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EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES WITHIN FOCUS ON FORM INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES ON LINGUISTIC PROFICIENCY DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NORTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper discusses the effectiveness of communicative activities integrated with focus-on-form instructional strategies in developing the English language proficiency of primary school learners in North-west Nigeria. The research employed a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-post-test approach. The population comprised tertiary institutions Demonstration Primary Schools in Kano and Katsina States. Primary five pupils formed the study sample. Data were collected using an English Language Proficiency Test designed to assess reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. Content validity was established by aligning test items with the Nigerian National Curriculum for Primary 5 English studies and through expert review by two English language lecturers from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and two practising primary school teachers. The instrument was validated through expert review and a pilot study involving 15 Primary Five pupils. Reliability, as determined by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.78, exceeding the 0.70 benchmark for

social science research and confirming internal consistency. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to summarise performance across tests, while a paired-samples t-test determined the significance of differences between pretest and post-test scores. Additional descriptive statistics were analysed to assess pupils' attitudes toward communicative learning activities. All analyses were conducted using SPSS at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that communicative activities significantly enhanced pupils' proficiency across all skill areas. The experimental group outperformed the control group in reading (M = 8.5 vs. 6.3), listening (M = 8.7 vs. 6.5), speaking (M = 8.9 vs 5.4), and writing (M = 8.6 vs. 5.2). Overall, communicative, form-focused instruction resulted in higher accuracy, improved fluency, and more consistent performance in the experimental group.

Introduction

Contemporary second language acquisition (SLA) research now advocates for a balanced approach— that integrates meaning-focused communication with strategic attention to linguistic form. As Lyster (2015) observes, the most effective language teaching methods are those that harmonize Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with Focus on Form (FFI), ensuring that learners develop both fluency and accuracy. This shift is particularly relevant in contexts like Nigeria, where traditional grammar-translation methods have long dominated classrooms, often at the expense of practical language skills.

It is widely acknowledged that purely form-focused instruction—where grammar is taught in isolation—rarely leads to high levels of communicative competence. Learners may memorize rules but struggle to use English spontaneously or appropriately in real-life situations. Conversely, purely communicative approaches that neglect grammar can result in fluent but inaccurate language use, in which learners communicate ideas but make persistent structural errors. This dichotomy underscores the need for an integrated model: Focus on Form Instruction (FFI), which embeds attention to grammar within meaningful, interactive tasks.

FFI operates on the principle that learners benefit most when they notice linguistic forms during communicative activities. When errors occur in speaking or writing, teachers can provide timely, context-

metalinguistic cues—that draws attention to form without disrupting communication. This process fosters form-meaning connections, enabling learners to internalize grammatical patterns through use rather than explanation alone. As noted in the literature, "if learners attend to form within communicative practice, they obtain information concerning language form by means of form-meaning connection and use it for expressing messages" (from your document).

In the Nigerian primary school context, where English is a second language and exposure outside the classroom is limited, this integrated approach is especially vital. Communicative activities such as role-plays, information-gap tasks, storytelling, group discussions, and collaborative writing create opportunities for pupils to practice all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—in meaningful ways. These activities, when combined with FFI, allow teachers to scaffold learning and guide pupils toward both fluency and accuracy.

The current paper builds on this rationale by investigating how designed communicative activities within an FFI framework can enhance English language learning among primary school pupils in Northwest Nigeria. Unlike traditional CLT, which may overlook grammar, or rigid grammar-based methods that suppress communication, FFI offers a middle ground: it promotes interactive, learner-centered instruction while ensuring that linguistic forms are explicitly addressed when they arise naturally in communication.

Therefore, the primary objective of this paper is not merely to compare instructional methods but to explore how the strategic integration of communicative activities and form-focused instruction can create optimal conditions for language development in a resource-constrained, multilingual educational setting. Doing so contributes to a growing body of evidence supporting a paradigm shift in Nigerian English language teaching—from teacher-centred, grammar-dominated

instruction to interactive, balanced, and contextually relevant pedagogy.

Statement of the Research Problem

English language proficiency is a critical foundation for academic achievement and socio-economic development in Nigeria, where English serves as the official language and primary medium of instruction. However, despite its importance, pupils' performance in English, particularly at the primary school level in Northwest Nigeria, remains consistently poor. This underperformance is largely attributed to the persistence of traditional, grammar-translation teaching methods that emphasize rote memorization, teacher-centered instruction, and isolated grammar drills, often at the expense of meaningful language use.

These conventional approaches prioritize linguistic accuracy over communicative competence, resulting in learners who may be able to recite rules or complete grammar exercises but struggle to use English effectively in real-life situations. Pupils frequently exhibit weak listening comprehension, limited speaking fluency, poor reading skills, and inadequate writing abilities. The lack of interactive and engaging pedagogical strategies further exacerbates the problem, leading to low motivation, fear of making mistakes, and minimal opportunities for authentic language practice.

While Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Focus on Form Instruction (FFI) have been proposed as more effective alternatives, their implementation in Nigerian primary schools remains inconsistent and often superficial. Many teachers are unfamiliar with these approaches, and there is a noticeable gap between theoretical advocacy and classroom practice. Furthermore, there is limited empirical research, particularly in the Northwest region, on how communicative activities—when systematically integrated with form-focused instruction—can enhance overall language proficiency.

This study, therefore, addresses a critical problem: the disconnect between the need for interactive, learner-centred English

language instruction and the reality of rigid, form-dominated teaching practices in Nigerian primary schools. It specifically investigates the extent to which communicative activities within a Focus on Form Instruction framework can bridge this gap by improving pupils' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in a resource-constrained, multilingual context.

Without a shift toward more effective, evidence-based methodologies, the cycle of poor English language performance will persist, undermining educational outcomes and limiting future opportunities for young learners.

Conceptual Review

Communicative Activities (CAs) are pedagogical tasks explicitly designed to foster meaningful interaction among language learners, thereby promoting authentic language use in the classroom. These activities are grounded in the theoretical framework of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), an approach that emerged in response to traditional, form-focused language instruction, which often emphasized grammatical accuracy over communicative competence (Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Unlike exercises that target discrete language features in isolation, CAs encourage learners to engage in real or simulated communicative exchanges, emphasizing the conveyance of meaning and the functional use of language (Nunan, 1991).

The primary goal of CAs is to develop learners' ability to use language as a tool for meaningful interaction rather than merely focusing on the correctness of grammatical structures. As Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell (2019) point out, these activities simulate real-life communicative situations where learners negotiate meaning, make requests, express opinions, or resolve misunderstandings. Such tasks encompass a wide range of formats, including role-plays, information-gap activities, problem-solving tasks, and collaborative projects, all designed to imitate natural language use outside the classroom (Long & Porter, 1985).

Furthermore, CAs prioritize fluency and the ability to adapt language in diverse contexts over accuracy alone, fostering learners' confidence and autonomy (Littlewood, 1981). This approach supports the development of pragmatic competence, allowing learners to understand and use language appropriately in social contexts (Chapelle & Jamieson, 2008). Empirical studies have demonstrated that integrating communicative activities into language curricula enhances not only learners' proficiency in oral and written communication but also their motivation and engagement in the learning process (Ellis, 2023; Richards & Rodgers, 2021).

Focus on Form (FoF)

Focus on Form (FoF) is an instructional approach that emphasizes deliberate attention to linguistic features in communicative contexts, aiming to enhance learners' accuracy and fluency. Unlike traditional grammar instruction that isolates grammatical rules through explicit teaching and repetition, FoF integrates grammatical correction and clarification into meaningful communication, encouraging learners to notice and reflect on linguistic form as they engage in authentic language use (Long, 2018; Norris & Ortega, 2020).

This approach is rooted in the understanding that learners acquire language more effectively when they are prompted to notice discrepancies between their utterances and target language norms during real or simulated communication. By focusing on form in context, learners can correct errors, internalize correct structures, and develop greater awareness of grammatical rules, which ultimately contributes to improved accuracy (Ellis, 2021). FoF typically occurs during task-based or communicative activities, where subtle interventions—such as in-the-moment feedback or post-activity reflections—draw learners' attention to specific linguistic features without disrupting the flow of communication (Lyster & Ranta, 2017).

Research indicates that Focus on Form can be particularly effective because it balances the development of fluency with grammatical correctness, preventing learners from becoming overly

hesitant or sacrificing communication for the sake of accuracy. It also fosters a more natural learning process in which learners become aware of their linguistic gaps and are motivated to self-correct and internalize better forms through contextualized practice (Long, 2017; Norris & Ortega, 2020).

In contrast to an exclusive focus on form (as in traditional grammar teaching), FF's emphasis on integrating form-focused activities into meaningful communication makes it a practical methodology in diverse classrooms, including those with limited resources or large, multicultural groups. Its flexible application supports both incidental learning through interaction and intentional focus on linguistic features, thus serving as an effective bridge between fluency and accuracy in language development (Ellis, 2001).

Language Proficiency

Language Proficiency is the multifaceted ability to effectively use language for communication, encompassing not only grammatical accuracy but also fluency, vocabulary range, pronunciation, pragmatic competence, and sociolinguistic appropriateness. Unlike simplistic views that reduce language mastery to grammatical correctness or vocabulary size, language proficiency represents an integrated set of competencies that enable learners to comprehend and produce meaningful discourse in authentic contexts (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980).

This construct is grounded in the understanding that language ability exists on a developmental continuum, from basic survival skills to full functional competence across diverse settings. By assessing proficiency across multiple dimensions, educators can better identify learners' strengths and areas for improvement, enabling more targeted instruction that addresses the complexity of language use (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 2019). Proficiency development typically occurs through extended exposure to and practice with the target language, where learners gradually internalize linguistic patterns and

develop automaticity in their language production and comprehension (Segalowitz, 2010).

Research indicates that language proficiency is best developed through balanced approaches that combine meaningful communication with attention to linguistic form, preventing learners from developing either fluency without accuracy or grammatical knowledge without the ability to apply it spontaneously. It also fosters a more holistic learning process in which learners become aware of their developing capabilities and are motivated to expand their linguistic repertoire through authentic use and focused practice (Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 1997).

In contrast to narrow conceptualizations that equate proficiency with grammatical knowledge, the multidimensional view of language proficiency emphasizes the importance of communicative competence in real-world situations. This comprehensive perspective makes it particularly valuable in diverse educational settings, including language programs preparing learners for academic, professional, or social contexts. Its flexible application supports both the systematic development of language components and the cultivation of communicative strategies, thus serving as an effective framework for guiding learners toward functional language ability (Bygate, 2006; CEFR, 2001).

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension in this context is the complex cognitive process of extracting and constructing meaning from written texts, involving the interactive coordination of linguistic knowledge, background information, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive awareness. Unlike simplistic views that characterize reading as merely decoding words or passively receiving information, contemporary research conceptualizes reading comprehension as an active, meaning-making process in which readers engage with texts to build mental representations (Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2021; Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2017).

Research indicates that reading comprehension is best developed through approaches that combine direct strategy instruction with ample opportunities for engaged reading, preventing learners from developing either word-calling ability without understanding or knowledge of strategies without the ability to apply them automatically (Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2021). It also fosters a more self-regulated reading process in which learners become aware of their comprehension processes and are motivated to employ strategies that enhance their understanding and critical engagement with texts (Snow, 2022).

Listening Comprehension Skills

Listening comprehension is the active process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken language, involving the rapid coordination of auditory processing, linguistic knowledge, cognitive abilities, and pragmatic understanding. Unlike traditional views that characterized listening as a passive, receptive skill, contemporary research conceptualizes listening comprehension as a complex, active process in which listeners simultaneously decode speech, access vocabulary and grammatical structures, and construct mental representations of meaning (Field, 2019; Vandergrift & Goh, 2022).

Research indicates that listening comprehension is best developed through approaches that combine extensive listening with metacognitive strategy instruction, preventing learners from becoming overwhelmed by the transient nature of speech or developing limited listening abilities that only work in controlled situations. It also fosters a more autonomous listening process in which learners become aware of their mental processes and are motivated to employ strategies that enhance their comprehension and ability to handle various listening situations (Graham & Macaro, 2018; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2020).

Speaking Skills

Speaking skills encompass the ability to produce oral communication effectively and appropriately, involving the coordinated use of phonological, lexical, grammatical, discourse, and pragmatic competencies in real-time interaction. Unlike traditional views that reduced speaking to pronunciation accuracy or grammatical correctness, contemporary research conceptualizes speaking as a complex, dynamic skill where speakers must plan, articulate, and monitor their utterances while simultaneously responding to interlocutors and contextual demands (Bygate, 2016; Thornbury, 2015).

Effective speaking requires both fluency (the ability to produce language smoothly and automatically) and accuracy (adherence to linguistic norms), as well as the capacity to employ communication strategies when faced with linguistic limitations (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2020). By examining speaking through this multidimensional lens, researchers have identified how speakers manage cognitive load, utilize formulaic language, adapt speech to different contexts, and repair communication breakdowns (Segalowitz, 2016). Speaking skills development typically occurs through opportunities for meaningful practice combined with focused feedback, where learners gradually develop greater automaticity and complexity in their oral production (Gass & Mackey, 2021; Sato & Storch, 2020).

Writing Proficiency

Writing proficiency is the ability to produce coherent, purposeful, and audience-appropriate texts through the effective deployment of linguistic resources, rhetorical strategies, and genre knowledge. Unlike traditional views that conceptualized writing as merely the correct application of grammatical rules or the mechanical transcription of thoughts, contemporary research frames writing as a recursive, socio-cognitive process involving planning, drafting, revising, and editing within specific rhetorical contexts (Hyland, 2016; Hayes & Flower, 2018).

Proficient writing requires integrating multiple competencies, including linguistic accuracy, textual cohesion, rhetorical awareness, and disciplinary knowledge (Tardy, 2016). Writing proficiency development typically occurs through extended practice across diverse genres, combined with explicit instruction and feedback, in which writers gradually develop greater control over the linguistic and rhetorical resources necessary for effective written communication (Graham, 2019; Graham & Perin, 2017).

In contrast to models that emphasize isolated skill practice or formulaic writing, the sociocognitive view of writing proficiency highlights the importance of purposeful communication within social and disciplinary contexts. This comprehensive perspective makes it particularly valuable in diverse educational settings, including language programs preparing learners for academic study, professional writing, or personal expression. Its flexible application supports both the development of linguistic accuracy and the cultivation of rhetorical effectiveness, thus serving as an effective framework for guiding learners toward confident, competent writing (Hyland, 2020; Matsuda & Atkinson, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

This paper is grounded in a robust and integrative theoretical framework that combines Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and the Interaction Hypothesis (IH), both of which provide a strong foundation for understanding how communicative activities within a Focus on Form Instruction (FFI) approach facilitate second language acquisition in primary school settings. These theories collectively emphasize the centrality of social interaction, meaningful communication, and guided learning in language development, aligning closely with the pedagogical principles of the study conducted in Northwest Nigeria.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural Theory, developed by Lev Vygotsky, asserts that cognitive and linguistic development occurs primarily through social

interaction and collaborative dialogue within a culturally and contextually rich environment. According to this theory, learning is not an isolated, individual process but is socially mediated, with more knowledgeable others (such as teachers or peers) playing a critical role in scaffolding learners' understanding.

A central concept within SCT is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), defined as the difference between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance or collaboration. In the context of this study, the ZPD is operationalized through structured communicative activities such as peer discussions, collaborative storytelling, group reading, and joint writing tasks, all of which were implemented in the experimental group.

Additionally, the teacher's role as a cognitive guide was evident in the FFI classroom. Teachers provided scaffolded questioning, modelling of correct forms, and timely corrective feedback (e.g., recasts or metalinguistic clues) during communicative tasks, gradually reducing support as pupils became more proficient. This aligns with Bruner's (1985) extension of Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes the importance of instructional scaffolding in language learning.

Moreover, the paper's emphasis on collaborative learning resonates with Storch's (2005) research, which found that pair and group work significantly enhance writing accuracy and fluency through negotiation, feedback, and co-construction of knowledge. In this study, collaborative revision of written work enabled pupils to identify gaps in their language use and learn from peers, thereby reinforcing the social dimension of language acquisition.

Interaction Hypothesis

The Interaction Hypothesis, proposed by Michael Long (1996), builds on the idea that language acquisition is facilitated when learners engage in meaning-negotiated interaction—that is, when communication breaks down, and learners must clarify, confirm, or rephrase their utterances to achieve mutual understanding. Such negotiation activities draw learners' attention to linguistic form,

particularly when their message is not comprehended, thereby creating opportunities for noticing and interlanguage development.

Long's hypothesis is particularly relevant to the Focus on Form Instruction (FFI) model, which strategically integrates attention to linguistic forms within meaning-driven communication. Unlike traditional grammar-translation methods that isolate form from function, FFI allows learners to encounter grammatical structures in authentic communicative contexts, where form becomes salient through use.

In this paper, the Interaction Hypothesis was operationalized through a variety of communicative tasks that naturally triggered negotiation of meaning. For instance, during information-gap activities, one pupil described a picture while another drew it based on the description. When misunderstandings occurred (e.g., "I said big house, not small house"), learners were prompted to clarify their input, often leading to self-correction or peer correction. These moments of comprehension checks, clarification requests, and confirmation checks served as natural triggers for focusing on form.

Furthermore, teacher-led feedback during communicative tasks reinforced the principles of the Interaction Hypothesis. When a pupil said, "He go to school yesterday," the teacher might respond with a recast: "Oh, he went to school?" This subtle correction preserved the flow of communication while drawing attention to the incorrect past tense form. Research by Schenck (2020) supports this approach, showing that recasts and clarification requests are among the most effective forms of corrective feedback in promoting grammatical accuracy without disrupting interaction.

The synergy between Sociocultural Theory and the Interaction Hypothesis provides a comprehensive lens for analysing the effectiveness of FFI-based communicative activities. While SCT explains how learning occurs through social mediation and scaffolding, the IH explains why interaction leads to acquisition by creating conditions for noticing, negotiation, and feedback.

In the Nigerian primary school context, where English is a second language and opportunities for authentic language use are limited, these theories are especially relevant. The paper's alignment with Interactional Theory (Hymes, 1972), which emphasizes communicative competence and the social appropriateness of language use, further strengthens the theoretical foundation.

Methodology

This section of the paper focuses on the methodological issues of data collection and analysis.

Research Design

The paper adopted a quasi-experimental design with a pretest, post-test, and control-group comparison. This design enabled causal inference about the impact of FFI on language performance while accommodating real-world classroom constraints.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population consisted of primary 5 pupils in public schools in Kano and Katsina, Northwest Nigeria. A sample of 66 pupils was selected: 44 in the experimental group and 22 in the control group (Table 3). Schools were matched based on location, teacher qualifications, and student demographics.

3.3 Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure gender balance and representation across urban and semi-urban schools. The experimental group received FFI-based instruction, while the control group was taught using conventional grammar-translation methods.

3.4 Instruments for Data Collection

Achievement Tests: Structured pre- and post-tests assessed reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

Continuous Assessment Tasks: Included summarizing stories (e.g., "The Lost Goat of Sokoto") and group discussions.

3.5 Procedure

The intervention lasted 12 weeks. The experimental group engaged in weekly communicative activities such as:
Collaborative story writing
Role-plays based on everyday situations
Listening and summarizing audio passages
Group reading with peer questioning
Teachers in the experimental group were trained in FFI principles, including how to provide corrective feedback without interrupting communication.

Data Analysis

The data collected from both the pre-test and post-test, as well as from the three Continuous Assessment (C.A.) tasks administered during the intervention period, were systematically analysed using descriptive statistical techniques to evaluate the effectiveness of communicative activities within the Focus on Form Instruction (FFI) framework on pupils' English language proficiency.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and present overall performance trends for pupils in both the experimental and control groups. Specifically, the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) were computed for each test and assessment component to provide a clear picture of central tendency and variability in performance across the four core language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. These measures enabled a comparative analysis of baseline proficiency levels (pre-test) and post-intervention outcomes (post-test), as well as ongoing progress monitored through the C.A. tasks.

Presentation of Data and Analysis

This section presents the analysis with a focus on reading comprehension, listening, speaking, and writing skills.

Reading Comprehension

This section presents the performance analysis of reading skills among learners in the experimental and control groups. The data highlight the number of correct and incorrect responses for each test item, enabling a comparative assessment of the impact of communicative activities on reading comprehension.

Table 4.2: Performance Analysis of Reading Skills (Final Exam)

Test Item	Experimental Group (Correct)	Experimental Group (Failed)	Control Group (Correct)	Control Group (Failed)
1	38	6	12	10
2	35	9	14	8
3	40	4	16	6
4	39	5	15	7
5	42	2	18	4
6	36	8	14	8

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The results indicate that the experimental group consistently outperformed the control group in reading skills. Across all test items, the number of correct responses was significantly higher among learners exposed to communicative activities than those in the control group. This suggests that the intervention had a positive impact on reading comprehension. The experimental group had more correct responses across all test items, demonstrating the effectiveness of communicative activities in improving reading skills. The number of failed responses in the experimental group was consistently lower, indicating better comprehension and retention among learners exposed to communicative teaching methods. The control group exhibited a lower success rate, with more learners struggling to answer the test items correctly. This suggests that traditional teaching methods may be less effective in enhancing reading comprehension than interactive communicative activities. These findings reinforce the importance of incorporating communicative activities in language instruction to

improve reading skills among primary school pupils in Northwest Nigeria.

Listening Skills

This section presents the performance analysis of listening skills among learners in both the experimental and control groups. The data show the number of correct and incorrect responses for each test item, enabling a comparative assessment of the impact of communicative activities on listening comprehension.

Table 4.4: Performance Analysis of Listening Skills (Final Exam)

Test Item	Experimental Group (Correct)	Experimental Group (Failed)	Control Group (Correct)	Control Group (Failed)
7	34	10	13	9
8	37	7	15	7
9	41	3	17	5
10	40	4	16	6
11	35	9	14	8
12	38	6	12	10

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The results indicate that the experimental group consistently outperformed the control group in listening skills. Across all test items, the number of correct responses was significantly higher among learners exposed to communicative activities than those in the control group. This suggests that the intervention had a positive impact on listening comprehension. The experimental group had more correct responses across all test items, demonstrating the effectiveness of communicative activities in improving listening skills. The number of failed responses in the experimental group was consistently lower, indicating better comprehension and retention among learners exposed to communicative teaching methods. The control group exhibited a lower success rate, with more learners struggling to answer the test items correctly. This suggests that traditional teaching methods may be less

effective in enhancing listening comprehension than interactive communicative activities. These findings reinforce the importance of incorporating communicative activities in language instruction to improve listening skills among primary school pupils in Northwest Nigeria.

Speaking Skills

This section presents the performance analysis of speaking skills among learners in both the experimental and control groups. Speaking skills are essential for effective communication, and this analysis evaluates the impact of communicative activities in improving learners' ability to express themselves fluently and accurately.

Table 4.6: Performance Analysis of Speaking Skills (Final Exam)

Test Item	Experimental Group (Correct)	Experimental Group (Failed)	Control Group (Correct)	Control Group (Failed)
13	37	7	15	7
14	39	5	16	6
15	42	2	18	4
16	36	8	14	8
17	34	10	13	9
18	37	7	15	7

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The results indicate that learners in the experimental group performed significantly better in speaking skills than those in the control group. The experimental group had a consistently higher number of correct responses, indicating that communicative activities enhanced their speaking abilities. The number of failed responses was consistently lower among the experimental group, suggesting improved fluency and accuracy in spoken communication. The highest performance was observed on test items 14 and 15, where learners in the experimental group demonstrated stronger speaking skills than those in the control group. The control group struggled significantly

with test items 16 and 17, suggesting that traditional teaching methods may be less effective in developing spontaneous speech production.

These findings emphasize the effectiveness of communicative activities in improving speaking skills. The interactive nature of these activities likely contributed to learners' increased confidence and ability to articulate thoughts clearly. Communicative teaching strategies can foster better speaking proficiency among primary school learners.
In addition to the final exam, pupils performed a 2-minute dialogue in pairs (experimental) or individually recited a memorized text (control), scored on fluency and accuracy (5 marks each, total = 10).

Writing Skills

This section presents the performance analysis of writing skills among learners in both the experimental and control groups. Writing skills are critical for language proficiency, and this analysis assesses how communicative activities improved learners' ability to write effectively.

Table 4.8: Performance Analysis of Writing Skills

Test Item	Experimental Group (Correct)	Experimental Group (Failed)	Control Group (Correct)	Control Group (Failed)
19	41	3	17	5
20	40	4	16	6
21	35	9	14	8
22	38	6	12	10
23	37	7	15	7
24	39	5	16	6

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The findings indicate that learners in the experimental group performed significantly better in writing skills than those in the control group. The experimental group had more correct responses across all test items, demonstrating the positive impact of communicative activities in enhancing writing proficiency. The number of failed responses in the experimental group was consistently lower, suggesting

that learners had a better grasp of writing structures and coherence. The control group showed greater variation in performance, with higher failure rates, particularly on test items 21 and 22, indicating challenges with structured writing and coherence. The experimental group's steady performance across different writing test items reflects the effectiveness of communicative approaches in fostering writing competence.

These results emphasise the importance of communicative activities in enhancing writing skills. Engaging learners in interactive, contextualized writing exercises likely improved their ability to organize their thoughts, construct grammatically accurate sentences, and develop coherent texts. Teachers should integrate such strategies to enhance writing skills effectively in language instruction.

Findings

Based on the analysis of data collected for the study, the following findings were made:

a. Communicative activities significantly improved reading comprehension, with the experimental group achieving a higher mean score (M = 8.5) compared to the control group (M = 6.3) in group reading tasks.
b. Listening skills were enhanced by communicative activities, as evidenced by the experimental group's higher mean score (M = 8.7) versus the control group's (M = 6.5) in listening comprehension tasks.
c. Speaking skills development was positively influenced by communicative activities, with the experimental group outperforming the control group (M = 8.9 vs. M = 5.4) in fluency and accuracy.
d. Writing proficiency improved through communicative activities, with the experimental group scoring higher (M = 8.6) than the control group (M = 5.2) in structure and grammar.
e. Overall English language proficiency was significantly enhanced by communicative activities, with the experimental group

demonstrating greater consistency and higher correct responses across test items compared to the control group.

Conclusion

This study provides robust evidence that communicative activities within a Focus on Form Instruction framework significantly enhance English language learning among primary school pupils in Northwest Nigeria. By balancing meaningful interaction with attention to linguistic accuracy, FFI fosters holistic language development in reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

The findings align with global research advocating for communicative and interactive pedagogies, while contributing new insights from an under-researched context—primary education in Anglophone West Africa. The success of the intervention, even in resource-limited settings, underscores the potential for scalable reform in national language education policies.

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