



Immersive learning on students' performance in English grammar in senior secondary schools in Abia State

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Abstract

This study investigated the use of immersive learning on students' performance in English grammar in Umuahia North Local Government of Abia state, Nigeria. The independent variable of the study was immersive learning strategy while the dependent variable was performance. The study had three objectives, three research questions and three hypotheses. Two-group pretest-posttest-quasi-experimental research design was used. The population was two thousand and ten (2010) senior secondary students. A sample size of one hundred and thirty-eight (138) students from two (2) co-educational schools with intact classes were purposively selected. In addition, the subjects selected were randomly assigned to groups: one, the experimental group (immersive-learning) and one, the control group (lecture strategy). The instrument used was English grammar Performance Test. The reliability of the instrument was done using Pearson Product Moment Correlation which yielded an index of 0.841. Face, construct and content validity were conducted for the instrument. A criterion mean of 2.5 was used. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and analysis of covariance was used for hypotheses using SPSS at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the immersive learning strategy is highly effective; as those exposed to it improved significantly in their grammar performance. On the other hand, gender played a significant influence on students' performance in English grammar. It recommended that teachers should infuse the immersive learning strategy into their teaching approach. The research has provided empirical review on language which had never been reported in Language Education, University of Port Harcourt Rivers state, Nigeria.

Keywords: Immersive learning, performance and English grammar

Introduction

Grammar is vital in all the language skills. Absence of correct grammar leads one to read with much misunderstanding; if a reader needs to re-read a statement multiple times to figure out what it means, he is more likely to miss the message or give up reading. Buy College Essay Team (2020) ^[2] observes that understanding simple grammar is a valuable resource to grasp what readers are reading. Additionally, just like writing and reading, speaking is a necessary part of everyday life, and one cannot function well without it. Therefore, having a strong understanding of grammar is essential for efficient communication. It is more important to note that the manner in which one presents oneself during a conversation provides clues as to one's expertise and education. Whether we like it or not, the way we communicate determines how others see us. One can be regarded as a well-educated individual if proper language on any academic activities is employed. When one's grammar is bad, the impression that will be made of him will be quite negative. Although grammar has a purpose in spoken communication, it also serves as an essential element in listening. It affects not only one's output but also one's comprehension and perception. The learner will have a much simpler time processing what they hear if they already know the grammar.

It enhances students' listening ability which will make them comprehend whatever instruction that is given by the teacher which leads to an increase in their academic performance. No wonder, Russel (2017) ^[16] corroborates that possessing a firm grasp of grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation, lays the groundwork for writing and speaking with others. Attesting to Russel's view, Esperval *et al.* (2020) ^[8] maintain that grammar is a foundation for improving English language proficiency; as a result, poor grammar can lead to poor oral, writing, reading, and listening communication skills, all of which are indicative of low English language proficiency. Even though grammar is not among the four popularly known language skills; it is a component of language that is necessary for the mastery of all the four language skills and a vehicle for improving learners' competence ;therefore, a thorough understanding of the principles that govern standard English may assist learners in avoiding common sentence errors such as misspelling, missing punctuation marks, poor academic achievement, and even missed career prospects if they learn with more engaging methods apart from what they have always been exposed to.

Hence, Hein *et al.*, (2021) ^[9] advocate the use of appropriate method in the learning process which is the incorporation of "Immersive language Learning". According to them, it is a strategy that entails learning language in the most possible natural way which helps students to acquire and improve their language skills by exposing them to artificially, digitally manufactured information and surroundings that perfectly imitate real-life circumstances. Learners are not just passive observers in this setting but have the opportunity to become active participants who learn the language and communicate in it correctly. Learning does not happen when someone is bored. One of the main benefits of having an immersive education is to help a learner remember what he learns. Students, who learn by doing and in a place that is completely immersed, keep their attention and minds off other things; understand the content than just reading about it (Phillip, 2019) ^[14].

In reality and in the past, the most efficient technique to learning a language is to join a community where the target language is used to communicate in a real-life setting. (Mesmrise Blog, 2021) ^[12]. However, the need to travel abroad to complete the language is demanding especially in this COVID 19 era when travelling has become so difficult and tasking. Therefore, learners are called to remain in the same setting while acquiring a whole lot of communicative competence. No doubt, the world is becoming more digitally oriented; so conventional classroom-based learning where a teacher stands in front of the class is becoming a thing of the past. Creating a participatory classroom atmosphere in which educators facilitate active immersive learning may be extremely useful to the learners' growth; since it can broaden their knowledge base and improve their practical abilities. 'If you want to learn a language, you have to surround yourself with it and use it,' I'd often say. 'Speak, listen, respond – communicate' (Kozlova, 2021) ^[10].

It is worthy to note that immersive learning has shown to be a highly successful method for many learners to advance their knowledge and abilities over time. In the past, language learning was done through instruction, where a student sat in a class and learned about a new language by listening, repeating, and doing exercises but immersive learning does not require reading only books or memorizing words. It allows the use of language in real-life situations. That is why

with the advances in ICT and multimedia, it is now possible to construct linguistically rich learning environments.

For instance, multimedia such as, videos, CDs, YouTube and TV shows, posters, visuals, English books, web sites, songs, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AU), Mixed reality (MR),3D immersive learning (3D) and mobile devices (more modernized ones) can all be used to provide a rich learning environment. They all play a big part in learning a new language. A note-worthy characteristic is the fact that immersive learning creates a highly engaging environment for learners, both electronically and physically. A learner may use technology to digitally reproduce a variety of actual situations that are not accessible within the confines of a traditional classroom setting. In fact, the virtual material is so motivating; it leaves a lasting effect on the minds of the students. These various packages help them build their language skills, knowledge, and understanding of the world. Learners are able to comprehend the native speakers' use of the correct grammar at meals, during shopping, and other activities. Having been exposed to these packages, they (learners) are compelled to use the language constantly and correctly.

To fulfil the learners' needs and attain the desired results in their grammar, Chukwuemeka (2018) ^[6] aptly states that it is essential for teachers to use technology appropriately in their classroom activities to assist the learners by guiding their intellect towards their personalized exposure to knowledge. Supporting this claim, a study by Muslem and Yulianti (2015) ^[13] maintains that the use of immersive multimedia learning improves students' motivation and interest in English. Though this approach may improve students' performance in English Language grammar, no study well-known to the researcher has been carried out in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia state to discover its relative effectiveness compared to conventional method. All the same, it is assumed that one noble way of carrying out another method of teaching a particular subject is to demonstrate through conducting tests and empirical data that such approach can yield positive instructional results. It is based on this that this study intends to find out the effect of immersive learning on secondary school students' performance in English grammar.

Statement of the Problem

Irrespective of the crucial role grammar plays in making communication in English language more meaningful, the researcher has observed over the years that a lot of students view its teaching as boring and frustrating, if not outright horror. This experience makes them lack the desire to attend English Language classes and even when they do, they lack concentration and very inactive during grammar lessons. The worst is made explicit as one engages in conversations with them; their code mixing and the poor application of tenses have become a thing of concern. These ungrammatical statements which they utter and their use of pidgin' language are extremely worrisome. These students find it difficult to interact among themselves in simple English or engage in meaningful conversations both within and outside the classroom; their complaint has always been that they prefer attending classes in other subjects to English Language class if not that English is a compulsory subject. Besides the issue of their loose grasps of English grammatical structure, the chief examiners of WAEC lament yearly over the poor performance of candidates in English grammar. For example,

in 2013, 25.64% passed at credit level, 32.48% in 2014, 30.32% in 2015, 35.02% in 2016, 41.52% in 2017, 38.9% in 2018, 42.05% in 2019 and 40.82% in 2020 (WAEC, 2020). One wonders if class activities that are dominated by the teachers describing the grammatical principles in isolation of all other language skills and then instructing students to do exercises based on the grammar rules, without designing a teaching strategy that incorporates interactive activities that make grammar class unthreatening, entertaining, and relaxing could cause their lack of interest and performance in English language. This sad situation depicts to a large extent why adequate attention should be given to the teaching and learning of English grammar. So, this study explored Immersive Learning (IL) on senior secondary school students' interest and performance in English grammar. It also explored classroom practices in this regard via immersive language tools.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate Immersive Learning on students' performance in English grammar in senior secondary schools, in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State.

Specifically, the objectives of this study were to

1. Investigate the effect of Immersive learning and Lecture strategies on students' academic performance in grammar;
2. Determine the effect of Immersive learning strategy on students' academic performance in grammar;
3. Verify the influence of gender on the academic performance of students taught grammar using Immersive learning and Lecture strategies;

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study

1. What is the difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive learning and Lecture strategies?
2. What is the difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive learning strategy?
3. What is the gender difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive learning and Lecture strategies?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses, which were tested at 0.05 level of significance guided this study

1. There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive learning and Lecture strategies.
2. There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using the Immersive learning strategy.
3. There is no significant gender difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive learning and Lecture strategies.

Related Literature Review

Cross Border Pre School (2016) reported that immersion education came in reaction to the lack of success in traditional classroom settings which led Wallace Lambert, Richard

Tucker, and other educators from McGill University establish language immersion programs in Quebec in Canada in the 1960s, which quickly spread throughout the province and later around the world. The first program was a French immersion program that began with the first grade and continued until the eighth grade. For the first grade, the teachers only spoke French to students who were fluent English speakers, and with each subsequent year, they gradually incorporated more French into their lessons. This proved to be a successful strategy, as these children were just as brilliant and on the same trajectory as their peers; they had a substantially greater understanding of French. In order to accommodate the growing number of language immersion programs, many variations of this framework were developed as stated by Cross Border Pre School, These include the Partially-immersion schools, in which half of the day is spent teaching in one language and half in the other, as well as dual-immersion programs, in which both languages are taught simultaneously and the majority of students are native speakers of both languages, Language immersion has been shown to be the most effective method for children to learn a second language, regardless of how the program is organized or structured.

Immersive language education is one of the most successful methods of learning a second language. This technique, according to Mangubhai (2005) ^[11], has been given different names which include immersion (Swain & Johnson, 1996) ^[17], content-based instruction, and two-way bilingual education (Cazabon *et al.*, 1993) ^[5]. Each of these types of language education has placed much emphasis on meaning and content delivery to pupils.

A person's performance may be described as how successfully they do an activity or task (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018). Students' performance has been the focus in secondary education in the twenty-first century. It is the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate one's knowledge verbally or written on paper.

Situated Learning Theory

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger proposed this theory in the year 1990 as a theory of learning among members of a community who have a similar vocation, profession, or skill, and it has since gained widespread acceptance. They are referred to as a "community of practice." Situated learning (SL) holds that learning occurs when students participate in activities that are ideally situated in authentic contexts or those that approximate as closely as possible to the contexts in which the knowledge will later be required. Catalano (2015) opines that learning is inseparable from authentic activity

The effectiveness of Immersive learning strategy (IMS) on students' performance in grammar

Some studies have been carried out on the effectiveness of immersive multimedia in teaching and learning of English and related subjects. Building upon previous research into the effectiveness of using videos for language teaching purposes, Al-Bahadli (2021) ^[1] studied the effect of the online video texts on EFL college students' performance in Grammar subject in a quasi-experimental design. Sixty students from the College of Al-imam Al-kadhum were randomly chosen during the academic year 2019-2020. Thirty (30) students in the experimental group were taught grammar using online video-text and thirty (30) students in the control group were

taught grammar according to the conventional ways. To achieve the aim of the study, the following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 significant level "there is no significant difference between the experimental group performance and that of the control group in the score of the posttest. Statistical analysis of data achieved through the test indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the experimental group performance and that of the control group in favors of the experimental group. This present study and the one under review are similar in the area of design (quasi-experimental), one of the variables - performance and the use of video-text but differ in sampling technique and sample population.

Research Methodology

Two-group pretest-posttest-quasi-experimental research design was used. The population was two thousand and ten (2010) senior secondary students. A sample size of one hundred and thirty-eight (138) students from two (2) co-educational schools with intact classes were purposively selected in Umuahia North Local Government Area, which was the area of the study. In addition, the subjects selected were randomly assigned to groups: one, the experimental group (immersive-learning) and one, the control group (lecture strategy). The instrument used was English Grammar

Interest Inventory. The reliability of the instrument was done using Pearson Product Moment Correlation which yielded an index of 0.841. Face, construct and content validity were conducted for the instruments. Before treatment commenced, the English Grammar Performance Test was administered as pre-test to the two groups in each of the sampled schools to ascertain their base line. The treatment lasted for one month. The students learnt with the researcher's instructional package which includes English grammar video clips from YouTube, those designed from the students' English text book and discussion with online teachers and peers. For the control group, the lecture method of teaching grammar and answering questions were maintained. After the treatment session, the same instrument, with numbers re-arranged, was administered to the subjects to obtain the post-test scores. The data obtained were used in answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses. A criterion mean of 2.5 was used. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and analysis of covariance was used for hypotheses using SPSS at 0.05 level of significance.

Analysis and Interpretation

Research Question 1: What is the difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning (IL) and Lecture (L) strategies?

Table 1: Mean score and standard deviation of the difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies

Strategy	n	Pretest		Posttest		Mean Gain
		\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	
ILS	70	42.07	11.71	63.06	9.19	20.99
LS	68	48.35	13.56	50.50	15.21	2.15

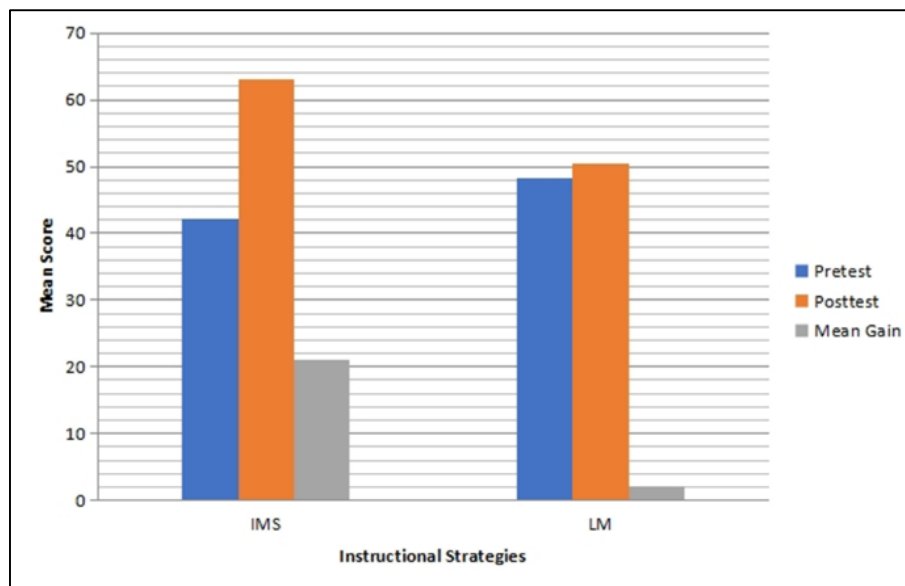


Fig 1: Chart on the difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning (IL) and Lecture (L) strategies. The results indicated that students taught English Grammar using the IL strategy (pretest: \bar{x} = 42.07, SD = 11.71, post-test: \bar{x} = 63.06, SD = 9.19, mean gain = 20.99) performed better than their counterparts taught using the Lecture strategy (pretest:

\bar{x} = 48.35, SD = 13.56, post-test: \bar{x} = 50.50, SD = 15.21, mean gain = 2.15). These results imply that the IL strategy is a more effective teaching method for improving students' English grammar proficiency compared to the Lecture strategy.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies.

Table 2: Summary of Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) on the difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies

Dependent Variable: Post-Test					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	5438.88 ^a	1	5438.88	34.69	0.00
Intercept	444791.81	1	444791.81	2837.22	0.00
Group	5438.88	1	5438.88	34.69	0.00
Error	21320.77	136	156.77		
Total	473072.00	138			
Corrected Total	26759.65	137			

a. R Squared = .203 (Adjusted R Squared = .197)

Note: *Post hoc test* cannot be performed for the group because there are fewer than three groups

Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using immersive learning and lecture strategies ($F_1, = 34.69$, $df = 136$, $P = 0.00 < 0.05$). Thus, null hypothesis one is rejected at the 0.05 alpha level. This result implies that the performance of the experimental group is significantly

different from the control group, providing evidence that the intervention had an effect on the outcome variable being measured.

Research Question 2: What is the difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using IL strategy?

Table 3: Mean score and standard deviation of the difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning strategy

Performance	n	\bar{x}	SD
Pre-test	70	42.07	11.71
Post-test	70	63.06	9.19
Mean Diff.		20.99	

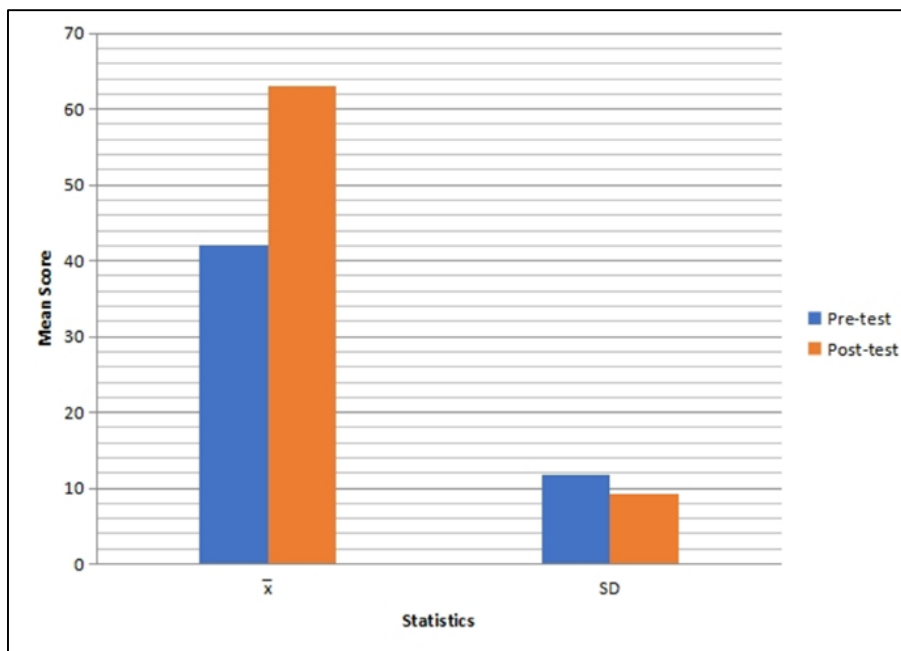


Fig 2: Chart on the difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using IL strategy

Table 3 and Figure 2 show the difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using IL strategy. The results indicated that the posttest of students taught English grammar using the IL strategy (post-test: $\bar{x} = 63.06$, $SD = 9.19$), is greater than the pretest mean score (pretest: $\bar{x} = 42.07$, $SD = 11.71$). However, the mean difference of 20.99 from the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using IL strategy after

treatment imply that students' performance in English grammar was improved by using the immersive learning strategy, which emphasizes interactive and meaningful learning experiences.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using the Immersive Learning strategy

Table 4: Summary of ANCOVA on the difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using the Immersive Learning strategy

Paired Samples Test		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Err. Mean	95% CID				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair	Pre-test - Post-Test	20.99	9.26	1.11	23.19	18.78	18.97	69	0.00

Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using immersive learning ($t = 18.97, df = 69, P = 0.00 < 0.05$). Thus, null hypothesis two is rejected at the 0.05 alpha level. This result implies that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test experimental

groups, indicating that the treatment had an effect on the outcome being measured.

Research Question 3: What is the gender difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of the gender difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies

Strategy	Gender	Pretest			Posttest		Mean Gain
		n	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	
ILS	Male	36	40.78	12.16	62.33	9.36	21.55
	Female	34	43.44	11.23	63.82	9.08	20.38
LS	Male	33	47.21	13.35	46.55	13.25	-0.66
	Female	35	49.43	13.87	54.23	16.15	4.80

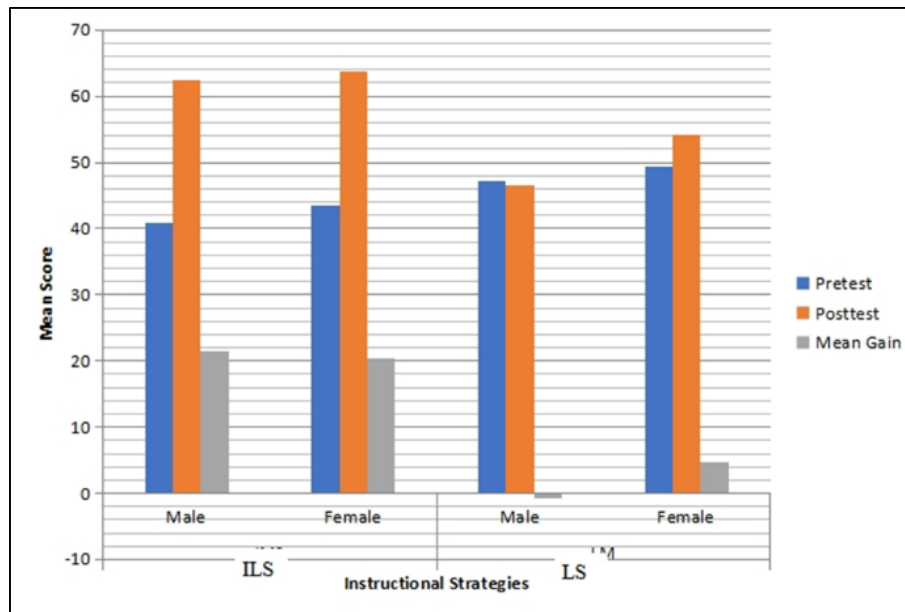


Fig 3: Chart on the gender difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies

Table 5 and Figure 3 show the gender difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies. For students taught English grammar using the IL strategy, the results indicated that male students (pretest: $\bar{x} = 40.78, SD = 12.16$, post-test: $\bar{x} = 62.33, SD = 9.39$, mean gain = 21.55) performed better than their female counterparts (pretest: $\bar{x} = 43.44, SD = 11.23$, post-test: $\bar{x} = 63.82, SD = 9.08$, mean gain = 20.38).

Furthermore, for students taught English Grammar using the Lecture strategy, the results indicated that female students (pretest: $\bar{x} = 49.43, SD = 13.87$, post-test: $\bar{x} = 54.23, SD = 16.15$, mean gain = 4.80) performed better than their male counterparts (pretest: $\bar{x} = 47.21, SD = 13.55$, post-test: $\bar{x} =$

46.55, $SD = 13.25$, mean gain = -0.66).

These results imply that there is a gender difference in how students respond to the IL strategy for teaching English grammar, with male students showing a slightly greater improvement in their performance compared to female students. Furthermore, there is a gender difference in the effectiveness of the Lecture strategy in teaching English grammar, with female students benefiting more from this approach compared to male students.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant gender difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies.

Table 6: Summary of ANCOVA on the gender difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using Immersive Learning and Lecture strategies

Dependent Variable: Post-Test					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	17987.57 ^a	4	4496.89	68.18	0.00
Intercept	5517.31	1	5517.31	83.65	0.00
Group * Gender	366.16	1	366.16	5.55	0.02
Error	8772.08	136	65.96		
Total	473072.00	138			
Corrected Total	26759.65	137			

a. R Squared = .672 (Adjusted R Squared = .662)

Note: Post hoc test cannot be performed for the group*gender because there are fewer than three group

Table 6 shows that there is a significant gender difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students taught grammar using immersive learning and lecture strategies ($F_1 = 5.55$, $df = 136$, $P = 0.02 < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis three is rejected at the 0.05 alpha level. This result implies that the pretest and posttest performance score of male and female students in the experimental group is significantly different from the control group, providing evidence that the intervention had an effect on the outcome variable being measured

Conclusion

The findings of this study led to the following conclusions: It was concluded that the immersive learning strategy is more effective than the lecture strategy in teaching English grammar to students, as it resulted in a significant improvement in their pre-test and post-test mean scores. Therefore, the effectiveness of the instructional delivery strategy for English grammar could be attributed to the immersive learning strategy, which allows students to actively engage in the learning process, interact with the material, and apply it in real-life situations, leading to better retention and application of knowledge.

5.4. Recommendations

Considering the findings, discussion and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers should consider incorporating the immersive learning strategy into their teaching approach to enhance students' English grammar proficiency since the immersive learning strategy creates a more engaging and interactive learning environment.
2. The Abia State Ministry of Education in collaboration with the school managements should prepare plans according to their locality in order to favor and support students through immersive learning so as to promote a more engaging and effective learning experience tremendously.
3. Structures and processes need to be established to guide all stakeholders in implementing immersive learning so that the experiences can be meaningful and worthwhile as intended.

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