

The Use of Present Continuous Tense among Students of Tertiary Institutions: An Over View On Aminu Saleh College of Education, Azare.

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ABSTRACT: *The most echoed voice in the contemporary academic parlance is lack of competency in the graduates of higher institution of learning. The majority of the graduates of present day tertiary institutions find it very difficult to make correct use of present continuous tense in their communicative moves. This culminated in bitter complain from the general public over the low proficiency in the learning output of the graduates. This paper investigates the “graduands daily interactions. The use of present continuous tense was selected and comparative analysis of their achievements when they were introduced to Dalton method and the demonstration teaching pedagogy was made. The study discovered that demonstration teaching strategy seems to be more learned-centre and therefore excel over the Dalton method. Thirty six (36) students were selected as sample and data collected through test items and the learners were assessed by the means of piagitian behaviorist cognitive grading system.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Language has been an integral part of human development and interactive process which manifest itself in verbal and symbolic forms. It serves as the instrument or vehicle of interaction which we understand our selves. It is obvious that no single sentence no matter how simple it is, without verb. Tense is the pivot of the intended communication of every sentence. Despite the importance attached to the tense in bring out the meaning of the verb, students of senior secondary schools of our contemporary Bauchi state, to them, tense has gone berserk. They are only comfortable with the choosing game of true or false or option from a, b, c, d which gives them less than 50% chance of passing their leaving school certificate or credit pass in English which is a basic requirement of entry into any institution of higher learning in Nigeria. Where the candidates fail to make the credit grade, they are admitted into the introductory or remedial class, where they spend one year to make the grade which qualifies them to go on to the normal course or program. Despite the special position of English language as above, the general performance of the students in the subject has been found to be poor and constitute the source of headache to the English language teachers.

A learned person can be recognized by the way he/she utilizes verb tense in expressing him/herself and his/her idea verbally. Some candidates lack clear verbal expression because they are ill-informed on how to use the tense. Present tense happens to be among the ways a person expresses himself in his daily interaction. A person can speak fluently based on an acceptable standard by the use of a correct tense. He does this effectively because of the effective pedagogy used in imparting the language. Students come to the vast societal information with such persistent mistake in the use of present tense extended in their interactive competence. It is against this background, this study intends to investigate the ASCOEA summer student’s difficulties in tense maintenance with special reference to the present continuous tense in English language.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

TENSE ASPECT REVISITED

Tense as defined by Yule (2006:17) “is the relationship between the form of the verb and the time of the action or state it describes”. By tense we understand the correspondence between the form of the verb and our concept of time (past, present, future) the word “maintenance refers to the act of keeping standard form of language which is at most generally accepted for use in the government, the law, business, education, and literature”. The aim of teaching grammar in every language is to help the students learn to use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately. The use of grammatical structure represents greatest long term learning English language challenges to ESL students. For example, learning when it is appropriate to use the present perfect tense instead of the past represents formidable challenges for English language learners’

aspect. According to Leech and Svartvik (2002:66), “Tense concerns the manner in which a verbal action is experienced or regarded for example as complete or in progress”. Tense aspect and maintenance relate the happenings described by the verb to time in the past, present, or future. The term aspect and tense overlap in meaning and this gives a great problem in English. The aspect refers to a grammatical category which reflects the way in which the verb action is regarded or experienced with respect to time. Unlike tense, aspect is not deictic, in the sense that it is not relative to the time of utterance. Wisniewska, Riggeanback, and Samuda (2007:1&48) supported the view of some grammarians that, “English has two simple marked aspects: the progressive aspect and the perfect aspect. The two aspect constructions of English, the perfective and the progressive can be seen as realizing a basic contrast between the actions viewed as complete and the actions viewed as incomplete. English language to an L2 learner is full of problems. Maintenance of the tract of tense in using present tense is peculiar. If someone makes too many mistakes, he can be difficult to understand, so a reasonable level of correctness is important. Tense/aspect maintenance is an aspect of correctness in communicating perfectly and effectively. Aspect is closely concerned in meaning with tense that the distinction between the two, is little more terminological convenience which helps us to separate in our minds, two different kinds of realization: the morphological realization of tense and the syntactic realization of aspect.

Quirk, et al (1985:173) have this to say “Time can be thought of as a line (theoretically of intimate length) on which is located as a continuously moving point, the present moment, anything ahead, of the present moment is in the future and anything behind it, is in the past”.

The tense of a verb indicates when the action took, is taking, or will take place. Tense indicates time of which the action of verb occurs. The present tense is used for actions taking place in the present, the past tense is used for actions that took place in the past, and the future for actions that will take place in the future. Tense is a term used in grammar to indicate the time of the action or event. Verbs are the most important of the parts of speech because they are the essential part of true sentence. At the same time, tense is most essential part of the verb. It is the tense that exposes to the listener or reader the state of the action of the verb. Tense has continued to be the most important aspect of verb which manifest itself in the daily interaction of human life. Communication cannot take place without the defined tense aspect of the verb in a sentence. If time/tense is not indicated in a given sentence, we will not perceive the intention of the speaker or writer. Tense is unavoidable aspect in either spoken language or written English.

PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE

The present continuous tense is used to express an action that is still going on. It is quite easy to make it. This tense is made by using two rods, the first rod is a form of the present tense of the verb to be (*am/is/are*), and the second part is the form of the verb that ends in – ing. The present continuous tense then, is made by using *am/is/are* plus the – ing form of the verb.

FUNCTIONS OF PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE

The present continuous tense, among its functions, are the following:

- a) To Express an action taking place at the moment . examples:
 - i. We are study about the present continuous tense
 - ii. A boy is running near the library.
 - iii. I am writing on the chalkboard.
- b) To show the continuously the action began in the past, present continuous is used to indicate the action began in the past is still going on, although right now we may not be doing it. Examples:
 - i. We are building a new administrative block.
 - ii. I am reading Yerima’s latest play.
 - iii. He is attending a course in computer operation.

✓ All the actions in the sentences above, building, attending, reading, were started at some time back, they are yet to be completed, and there is hope to continue to the completed stage.
- c) To express personal – which is informal immediate plans:

We use present continuous tense to express immediate plans. Although we did not start the action, we make use of the progressive tense to show assurance over the intended action. Examples:

 - i. I am going to Duwaim this afternoon.
 - ii. They are holding a congress meeting this evening
 - iii. The Dean is addressing the students tomorrow morning.

✓ All the actions *going to Duwaim, holding of congress meeting, and addressing the students* are near future planned actions.

Apart from these functions of present continuous tense, these are some points to remember: verbs that end in silent “e”. drop the “e” when they adding. E.g clap – clapping, get – getting. Verbs ending in “ie” change to “y”, eg. Die – dying, vie – vying.

III. DEMONSTRATION TEACHING METHOD

Demonstration teaching strategy answers the question what is it and how does it work? Demonstration strategy for teaching is also the teacher's greatest asset in arriving at short time. In fact, it is the basic method for introducing a new skill to the learner for developing understanding and for setting people to accept new and better way of doing things. (www.teachingenglish.org.uk). The teacher can plan manipulation of a phenomenon with the students. Thus demonstration strategy for teaching simply means displaying something accompanied by showing how it works or how it should be handled or manipulated.

The strategy can be employed at all levels of skills and practice. Demonstration activities are of different types. These include:

1. Teacher – demonstration
2. Students – demonstration
3. Group and individual demonstration

Teacher demonstration refers to demonstration carried out by teacher for the entire class, while the students entirely actively watch and ask questions on those points that are not clear to them. When student(s) are asked to come and repeat the same demonstration for the class or group of fellow students, after that of the teacher, then it is called student-demonstration. Group demonstration entails a situation where the entire students are divided into groups and the demonstration goes more with the individual instruction and it is also used in the workshop or laboratory to teach each student how to carry out certain activities. An effective classroom, has been characterized as one in which students had opportunities to demonstrate or physically interact with instructional materials and engage in various kinds of activities. (Wills, 1983:268).

Learning by doing is one of the effective strategies for skill development. The best ways to teach present tense and attitudes to students that will enable them manipulate their immediate environment for survival, is to give them an opportunity to practice them and demonstration strategy.

The teacher should write and converse with the learners, the present tenses for practical activities in the class so that the students in turn would imitate him/her even if not around this is because the students supposed to be asked to use teacher's pattern and produce variety of sentences of their own in simple present tense.

2.6.4 DALTON METHOD

Dalton pedagogy of teaching is also known as Dalton laboratory plan. It derived its name from the city Dalton where it was implemented by teacher Helen Parkhurst who lived between 1886-1973. She was unsatisfied with the then system of classroom instruction which brought learners, despite their individual differences, under one umbrella to work in the same speed rate in the learning of the same topic. The students on the other hand, have freedom to choose their own school work and to arrange their study time as they wish. The teacher serves only as an adviser who is to be consulted by individual students. Under this philosophy they would have freedom for self-development.

Advocates of Dalton plan maintain that class grouping is mainly for convenience and not for instruction. The classroom is seen as an educational workshop equipped with teaching/learning materials that will enable each learner to complete the task which was given to him/her. The system has no uniform form and therefore changes according to the content of the teaching/learning interaction.

For instance, Buba (2014) experimented the method with NCE 1 students of College of Education, Azare through comparative analysis in relation to discussion method of teaching in teaching written English in tertiary institutions, the Dalton method emerged as yielding more positive result than the former. The method gives the learners freedom, independence, and co-operation among themselves.

The students are allowed to make active decision about how they work, and how they learn confidently and independently. This lifts the understanding and the achievement of the students. He further identifies not less than eight characteristics attached to the Dalton method of teaching as below:

- i. Contract between the instructor and the learner.
- ii. Contract reading 1/10 of the years work.
- iii. Contract limited to core subjects.
- iv. Contract, each, has introductory paragraph.
- v. Contract follows series of learning experiences.
- vi. Experiences evaluated in terms of daily portions.
- vii. Contract contains specific reference materials.
- viii. Contract encodes departmental units.
- ix. www.

The method was demonstrated at a primary school in the Czech Republic in the 90s and the result was positive. It was also observed with the girls' school at the same republic and was found that the way has stimulated self-reliance and assisted the girls to assume responsibilities for their own learning and it engaged

both the learners and the teacher in intellectual partnership. The competency was achieved because consideration had been made to the students' individual differences which Dalton plan provides. Different students have different ways of thinking and performing tasks. Providing ample time for learning and keeping to the pace of how the individual student precedes nature's student's motivation and approach to learning, as well as the ability to persevere. www.webcrawler.com.

The justification for the Dalton method as appreciated by Onwuka, is that each learner has individual needs which can be satisfied by working alone. Furthermore, the plan avoids the waste of time which often results from most group interaction which proceeds at a uniformed pace. This kind of movement, usually, bores the fast learners if the teacher provides extra time to explain some points to the slow learners. Where the teacher pays more attention to the quicker ones, she or he frustrates the non-talented ones who are incapable of following.

The method provides the learners choice of order in which they confront different tasks they explore the freedom of turning from activities which tire them to others which offer relief. He has also this to say, "The plan enhances the acquisition of cognitive knowledge attitude, values, and skills in rational.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A sample of thirty six students was selected from the target students populace. This is in line with Sulaiman (2012) and recommended by Sambo (2008). The instruments used for the data collection in this study were teacher constructed test items which depicts the course outline on design by the NCE minimum standard. The validity of these test items lies on the fact that they had been used by experts and were found to be effective to most English second language teacher/learners. The results were drawn after when the students were tested after being introduced through the comparative teaching pedagogies. The test also helped the researcher deduced which method of teaching yielded better proficiency in relation to Demonstration/Dalton methods and the students' use of present continuous tense thinking". However, Onwuka further discourages the use of the plan in the elementary stage of education in developing countries like Nigeria due to the lack of sufficient reference materials but recommends that the pedagogy could be applied to the upper classes of the secondary school which is the subject of inquiry of this research, and the institutions of higher learning.

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

The study will be based on the work of Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Piaget's theory of cognitive development gave a detailed picture of learner's thinking. It asserted that development occurs in a distinct, measurable, and observable stages. It further supported hierarchical order to teaching new knowledge, from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract. Piaget (1964) also discovered that the differences between child's and adult's thinking is qualitative and not quantitative. The current research will be on young adults who are between the ages of twenty one and twenty five. It will also use two methods of teaching to introduce the learners to simple, continuous tense.

HYPOTHESIS

There is no relationship between students' low proficiency in the use of present continuous tense in English and the method employed in the teaching exercise.

4.2.3 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This research investigates factors militating against effective communication through the use of present continuous tense among the summer students. Lottery means of random sampling techniques was used to group the sampled population into two, each consisting of eighteen (18) students. The research used Demonstration teaching method and Dalton method of teaching for comparison on the groups to carry out the work. The two groups were taught for eight weeks in the use of present continuous tense by using Demonstration method and Dalton method of teaching. The results were analysed using t-test statistical tool at $\alpha = 0.05$ critical level.

The data for the research in this unit were collated by using simple percentage and average. For each exercise a table was designed in which the marks obtained were calculated in terms of average score and the percentage score. This enables the researcher to know average scores as well as percentage scores of performance on each exercise in the research study.

The hypothesis which says there is no significant difference between Demonstration teaching method and Dalton methods of teaching on the students' performance on the tense maintenance in the use of present continuous tense in English was tested by using t-statistical tool at $\alpha = 0.05$ and the degree of freedom = 0.06 and t-critical = 1.64.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS BASED ON THE METHODS USED IN THE RESEARCH

MEAN	VARIANCE	T-VALUES	
XA = 29.5 XB = 25.7	S2 = 12.37 S2B = 7.17	T-CALCULATED 3.84	T-CRITICAL 1.68

t-calculated > t critical. Therefore t – calculated is greater than t – critical and for this reason the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted which stated that there is significant difference between the two teaching strategies of which Demonstration strategy emerged more fruitful. The results showed that the students exposed to Demonstration method of teaching have much proficiency over those exposed to the Dalton plan method of teaching. The calculation shows that null hypothesis is rejected. This proved that there was significant difference between teaching pedagogies and the students’ achievement. There was positive relationship between the Demonstration method employed in teaching the use of present continuous tense to students. The method yielded more results than that of the Dalton method of teaching in the use of present continuous tense.

The value of t – calculated at the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$ degree of freedom = 106 and t – critical = 1.64. t – calculated is greater than the critical value of t and so the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The alternative hypothesis asserts that there is significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students exposed to the task the use of present continuous tense through the Demonstration method of teaching over those exposed the same concept through Dalton method. The research conclusion now is that there is preference for Demonstration over Dalton plan pedagogy.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research on teacher talk and tense maintenance among Bauchi State Tertiary Institutions students observed that the effect of teacher talk and the use of present tense in relation some other methods of teaching was positive. This shows that activity based teaching/learning of which teacher talk was among, yields much proficiency over other pedagogies used. Gender factor also affects the academic achievement of the students in some teaching methods as it was seen with Demonstration teaching method which equalized both male and female while the former excelled in Dalton plan and the latter shows higher competency in the class method.

The research findings specifically consist of the following:

- ✓ it was found that Demonstration teaching strategy was more effective in teaching the use of present continuous among a summer students of ASCOEA.
- ✓ It was discovered that students exposed to the active learning in the teaching/learning process in present continuous tense performed better than those who were not exposed to active learning. The former could easily relate classroom situation to real life outside the classroom while the latter could not.
- ✓ The gender factor has effect on demonstration teaching strategy in teaching the use of present continuous tense and the students’ achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of every research work is to make contribution to knowledge. The contribution should also be utilized by the target population. These are the researchers, teachers, learners, government and then society.

Based on the findings of this research, the study has the following recommendations:

- The research advocates for the need to expose teacher of English Demonstration teaching methods so that they would make appropriate choice.
- Teachers of English should not dominate classroom activities but should allow the student/learner a considerable amount of teacher/learner activities favours the students at least 3:2 ratio most preferably allow the students do things themselves 85% and teacher’s contribution 15% as recommended by Chaudron.
- Teachers of English instructors should be very meticulous in their selection of the teaching strategy. While teaching present continuous tense.
- Teachers of English language as mentors of their students, should employ various teaching methods in executing their primary assignment in achieving the objectives of teaching present continuous tense,
- The students require active learning in the teaching/learning process in order to attain high proficiency in using present continuous tense perfectly.

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