

## AN ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS TOWARD LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE GRAMMAR AND USAGE: PERCEPTION AND SCALE DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined students' attitudes toward using the English language as a medium and as an official language in Nigerian Universities. The study employed descriptive analysis. Fifty questionnaires were served, and 31 was returned, indicating their attitude towards using and learning English Grammar as a language and official communication medium. The findings suggest that most of the investigated students have been trained using some syntax constructions since childhood without considering grammatical rules or structures. Thus, it was used only in the universities environment, the less grammar. In addition, the result also shows that the students of Federal University, Gashua, Yobe State, have positive attitudes toward learning English grammar. The findings further demonstrated the percentage of Nigerian students who use English grammar in their day-to-day interactions as advantageous despite not being considerate enough. The study recommends future research involves many participants as possible of different ages and universities from other regions in the country.

**Keywords:** Attitude, Students, English syntax, Use of grammar.

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### INTRODUCTION

English Grammar is undeniably the most influential language worldwide and almost one of the most potent languages [1]. In Nigeria, English was the official language used in every official engagement, despite over 300 speaking languages used in different locality and regions within the country. English language was chosen to be a unified official language used in all government activities, and universities are no exception [2]. The Nigerian universities use the English language as a medium of instruction, despite there being some languages such as Arabic and French, which is used for a specific department in universities, but 98% of the language used in Nigerian universities, is English [3]. Nigeria has been colonized by the British and trained. According to Enginarlar and Temel [4] and [5] learning language under colonized society by the United Kingdom has become significant and considered as a prerequisite condition. However, in Nigerian institutions and courses of teaching have been designed and thought of in the English language as the prerequisites despite its foreign language. Still, it is currently becoming ineffective in constructing sentences and teaching language communication skills [6]. Therefore, the study examined students' attitudes toward using the English language as a medium and as an official language in Nigerian Universities based on scale development.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Similarly, Enginarlar [7] discussed the philosophy of rhetoric to extend so far as to name the language as "purely a species of fashion," and further recognized the superior force of usage. Campbell's belief shared and controlled language in some ways other than by custom. In current circumstances, it had recourse to the principle of analogy to settle questions of divided usage, though admitting that it was not always possible. Thus, the tremendous advances of linguistics since the 18<sup>th</sup> century; however, the popular attitudes have changed very little as Bishop Lowth and Lindley Murray [8]. The principles guideline was based mainly on logic and reason, which indicates the law of language, was rooted in the natural order. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, grammarians outlawed the emphatic double negative construction for a reason stated by Lowth, that "two Negatives in English destroy one another, or are equivalent to an Affirmative," just as they do in mathematics, though the analogy is entirely false. Many reasonable people of earlier times

produced sentences with two or even more negatives, as many today still do [9]. It is also not a formal Standard English to those in society who use proper Standard English is less than before. The role of grammar in advancing English language in a foreign country has been analyzed and debated for over a decade. Such is considered one of the essential elements to assist learners in improving and communicating. However, Andriani *et al.* [10] discussed that grammar is seen as a phenomenon everyone can acquire naturally and develop a curricular grammar-based. Such a claim created massive debate amongst the academicians and impacted much on the practitioners. Thus, grammar is undoubtedly indicated as a hook that connects learners and its practically used to address proficiency in the language [11]. Similarly, it was suggested as an effective tool in reaching a targeted group of people. However, such students who were prepared for the grammatical forms of learning were not ready to learn. According to Graham *et al.* [12] considering grammar in teaching and learning assists in improving and supporting language enhancement.

Some studies indicate that teaching grammar and learning the language comes with some perceptions that mostly have been ignored by both learners and researchers [13] According to Dewaele and Alfawzan [14], play a significant role on different issues related to activities of a student to be used by the teaching anxiety, motivation, proficiency and learning strategies as indicated by Walker *et al.* [15]. The study investigated 607 Colombians and 824 Florida, and the result indicates that American and Colombian students considered grammar are recognized as essential and primary in mastering a foreign language, as almost all participants named grammar as the basis of constructing information and perceiving more and learning more about language. Further, it indicates participants were motivated to enhance their grammar to avoid making mistakes in writing or speaking. Moreover, Yáñez-Bouza [16] shows that students innate grammar as a vital aspect in teaching and learning language supported the view that should be more communicatively and instructional thought.

### METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher used the interview questionnaire adapted to elicit the attitudes and usage of the informant to grammar. The

participants responded using one, two, and three optional words to define their attitude regarding this set. The data were gathered using face to face chat or interaction. The informant's attitudes to usage and grammar were also collected from their responses toward the language. Then, their responses were numbered based on categories and calculated in percentages showing their attitude toward the usage of grammar.

Thirty-one Nigerian undergraduate students who are their average age are between 25 and 32 years was selected to participate in this study. All the participants are students from the Federal University, Gashua, which is considered the testing ground of the study. However, the students were selected randomly from diverse disciplines within the University. The sampling technique used in the study is purposive sampling, where the subjects have been stratified based on sex (15 females and 16 males).

### Findings

In this part of the study, data analysis is presented. The types of agreeing/disagree questions concerning the students' attitude to grammar reflected in the questionnaire distributed to the respondents are treated in Table 1. However, responses to questions that demand more than agrees/disagree answers are treated separately for clarity.

Table 1 highlights the level of respondents based on agree/disagree towards students' attitudes. It illustrates that 45% of the students admitted using syntax or grammar while 55% have disagreed with using syntax. The narration of the participants can indicate that the number of grammar users was less than those who did not. However, the language genuineness can be enhanced based on the literature available in the field; it was sought to understand if the students are forth-coming to the written materials for grammar enhancement. The result shows that 90% of the students agreed to read materials in syntax, while only 10% disagreed with students' use of grammar (syntax) in their speaking or writing.

In Table 1, 90% of the participants agree that grammar should be used in all activities related to students, such as meeting in the Universities. At the same time, only 10% disagree with the opinion, as Standard English should be used. It is evident that most Nigerian students, specifically undergraduates, are encouraged to use syntax among themselves. In that direction, whether syntax rules can be considered a way of expressing or receiving a message, 60% of the respondents viewed syntax, and 20% were not in support. Similarly, 90% of the participants agree with a variety of English, and 65% say otherwise. Furthermore, 35% of the participants believe that grammar should be taught as a subject in schools, and 65% disagree. One hundred percent of the respondents say syntax is fit to be a medium of communication among all Nigerian students in Nigerian

**Table 1: The attitude of student toward grammar**

Questions	Agree	Disagree
I use syntax (rules that govern how word are combined to form sentence)	45	55
I always use materials written in English	90	10
I consider using grammar and syntax be used to conduct meetings	90	10
Syntax and grammar rules should be considered in sending and receiving message from parties	60	40
Syntax and grammar should always be used in expression	35	65
Grammar and syntax be adopted and used in all across Nigerian Universities	100	0
I can use both syntax and grammar while writing exams	35	65

Source: Designed by author

Universities because it is easy. Furthermore, they will still maintain the mode of communication used by the majority of the population in our country. On adoption of grammar as an official language, 65% of the respondents say YES.

In comparison, only 35% say NO because they need to learn the Standard English used worldwide for better communication with international countries. Finally, on the capacity of syntax to express all our thoughts during exams, 35% of respondents agree while 65% disagree has been used to communicate in all aspects of social life. The participants' responses to the questions that require more than agree or disagree are represented above.

Table 2 presents statistical results related to the respondents' commencement time of syntax use. The result reveals that the duo of childhood and primary school (at their younger ages) has 35% and 26%, respectively. This signifies that majority of them acquired syntax at their younger ages. By implication, as a foreign language, there is every possibility for students to face the problem of fossilization when using syntax English language at their older ages and consider the rules.

Table 3 shows that 19% of the participants frequently use syntax rules in most of their communication which justifies that English syntax is still on the lower side among students. The alarming rate of use of English rules can imply that syntax as variety will still survive if the emphasis has been given and considering the use of syntax would be improved from 19 to 70%, although not having native speakers. Still, it is free from facing endangerment, as shown above.

Table 4 deduced that since only in the classroom of universities and social gatherings the participants use syntax English minimally, and the fact that the duration students spend in these areas are quite limited compared to home; hence, it signifies that syntax English may be interrupted if not dominate or overtake the use of Standard English language.

Table 5, considering the perception of the users of syntax, indicates that literacy has 20% and all categories of people stated 65% consider the university students 10% and semi-literates 5%.

**Table 2: Stages of learning grammar**

Categories	Percentage
Childhood	35
Primary school	26
Secondary school	43
University	1

Source: Designed by author

**Table 3: Considering syntax rules**

Categories	Percentage
Often	19
Occasionally	70
Seldom	10
Rarely	1

Source: Designed by author

**Table 4: Places normally use syntax**

Categories	Percentage
University	50
Social gathering	25
Home	5
All of the above	20

Source: Designed by author

**Table 5: The category of people considers syntax important**

Categories	Percentage
Literates	20
Semi-literates	5
University students	10
All categories of people above	65

Source: Designed by author

## DISCUSSION

On a general note, the finding demonstrates that the percentage of Nigerian students who use syntax English in their day-to-day interactions is advantageous despite not being considerate enough. More significantly, the attitude of Nigerian undergraduate students in University regarding syntax English is considered to be lower-positive. This may have resulted from the fact that syntax does not belong to any particular region among various regions in Nigeria, which facilitates its acceptability as a lingua franca of all. Hence, this empowers unity among Nigerians regardless of where they come from as a region (Nigerian students). The results illustrated in the tables above show that syntax is peculiar to non-literate individuals and practicable by the educated elite who want to be considered. The finding is incongruent with the view of Yáñez-Bouza [16]. Akay and Toraman [8] as grammar works as a hook of learners. Therefore, undergraduate students as literates are not excluded as a result reveals that use of grammar has been at an alarming rate despite students interacting with their lecturers and the national students who come from a different linguistic background, and the medium of communication is native or Standard English language, they still maintain their romance to syntax English. Predictably, in the next few tears, Nigerian students with enthusiasm in syntax and grammar will be used in various communication domains such as student meetings, interaction with each other on campus, and other social gatherings (1982) claimed that grammar is a phenomenon.

Conversely, the finding contradicts [2] who reveal a negative attitude toward Nigerian students' syntax rules. This is not far away from the fact that the setting of the study may influence the finding. Virtually all the past and present regimes of Nigerian education did not encourage the development of syntax, especially at home. It is not recognized at home, but people consider fashion and uplifting their status to become a parameter. Such a study is conducted in Nigeria mostly as a self-study amid a negative attitude on syntax from the community itself. Perhaps, it is hypothesized that the lack of frequent syntax rules would corrupt the learning of Standard English which is considered the government's priority.

## CONCLUSION

The student's preference for Nigerian English rules as a lingua franca among Nigerian students is related to its simplicity, easement, acceptability, and unity facilitation among Nigerians studying in early stages in universities.

Despite its challenges as not native language status, students' attitudes toward English rules remain positive. It is also noticeable that Nigerian English syntax is favored by literate individuals and serves as a medium of communication among learners and literates around the globe.

## Limitation and recommendation

The main limitation of this study lies in the small number of participants selected. Only 31 undergraduate students may limit the generalization of the findings. For further studies, it can be recommended that future research involve as many participants as possible from different ages and educational backgrounds. By doing so, a strong claim could be made, and a generalization can also be drawn based on the study's findings.

## CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflicts of interests.

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