught using Traditional Lecture Method (TLM)

Groups	N	Pretest		Posttest		Mean Gain
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Experimental Group	87	56.40	7.74	66.60	8.57	10.20
Control Group	93	53.31	8.62	54.54	8.29	1.23

Results in Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of English language skills acquisition scores of students in the two groups. The mean scores indicated that the students in experimental group (RPIM) had the higher posttest mean score than those in control group (TLM). This shows that the students in experimental group

achieved better than those in the control group.

- What are the English language skills acquisition means scores of students from urban and rural schools taught English language using role play method and those taught with traditional lecture method?

**Table 2**  
Mean English Language Skills Acquisition Scores in Pretest and Posttest of Urban and Rural students taught English Language

Variables	Experimental group U (N=46); R (N=41)						Control group U (N=45); R (N=48)				
	Pre-test		Post-test		$(\bar{x})$ Gain	Pre-test		Post-test		$(\bar{x})$ Gain	
	$(\bar{x})$	SD	$(\bar{x})$	SD		$(\bar{x})$	SD	$(\bar{x})$	SD		
Comprehension	Urban	55.98	8.02	67.46	8.96	11.48	53.47	8.73	54.80	8.29	1.33
	Rural	56.88	7.49	65.63	8.11	8.75	53.17	8.59	54.29	8.36	1.12

Results in Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of posttest mean scores of urban and rural students in the two groups. The mean scores indicated that the urban students had higher posttest mean score than rural students in the two groups. This shows that the urban students did better than rural students in all the groups.

### Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the English language skills acquisition mean scores of students taught English language using RPIM and those taught with traditional lecture method.

**Table 3**  
**ANCOVA for Differences on Mean English Language Skills Acquisition Scores of Students taught English Language using Role play Instructional Method and those taught with Traditional Lecture Method**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	16958.399a	2	8479.200	681.137	.000
Intercept	345.055	1	345.055	27.718	.000
pretest_termscores	10420.637	1	10420.637	837.094	.000
Method	3655.496	1	3655.496	293.647	.000
Error	2203.401	177	12.449		
Total	675106.000	180			
Corrected Total	19161.800	179			

a. R Squared = .885 (Adjusted R Squared = .884)

Results in Table 3 show that there is a significant main effect of treatment in the posttest English language skills acquisition of students in the experimental and control groups  $F(2, 180)$

= 293.647,  $p < 0.05$ . This means that there is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students in experimental and control groups. Therefore,

the hypothesis that there is no significant mean difference in the achievement of students taught with RPIM and those taught with TLM is rejected.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the English language skills acquisition mean scores of students from urban and rural schools taught English language.

**Table 4**  
**ANCOVA for Difference in English language Skills Acquisition of Urban and Rural Students taught English Language**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	17113.379 <sup>a</sup>	4	4278.345	365.506	.000	.893
Intercept	325.023	1	325.023	27.767	.000	.137
pretest_termscores	10497.621	1	10497.621	896.829	.000	.837
method	3572.058	1	3572.058	305.167	.000	.636
location	93.783	1	93.783	8.012	.005	.044
method * location	66.553	1	66.553	5.686	.018	.031
Error	2048.421	175	11.705			
Total: 675106.000180						
Corrected Total	19161.800	179				

a. R Squared = .893 (Adjusted R Squared = .891)

Results in Table 4 shows that there is a significant main effect of treatment in the posttest English language skills acquisition mean scores of urban and rural students in the two groups  $F(1,180) = 8.012$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . This means that there is significant difference in the English language skills acquisition mean scores of urban and rural students in the two groups. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant mean difference in the English language skills acquisition mean scores of urban and rural students in the two groups is rejected.

method. Likewise, the result indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the English language skills acquisition of students taught with role play method than those taught with traditional lecture method. This remarkable improvement proved that students in the experimental group acquired the skills better than those in the control group. This therefore indicates that role play method is effective and a practical means of enhancing students' acquisition of English language skills in English language. This finding is in agreement with the results of Abduland Nooreiny (2018), Puyate and Emeli (2017), Krebt (2017), Esmail, Amin Saed and Parivash (2017), Bhattacharjee (2014), Binta (2012) and Wandera (2012), whose studies established that students exposed to learning using role play instructional method had better results than their counterparts taught using traditional lecture method. In contradiction, Rasheed Joma, Al-Abed, and Ismail Nafi, (2016) and Seli (2019)

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that SS2 students in experimental group who were taught English language using role play instructional method acquired the English language skills more than those in the control group who were taught the same subject using traditional lecture

in similar studies found out that role play instructional method is not a significant factor in enhancing students' learning outcomes.

Moreover, the findings of the present study revealed that the language skills acquisition of students from urban and rural schools taught English language with role play method was enhanced. Nonetheless, students from urban schools performed better than their counterparts in the rural schools. The finding equally established that there was significant difference in the language skills acquisition of students from urban schools over those from the rural schools in English language on their exposure to RPIM. This therefore showed that school location is a significant factor in students' acquisition of language skills with the use of role play method. The finding of the study is in agreement with the study of Owoeye (2011), Keshta (2013) Akogwu (2020) and Gwaza (2020) that students from urban schools did better than the students from the rural schools on their exposure to role play method. However, Uzoamaka and Ajiwoju (2015) conducted a similar study and found out that students from rural schools did better than the students from urban schools. On the contrary, Ramo and Nieto (2012) as well as Castro and Villafurte (2019) established in their studies that students from rural and urban schools performed better with the application of role play method irrespective of the school location. Therefore, the effect of school location on students' academic performance is inconclusive.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that the use of role play method had a significant effect on the English language skills acquisition of SS2 students in English language in Nigeria. In addition, school location was found to be a significant factor on the students' acquisition of English language skills in English language with the use of role play method.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, it was recommended among others that:

- English language teachers in the secondary schools be encouraged and empowered to adopt the use of role play instructional method in the teaching and learning of English language as it has been discovered to be a practical and effective means of improving students' acquisition of language skills.

- Education stakeholders along with school administrators should organize seminars, workshops and conferences to train English language teachers and other teachers at all levels in the school system to acquire the rudiments and basic knowledge of using of role play method for effective teaching and learning.

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