## Spelling Bee as an Effective Strategy for Vocabulary Learning among Pre-NCE Students

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**Abstract**
This paper intends to investigate the effectiveness of the Spelling Bee Approach (SBP) on vocabulary learning. Thus, Kano State College of Education and Preliminary Studies (KASCEPS) students were used to ascertain whether the approach is effective. Therefore, the population included all Pre-NCE students in the Department of English and European Languages, specifically in the second semester of the 2020/2021 Academic Session. To this end, a systematic random sampling method was utilized in taking the sample size. There were 18 students as the sample size obtained from the total number of 42 students' population offering English along with other combinations. Furthermore, the paper adopted an experimental design, particularly a pre-test and post-test control group design. The Spelling Dictation Achievement Test (SDAT) was employed as the instrument of the data collection. The 18 students of the sample size constituted both experimental and control groups of the study. The data was analysed using a t-test for independent samples. The result indicated a mean of 70.33 for the experimental group and 30.22 for the control group. Given that, a deduction can be made that Spelling Bee Approach is effective in vocabulary learning. Hence, teachers/lecturers can employ it to teach vocabulary development.

**Key Words:** Spelling Bee, Vocabulary Learning, Experimental Group, Control Group

**Introduction**
The phrase "Spelling Bee" was first used in (1850) and generally refers to a competition for students to spell words aloud letter by letter (Haeri, 2019). Sebba (2011) defines it as "a competition which requires the contestants to spell words". It is an extra-curricular activity that fosters better vocabulary learning among divergent learners. Accordingly, vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency which provides much of the basis for how learners speak, listen, read, and write (Richards & Rinandya, 2002, pp. 255). Even the well-balanced sentence itself may be dependent on a wide vocabulary whose use is consistent with accuracy (Kamal, 2010, pp. 15). Therefore, Spelling Bee is one of the vocabulary learning strategies which if well

utilised can effectively develop and expand learners' vocabulary size and will, in turn, help them excel in their second language learning. Obviously, words must be studied for effective communication to take place. And the central focus of Spelling Bee gears towards learning the exposition of words and their possible semantic relations: synonymy, antonymy, homonymy (homophone, photographs) and polysemy, etc. Thus, students are required to acquire adequate spelling ability and considerable vocabulary size to excel academically. The reason being is that most of the problems they encounter while writing their continuous assessments (C.A.), exams, and academic essays are linked to the mediocre vocabulary pool in their possession. Over the years, this has been one of the reasons for the falling standard of Nigerian Education. Vocabulary as a crucial aspect of the English language needs to be offered sufficient time for learners to avail themselves of language proficiency and fluency.

**Objectives of the Study**
1. To find out whether vocabulary can easily be acquired through the spelling bee approach (SBA) among Pre-NCE students of Kano State College of Education and Preliminary Studies (KASCEPS).
2. To find out whether SBA can improve students' mastery of vocabulary among Pre-NCE students of Kano State College of Education and Preliminary Studies (KASCEPS).
3. To find out the effectiveness of SBA on vocabulary learning among Pre-NCE students of Kano State College of Education and Preliminary Studies (KASCEPS).
4. To find out the impact of spelling proficiency and vocabulary expansion among Pre-NCE students of Kano State College of Education and Preliminary Studies (KASCEPS) who were exposed to SBA.

**Research Questions**
1. Can vocabulary be easily acquired through SBA among Pre-NCE students of Kano State College of Education and Preliminary Studies (KASCEPS)?
2. Can SBA improve students' mastery of vocabulary among Pre-NCE students of Kano State College of Education and Preliminary Studies (KASCEPS)?

**Hypotheses**
1. There is an effectiveness of SBA on vocabulary learning among Pre-NCE students of Kano State College of Education and Preliminary Studies (KASCEPS).
2. There is a significant impact of spelling proficiency and vocabulary expansion among Pre-NCE students of Kano State College of Education and Preliminary Studies (KASCEPS) who were exposed to the Spelling Bee Approach.

**Methodology**
This paper is experimental research that used a pre-test and post-test control group design. The paper made an intervention among Pre-NCE students of Kano State College of Education and Preliminary Studies (KASCEPS). During the intervention, the students were divided into two groups, namely: experimental and control groups. Both of the groups received pre-test and post-test respectively, whereas the intervention was made only to the experimental group.

The population of this paper constituted only Pre-NCE students of KASCEPS. It constitutes forty-two (42) students who were offered English with different course combinations during the 2020/2021 Academic Session. The following is the breakdown of the population:

**Table 1:** Population of Pre-NCE Students Based on Course Combinations

| s/n | Course Combination | No. of Students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | English/Islamic Studies | 12 | 28.9/% |
| 2. | Social Studies Double Major | 7 | 16.6% |
| 3. | English/Hausa | 7 | 16.6% |
| 4. | ECCE | 3 | 7.1% |
| 5. | Hausa/Islamic Studies | 4 | 9.5% |
| 6. | Social Studies/Islamic Studies | 3 | 7.1% |
| 7. | ANF | 3 | 7.1% |
| 8. | PES | 3 | 7.1% |
| Total | | 42 | 100% |

The sample size of this paper was extracted from the general population. The actual sample size included eighteen (18) students, comprising both male and female genders. Below is the breakdown of the sample size:

**Table 2:** Sample Size of Pre-NCE Students Based on Gender

| s/n | Gender | No. of Students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Male | 05 | 27.7% |
| 2. | Female | 13 | 72.3% |
| Total | | 18 | 100 |

The data collection instrument that was used during the intervention is Spelling Dictation Achievement Test (SDAT) developed by the researchers. This test is meant to measure the spelling ability of Pre-NCE students of KASCEPS. In this test, the students were instructed to collectively write some words dictated to them. These words cut across different registers related to the student's course combinations. The entire words were categorized into subsections. The first section comprised words that the instructor dictated to the students who wrote as they heard them. In the second section, the students were asked to provide synonyms and antonyms of the dictated words. While in the last section, they were asked to produce homonyms (homophones and homographs) of some dictated words.

Pre-test and post-test assessment were administered on eighteen (18) students. The intervention focused on two groups: experimental and control groups. Pre-test and post-test assessments were meant only for both groups. Each group contained nine (9) students. However, the actual treatment was made only for the experimental group. The analysis was made on the pre-test and post-test scores using a t-test for independent samples to determine the effectiveness or otherwise of the Spelling Bee Approach (SBA) on vocabulary learning among KASCEPS students.

The pre-test was conducted through Spelling Dictation Achievement Test (SDAT). The researchers read a number of words mentioned above and allowed the students to write them on sheets of paper; thereafter their responses were marked. The post-test was followed immediately

to determine the effectiveness of SBA on vocabulary learning. The students, in this test, received multiple series of training for the purpose of ascertaining their spelling skills and vocabulary size. Consequently, the result of the pre-test showed low performance compared to the result of the post-test.

## Results

The data were collected through Spelling Dictation Achievement Test (SDAT). However, a t-test for independent samples was used to test the hypothesis for the purpose to determine the effectiveness or otherwise of SBA to vocabulary learning. The following shows the results of the experimental and control groups:

**Table 3:** Results of Experimental and Control Groups

| Group | No. | Mean (x) | Stand. Dev. | Df. | Cal. t-value | Cri. t-value | Level of Sigf. |
|-------|-----|----------|-------------|-----|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Exp. Grp | 9 | 70.33 | 13.05 | | | | |
| | | | | 16 | 7.98 | 2.12 | 0.05 |
| Cont. Grp | 9 | 30.22 | 7.51 | | | | |

Table 3 above shows the results of experimental and control groups, clearly depicting the effectiveness of SBA on vocabulary learning among Pre-NCE KASCEPS students. Considering the results, there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. The results indicate a mean of 70.33 for the experimental group and 30.22 for the control group. Using the table of t-distribution under the 16 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, the critical t-value is (2.12), while the calculated t-value is (7.98). As the calculated t-value (7.98) is greater than the critical t-value (2.12), the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is a significant impact on spelling proficiency and vocabulary expansion among Pre-NCE students of KASCEPS who were exposed to SBA.

## Discussion of Findings

Spelling is particularly difficult in the English language due to the lack of one-to-one correspondence between the individual sounds of spoken words and the letters of written English (Umar, 2023), though writing accurate spelling of words adds to the quality of the overall writing text (Subhi & Yasin, 2015). To this end, the results of this paper address this prevailing tendency of the English language by justifying how SBA can be effective in ameliorating students' poor spelling and vocabulary learning. The findings of this paper support the work of Sekarini (2013) who found that Spelling Bee can improve students' spelling ability. It also corresponds to the research made by Yusuf, Mustafa, & Alqinda (2019) who proved that Spelling Bee is highly recommended as an effective strategy in teaching vocabulary to EFL learners as it creates a fun classroom atmosphere. In addition, Sari (2017) states that it can be found that students' achievement of vocabulary mastery was improved. This is based on the result of the pre-test and post-test where students' mean scores were improved from 45.34 in the pre-test to 63.97 in the post-test. Furthermore, Inayatullah (2012) clearly proved in his research that the post-test result contains (75.69) which is greater than the pre-test score (37.67). These results indicated the

students' achievement in English vocabulary. While analysing the t-test for independent samples at the significance level of 0.05, the calculated t-value (2.18) is higher than the t-table (1.68). This means that the alternate hypothesis is accepted, while the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicated that there is an influence of SBA on the students' achievement in English vocabulary learning.

## Conclusion

It is obvious from the results of this study that Spelling Bee Approach (SBA) is effective in vocabulary learning. It is an effective approach that can ameliorate spelling difficulties and enlarge vocabulary size. Testing SBA using SDAT has been interesting for the researchers to ascertain the effectiveness or otherwise of the approach to vocabulary learning among the students of the Department of English and European Languages. This study examined the approach and found it effective.

## Recommendations

1. As this paper discovered the effectiveness of SBA on vocabulary learning, it recommends that teachers should utilise the approach to teach their learners vocabulary.
2. Vocabulary should be taught alongside with Spelling Bee.
3. Students should be encouraged to participate in Spelling Bee.
4. The English department should organize and coordinate the Spelling Bee with support from school/college management.
5. Spelling guide should be well developed taking cognizance of words and their semantic relations.

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