

## **Influence of Psycholinguistic Mentorship on Final Year Students' Research Project at the Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The practice of graduating students' project supervision in Universities in Nigeria is unique mentoring practices that undoubtedly foster psycholinguistic efficiency training on students' proficiency in English language. With 97 participants including lecturers and graduating students, the study examined project supervision as offering psycholinguistics mentoring on students. Data gathered through questionnaire were analyzed using Mean score, Standard deviation, T-test and ANOVA and it was found that both groups of participants considered project supervision a form of psycholinguistics mentoring and the interactions afford learning of English language across gender and different courses of study of participants. The study suggests a de-technicalization of the English use in research reports and collaboration among teachers of different fields of study to facilitate English Registers on different disciplines to make research writings easy and accessible to the society*

**Keywords:** Mentoring; Psycholinguistics; Research; Supervision; English Language.

### **Introduction**

The practice of graduating students embarking on research works in partial fulfillment of requirements for graduation from tertiary institutions in Nigeria is an age-long practice. The practice as old as it has become, very little effort has been devoted however, to examine the imports of the practice on key areas of its influence. This is felt a missing gap deserving special attention as research projects engender a form of closer interactions among students and their academic staff that can be closely studied to reveal the possibility of supervisors- students' interactions facilitating psycholinguistics efficiency particularly in the mastery of the all-important English language.

Psycholinguistics connects the theoretical and empirical essence of both language and psychology to the purely cognitive process of understanding and use of language (Slobin, 1971). This is more an interesting relationship as psychologists are pre-occupied with the cognitive process which enables a child to make use of systems that energize the understanding of meaning of what is said while people are speaking; the linguist on the other hand is concerned with competence of grammar and morphophonemic knowledge underlying language. This interconnection dwells on a human attribute (language) and the process the human learned behavior is mastered. Slobin (1971) also described the English language usage as a body of knowledge residence in the brain of the speaker, while psychology is the science of human behavior.

From this background knowledge, it is manifestly clear that a combination of the knowledge of psychology and linguistics is indeed a great facilitation of the process of teaching and learning of especially English as second language in the Nigerian context. The reality of English preponderance influence in the Nigerian school system (pre and at tertiary levels) by far goes beyond its being the official language of the country and as the only medium of instruction in the education ladder (aside in the few studied local and foreign language) but as Adegbija (1994) submitted, the mastery of English language is indeed a reason most parents send their children to schools.

Steinberg (1993) acknowledged Bloomfield that since linguistic description is about what people have learned, it is trite to capture such endeavor as psychological procedure-human learning. Chomsky (1965) wholly supports the idea of linguistics deriving its roots from psychology by describing language as a branch of cognitive psychology. He used the word grammar to show a form of innate knowledge of language by which a successful linguist is one that aptly his description correctly reflects the knowledge in people's brain (Steinberg, 1993). Chomsky (1965) then broke down the focus of linguistics to:

- a. Explain human use of competence to enable production and understanding of sentence; and
- b. elucidate on processes leading to the acquisition of language competence.

Chomsky's competence (mental grammar) has a secondary other leg in performance which works on words production (derived from competence) (Steinberg, 1993).

Unoh (1994) described the psycholinguistics process as a study of rules-governed behavior (language), which is a psychological task of the study of language and communication. Unoh broke Psycholinguistics focus to primary 3 and secondary 2 thus: (a) grammatical system, (b) phonological system; and (c) morphophonemic system; then (d) semantic system, and (e) phonetic system respectively. Unoh (1994) cited Newcomer and Hamill to state that

Psycholinguistics is the study of the mental processes which underline the acquisition of and use of language. As such, it is clearly the progeny of a rather unruly marriage between psychology, the study of behavior, and linguistics, the study of language structure. As it is the case in most marriages between two strong partners, there are frequent disputes over who has contributed most to the offspring and whose position is dominant (P. 114).

Slobin (1971) therefore posited that psycholinguistics is concerned with the understanding of psychological reality that influence competence and the psychological factors that cause performance to deviate from competence sometimes. Chomsky (1968) had earlier given a summation of the synergy that 'I have tried to suggest that the study of language may very well, as traditionally supposed, provide remarkably favourable perspective for the study of human mental processes' (p. 84).

### **Mentorship**

Mentoring is a form of informal relationship between individuals with one very knowledgeable and skillful and the other without those qualities but out to learn and is guided by the experience of the knowledgeable. Philip (2014) described mentorship as a form of informal mode of knowledge transmission and the psychological assistance a learner count as helpful to the attainment of set goals. He also posited that mentoring involves communication anchored on relationship. It is a physical interpersonal interaction for a period of time between one considered knowledgeable and the other desirous of knowledge (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007). It is a purposeful systematic interaction that is meant to guide a learner to confront challenges that less qualified people face on a task.

Aubrey and Cohen (1995) traced the practice of mentorship to the time of early educationist of the Socratic era. They hinted on the influence of the situation and mindset of the mentor on the choice of teachable moment and the technique to explore for mentorship. The subject matter or goal for mentorship can be a useful determinant of the process choice of technique to use and time. Since the goal in mentoring is to stimulate a readily able person, the techniques vary and can sometimes be complex to attain the task of making learners master a new and appropriate way of doing things. Aubrey and Cohen (1995) identified the common techniques of mentoring to include:

- a. Accompanying: a side-by-side mentoring involving doing it together by the mentor and the mentee.
- b. Sowing: preparing learners ahead of the task.
- c. Catalyzing: provoking learners to think differently to different challenge, make learners re-order value.
- d. Showing: make learners to be conversant with task by example as they watch.
- e. Harvesting: creating awareness of learning through conclusion reached by learners from experience.

Mentoring types, according to research.wustl.edu, may include situational, supervisory, occupational, circle mentoring and flash mentoring. In many secondary and tertiary institutions, mentorship programmes are offered to support students in programme completion, confidence building and transition to further education

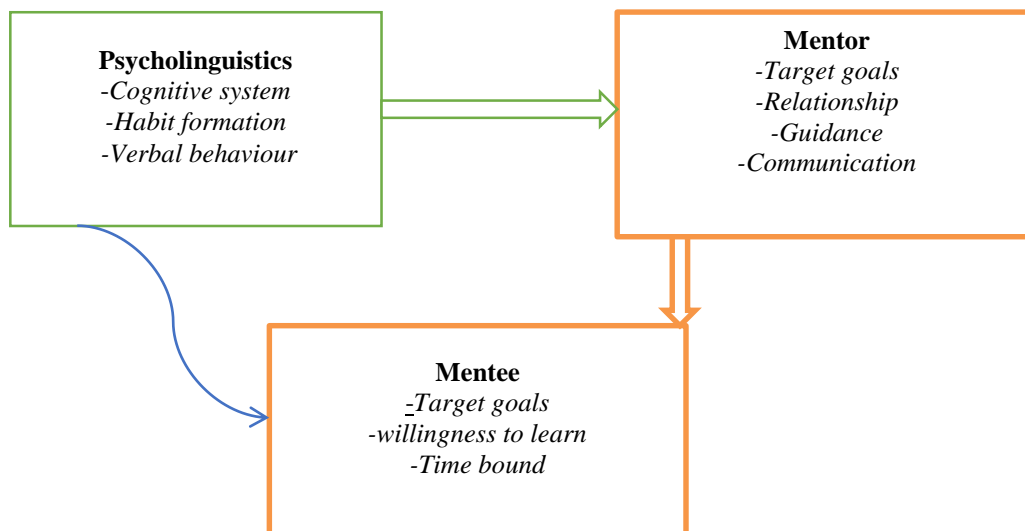
or the workforce. The Washington University in St. Louis site (research.wustl.edu) viewed mentoring as a practice mostly used to offer support to students in confidence building, transitioning to further education and completion of studies as common with final year students' research writing which is the focus of this study. Baron (2006) expressed views to support of academics-students interaction on informal learning as justified on the basis of its utility in making the University one of the veritable learning contexts for teachers to adequately understand students' independent learning practice and to assist students to master on-the-field-skills of finding solutions to lingering human challenges. Supervisory mentoring is the preoccupation of this study as it seeks to examine the influence of mentoring on the psycholinguistics efficiency of the students by both final year students and academic staff research supervisors at the Federal University Dutsinma Katsina State, Nigeria. The Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State, Nigeria was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2011 to complement the existing tertiary and indeed university education in Nigeria.

This study is an examination of the compulsory final year students' project for its psycholinguistic mentoring component in Lecturers (supervisors) and final year students (researchers) projects/research. Research project is a 6 Credit Unit course offered in the final year of every programme as provided for in the National University Commission's (NUC) Minimum Academic Standard for Nigerian Universities (FGN, 2011). The interaction amongst academics and students during final year students' research is described by Jimoh (1985) as a unique mentoring of introducing graduating students to societal expectations from being educated as instrument of positive societal change through problem solving research.

The outcome of this study would be a kind of goal setting and relationship guide by helping to focus the responsibilities of supervisors on the language learning needs of students from project supervision and prepare students for exhaustive linguistic gains from the project supervision interactions. The University system would be challenged on effective communication of research reports to the society by findings of the study and the need for Varsities to evolve collaborative approach to making scientific researches easily understandable to the public when writing in simpler dictions. The education sector and the society would benefit from the study's findings as research procedures are made easier and the society forthwith should be able to apply their understanding of research findings to improve humanity.

NUC is the Federal government of Nigeria agency charged with the responsibilities of assuring quality approves new programmes and courses and supervises Universities in the country. So, it is compulsory for every student irrespective of the course of study to present a research report under the supervision of a minimum of one academic staff called supervisor. The duty of the supervisor is as specified in the role of a mentor and the student researcher as mentee in a classic mentorship interaction.

### Conceptual Framework and Justification of the Study



### **Figure 1: Researchers' Designed Framework for the Study**

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 shows the interconnection among the concept psycholinguistics, the mentor and the mentee. Psycholinguistics stands as a field of study that the lecturer draws from her knowledge of to modify and correct the attempt of the mentee to conjure a worthwhile research especially the aspect of English language use to communicate procedures, content and reports of study as student researcher. The tendency of the mentee to independently access further knowledge on appropriate English language use is a possibility as every student at this stage must have attained the Lawal (2008) reading to learn status by which student researcher can as well discover and utilize new information. However, such information may still require verification from the supervisor (mentor) to be accepted as useful and the reason understanding the link between psycholinguistics and mentee; and in the course of interaction with the mentor. Under each of the three domains are core focuses making the interconnections beneficial exchanges.

Undertaking final year research project is a very common phenomenon amongst tertiary institutions in Nigeria, which has thrown up different challenges among participants. Some of these challenges border on inability of participants (lecturer- student) to understand what each side roles are, inability to manage differences, ego problem; and issue of competency problem in the English language use of students' research. This has resulted in many unpleasant consequences like production of compromised substandard project, disciplinary problem, plagiarism, extortion and inability to complete project task. Leaving these challenges unaddressed will continue to make a mockery of the project writing provision of the degrees programme of exposing the students, first hand, to procedures for digging out solutions to human challenges. For paucity of studies in this outlined area, the current study seeks to determine among lecturers/ supervisors and current final year students/ researchers on the influence of psycholinguistics mentoring on the suitability or adequacy of the final year project/research at the Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State.

### **Research Questions**

- i. Do lecturers and students of FUDMA consider final year project supervision as a form of mentoring?
- ii. To what extent do lecturers and students consider project supervision as offering psycholinguistic mentoring on students?
- iii. What is the perception of lecturers and students on students gaining linguistic mentoring especially in English language through final year research supervision?
- iv. What is the influence of gender as female and male among students on perception of final year research as offering psycholinguistic mentorship?

### **Research Hypotheses**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>**. There is no significant difference in the perception of lecturers and students on student's final year research work as a form of mentoring

**Ho<sub>2</sub>**. Significant difference does not exist in lecturers' perception of final year student research as offering psycholinguistic mentoring on students on the basis of faculty of specialization

**Ho<sub>3</sub>**. The gender of student as male and female does not have significant difference on the perception of final year research as offering psycholinguistic mentorship.

**Ho<sub>4</sub>**. There is no significant difference in the perception of students on the psycholinguistic mentorship offered through final year research on the basis of their different faculties of study

### **Analysis of Data and Presentation of Results**

The results obtained from the analysis of data are presented in this section. The data are presented using research questions and hypotheses as guide.

**Research Question 1:** Do lecturers and students of FUDMA consider final year project supervision as a form of mentoring?

**Table 1: The Mean and standard deviation on lecturers' perception**

Group	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean Gain
Lecturers	36	78.6111	6.26682	-0.2414
Students	61	78.8525	7.83121	

Results in Table 1 show that lecturers had mean score of 78.61 and students had a mean score of 78.85 and standard deviation of 6.27 and 7.83 respectively. The higher mean for both lecturers and students clearly revealed that both lecturers and students consider final year project supervision as a form of mentoring.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do lecturers and students consider project supervision as offering psycho-linguistic mentoring on students?

**Table 2: The Mean and standard deviation of lecturers' and students' perception on project supervision as offering psycholinguistic mentoring on students**

Group	N	Mean	Std deviation	Mean Difference
Lecturers	36	78.6111	6.26682	-0.2414
Students	61	78.8525	7.83121	

Results in Table 2 indicate that Lecturers and students are almost on equal terms in considering project supervision as offering psycho-linguistic mentoring on students with calculated Mean scores of 78.6111 and 78.8525 respectively. Obtaining a higher means for both lecturers and students clearly indicates that both lecturers and students considered project supervision as a means of offering psycho-linguistic mentoring to students.

**Research Question 3:** What is the perception of lecturers and students on students gaining linguistic mentoring especially in English language through final year research supervision?

**Table 3: The Mean and standard deviation on perception of lecturers' and students on students gaining linguistic mentoring (in English language)**

Group	N	Mean (X)	Standard deviation
Lecturers	36	78.6111	6.26682
Students	61	78.8525	7.83121

Results in Table 3 reveal that perceptions of Lecturers and students are in agreement with similar higher mean on students gaining linguistic mentoring especially in English language through final year research supervision with calculated Mean scores of 78.6111 and 78.8525 respectively. With such relatively higher Mean scores, it is clearly manifest that lecturers and students' perception on students gaining linguistic mentoring through final year research supervision is strongly true.

**Research Question 4:** What is the influence of gender as female and male among students on perception of final year research as offering psycho-linguistic mentorship?

**Table 4: The Mean and standard deviation on gender (as male and female) perception of students on final year project offering psycholinguistic mentorship**

Groups	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean Difference
Male	37	79.8649	8.68639	2.5732
Female	24	77.2917	6.13953	

Results in Table 4 show that male and female students have Mean scores of 79.8649 and 77.2917 respectively. With mean difference of 2.5732, the recorded higher Mean scores for both males and females imply that both male and female students share positive perception on final year research as offering psycholinguistic mentorship to students.

**Hypotheses**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the perception of lecturers and students on student’s final year research work as a form of mentoring.

To determine and test the stated Ho<sub>1</sub>, the data were further analyzed with independent Samples t-test as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Analysis of Independent Sample T-test of lecturers and students’ perception on students’ final year research work as form of mentoring**

Groups	N	Mean	Std.	df	t	P	Decision
Lecturers	36	78.61	6.27	95	-0.157	0.875	Not rejected
Students	61	78.85	7.83				

As indicated in Table 5, the calculated t-value is -0.157 and the P-value obtained 0.875, since the calculated p value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This means that there is no significant difference between lecturers and students’ perception on students’ final year research work as a form of mentoring on the students.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** Significant difference does not exist in lecturers’ perception of final year student research as offering psycholinguistic mentoring on students on the basis of different faculty of specialization.

**Table 6: Summary of ANOVA of lecturers’ perception on students’ final year research as offering psycholinguistic mentoring**

Lecturers perception	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Between Group	129.960	5	25.992	.627	0.681
Within Group	1244.595	30		41.487	
Total	1374.556	35			

From the analysis in Table 6, the calculated F= 0.627 and the P-value obtained is 0.681 and since the calculated p value is greater than 0.05 alpha level, it implies the null hypothesis is accepted. It means that there is no significant difference between lecturers’ perception of final year student’s research as offering psycholinguistic mentoring on students on the basis of faculty of specialization.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** The gender of student as male and female does not have significant difference on the perception of final year research as offering psycholinguistic mentorship

**Table 7: Analysis of Independent Sample T-test on gender perception of students on final year research as offering psycholinguistic mentorship**

Groups (stud)	N	Mean	Std.	df	t	P	Decision
Male	37	79.86	8.69	59	1.260	0.213	Not rejected
Female	24	77.29	6.14				

As seen in Table 7, the calculated t-value is 1.260 and the P-value obtained is 0.213, since the calculated p value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This means that there is no significant difference between male and female student(s) perception on student final year research as offering psycholinguistic mentorship to the students.

**Ho<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant difference in the perception of students on the psycholinguistic mentorship offered through final year research on the basis of their different faculties of study.**

**Table 8: Summary of ANOVA of Students' perception on psycho-linguistic mentoring offered through final year research on the basis of their difference faculties of study**

Students Perception	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Between Group	614.767	5	122.953	2.206	0.067
Within Group	3064.906	55	55.726		
Total	3679.672	60			

The calculated  $F = 2.206$  and the P-value obtained is 0.067. Since the calculated p value is greater than 0.05, from this analysis, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is no significant difference between Students perception on psycholinguistic mentorship offered through final year research on the basis of faculty of specialization.

### Discussion of Findings

From the analyzed data, the two groups of participants subscribed to the fact of project supervision as a viable means of mentorship between the supervisor and supervisee. This finding can be justified on the premise of profound benefits that accrues when a more learned person deliberately offers to guide learners on interactions to guide their expose to knowledge. Many scholars have emphasized (Jimoh, 1985; Aubrey and Cohen, 1995; Bozeman and Feeney, 2007; Philip, 2014) on the very useful benefits such interactions offer and confidence it builds in learners. This agreement of views on mentoring usefulness in strengthening benefits on psycholinguistic competence and on English language mastery, which is the life support on which the education in Nigeria as the medium (Adegbija,1994; Iliyas, 2011 and Lawal 2008). It is opportunities for students to further cross verify their mastery and use of the language in tenets with communicative approach to second language learning by real use as espoused by Chomsky (1965).

On the finding of unanimity of male and female participants in the acceptance of project supervision as a form of psycholinguistics mentoring and across the faculties of study; which can be because of the fact that the English language as a target in psycholinguistics focus is un-discriminatorily used in the University system as instrument of general study and the mentoring in project supervision is collectively experienced across gender and in the different faculties of study. The Washington University in St. Louis and others (research.wustl.edu; Aubrey and Cohen, 1995; Philip, 2014) have separately highlighted commonality in the application of mentoring benefits on mentees irrespective of division of studies and gender in the educational context. In the same token, a lack of analysis reaching significance level of 0.05 in the test of the four hypotheses tested in the study (0.87, 0.68, 0.21 and 0.06). These as hypotheses test outcomes for acceptance of project supervision as psycholinguistics mentoring, significant differences based on the participants as research project supervisors and students, gender as male and female and different faculties of study respectfully. The findings are in congruity with those of the research questions in the unanimity of the implications of project supervision as psycholinguistics mentoring in Nigeria's University system.

### Conclusions

The study has found great psycholinguistics mentoring as a very useful benefit of students' research supervision at the Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State, Nigeria. Considering that researches at every level are not carried out as mere academic rituals and its findings as meant only for Universities library shelves, efforts have to be made to communicate these findings to the society where it could be used to positively influence developments. It is the competence of the students on the language of research especially in English language that is the easiest way to make communicating findings to the society a possibility. In the process of research therefore, supervisors should emphasize on clear guidance of students to understand English language properly to accurately report findings, use appropriate diction to simplify findings for societal benefits; and prepare graduating students to be agents of change through competence in the use of English language to genuinely demystify innovations required for national development. This is realizable by effective communication of research findings to the widest segment of the society.

## **Recommendations**

Deriving from the findings of the study on project supervision as a psycholinguistics mentoring at the Federal University Dutsinma, Katsina State, Nigeria, the following are suggestions for strengthening the undisputed benefits of the Faculty members and graduating students' interaction for optimal utility of the scheme:

- i. Efforts should be made by the University authority to incorporate collaborative teaching of the general communication in English by experts across disciplines to further familiarize students to Registers as it deeply apply to different field of studies.
- ii. Arraignment should be made to linguistically simplify procedures of researches especially in core Sciences to make for wider accessibility of findings to the larger society. This can be done through targeted synergy by English language experts and scholars in the Sciences on de-technicalization of research findings.
- iii. Efforts should be made to ensure there are not more than 2-3 supervisees to every academic staff to allow for meaningful result oriented psycholinguistic mentoring of the students in the course of the research project annually.
- iv. The University system should device incentive mechanism for both staff and students as motivation for due diligence in the research project interaction. This can be in form of special allowance for staff and availability of information resources and material supports for students who are researchers.
- v. To ensure the outcome of such researches really have impact on the society, a concise research report documents should be annually communicated to relevant agencies, department and societal segments to ensure the University really impact on positive change in the society.

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