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EFFECTS OF VISUAL AIDS ON BASIC 8 STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH ABSTRACT NOUNS IN UBE SCHOOLS IN KEFFI, NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of visual aids on basic 8 students' achievement in English abstract nouns in UBE schools in Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State. Two research questions guided the study. While two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study was anchored on dual coding and theory. The study adopted the quasi experimental research design using pretest, treatment and posttest. The population of the study was 2,761 Basic 8 students from 189 UBE schools in Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State, 2025/2026 academic session. The sample size was 120 Basic 8 students drawn from two intact classes, using simple random sampling techniques. One instrument-Abstract Noun Achievement Test (ANAT) was developed by the researchers and validated by two experts from English Language Education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation, was used for data collection. The instrument was tested for validity and reliability using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The reliability index of 0.86 was obtained for data collection. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation of scores were used to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). Results indicated that the use of visual aids was effective in improving student's achievement in abstract nouns in English Language in Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State. The study recommended among others that English Language teachers at UBE level in Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State should adopt the use of visual aids in teaching abstract nouns to enhance students' achievement in identification and use of the various types of abstract nouns in English Language.

Keywords: English language, Abstract nouns, Visual aids, Vocabulary instruction, Basic 8 students, UBE schools.

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Introduction

Grammar occupies a strategic position in the teaching and learning of the English language. The knowledge of grammar particularly the classes of words enable students to make correct sentences both in oral communication and written communication. Among the classes of words, the noun plays crucial roles in sentence formation. Within the noun class, abstract nouns require particular attention as they do not appeal directly to the five senses. This aspect of the English grammar is recognize and taught at the Universal Basic Education (UBE) level in Nigeria under the English language, which is taught as a core subject. It is considered a fundamental tool for literacy and academic success.

Apart from being a core subject at UBE level of education, English is recognize as the language of instruction. Nigeria's official Education Policy has historically positioned English as the dominant medium of instruction from Upper Basic through secondary and tertiary levels of education, while recommending the use of the child's mother tongue (MT) or language of immediate environment (LIE) in the early or formative years of education i.e. Lower Basic (National Policy on Education (NERDC), 2022). The FRN (2013) stipulates that while indigenous languages may be used for initial literacy, English becomes the main medium for teaching core subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and Social studies. According to Bamgbose (2018), this policy is justified by Nigeria's linguistic diversity- over 500 indigenous languages which make English the most practical lingua franca for national unity and global integration. This indicates that the teaching and learning of English language, especially grammar and particularly the abstract noun requires special attention.

Grammar is one of the core components of English language instruction. It forms the structural foundation of effective communication. According to Mayer, Caggiano, and Brown (2017), a sound knowledge of grammar enhances students' ability to read, write, speak and understand English accurately and fluently. Jones (2024) contend that grammar includes both spoken and written norms, and awareness of these norms enhances learners' communicative competence. Grammar is indispensable for the development of fluency and automaticity. Pawlak (2024) argues that grammar facilitates fluency by helping learners internalize patterns and constructions that enable faster retrieval in speech and writing.

Despite the importance of grammar, its teaching and learning in Nigeria especially at the universal basic education (UBE) level remains a significant challenge. These challenges according to Nwanna (2025), ranges from policy-practice frictions around language of instruction, overcrowded classrooms, teacher knowledge, learning materials, and curriculum load, social-linguistics realities, among others. The worry often expressed by the WAEC chief examiners on the poor performance of students in the English language

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deserves some attention (WAEC Chief Examiner's report, 2024). Some critical comments made in the report centered on students' weakness in the area of writing, lack of familiarity with the required structural format, construction of loose sentences, transliteration from the mother tongue, and abuse of the basic rules of grammar.

The aspect of grammar that is central to this study is the noun, and in particular the abstract noun. Abstract nouns are known to refer to ideas, qualities, state of being, among others. These are things that can neither be seen, touched nor felt by any of our five senses. They can be grouped into qualities or traits, concepts or ideas, states or conditions, and time or events. Unlike concrete nouns that can be seen, touched, modeled or even drawn. They are therefore not easily shown or explained compared to concrete nouns.

Recent studies highlight the challenges of English as a subject in UBE schools with particular emphasis on the abstract nouns. According Murana (2021), teacher competence and professional development affect the teaching of English. Reports indicate more focus to be given to communicative methods and bilingual pedagogies for English instruction, especially at the early transition stage. There is a need to take a closer look at various methods for effective teaching of English, especially grammar and particularly abstract nouns. It is the researcher's view that, the use of teaching aids in general and visual aids in particular may enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning of abstract nouns in English at the UBE level. An in depth look at the effects of visual aids at the UBE level is the focus of this work. This study therefore aimed to examine the Effects of Visual Aids on Basic 8 Students' Achievement in English Abstract Nouns in UBE Schools in Keffi, Nasarawa State.

Statement of the Problem

The teaching and learning of the English language at the UBE level poses a big challenge. The challenges are more pronounced in the teaching and learning of grammar, particularly- the abstract noun. Hence, the abstract noun does not appeal directly to the five senses, it becomes difficult for students to comprehend easily when it is taught. Students find it difficult to relate words that express abstract concepts or ideas to real life experience.

Classroom experience indicates that students at UBE level particularly Basic 8 find it difficult to identify and use abstract nouns expressing action; and abstract nouns expressing idea. It is against this backdrop that the researchers investigated Effects of Visual Aids on Basic 8 Students' Achievement in English Abstract Nouns in UBE Schools in Keffi, Nasarawa State.

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Objectives of the Study

1. to examine the extent how the use of visual aids enhance Basic 8 students' achievements in the use of abstract nouns expressing action?
2. to evaluate the effects of the use of visual aids on Basic 8 students' acquisition of abstract nouns expressing idea?

Research Questions

1. to what extent does the use of visual aids enhance Basic 8 students' achievements in the use of abstract nouns expressing action?
2. How do we evaluate the effects of the use of visual aids on Basic 8 students' acquisition of abstract nouns expressing idea?

Statement of Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between Basic 8 students taught the identification of abstract nouns expressing action using visual aids and those taught without the use of visual aids.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference between Basic 8 students taught the comprehension of abstract nouns expressing idea using visual aids and those taught without the use of visual aids.

English language and Grammar

English language occupies a central position in Nigeria's educational system as the official language and the principal medium of instruction from the upper basic level to tertiary education (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013). It serves as the language of administration, commerce, science, technology, international communication, and national integration in a multilingual society such as Nigeria (Bamgbose, 2018).

Grammar is an indispensable component of English language learning because it provides the structural rules governing the formation and interpretation of meaningful sentences. According to Jones (2024), grammar comprises the system of rules that guides how words are organized into phrases, clauses, and sentences for effective communication. Pawlak (2024) further explains that grammar instruction promotes communicative competence by enabling learners to internalize language structures and apply them accurately in speaking and writing.

Within grammar, word classes constitute an important area of instruction. Mastery of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections enables learners to construct grammatically acceptable sentences. Among these word classes, nouns occupy a central position because they function as subjects, objects, complements, and objects of prepositions.

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Nouns and Abstract Nouns

A noun is traditionally defined as a word that names a person, place, thing, animal, quality, idea, event, or phenomenon. Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) classify nouns into proper, common, collective, concrete, abstract, countable, and uncountable nouns.

Abstract nouns differ from concrete nouns because they refer to ideas, qualities, emotions, beliefs, states, or concepts that cannot be directly perceived through the five senses. Examples include honesty, justice, courage, freedom, wisdom, love, kindness, happiness, patience, and faith.

According to Mayer, Caggiano, and Brown (2017), abstract nouns require more cognitive processing than concrete nouns because their meanings are represented conceptually rather than perceptually. Learners therefore experience greater difficulty understanding and remembering abstract nouns without contextual or visual support.

Similarly, Nation (2022) argues that abstract vocabulary should be taught through meaningful contexts, examples, visual illustrations, and repeated exposure to enhance conceptual understanding.

At the Basic Education level, students frequently confuse abstract nouns with adjectives or verbs because they often fail to recognize that words such as kindness, bravery, and freedom function as nouns rather than qualities alone. Consequently, effective instructional strategies are needed to improve students' understanding of abstract nouns.

Visual Aids

Visual aids refer to instructional materials that communicate ideas through visual representations. They include pictures, photographs, charts, diagrams, flashcards, posters, concept maps, cartoons, graphic organizers, illustrations, videos, and multimedia presentations. According to Mayer (2021), visual aids promote meaningful learning by enabling learners to process information through verbal and visual channels simultaneously. Such multimodal processing enhances comprehension, retention, and transfer of learning.

Visual aids are particularly useful for teaching abstract concepts because they transform intangible ideas into observable situations. For instance, honesty may be represented through a picture of a child returning a lost wallet, while courage may be illustrated through a firefighter rescuing people from danger. Teachers can also employ story pictures, role-play illustrations, cartoons, and digital animations to help students infer the meanings of abstract nouns from real-life situations.

Visual Aids in English Language Teaching

Visual aids are instructional materials (teaching aids) that communicate information through images, symbols, diagrams, charts, pictures, videos, animations, and other visual

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representations. Mayer (2021) noted that visual aids enhance meaningful learning by helping learners organize and integrate verbal and pictorial information.

Visual aids commonly used in English language instructions include: photographs, flashcards, posters, charts, illustrations, diagrams, cartoons, comic strips, PowerPoint slides, graphic organizers, concept maps, videos and interactive whiteboards. Visual aids improve teaching because they: attract learners' attention, increase motivation, simplify difficult concepts, improve vocabulary retention, stimulate classroom interaction, accommodate different learning styles, enhance critical thinking and promote active participation.

Teaching Abstract Nouns through Visual Aids

Teaching aids are of three types – audio, visual and audio-visual. According to Rautrao (2012) the interest of students as well as teachers increases when visual aids are used. Visual aid is, as Stevick defined it, "anything visible which helps your student master the language more quickly or more accurately"... Visual aids are stronger than audio aids. They include pictures, charts, diagrams, graphs, tables, sketches, films, and actual presentations. An image of a visual can remain on the mind"s eye for a long time. Visual aids help learners to retain what is visualized. Visual information is more engaging. Ngonyani (2018) stated that teachers consider the use of real objects as important in teaching and learning process.

Teaching abstract nouns has traditionally been a difficult aspect of English language instruction because abstract concepts cannot be directly observed through the senses. Unlike concrete nouns such as *book*, *table*, or *house*, abstract nouns represent ideas, feelings, qualities, virtues, and states of being. Consequently, learners often struggle to understand and use abstract nouns correctly when instruction is limited to dictionary definitions or rote memorisation.

Visual aids provide an effective instructional strategy for making abstract concepts more meaningful. Visual aids are instructional materials that appeal primarily to learners' sense of sight and facilitate understanding through pictures, diagrams, illustrations, photographs, charts, graphic organisers, videos, animations, and multimedia presentations. According to Mayer (2021), learning becomes more meaningful when learners process information through both verbal and visual channels. Visual representations enable learners to establish stronger cognitive connections between words and their meanings.

In teaching abstract nouns, teachers can use picture sequences that depict actions reflecting qualities such as honesty, courage, kindness, patience, generosity, justice, and loyalty. For instance, a series of pictures showing a pupil returning a lost wallet may help students infer the meaning of honesty. Similarly, a picture illustrating a firefighter

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rescuing people from a burning building can effectively demonstrate bravery or courage**.** Such contextualised visual representations allow learners to derive meaning through observation, discussion, and interpretation rather than through memorisation alone.

Graphic organisers and concept maps are equally valuable in teaching abstract nouns. These instructional tools visually display relationships among concepts and related vocabulary. For example, a concept map centred on *kindness* may include related ideas such as *helpfulness*, *compassion*, *generosity*, and *empathy*. This enables students to recognise semantic relationships and expand their vocabulary network.

Role-play combined with visual prompts also promotes deeper understanding. Teachers may display pictures illustrating different social situations and ask learners to identify the abstract noun represented by each scenario. Such learner-centred activities encourage collaboration, discussion, critical thinking, and active participation, all of which contribute to meaningful vocabulary learning.

Digital visual resources, including animations, educational videos, interactive whiteboards, and multimedia presentations, further enhance vocabulary instruction by presenting dynamic examples of abstract concepts in authentic contexts. Multimedia learning environments increase learners' motivation and improve long-term retention because they stimulate multiple sensory channels simultaneously (Mayer, 2021).

Overall, integrating visual aids into the teaching of abstract nouns transforms abstract nouns lessons from teacher-centred explanations into interactive learning experiences in which learners actively construct meaning.

Students' Academic Achievement

Academic achievement refers to the level of learning attained by students after exposure to instructional activities. It is commonly measured through tests, examinations, assignments, classroom assessments, and other evaluation instruments. In English language education, achievement reflects learners' mastery of language skills, grammatical structures, vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking, listening, and writing. According to Bloom's theory of educational objectives, achievement is demonstrated when learners acquire knowledge, understand concepts, apply learned information, analyse relationships, evaluate ideas, and create new meanings. Students who achieve well in vocabulary instruction are able not only to recognise word meanings but also to apply them accurately in communication.

Several factors influence students' academic achievement, including instructional methods, teacher competence, classroom environment, learner motivation, availability of instructional materials, parental support, and school resources. Among these, instructional strategy is widely recognised as one of the most influential school-based factors affecting learning outcomes. Studies have shown that learner-centred

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instructional approaches generally produce higher academic achievement than teacher-centred methods. When students actively participate in learning through observation, discussion, demonstration, and problem-solving, they develop deeper conceptual understanding and retain information longer.

Visual aids enhance academic achievement because they improve learners' attention, motivation, comprehension, memory, and classroom engagement. By making abstract concepts more concrete and meaningful, visual materials enable students to process information more effectively and recall learned vocabulary with greater accuracy.

In the present study, academic achievement refers to the scores obtained by Basic 8 students on the Abstract Nouns Achievement Test (ANAT) after receiving instruction through either visual aids or the conventional teaching method.

Empirical Studies

Andriani, Hastini, Bochari, and Mertosono (2025) examined the effectiveness of coloured pictures in teaching English vocabulary among junior secondary school students in Indonesia. Using a quasi-experimental design, the researchers found that students taught with coloured pictures achieved significantly higher vocabulary scores than those taught with conventional methods. Although conducted outside Nigeria, the study provides evidence that visual aids improve vocabulary acquisition among junior secondary school learners.

Mayer, Caggiano, and Brown (2017) examined how learners process concrete and abstract nouns in foreign-language learning. Their findings indicated that abstract nouns require greater cognitive effort than concrete nouns and benefit from instructional support that links verbal explanations with visual or contextual cues.

Murana (2021) examined teacher competence and the use of visual aids in English language classrooms in Nigerian UBE schools. The study found that teachers who frequently used visual instructional materials achieved better learner engagement and vocabulary development than teachers who relied solely on lecture methods. The study provides Nigerian evidence supporting the effectiveness of visual aids but did not specifically investigate abstract nouns.

Theoretical Framework

Dual-Coding Theory by Paivio (1990) posits that images and words have different cognitive presentations and therefore the brain uses separate memory systems for different types of information. The rationale for using dual-coding theory in this study According to Paivio, learning becomes more effective when information is presented in both verbal and visual forms because learners create two memory traces instead of one. This dual representation enhances understanding, retrieval, and long-term retention.

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The theory was relevant to this study in various ways as follows: First, the theory is appropriate when referring to remembering information, which is very crucial in the learning process. To recall information being taught is important because that would be the joy and intent of the teacher and also the learners. For example, we have the sense of hearing, smelling, touching, seeing and tasting. These collections of codes include visual codes and verbal codes that can represent letters, numbers or words, often referred to as symbolic codes. In the same vein, Rieber (1994) cited by Paivo (1990) asserts that it is easier to recall information from visual processing codes than verbal codes because visual information is accessed using synchronous processing, rather than sequential processing. Rieber says, incorporating pictures to prose learning promotes learning, ensuring the pictures adhere to the learning task and children do not create mental images unconsciously or spontaneously while reading. This is important because it can increase the chances of learners to retain what they have been taught in the classroom which is important. Secondly, visual and verbal information is processed differently in the human mind and along separate channels, creating separate representations for information processed in each channel. For example, if a teacher is teaching the pupils about different shapes, and he or she writes the word of different shapes on the chalkboard such as rectangle, triangle, square and circle without pupils seeing the real objects, they may forget the word. But, if the shapes are shown to them to pronounce, see and even draw the shapes in their exercise books, the pupils will never forget what they have seen, touched and drawn. Thirdly, the theory posits that the mental code corresponding to these representations is used to organize incoming information that can be acted upon, stored, and retrieved for subsequent use by the learners. It is vital to use both visual and verbal codes because the eye is not separated from the brain and they are part of the same organ images can be retrieved easier in memory (Sammons, 2016).

Applied to the teaching of abstract nouns, the theory suggests that learners understand concepts such as *justice*, *honesty*, *peace*, and *freedom* more effectively when teachers combine verbal explanations with meaningful visual representations. For example, a picture depicting a judge treating two people fairly can reinforce the concept of justice.

The Dual Coding Theory therefore provides a strong theoretical justification for the use of visual aids in English vocabulary instruction. The theory is relevant because it explains why students taught abstract nouns using visual materials are expected to perform better than those taught through verbal explanations alone. It supports the assumption that visual aids improve comprehension, retention, and academic achievement.

Methodology

The researchers adopted a quasi-experimental research design of pretest and posttest of non-randomized and non-equivalent experimental and control groups design. The

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population consisted of 2,761 Basic 8 students from 13 UBE schools in Keffi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, 2025/2026 academic session. The sample size was 120 Basic 8 students drawn from two intact classes, simple random sampling techniques. One instrument- Abstract Noun Achievement Test (ANAT) was developed by the researchers and used for data collection. The instrument was tested for validity and reliability using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The reliability index of 0.86 was obtained. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation of scores were used to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA).

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pretest and Posttest Achievement Scores on the use of Abstract Nouns expressing Action by Basic 8 students

Group	N	Pretest Mean (SD)	Posttest Mean (SD)	Mean Gain
Experimental	50	16.20 (3.44)	57.32 (5.89)	41.12
Control	70	16.77 (3.71)	34.11 (5.02)	17.34

Table 1 shows the pretest and posttest scores statistics and standard deviations in comprehension of abstract nouns expressing actions by Basic 8 students. The table shows that the experimental group improved much more than the control group after the treatment, with a larger post-test mean and a higher gain score. Statistically, students taught abstract nouns expressing action using visual aids (experimental group) recorded a higher post-test mean score 56.64 and a greater achievement gain 41.12 compared to those taught using the conventional method (control group), who had a post-test mean of 34.11 and a gain of 17.34. This indicates that the use of visual aids was effective in improving students' achievement in abstract nouns expressing action.

Table 2: ANCOVA on Abstract Nouns Expressing Action

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Pretest	298.1	1	298.1	13.02	0.000	0.10
Group	10987.3	1	10987.3	480.33	0.000	0.80
Error	2677.4	117	22.88			

Decision: H_{01} is rejected.

Table 2 shows that the effect of visual aids on abstract nouns expressing action remained significant even after controlling for pretest scores. The group effect was significant, $F = 480.33$, $p < 0.05$, and the effect size was large (partial $\eta^2 = 0.80$). This indicates that visual aids had a substantial effect on students' achievement in abstract nouns expressing action.

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Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pretest and Posttest Scores of BASIC 8 students' acquisition of Abstract Nouns expressing ideas

Group	N	Pretest Mean (SD)	Posttest Mean (SD)	Mean Gain
Experimental	50	16.32 (3.52)	56.80 (6.24)	40.48
Control	70	16.63 (3.55)	34.57 (5.46)	17.94

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of pretest and posttest, and standard deviations in acquisition of abstract nouns expressing ideas by Basic 8 students. The table shows that both groups had similar pre-test means, but the experimental group scored much higher at post-test and gained more than the control group. That is, students taught abstract nouns expressing idea using visual aids (experimental group) recorded a higher post-test mean score 56.80 and a greater achievement gain 40.48 compared to those taught using the conventional method (control group), who had a post-test mean of 34.57 and a gain of 17.94. This indicates that visual aids improved achievement in abstract nouns expressing ideas by Basic 8 students.

Table 4: ANCOVA on Abstract Nouns Expressing Ideas

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Pretest	265.9	1	265.9	11.78	0.001	0.09
Group	10823.5	1	10823.5	479.45	0.000	0.80
Error	2642.1	117	22.58			

Decision: H_{02} is rejected.

Table 4 shows that the difference between the two groups on abstract nouns expressing ideas remained significant after pretest scores were controlled. The group effect was significant, $F = 479.45$, $p < 0.05$, with a large effect size (partial $\eta^2 = 0.80$). This confirms that visual aids had a strong effect on students' achievement in abstract nouns expressing ideas.

Discussion of Findings

The findings on abstract nouns expressing action revealed that students exposed to the use of visual aids had greater improvement in achievement than those taught without the use of visual aids. The higher post-test mean score (57.32) and achievement gain (41.12) recorded by the experimental group indicate that visual aids enhanced students' achievement in abstract nouns expressing action. The ANCOVA result further confirmed a significant difference between the two groups ($F = 480.33$, $p < 0.05$), showing that visual aids had a significant effect on students' achievement in abstract nouns expressing action.

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The findings on abstract nouns expressing idea revealed that students exposed to the use of visual aids had greater improvement in achievement than those taught without the use of visual aids. The higher post-test mean score (56.80) and achievement gain (40.48) recorded by the experimental group indicate that visual aids enhanced students' achievement in abstract nouns expressing idea. The ANCOVA result further confirmed a significant difference between the two groups ($F = 479.45$, $p < 0.05$), showing that visual aids had a significant effect on students' achievement in abstract nouns expressing idea.

Conclusion

The study concludes that that visual aids are effective instructional materials for improving students' achievement in English abstract nouns. The use of visual aids enhance students' ability to identify and use the various types of abstract nouns in sentences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. English Language teachers at UBE level in Keffi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State should adopt the use of visual aids in teaching English abstract nouns to enhance students' achievement in identification and use of the various types of abstract nouns;
2. UBE school administrators in Keffi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State should make visual aids materials available and sufficient in schools for effective teaching and learning of the English abstract nouns

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