

A discourse analysis on the language of English classroom assessment and evaluation on students' performance in English grammar examination in a University in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Complete dependence on cognitive classroom assessments for evaluation of students' performance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria at the expense of the psychomotor and affective domains is detrimental to the students, their future careers, education and the existence of harmony in the society at large. Students, whose intelligent quotients are very low on mental measurements, will finally be put on probation and at last may be asked to withdraw since they cannot pass the imbalanced and one-sided tests and examinations' assessment criteria adopted by these institutions. These asymmetrical tests and examinations are dependent on the choice of words employed in classroom assessments and evaluations by the teachers. This is a real problem that does not only affect the students but their parents, sponsors, guardians and the society. This study therefore investigates the discourse analysis of assessment criteria for students' evaluations in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This is a qualitative research that utilizes randomly selected data from Second Semesters' English Syntax papers and mark sheets of 2019/2020 and 2020/ 2021 sessions from the Department of Languages of a university in Ogun State, Nigeria. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1975)¹ Semantic inferentialism Approach is adopted for this study. One of the major findings is that the language of assessments for evaluations of students in English Syntax is highly official, impersonal; replete with directives and geared towards favouring the prominence and display of cognitive skills in learning. The study therefore recommends that students' assessment and evaluations should be based on the three domains of affective, cognitive and psychomotor as stipulated by the 2004 Revised Version of National Policy on Education rather than totally dependent on cognitive domain of learning.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, classroom assessment, evaluation, intelligent quotient, semantic inferentialism

¹Hegel, Georg Wilhel Friedrich, 1975

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inferential_role_semantics#:~:text=Overview,what%20is%20now%20called%20inferentialism. (accessed 8 October 2021)



Introduction

Classroom assessment and evaluation in Nigeria's institutions of higher learning is based on continuous assessments (CA) and examinations (either traditional or online). They are indispensable tools in measuring the knowledge, skills, behaviours, attitudes, personalities, talents, etc. of the learners. Pollard et al (2005)² observe that "assessment has become more and more important in education" (321). It is one of the "most required parts of education processes in which students' learning are measured by diverse procedures" (Koksal & Ulum 2018)³. Assessment and evaluation are very necessary in all educational levels because they are criteria that teachers use in judging and grading their students. According to (Arends 2007)⁴ assessment and evaluation are "of utmost importance to students and parents." (208); so, it is not only the teachers and their students that appreciate these educational potential tools but parents and even guardians (that are interested in their students' or wards' assessments and evaluation).

Without assessment and evaluation, it will be very difficult for the teachers to determine whether or not the learners have actually achieved anything. It will also be confusing for both students, their sponsors or guardians to understand the level of their students and wards' comprehension and utilization of the knowledge, skills and the like translated and transferred to them by the teachers. The need to assess and evaluate necessitated the curriculum developers to formulate a policy that guides the performance of students in classrooms. Section I, Paragraph 9 (g) of 2004 revised version of the National Policy on education states that the "educational assessment and evaluation in Nigeria shall be liberalized by their being based in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individuals."

Unfortunately, the assessment and evaluation of students in Nigerian institutions of learning seem to be lopsided, one-sided and a paper-work; because of their overwhelmingly concentrations on cognitive domain at the expense of other domains. Also, many Nigerian teachers have not applied Sonmez' (2017)⁵ association domains of learning as they isolate and give preference to cognitive domain only. Having observed the trends in educational assessment and evaluation, Bloom⁶ submits that many people's conclusion is that learning is centred on the cognitive function only. As a result of this

²Pollard, Andrew, Collins, Janet, Maddock Mandy, Simco, Neil, Swaffield, Sue, Warin, Jo & Warwick, Paul, *Reflective teaching*. (London. Continuum 2005)

³Koksal, D. & Ulum, O. G. Language assessment through Bloom's Taxonomy. *Journal of language and linguistics*. 2018, 12 (2) 76-88mm (accessed 2 February 2021) file:///C:/Users/Teacher/Desktop/Bloomfield%20's%20Taxonomy%20Grammar.pdf

⁴Arends, I. Richard, *Learning to teach* (Boston: McGraw-Hill International, 2007), p 208

⁵Bloom, Benjamin, Affective Domain of Learning, 2019, <https://thepeakperformancecenter.com/educational-learning/learning/process/domains-of-learning/affective-domain/> (accessed 20 January 2022)

⁶Bloom, Benjamin, Affective Domain of Learning, 2019, <https://thepeakperformancecenter.com/educational-learning/learning/process/domains-of-learning/affective-domain/> (accessed 20 January 2022)

submission, the implementation of these criteria seems not to be there at all. Ogunleye et al (2015)⁷ explain that that “has fallen short of expectation “ (P2). To have a balanced assessment and evaluations of students’ performance, therefore, there is need for teachers to apply, not only, the cognitive domains of learning but the affective, the psychomotor and probably, the intuitive domains.

Considering the indispensability of classroom assessments and evaluations, cautions should be taken by the assessors and evaluators (teachers) to ensure that they choose lexical items that make their assessments and evaluations easily comprehensible for their students. There is therefore the need for them to select clear , simply to understand, non-verbose, straightforward and unambiguous vocabularies and expressions that students understand at all levels of their education. Grammatical items that gear towards the application of especially the affective and psychomotor should be deliberately introduced and used by the teachers in English classroom’s assessments and evaluation.

This paper, therefore, is an attempt to ensure that language is used appropriately to capture (especially) the affective and psychomotor domains. This work is a discourse analysis on classroom assessments and evaluations of students by their teachers in tertiary institutions and uses a university in Ogun State (Mountain Top University) as a case study. It attempts to show how language should be used in conducting examinations and tests that do not favour only the cognitive aspect of learning but the psychomotor and affective domains. It also attempts to suggest to the language teachers the grammatical items that pay attentions not only on the cognitive aspects of students’ performance of their assessment and evaluation; rather on the utilization of the said lexical items on all the domains of learning. In so doing, it may curtail the failure on the number of students that may be asked to withdraw due to their poor performance or even rusticated based on violations of school rules and regulations (as a result of the psychological traumas that they might have passed through due to their inabilities to meet up with their tests or examinations requirements). Again, the society may be made a better place if the students after graduation, become employed, employable and employers of labour.

The Concept of Assessment

Assessment is polymorphous term that is defined to suit every field of human discourse. In other words, it have many and different meanings depending on the context of us. The psychologists, educationists, engineers, sociologists, accountants, economists, just to name but a few, have varying definitions of what an assessment means. This prompted (Bachman 2004 as cited in Ghaichai (2016)⁸ to maintain that it “appears that there is no agreement on the definite

⁷Ogunleye, AkinyemiWumi&Olawumi Victoria Omolayo, Internaational Journal of social science 5(1) 2016. Classroom assessment in Secondary schools in Nigerian <http://ndpublisher.in/admin/issues/IJSSV5N1a.pdf> pp 2-6 (accessed 2 January 2022)

⁸Ghaicha, Abdalla, Theoretical framework for educational assessment: A synoptic review 2016, (PP 212 –231). *Journal of Education & Practice* 7 (24) 2016, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1112912.pdf>(accessed 9 January 2022)

meaning of it" (p6). Be as it may, (Cronbach 1990 as cited in Whiston 2017)⁹ defines assessment as "a systematic procedure of observing behaviour and describing it with the aim of numerical scales or fixed category"(2). Yambi (2018 as cited in Brown 1990)¹⁰ observes that assessment relates to "series of measures used to determine a complex attribute of an individual or group of individuals."(1).

It is the basis for identifying problems, planning their interventions, evaluating and /or diagnosing clients and informing clients (Balkin&Juhnke2018),¹¹ and possibly attempting to find solutions to the diagnosed problems. It is also the collection of information so as to "identify, analyse, evaluate and address the problems, issues and circumstances" (Ibid., p 2) that one may be experiencing or have experienced. It is a "part of educational process where faculty instructors appraise students' achievements by collecting, measuring, analyzing, synthesizing and interpreting relevant information about a particular object of interest in their performance under controlled conditions in relations to curricula objectives set for their levels, and according to the procedures that are systematic and substantively grounded,"(Ibid., p 213) .

Classroom Assessment (CLA)

Just as other fields of discourse relate assessment to their data (such as psychological data, political data, Agricultural data, chemical data, etc.), classrooms-related data are gathered through various tests and examinations based on the domains of learning. Ogunleye & Omolayo (2006)¹² observe that it is the process of gathering data and fashioning them into interpretable form for decision-making. It is the language of assessment and evaluation that determines the tests on any domain of learning. CLA, according to (William & Black 1960 as cited in Azis (2012)¹³ CLA is an "evidence of performance (540) commonly used in many ways in language testing and educational measurement domains" (Bachman 2004 as cited in Ghaichai 2016)¹⁴. The used of CLA is also unique to every nation in the world as curriculum planners design what they are made up of. The case is not different from that of Nigeria.

CLA in Nigeria therefore is expected to be centred on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning for students; but, it seems that the reverse is

⁹Whitson C. Susan, Principles of application of assessment in counselling 5th edition, 2017

¹⁰YambiYomas de Aquino Caluyua, Assessment and Evaluation in Education , 2018
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342918149_ASSESSMENT_AND_EVALUATION_IN_EDUCATION(accessed 5 May2029)

¹¹Balkin,S. Richard and Juhnke , Assessment in counselling practice and application, (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

¹²Ogunleye, AkinyemiWumi&Olawumi Victoria Omolayo, International Journal of social science 5(1) 2016. Classroom assessment in Secondary schools in Nigerian
<http://ndpublisher.in/admin/issues/IJSSV5N1a.pdf> pp 2-6 (accessed 2 January 2022)

¹³Azis, Astuti, "Teachers' conceptions and use of assessment in student's learning" 2012.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276737290_Teachers'_conceptions_and_use_of_assessment_in_student_learning(accessed 23 January 2022)

¹⁴Ghaicha, Abdalla, Theoretical framework for educational assessment: A synoptic review 2016, (PP 212 –231). *Journal of Education & Practice* 7 (24) 2016,
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1112912.pdf>(accessed 9 January 2022)

the case. Nigeria's assessment procedures run contrary to Nigeria's national policy on education which focuses on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor (Idowu & Esere 2009)¹⁵. This necessitated (Idowu & Esere, *ibid*) to further lament that assessment among teachers in Nigeria is commonly based on cognitive domain. It is also saddening to note that the method of educational evaluations in Nigeria as inherited from the colonial masters is a defective one (Okoye 1996 as cited in Okoloeze et al 2015)¹⁶. Therefore there is the need to consider it critically, hence the importance of this research.

In addition, it should be noted that there are many approaches to assessment; (McAlpine 2002 as cited in Yambi, *ibid*) identifies formative versus summative, informal versus formal, continuous versus final, process versus product and divergent versus convergent assessments. But (Shepard 2019)¹⁷ only identifies formative and summative; which are progressive and conclusive. Shepard further states that they (formative and summative assessments) "must be coherently linked *Ibid.*, p 1" so that the assessors and the evaluators will understand how to apply them appropriately on the students.

Again, it worth adding that assessment is either a partial or holistic /total evaluation of what the teachers have taught the students over a period of time. Partial assessment entails that some things are tested and total assessment means that everything that teachers have taught over a period of time is examined. Again, it can be partial if it concerns only the continuous assessment (CA) and total, if it focuses on both CA and examination.

Again, CLA can be micro or macro in nature; (Ogunleye and Omolayo, *Ibid*), having considered a study on assessment in classrooms in secondary schools in Nigeria, aver that there are macro level of assessment and micro level of assessment in the classrooms. The macro level is centred on the quality of performance in external examinations while the micro level is based on continuous assessments and school based assessments. Also, (Ikaba & Enyindah 2020)¹⁸ investigate the evaluation criteria adopted by students and parents to select higher education in Nigeria and observe that assessment is germane in higher institutions of learning.

Classroom Evaluation (CLE)

Classroom evaluation is the "process of arriving at judgment about abstract entities" (Ghanicha 213). Contrary to some researchers' views, on the sameness of assessments and evaluations, (Yambi, *ibid*) maintains that "assessment and

¹⁵Idowu, Adeyemi.&Esere, O. Mary Portfolio as a tool for assessing students affective learning outcomes in economics in Ebonyi State secondary schools, 2019, American Journal of Educational research, 7(5) 343 –348 (accessed 20 December 2021)

¹⁶Okoloeze, M. Ndubueze,, Iyoke, J. O. , Okoh, S. C &Akubuilu, N, Beatrice. In Journal of Education and Practice. 6 (21) 2015, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1079144.pdf> (accessed 20 January 2022)

¹⁷Shepard, Lorrie A, Classroom assessment to support teaching and learning, 2019, . <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002716219843818> , (accessed 12 January 2020)

¹⁸Ikaba Yirakpoa & Enyindah, Charles 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341535806_Evaluative_Criteria_for_Selection_of_Higher_Education_Institutions_in_Nigeria, (accessed 4 September 2020)

evaluation are two different concepts”; they are indispensable in testing the outcome of the input done by the teachers through their teaching. Students are evaluated through the assignments using either the letter grades and/or number grades to ascertain their performances. In many institutions in Nigeria, “A” is used to stand for 5 points (which is the highest point), “B”, for 4 points, “C”, for 3 points, “D”, for 2 points, “E” for 1 point and “F”, 0 point.

The domains of learning

Three domains of learning, cognitive, affective and psychomotor, (Hogue 2016, 45)¹⁹ exist in our institutions of learning; in addition, (Sommez 2017 developed another model called intuition models and this made up the fourth domain of learning. It is” ideal to explain Benjamin Bloom’s (1956) taxonomies” (Ibid: 45) are highly recognised and used by many scholars especially in educational field ; in (Sonmerz’s 2017, ibid) observation, Bloom’s classification has been widely accepted; but in Nigerian schools, it is only the cognitive domain that is predominantly applied to classroom assessments.

The cognitive taxonomy originated in 1956, affective in 1964; the psychomotor in 1970s and the intuitive domain, possibly in 2017. Skills acquisition by learning such as handwriting, drawing, handling of apparatus, vehicles and equipment, playing of instruments, using of keyboards, dances, games, sporting skills and stage performance are some aspects that are domiciled in the psychomotor domain. Social and personality traits such as beliefs, values, attitudes, interests adjustment, habits, perceptions and social relations are located in affective domain; while the mental skills are located in cognitive domain (Oyesola 1986 as cited by Idowu & Esere ,ibid). The intuitive skills are also located at the mental or cognitive domain.

The taxonomies of the domains of Learning is shown in the table below, starting from the highest levels to the lowest levels.

Table1: Modified from Bloom’s & Sonmez’s taxonomies

Cognitive Domain	Affective Domain	Psychomotor Domain	Intuition Domain
Evaluation	Characterization by value	Origination	Recognising
Evaluation	Organisation	Adaptation	Discrimination
Analysis	Valuing	Complex overt response	Inside Born
Application	Responding	Mechanism	Retention
Comprehension	Receiving	Guided response	The future-past relationship
Knowledge		Set	
		Perception	

¹⁹Hogue, M. Enamul, Three Domains of Learning: Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor. The Journal of EFL Education and Research (JEFLER). 2016 , 2, (2) 45 -52 (accessed 20 December 2021)

(Source: Author)

Cognitive Domain

A lot of people, even the teachers, recognize the cognitive domain and use it maximally. It focuses on the mental aspect of learning. A researcher, (Hogue, ibid) identifies the hierarchy of cognitive domain as evaluation, synthesis, analysis, application, comprehension and knowledge. Lexical items such as “explain, describe, explore and explicate” are clear indicators that lead to the assessments of students’ cognitive abilities during test and examinations.

Affective Domain

This deals with emotional areas; Bloom’s principle of internalization (a process where one’s affect grows from mere awareness stage to a point of internalisation and a manual for constant guide of one’s behaviour) is used in the affective domain. Some lexical items that can be used to explore the affective domain are express, admire, adore and admit.

Sub-categories of Affective Domain

Bloom (1948 as cited in Hogue 2016), explains that there are five categories of affective domains namely characterisation, organisation , valuing , responding and receiving. “Characterization” is the highest level of affective domain. It focuses on the act of an individual internalizing values; this deals with when one works according to the values one has internalized; and one thereby allows the values to work on him/her. “Organisation” deals with ones’ ability to put various values, ideas and information together and relating them to existing beliefs in order to obtain an internally regular philosophy. It also involves one’s ability to prioritise one’s value over another and create a special value system. “Valuing” centres on one’s ability to observe something and worth it. It focuses on one’s value attached to specific thing. “Responding” is the ability of someone to solely participate in learning processes; and “receiving” deals with the awareness of feeling or emotion. It is the lowest category of the affective domain. It involves one’s ability to pay attention and be aware of the existing concepts, ideas and materials.

Psychomotor Domain

The psychomotor domain focuses on skills (Hogue, 45). Handworks of all categories fall under the psychomotor domain. Drawing, matching, working outside the classroom of all sorts are examples of psychomotor skills. The objective of the psychomotor are physical functions, reflex actions and interpretive movements (Hogue 50). Some lexical items that can test or judge a psychomotor domain is “ draw, match, make, cave, curve and beat,

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria

Nigeria has numerous tertiary institutions (Lazyreporta 2016)²⁰, the major types (which are both public and private) are the universities, polytechnics, monotechnics and Colleges of Education. They are called higher institutions because of their possibility of being ranked as one being placed higher than the other. Many of these institutions offer courses (Fine Art Performing Art, Theatre Act, Music, Agriculture, Engineering, Chemistry, and many others) that are capable of conveniently assessing all the domains of learning, but unfortunately, these domains are mostly reduced to cognitive assessments and evaluations. One of the private universities in Nigeria is a Christian-based university, Mountain Top University.

Mountain Top University located at Mowe, Ogun State, Nigeria, is sarcastically said to be the only university on top of the mountain. It was founded by in 2015 by Dr. D. K. Olukoya, the General Overseer of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (online university compass)²¹ It has over twenty departments; some of which are Departments of Languages, Accounting, Business Administration, Banking and Finance, Biochemistry, Computer Science, Mass Communication, Industrial Relations and Personal management, Geophysics and Microbiology.

It has the Departments of music, Fine Arts, entrepreneurial departments, Food science and Technology, Physics, Chemistry, etc. were the psychomotor domains can be overtly and easily tested. Even in some departments whereby the psychomotor domain is covertly shown such as languages, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Industrial Relations, etc. yet all psychomotor tests and examinations can be done.

It is possible to test and evaluate students based on all the domains of learning if the teachers teaches the students right and eventually select the lexical items that will enable them to explore the said domains. Contrary to this, teachers in Nigeria's institutions of learning concentrate on the cognitive domain only. It worth noting that at the end of the day, even the psychomotor and affective teachings and measurements giving to students are still reduced to the cognitive assessments and evaluations. For example, in a situation whereby students should be taught and asked to build and use computers, they are asked to explain what a computer is and they uses of computers in the society.

Language, Discourse and Discourse Analysis

Language is man's greatest tool in assessing and evaluation students at all levels of education in the world. According to (Varkika 2021)²² language is of "crucial importance in the individual development of humans". It therefore implies that the educational development of students can be attained through the language of assessments and evaluations. Without it, assessments and evaluations of students may be reduced to efforts and exercises in futility. The teacher's choice of words and expressions, will determine what the students are actually

²⁰Lazyreporta 2016, *Nairaland Forum*. <https://www.nairaland.com/2916155/3-major-types-tertiary-institutions>. (accessed 20 June 2021)

²¹<https://universitycompass.com> (accessed 22 January, 2022)

²²Vartika, K. *Effective communication in the workplace: how and why*. 2021, www.linkedin.com.

expected to do. It will enable the students to respond to the teacher's assessment either positively or negatively depending on whether or not they understand the teachers' tests or otherwise. It will also indicate what domain of learning the teacher tests his /her students.

Discourse is language in used for communication (Cooks 1989 as cited in McCarthy and Clancy 2016)²³. It can be analysed structurally where the features such as acts, moves, lessons and transactions are analysed or functionally in terms of what it is used to perform. It is the use of spoken or written language in social context (Nordquist 2018)²⁴. Discourse can be used in analyzing any data using any framework; and one of the frameworks that can be used in discourse is discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis (DA) simply means evaluating language in use either in the spoken language or the written language. All aspects of human language can be analysed using discourse analysis approach; in other words, the theory is multifaceted as it cuts across all fields of human endeavour. van Dijk, (1985 as cited in Gee & Green 1998)²⁵ explains that DA draws on discourse theories and methods from other disciplines such as Applied linguistics, Law, literary studies, psychology, sociolinguistics, Sociology, etc. Also, Chambers, (2007)²⁶ affirms van Dijk's observation.

DA centres on studying and analysis the uses of language (Hodges, kuper and Reeves , 2008)²⁷. Hodges et al identify formal linguist discourse analysis as involving a structured analysis of text; empirical discourse analysis that considers broad themes and functions of language in action using conversational analysis and genre analysis; and critical discourse analysis which scholars in cultural , sociological and philosophical studies use to broaden all social , individuals and institutional practices. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is said to be "rooted in constructivism" (Hodges et al, 570).

Again, (Reisigl 2014 as cited in Nonhoff 2017)²⁸ observes that CDA has six major varieties: (i) the Siegfried Jager's Duisburg group that is focused on

²³McCarthy, Michael &Clancy , Brain, From language as system to language as discourse. 2018,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328334800_From_Language_as_System_to_Language_as_Discourse#fullTextFileContent(accessed 2 August 2021)

²⁴Nordquist Richard "Discourse: Definition and Examples" 2019, https://www.thoughtco.com/discourse_language_term_1690464. (accessed 10 December 2021)

²⁵Gee, James Paul & Green, Judith L , *Discourse Analysis, Learning and Social Practice: A Methodological Study* , 1998, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0091732X023001119> (accessed 10/1/ 2022)

²⁶Chamers, Angela, Language learning as discourse analysis: Implications for the LSP learning environment, 2007, <https://journals.openedition.org/asp/483> (accessed 15/1/ 2022)

²⁷Hodges, Brain David, KuperAyelet& Reeves Scott, Discourse Analysis, 2008, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23156530_Discourse_analysis pp 570 --572 (accessed 7 January 2022)

²⁸Nonhoff, Martin , *Discourse Analysis as Critique*, 2017 <https://www.nature.com/articles/palcomms201774>(accessed 20 March 2020)

Michel Foucault and Jurgen Link; (ii) the Oldenburg group connected to the Duisburg group but focused more on linguistic analysis of single texts; (iii) the socio-cognitive approach of Teun van Dijk; (iv) the approach of Norman Fairclough that anchors on social theory; (v) the socio-semiotic CDA that is in line with Gunter Kress and Theo van Dijk; and (vi) the discourse –historical approach that is connected to Ruth Woak's works. This study focuses on functional discourse analysis but draws its theoretical base on a semantic theory of inferentialism by Jerry Alan Fodor.

Semantic Inferentialism

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel is said to be the early proponent of inferentialism(Wikipedia)²⁹; Robert Brandom, Gibbert Harman, Paul Horwich, Ned Block and Luca Incurvati are contemporary founders. The term Inferential Role Semantics (IRS) was coined by Jerry Fodor (Wikipedia, *ibid*); IRS can also be called semantic inferentialism, conceptual role semantic, procedural semantics, Referential Semantic Theory (Wikipedia, *ibid*). This theory focuses on an “apparent relation between a word and the world” (Online Britannica)³⁰. It centres on the belief that the meaning of an expression is what that expression applies to. According to Piattelli-Palmarini³¹, the meaning of a concept is said to be “functionally determined”. The meaning of words is its use in communication and in social interaction (Block)³². For meaningless expressions, Referential Semantics considers them as meaningless. It is worth noting that “two expressions may have the same referent without having the same meaning” (Online Britannica).

This study adopts Jerry Alan Fodor (1960s)³³'s Inferential Role Semantics which focuses on meaning; meaning is said to be closely related to truth conditions ; they are shared ; and word meanings are considered as concepts and all concepts are applicable to things. Also, all concepts are true of a particular thing and “only” of that thing. Central to Fodorian Semantic Inferentialism is the concept of association. This means that everything is associated with other things; meaning is not “constitutive”. According to Fodor, “cat” is associated with “mouse; hence “assessment” and “evaluation” are associated to tests and examinations. Fodor maintains that meanings are not the same as the “mental pictures” or images or associations that a word may elicit in each individual (Piatelli-Palarinin, *ibid*).

Methodology

²⁹[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inferential_role_semantics#:~:text=Contemporary%20proponents%20of%20semantic%20inferentialism,to%20the%20theory%20of%20meaning.\(accessed 15 October 2021\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inferential_role_semantics#:~:text=Contemporary%20proponents%20of%20semantic%20inferentialism,to%20the%20theory%20of%20meaning.(accessed%2015%20October%202021))

³⁰<https://www.britannica.com/science/semantics/Historical-and-contemporary-theories-of-meaning#ref1051358>(accessed 2 April 2020)

³¹Piatelli-Palarinin, M, A powerful critique of semantic networks:Jerry Fodor's atomism.missimo@u.arizona.edu. (accessed 12 April, 2020)

³²Block, Ned, Semantics, conceptual role. Forthcoming in TheRoutledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. www.nyu.edu (accessed, 21 January 22)

³³Piatelli-Palarinin, M, A powerful critique of semantic networks:Jerry Fodor's atomism.missimo@u.arizona.edu. (accessed 12 April, 2020)

This study adopts a qualitative research design; data were randomly selected from 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 first Second Semesters' syntax papers and mark sheets from the Department of Languages of Mountain Top University, Ogun State Nigeria. Random Sampling Technique was used to extract samples of data used in this work. The question papers and the lecturers' assessments, evaluations and students' performances (from the ENG 401 and ENG 202 marksheets, English syntax courses) were selected and presented; and analysed using the Inferential Semantics Theory.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data are first presented (accordingly before they are analysed). Excerpts of data retrieved from syntax questions and marksheets used in assessing and evaluating students in the Department of Languages of the university in question are used in this study.

Data Presentation 1 (a) : Excerpt from 2020/2021 First Semester Syntax question



**MOUNTAIN TOP UNIVERSITY
LAGOS-IBADAN EXPRESSWAY
PRAYER CITY
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES
2020/ 2021 FIRST SEMESTER EXAMINATION**

COURSE TITLE: NEW TRENDS IN SYNTAX

COURSE CODE: ENG 401

LEVEL: 400 CREDIT UNITS: 3C

TIME ALLOWED: 3 HOURS

Instruction: Answer all questions from Section A

SECTION A: MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. _____ accounts for observed real-world data and native speaker's judgment (a) Observationally adequate grammar (b) Explanatorily adequate grammar (c) Descriptively adequate grammar (d) Normatively adequate grammar
2. A perceived and experienced elements that undergoes actions or changes in state is called _____ (a) goal (b) theme (c) objective (d) location
3. _____ is associated with direct and indirect objects (a) Theta role (b) External theta role (c) Internal theta role (d) the theta criterion
4. _____ is inserted where there is no other option for supporting inflectional affixes (a) Null- insertion (b) Expletive insertion (c) Implosives insertion (d) Do-insertion
5. $V \rightarrow T$ (in head-to-head movement) is motivated by _____ (a) phonology (b) syntax (c) morphology (d) semantics
6. $T \rightarrow C$ Raising is done where there is _____ empty- θ [+Q] complementizer. (a) linguistically (b) morphologically (c) phonologically (d) semantically

7. "Equi" is also called _____ (a) obligatory control (b) subject control (c) object control (d) optional control
8. _____ is the movement between D-Structure and S-structure. (a) Covert movement (b) Overt movement (c) Economy condition (d) Wh-in-situ
9. The singular phrase structure rule used in Bare Phrase Structure (BPS) is called (a) merge (b) scope (c) case (d) set
10. In a syntactic structure, if "D" is immediately dominated by "C", then "C" is a _____ of "D". (a) daughter (b) mother (c) sister (d) parent

SECTION B: THEORY

Answer **question 1** and any other two questions.

1. (a) Write short notes on any two of the following
 - (i) The Minimalist Programme
 - (ii) X-bar theory
 - (iii) Generative Grammar
 - (iv) Constituency Test
 - (v) C-Command
2. Use the labelled bracketing technique to assign each word in each of the sentences below to a grammatical category which represents how it is being used in the position in which it occurs in the sentence concerned. Give reasons in support of your proposed categorisation, highlight any analytic problems which arise, and comment on any interesting properties of the relevant words.
 - (a) He was feeling disappointed at only obtaining average grades in the morphology exercise
 - (b) Student counsellors knows that money troubles can cause considerable stress
 - (c) Opposition politicians are pressing for election debates to receive better television coverage.

Data Analysis 1(a) : Assessment on ENG 401

The excerpt above indicates Section A (which contains 10 objective questions) and Section B (with 2 theory questions). All objective questions 1-10 are representatives. All the questions are the cognitive-domain based examination (and none accounts for either the psychomotor or affective domain). In applying IRS to the analysis of the questions above, it can be stated that the questions are actually what they lecturers mean to assess and evaluate the students. The predicators, "account" in question 1, "undergoes" in question 2, "is" in questions 3 to 8 and 10 and "used" in question 9 and "write" and "Use" in section B in questions 1 and 2 are all potential lexical actions that lead to the application of cognitive domain by students and eventual assessment and evaluations by the English teacher in this regard. All the questions are devoid of lexical items such as "apply" "do", "show" "practise", and "draw" which would have drawn the students' attention to other domains of learning.

Data Presentation 1 (b) : ENG 401 Mark sheet (Results)

**MOUNTAIN TOP UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES
400 LEVEL, 2020-2021 SESSION
FIRST SEMESTER EXAMINATION RESULT**

ENG 401: NEW TRENDS IN SYNTAX

S/N	Matric. No.	Name	30%	70%	100%	L.G	G.P.
1.	17020401001	Itoje Oluwatunmise	27	18	45	D	2
2.	17020401002	Oluwasanimilo Goodness	20	26	46	D	2
3.	17020401003	Adeyemi Deborah	25	20	45	D	2
5.	17020401007	Oladipo Oluwaferanmi	20	47	67	B	4
6.	17020401008	Oluwanowo Pluwatomisin	20	48	68	B	4
7.	18020401008		20	30	50	C	3

NOTE: L.G. (Letter Grade), G.P.(Grade Point), 30% (C.A.), 70 (Exam), 100% (Total).

Dr Anana Mariam
Course Lecturer

Prof. E. A. Adedun
H.O.D

Table 2**Data Analysis 1(b) : Evaluation on ENG 401**

The evaluation on Table 2 above shows that Seven (7) students were graded; out of this, only one student got a "C", 4 students had, "Ds" and two, "Bs". The evaluation above is based on the cognitive questions asked as shown in the data presented in 1(b). We can infer from this result that the students' evaluation is imbalance as the affective and psychomotor domains are neglected and that the three students that had Ds would have done better than that if the neglected domains were to be tested and evaluated. The grades of 'C' and "Ds" is inferentially connected with the average performance of students in the examination and the nature of questions asked in the said examination while that of "B" is connected to good performance and possibly due to the good cognitive ability of this student.

It can also be inferred that the students who have been awarded "Bs" my feel fulfilled, satisfied and elated while those with "Fs" will be , disappointed , devastated, disorganized and infuriated. We can as well deduce that those who scored high may perform well in the society while those who failed may not.

Data Presentation 2 (a): Excerpt from 2019/2020 First Semester Syntax question



**MOUNTAIN TOP UNIVERSITY
LAGOS-IBADAN EXPRESSWAY
PRAYER CITY**

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES

2019/ 2020 SECOND SEMESTER EXAMINATION

COURSE TITLE: ADVANCED ENGLISH SYNTAX

COURSE CODE: ENG202

LEVEL: 200 CREDIT UNITS: 2C

TIME ALLOWED: 2 HOURS

Instruction: Answer all questions from Section A

SECTION A: MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

SECTION A

1. Any speaker of a human language can produce and understand a(n)_____ number of sentence.
(a) Finite (b) fixed (c) infinite (d) few
2. Mechanisms such as _____ and _____ that make the number of sentence limitless.
(a) Coordination, aspiration, deletion
(b) Coordination, modification, clause insertion
(c) Modification, liaison, inversion
(d) Clause insertion, suppletion, coordination
3. _____ are composed of discrete units that are combined by rules.
(a) words (b) phrases (c) sounds (d) sentences
4. The part of the grammar that represents a speaker's knowledge of sentences and their structures is called _____. (a) syntax (b) semantics (c) morphology (d) pragmatics
5. The meaning of a sentence depends largely on the order in which _____ occur in a sentence. (a) sounds (b) phrases (c) words (d) morphemes
6. Sentences are not simply random string of words; they conform to specific patterns determined by the _____ rules of the language. (a) grammatical (b) morphological (c) syntactic (d) phonological
7. Intuitions about which sentences are grammatical in a language are called _____.
(a) innateness (b) grammaticality judgments (c) artificial intelligence (d) native intelligence
8. Syntactic knowledge goes beyond being able to decide which strings are grammatical and which are not. It also accounts for _____ in expressions (a) ambiguity (b) similarity (c) differences (d) parallelism
9. _____ reveal the grammatical relations among words of a sentence and tell us when structural differences result in meaning differences and when they do not. (a) tree diagrams (b) phrase structure rules (c) syntactic rules (d) lexical rules
10. The natural groupings of a sentence are called _____. (a) phrases (b) constituents (c) morphs (d) units

SECTION B

Answer Question ONE and any Other Two Questions

1. Identify the form and function of each of the underlined expressions in the following passage.
- 'Most Americans live in urban areas. Cities offer "people" a wide variety of activities. They also "provide" many job opportunities. Offices and factories "are often located in cities". "Yet" rural life has advantages. Small towns can seem "friendlier". People usually know "their" neighbours. There is "more open space", the pace is slower. What kind of place should you live "in"? Let your heart be your guide.
- 3a. With copious examples, show the difference between lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity?
- 3b. How do syntactic rules account for structural ambiguity?
5. Write short notes on the following
- (a) X-bar theory
 - (b) Phrase structure rules

Data Analysis 2(a) : Assessment on ENG 202

The relationships between the lexical items, "can produce and understand" and the world in question 1 are inharmonious; the two are quite formal, distant and separated. The word "can" fall under the concept of "probability", either "yes" or "no", whether "good" or "bad". The word, "make" in question 2, "are" in questions 3, 6, 7 and 9, and "reveal" in question 10 are all tended to testing cognitive abilities at the expense of both psychomotor and affective domain. From the the choice of lexical items it is evident that the skills ability and affective abilities are neglected in the assessments of students in English Grammar. We can infer from this that students may graduates and find it difficult to fit into the world of works where all the domains learning are needed. The society may fast produce graduates who are good at "theories" rather than "functions" . This may be detrimental to the society as it will accommodates graduates with who are unemployable.

Again the intention of the addresser (the teacher) , even if it is not misinterpreted by the students, have nothing to offer them rather than abstract ideas which may function little in their daily interactions with the world outside the school. Once these students graduate, these theories may have little or no advantage to them due to the present lack of employment situation in Nigeria; which compels everyone to be self-employed; and in a self-employment situation, the psychomotor and affective skills are needed more than the cognitive skills.

Data Presentation 2(b) : ENG 202 Mark sheet

**MOUNTAIN TOP UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES
200 LEVEL, 2019-2020 SESSION
SECOND SEMESTER EXAMINATION RESULT**

ENG 202: ADVANCED ENGLISH SYNTAX I

S/N	MATRIC. NO.	NAME	30 %	70 %	100 %	L.G.	G.P.
1	15020401004	Iyanu Ayeobasan	16	34	50	C	3
2.	16020401005	Olaseinde Tope-Ajayi	-	32	32	F	0
3.	18020401001	Omowumi Ige-olugboye	14	17	31	F	0
4.	18020401002	Precious Yusuf	15	28	43	F	0
5.	18020401003	Peculiar Omokhua,	18	23	41	F	0
6.	18020401004	Onyinye favour Francis	16	39	55	C	3
7.	18020401005	Mojolao luwaOsho,	16	34	50	C	3
8.	18020401006	Samuel Oloniyo	16	27	43	F	0
9..	18020401009	Damilare Oyebade	10	29	39	F	0
10.	19020401007	John Oyinlola	12	22	34	F	0
11.	19020401012	Adebimpe Adejumo	16	31	47	D	2
12.	19020401017	Oluwatosinn Badejo	10	30	40	F	0

NOTE: L.G.(Letter Grade), G.P.(Grade Point), 30% (C.A.), 70 (Exam), 100% (Total).

DrAdemola-Adeoye
Course Lecturer

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H.O.D

Table 3

Data analysis 2(b) : Evaluation in ENG 202

The evaluation of ENG 202 reveals that out of the 12 students that wrote ENG 202 only three students passed; 2 score “Cs” and one, a “D” while others score “Fs”. From this result, we can deduce that the examination was difficult; and /or that the students did not understand what the lecturer was teaching them or that some of the students who failed did not attend classes. With the tag of “Fs” in their results, this can semantically be interpreted that these students will carry this course over to 300 levels since the status of it is “C” (i.e. “compulsory”). It is also possible that those who failed other compulsory courses may find it difficult to slot this in their 300 course forms thereby making them to continue to carry it over to the 400 level or even have extra year to tackle with it.

These “Cs” , a “D” are associated with mediocrity and “Fs” with failure. This is no other ways these can be interpreted apart from what they are and what they mean. The students who are graded with “Fs” for instance, may not change their status of “Fs” to “As” (i.e. unsuccessfulness to excellent performance) in

ENG 202 examination, even if they tell their colleagues, parents or guardians that they had passed well.

Findings

From the analysis above, all ENG 401 and ENG 202 questions focus on the cognitive domain and at the neglect of the affective and psychomotor domains. These are evident in the choice of lexical items employed by the lecturers. Also, the language of English Grammar classroom assessments and evaluations is direct and strict. There is no flexibility of use at all. It is either “pass” or “fail” leaving those who fail to pass through all sort of psychological traumas. Its strictness informs the invocation of either joy or otherwise in the heart of the recipients.

It (the language of English classroom assessment and evaluation) is official (devoid of informality). Representatives are dominantly applied in asking objective questions. All the questions employ implied directives which make it impossible for students to decide otherwise. The language of English grammar assessment and evaluation is highly impersonal, devoid of personal sentiments; it is the language that creates a gap/ distance between the interlocutors, the addressers and the addressees (teachers and the students); this is informed by its high officialdom

Conclusion and Recommendations

Language is a vital tool in all aspects of classroom assessments and evaluations. It expresses our “thought and ideas” and helps us to “encode and externalize our thoughts” (Vyvyan, 2019)³⁴. In English Syntax classroom, the teachers externalize their thoughts by assessing and evaluating their students through texts and examinations and their grading systems. The assessments and evaluations in this classroom are directed and effected through the choice of words used in setting questions and in grading students after their tests and examinations. We have observed that teachers of English apply words that allow students to respond to their cognitive abilities at the expense of their affective and psychomotor skills. Judging student’s performance and the grading system in Nigeria’s institutions of learning have been seen as one-sided and highly official as teachers resort to only the “brainwork” they give and expect their students to feed them back with it. The researcher observes that this is parallel to the present economic situation in Nigeria which has no accommodation for white collar jobs that may demand a maximal expression of the cognitive abilities.

The imbalance choice of lexical items (that favours the assessments and evaluations of students on cognitive aspect of learning) has a far negative implications on students beyond the worlds of classrooms. There seems to be a disconnection between these words and the worlds of works and employability. In other words, the present economic situation in Nigeria calls for graduate to use their psychomotor skills and emotive skills that will enable them to be

³⁴Vyvyan, E, Cognitive Linguistics. A complete guide, (UK: Edigburg University Press, 2019)

self-employed after graduation, therefore the need for teachers to test their affective and psychomotor abilities with a view to getting them prepared for life after school (which will entail more than just their cognitive abilities but the psychomotor and the affective domains of learning).

The researcher therefore recommends that teachers should choose lexical items that enable students to attend to affective and psychomotor domain in testing them. They should also adhere to the educational curriculum which enjoins them to adopt and apply the three domains of learning (at all levels of education and in all classes). All educational stakeholders should ensure that the applications of these domains of learning are done accordingly. The governments (local, state and federal) should ensure that these learning domains are applicable and applied by teachers by doing routine checks on schools (both private and public) in order to implement the assessment and evaluation policies on daily teaching and learning in our educational institutions in Nigeria.