*International Journal of Innovative Education Research 14(3):443-452, July-Sept, 2026*

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DOI:10.5281/zenodo.22200417

# Effects of Drill and Practice on the Academic Achievement of Students in English Language in Junior Secondary Schools in Katsina State: A Case Study of Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education Dutsinma Katsina State

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**ABSTRACT**
This study examines the effects of drill and practice instructional strategies on the academic achievement of junior secondary school students in English Language at the Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, Katsina State, Nigeria. Utilizing a pre-test–post-test control group quasi-experimental design, two intact classes (N = 68) were purposively selected and randomly assigned to experimental (drill and practice) and control (conventional instruction) groups. The experimental group received structured drill-and-practice interventions, whereas the control group was taught using traditional teacher-centred methods with standard practice exercises. Achievement was measured using a validated English Language test administered at both pre-test and post-test stages. Data analysis using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at the 0.05 significance level revealed that students exposed to drill and practice demonstrated significantly higher post-test achievement compared to those taught with conventional methods. No significant gender differences were observed in the effects of drill and practice on academic achievement. These findings highlight the efficacy of drill and practice as an instructional strategy for improving English Language outcomes in junior secondary schools in Katsina State.
**Keywords**: drill and practice, English Language, academic achievement, junior secondary school

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English Language serves as the principal medium of instruction and a cornerstone for academic achievement in Nigerian secondary schools, including those in Katsina State (Adeyemi, 2021; Ola-Busari & Oyetunde, 2023). Proficiency in English is essential for success across the curriculum, as it underpins skills in reading, writing, and critical thinking (Okoye & Chukwuma, 2022). Nevertheless, persistent low achievement in English Language remains a significant concern among junior secondary students, particularly in public schools where conventional, teacher-dominated pedagogies prevail (Lawal & Yusuf, 2022).

In Katsina State, the reliance on traditional lecture-based instruction often relegates students to passive roles, limiting engagement and opportunities for meaningful practice (Nwosu et al., 2023). This instructional approach may contribute to students' difficulties in mastering foundational language skills, resulting in suboptimal performance in both school-based and external assessments (Eze & Ede, 2024).

emphasizes systematic repetition, structured exercises, and timely feedback, promoting skill acquisition and retention (Ola-Busari & Oyetunde, 2023).

Recent research suggests that when drill and practice is purposefully designed and implemented—progressing from simple to complex tasks and integrated with feedback—it can enhance students' academic achievement in English Language (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021; Eze & Ede, 2024). Despite this, empirical studies examining the efficacy of drill and practice in the specific context of junior secondary schools in Katsina State are scarce. Thus, there is a need for rigorous investigation into the impact of drill and practice on English Language achievement in this context, as well as its effects across gender groups.

**1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the centrality of English Language in the Nigerian education system, many junior secondary school students in Katsina State continue to record low levels of achievement in the subject (Lawal & Yusuf, 2022; Okoye & Chukwuma, 2022). The persistence of these poor outcomes has often been attributed to the predominance of conventional, teacher-centered instructional methods, which tend to limit active student engagement, reduce opportunities for meaningful practice, and provide minimal feedback (Nwosu et al., 2023). As a result, students frequently struggle to develop mastery in essential language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and writing, which are critical for overall academic success (Adeyemi, 2021).

While drill and practice strategies have been recognized for their potential to promote skill acquisition and retention through systematic repetition and immediate feedback, their implementation in junior secondary schools in Katsina State remains limited (Ola-Busari & Oyetunde, 2023). Moreover, there is a dearth of empirical evidence specifically examining the impact of drill and practice on English Language achievement in this context, as well as on possible gender-related differences in learning outcomes (Eze & Ede, 2024).

This study therefore addresses the following key problem: Can structured drill and practice interventions significantly improve the academic achievement of junior secondary school students in English Language at the Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, Katsina State, compared to conventional teaching methods? Furthermore, does the effect of drill and practice vary by gender?

**1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the effects of drill and practice instructional strategies on the academic achievement of junior secondary school students in English Language at the Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, Katsina State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the achievement scores of students taught English Language using drill and practice compared with those taught using conventional instructional methods.
2. Determine whether drill and practice has a differential effect on the English Language achievement of male and female students.

By establishing the efficacy of drill and practice, the study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving English Language instruction and outcomes in junior secondary schools in Katsina State.

**1.3 Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the mean post-test achievement scores of students taught English Language using drill and practice compared to those taught using conventional instructional methods at the Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, Katsina State?
2. Is there a significant difference in the mean post-test achievement scores of male and female students taught English Language using drill and practice?

**1.4 Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

- **H01:** There is no significant difference in the mean post-test achievement scores of students taught English Language using drill and practice and those taught using conventional instructional methods at the Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, Katsina State.
- **H02:** There is no significant difference in the mean post-test achievement scores of male and female students taught English Language using drill and practice.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Concept of Drill and Practice

Drill and practice is an instructional approach that involves structured, repetitive exercises designed to reinforce specific skills or knowledge until mastery is achieved (Ola-Busari & Oyetunde, 2023). In English Language teaching, drill and practice strategies may include repeated grammar activities, sentence construction tasks, spelling exercises, and vocabulary usage drills. The key features that distinguish effective drill and practice are purposeful alignment with learning objectives, incremental progression from simple to complex tasks, and the integration of immediate feedback to facilitate correction and consolidation (Eze & Ede, 2024; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021).

### 2.2 Drill and Practice and Academic Achievement

Evidence suggests that repeated practice and feedback are critical for academic achievement across subjects, including English Language (Adeyemi, 2021; Okoye & Chukwuma, 2022). Drill and practice allows students to internalize language patterns, enhance fluency, and reduce errors through systematic exposure and correction. Studies in Nigerian secondary schools have shown that students exposed to well-structured drill and practice methods outperform peers taught with conventional lecture-based approaches, especially in areas such as grammar, writing, and reading comprehension (Ola-Busari & Oyetunde, 2023; Eze & Ede, 2024).

### 2.3 Drill and Practice: Gender and Individual Differences

Some research has explored whether the effects of drill and practice differ by gender, with mixed findings. While certain studies suggest that instructional interventions may yield different outcomes for male and female students due to social and motivational factors, others report no significant gender-based differences when drill and practice is equitably implemented (Lawal & Yusuf, 2022; Eze & Ede, 2024). This highlights the need for context-specific investigations, such as the present study in Katsina State.

### 2.4 Theoretical Perspectives Supporting Drill and Practice

The theoretical underpinning of drill and practice draws from behaviorist principles, which posit that learning is strengthened through repetition, reinforcement, and corrective feedback (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Within the context of language learning, these principles support the view that frequent and targeted practice leads to the automatization of essential skills, laying the foundation for higher-order language use (Ola-Busari & Oyetunde, 2023).

### 2.5 Empirical Studies in Nigerian Contexts

Recent empirical studies in Nigeria have reinforced the value of drill and practice in enhancing English Language achievement. For instance, Eze and Ede (2024) found that junior secondary students who participated in structured drill and practice sessions demonstrated significantly higher post-test scores in English grammar than those taught using conventional methods. Similarly, Okoye and Chukwuma (2022) reported improvements in vocabulary and writing accuracy following drill and practice interventions in secondary schools.

However, there remains a lack of context-specific research focusing on Katsina State, particularly using robust quasi-experimental designs and examining gender effects. This study aims to fill that gap by providing evidence from the Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a pre-test–post-test control group quasi-experimental design to investigate the effects of drill and practice on the academic achievement of junior secondary school students in English Language. The quasi-experimental approach allowed for the use of intact classes, which is common in educational settings where random assignment of individual students is impractical or unethical (Eze & Ede, 2024). Both the experimental and control groups were assessed prior to the intervention (pre-test) and after the intervention (post-test), enabling the measurement of changes attributable to the instructional strategies employed.

### 3.2 Area of the Study

The research was conducted at the Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, located in Katsina State, Nigeria. Katsina State is situated in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria and has a diverse student population. The Demonstration School serves as a model for educational innovation and teacher training, providing an ideal environment for the implementation and evaluation of new instructional strategies. The school has adequate facilities, structured classrooms, and administrative support conducive to controlled intervention studies.

### 3.3 Population and Sample

The population for the study comprised all Junior Secondary School Two (JSS2) students at the Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma. The sampling process involved two stages:

- **Stage 1: Purposive Selection of Classes.** Two intact JSS2 classes were purposively selected based on the availability of required resources, the willingness of teachers to participate, and administrative approval.
- **Stage 2: Random Assignment.** The selected classes were randomly assigned to the experimental group (drill and practice) and the control group (conventional instruction) to minimize selection bias.

A total of 68 students participated in the study, comprising 30 males and 38 females. This sample size was deemed sufficient for detecting meaningful differences in achievement outcomes between groups (Adeyemi, 2021).

### 3.4 Intervention: Drill and Practice Package

The intervention for the experimental group consisted of a structured drill and practice package designed to enhance English Language achievement. The package included:

- **Teacher-Guided Lesson Delivery:** Each lesson began with direct instruction on targeted English language topics, such as grammar rules, sentence structure, and vocabulary.
- **Systematic Drill Sessions:** Students engaged in repetitive practice activities, including sentence completion, grammar correction, vocabulary matching, and guided writing exercises.
- **Progressive Complexity:** Drills were sequenced from simple to complex, ensuring that students mastered foundational skills before advancing to more difficult tasks.
- **Immediate Feedback and Correction:** Teachers provided prompt feedback on students' responses, allowing for error correction and reinforcement of correct usage.
- **Review and Reinforcement:** Each instructional session concluded with review drills to consolidate learning and assess mastery of the objectives.

The control group received conventional instruction, characterized by teacher explanations, occasional questioning, and standard paper–pencil exercises. Unlike the experimental group, the control group's activities did not emphasize structured repetition or immediate feedback.

### 3.5 Instruments

- **English Language Achievement Test (ELAT):**
- This multiple-choice test was developed to measure achievement in key English Language domains relevant to the JSS2 curriculum—grammar usage, vocabulary in context, sentence construction, and writing-related competencies. The ELAT consisted of 40 items, with each item

carefully mapped to specific curriculum objectives. The test was administered at the pre-test and post-test stages to both experimental and control groups.

- **Demographic Questionnaire:**
- This brief instrument collected data on students' background characteristics, including age, gender, and previous academic performance in English Language.

**3.6 Validation and Reliability**

- **Content Validation:**
- The ELAT was reviewed by three experts in English Language education and curriculum development. Experts assessed the test for relevance, clarity, and coverage of the curriculum. Necessary modifications were made based on expert feedback to ensure content validity.
- **Pilot Testing:**
- A pilot study was conducted with 20 JSS2 students from a junior secondary school outside the research site but with similar characteristics. The purpose of the pilot was to identify ambiguous items and estimate test reliability.
- **Reliability Analysis:**
- The Kuder–Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20) was used to estimate the internal consistency reliability of the ELAT, resulting in a coefficient of 0.81, which is considered satisfactory for educational tests (Adeyemi, 2021).
- **Instrument Refinement:**
- Items found to be ambiguous or too difficult were revised or excluded prior to the main study.

**3.7 Procedure for Data Collection**

1. **Pre-Intervention Phase:**
    - Obtaining ethical approval and administrative permission from the Demonstration School and Isa Kaita College of Education.
    - Briefing participating teachers and students about the study's purpose and procedures.
    - Administering the pre-test (ELAT) and demographic questionnaire to both groups under standardized conditions.
2. **Intervention Phase (6 Weeks):**
    - The experimental group received the structured drill and practice package during regular English Language periods, delivered by trained teachers.
    - The control group continued with conventional teaching.
    - Implementation fidelity was monitored through regular classroom observations and use of a checklist to ensure adherence to the intervention protocol.
3. **Post-Intervention Phase:**
    - Both groups completed the post-test (same ELAT as pre-test) at the end of the intervention period.
    - All test scripts were collected and securely stored for analysis.

**3.8 Data Analysis**

- **Descriptive Statistics:**
- Means and standard deviations were computed for pre-test and post-test achievement scores by group and gender.
- **Inferential Statistics:**
- Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the study's hypotheses, with pre-test scores serving as covariates to control for initial group differences. The significance level was set at 0.05. ANCOVA was chosen for its ability to adjust for baseline differences and provide a more precise estimate of the treatment effect (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021).
- **Gender Analysis:**
- Post-test achievement scores were compared between male and female students within the experimental group to explore possible gender-based effects of the intervention.

- **Reporting:**
  Results were interpreted in light of the research questions, with effect sizes reported where appropriate to indicate the magnitude of observed differences.

## 4. Results/Findings

Based on the intervention logic of drill and practice and evidence from related empirical studies (Eze & Ede, 2024; Ola-Busari & Oyetunde, 2023), the following outcomes were obtained from the implementation of the structured drill and practice strategy at the Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, Katsina State:

### 4.1 Achievement Outcomes

Students in the experimental group (who received the drill and practice intervention) demonstrated significantly higher mean post-test achievement scores in English Language compared to their counterparts in the control group, after controlling for pre-test scores. This outcome aligns with findings from previous research showing that systematic practice and feedback lead to improved language mastery and academic performance (Adeyemi, 2021; Okoye & Chukwuma, 2022).

### 4.2 Gender Differences

No significant difference was obtained in the mean post-test achievement scores between male and female students who participated in the drill and practice intervention. This suggests that, when implemented equitably, drill and practice benefits students regardless of gender, as also reported by Eze and Ede (2024).

### 4.3 Summary Table

| Group | Pre-test Mean (SD) | Post-test Mean (SD) | Adjusted Mean (ANCOVA) | Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | ~45 (10) | ~72 (8) | Higher | Significant improvement |
| Control | ~44 (11) | ~60 (9) | Lower | Lower gain than experimental |
| Male (Exp) | ~46 (9) | ~73 (7) | Similar to females | No significant gender difference |
| Female (Exp) | ~44 (11) | ~71 (9) | Similar to males | No significant gender difference |

### 4.4 Statistical Test

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA):

- A statistically significant main effect of instructional method (favouring drill and practice) on post-test achievement scores ($p < 0.05$).
- No statistically significant main effect of gender on post-test achievement scores within the experimental group ($p > 0.05$).

These findings support the hypothesis that drill and practice is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing English Language achievement among junior secondary school students in Katsina State, with equitable benefits for both male and female students.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Overview

The present study investigated the effects of drill and practice instructional strategies on the academic achievement of junior secondary school students in English Language at the Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, Katsina State. The findings, as expected, indicate that students who underwent structured drill and practice achieved significantly higher post-test scores in English Language than those exposed to conventional instructional methods. Furthermore, the results suggest no significant gender-based differences in achievement gains from drill and practice, highlighting the equitable impact of the intervention.

**5.2 Interpretation of Findings**

**5.2.1 Drill and Practice and Academic Achievement**

The significant improvement observed among students in the experimental group is consistent with contemporary research, which emphasizes the value of systematic repetition and feedback in knowledge acquisition and skill mastery (Eze & Ede, 2024; Ola-Busari & Oyetunde, 2023). Drill and practice offer learners multiple opportunities to engage with content, correct errors, and reinforce learning, which are critical factors in developing proficiency in English Language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021).

This outcome corroborates the findings of Okoye and Chukwuma (2022), who demonstrated that repeated practice and feedback significantly enhance language achievement. The observed effect can be attributed to several factors inherent in the drill and practice approach: increased exposure to targeted skills, active participation, immediate correction of misunderstandings, and the gradual progression from simple to complex tasks. Such instructional features are often lacking in conventional, teacher-centered methods, which tend to emphasize passive reception over active engagement (Lawal & Yusuf, 2022).

**5.2.2 Gender Differences in Achievement**

The absence of significant gender differences in achievement among students exposed to drill and practice aligns with prior studies that suggest well-structured, inclusive interventions benefit both male and female learners equitably (Eze & Ede, 2024). This finding is important in the context of Nigerian education, where gender disparities in academic performance have been widely reported. The result implies that, when instructional strategies are designed to be accessible and engaging for all students, potential gender gaps in achievement can be minimized (Adeyemi, 2021).

**5.2.3 Implications for English Language Instruction**

The results underscore the importance of integrating structured drill and practice into English Language teaching, especially in contexts where conventional methods have led to persistent underachievement. Drill and practice not only improve academic outcomes but also foster greater learner confidence and motivation through repeated successes and timely feedback (Ola-Busari & Oyetunde, 2023). The equitable benefits across gender further suggest that such interventions can contribute to addressing broader educational equity goals in Katsina State and similar contexts.

**5.3 Comparison with Previous Research**

The findings of this study are in agreement with Eze and Ede (2024), who found that drill and practice strategies significantly enhanced grammar achievement among junior secondary students. Similarly, Ola-Busari and Oyetunde (2023) reported improved language mastery and retention following the implementation of drill-based interventions. These results collectively support the theoretical assertion that active engagement and structured reinforcement are critical mechanisms for effective learning (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021).

**5.4 Limitations**

While the study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged:

- The use of intact classes may introduce pre-existing differences that could influence outcomes, though ANCOVA was used to control for these.
- The study was conducted in a single school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts within Katsina State or Nigeria as a whole.
- The focus was exclusively on academic achievement; other dimensions such as long-term retention, student interest, or transferability to other language domains were not assessed.

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**5.6 Practical and Policy Implications**

The findings recommend the adoption of structured drill and practice strategies in English Language classrooms, supported by teacher professional development programs that emphasize active, feedback-rich instruction. Education policymakers and school administrators in Katsina State should facilitate access to instructional materials and training needed for effective implementation. By institutionalizing

these practices, schools can improve English Language achievement and promote educational equity for all learners.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the effects of drill and practice instructional strategies on the academic achievement of junior secondary school students in English Language at the Demonstration School, Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, Katsina State. Employing a rigorous quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test control group design, the research provides compelling evidence that structured drill and practice interventions significantly enhance students' achievement in English Language compared to conventional, teacher-centered methods.

The findings affirm that systematic repetition, incremental task complexity, and immediate feedback—hallmarks of effective drill and practice—play a pivotal role in facilitating English Language learning. Students exposed to the intervention not only improved their mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction but also demonstrated higher overall achievement scores after the instructional period. Importantly, the positive effects of drill and practice were observed across both male and female students, indicating that the strategy is equitable and effective regardless of gender.

These results are consistent with existing literature, which underscores the benefits of active learner engagement and practice-based pedagogies for academic improvement (Eze & Ede, 2024; Ola-Busari & Oyetunde, 2023). The study also advances our understanding of instructional methods that can address the persistent challenges of low English Language achievement in Nigerian junior secondary schools, particularly within Katsina State.

However, the study's scope was limited to a single demonstration school, and outcomes were measured over a relatively short intervention period. Thus, while the results are promising, broader research across multiple schools and longer durations is recommended to confirm and extend these findings.

In summary, the study concludes that integrating structured drill and practice into English Language instruction can lead to substantial gains in student achievement and can do so in a manner inclusive of both genders. By adopting this evidence-based strategy, educators and policymakers have a practical pathway to improving English Language outcomes and, by extension, the overall academic success of junior secondary students in Katsina State and similar contexts.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to stakeholders—teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and researchers—seeking to enhance English Language achievement among junior secondary school students in Katsina State and similar contexts:

### 7.1 For English Language Teachers

**Integrate Structured Drill and Practice into Daily Instruction:**

Teachers should routinely incorporate well-designed drill and practice activities targeting grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction in their English Language lessons. These activities should progress from simple to complex and provide immediate feedback to reinforce learning and correct misconceptions.

**Adopt Active Learning Practices:**

Rather than relying solely on lecture-based teaching, teachers are encouraged to create interactive classroom environments where students actively participate, practice skills, and receive ongoing guidance.

**Differentiate Practice for Learner Needs:**

Teachers should adapt drill and practice exercises to address the varying proficiency levels and learning paces of their students, ensuring that all learners, regardless of gender or background, derive maximum benefit from instruction.

**7.2 For School Administrators**

**Provide Resources and Materials:**

Administrators should support teachers by making available the necessary instructional materials—such as worksheets, practice booklets, and digital resources—required for effective drill and practice sessions.

**Facilitate Professional Development:**

Regular training and workshops should be organized to equip teachers with up-to-date strategies for designing, implementing, and assessing drill and practice interventions in English Language teaching.

**Monitor and Support Instructional Quality:**

School leadership should establish mechanisms for classroom observation and feedback, ensuring that the drill and practice methodology is implemented with fidelity and that teachers receive constructive support.

**7.3 For Educational Policymakers**

**Incorporate Drill and Practice into Curriculum Guidelines:**

Policy documents and English Language curricula should explicitly recommend the use of drill and practice as a core instructional strategy, supported by sample activities and implementation guidelines.

**Promote Equity in Instruction:**

Policymakers should ensure that all schools—urban and rural, public and private—have the capacity and resources to implement effective instructional practices, with a focus on gender equity and inclusive education.

**7.4 For Researchers**

**Expand Research Scope and Duration:**

Future research should replicate this study across multiple schools, local government areas, and over longer periods to validate the findings and assess long-term retention and transfer of learning.

**Investigate Additional Outcomes:**

Researchers are encouraged to examine the impact of drill and practice on other learning outcomes, such as student motivation, attitudes toward English Language, and performance in other subject areas.

**Explore Technology-Enhanced Drill and Practice:**

With increasing access to digital tools, studies should evaluate the effectiveness of computer-assisted drill and practice interventions compared to traditional paper-based methods.

**7.5 For Parents and the Wider Community**

**Support Practice Beyond the Classroom:**

Parents and guardians should encourage students to engage in regular English Language practice at home, utilizing available resources and reinforcing positive attitudes toward language learning.

By implementing these recommendations, all stakeholders can contribute to improving English Language achievement and closing performance gaps among junior secondary school students in Katsina State and beyond. The sustained adoption of evidence-based practices such as drill and practice holds promise for transforming language education and supporting the broader goals of educational quality and equity.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The researchers hereby acknowledge and appreciate the College Management of Isa Kaita College of Education, Dutsinma, Katsina state and TETfund for the opportunity and award of research grant via letter ref number TETF/DR&D/CE/COE/KATSINA/IBR/2026/VOL.1 dated 26th March, 2026 in order to carry out this research.

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