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A COMPRATIVE STUDY OF SKILL-BASED AND WHOLE-LANGUAGE READING INSTRUCTION ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN READING COMPREHENSION IN KONTAGORA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NIGER STATE

By

Jacqueline Brown Ukaegbu (PhD)
ukahjack@yahoo.com
07036681474
Department of Primary Education, Faculty of Specialized Education, Federal University of Education, Kontagora, Niger State

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to compare the skill-based reading instruction with the whole-language reading instruction in reading comprehension achievement of senior secondary students in Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger State. A sample of 100 SS2 students of two public schools from the population of 480used for the study using a Quasi experimental design. The groups were made up of two experimental and two control groups. The instrument for data collection is test, titled Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT), modified by the researchers and adapted from WAEC comprehension examination. The data analyses are calculated using Means and Variance, and Analysis of Variance t- Test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that the choice of reading instruction affects achievement in reading comprehension of students as the students in the experimental groups had higher scores in post-test than those in the control groups. It also shows that explicit treading comprehension instructions should be used in the teaching of reading comprehension in senior secondary schools. In view of the foregoing it is recommended that teachers of English should teach reading comprehension explicitly using appropriate methods, provision should be made for the teaching of reading comprehension on schools' timetables and students' reading culture should be developed and encouraged for desired learning outcomes. It also recommends that this instruction should be employed against other language teaching strategies in order to facilitate the learning of other courses, since reading skill will help the is a repertoire of skills that will help the students to navigate through the other courses with minimal difficulty. It should therefore be given prominence in the school curriculum.

Keywords: Reading instruction, Innovation, Skill based study, Achievement, Reading Comprehension.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the main goals of literacy is to teach students to read. Reading is one of the principal ways of transmitting a culture from one generation to another. Failure to learn to read can keep people from full participation in society (Dike, 2006). Reading is a composite skill which begins when the reader looks at printed material, perceives the organization of the letters, connects the visual perception and auditory sensation, selects meaning given in the context, and finally comprehends the passage. In order for these skills to take place reflexively when a child reaches maturity, the school builds these skills in the child through study and practice (Enyi & Ereke, 2021). Reading is an essential school subject and deserves to be given appropriate attention in the school curriculum. This is necessary in other to accomplish one of the broad goals of secondary school education which stresses the importance of preparing the individual for useful living within the society and for further education (FRN, 2004). In spite of these, reading has been erroneously conceived and poorly taught in Nigerian secondary schools. Most teachers perceive reading instruction as a time to test students' ability to read a given text and answer few recall questions (Onukaogu, 2012).

The problems associated with the teaching of reading and the practice of reading informal education in Nigeria is captured by (Unoh, 1995) in what he described as the "prevalence of the reluctant reading and learning syndrome in Nigeria's educational institutions". Similarly, students are described as having poor reading habit (Moudumogu, C.A. (2006)). This may largely be responsible for the high rate of failure recorded in the English Language and Literature Examinations conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) as presented in the WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports for May/June (2013) and (2014) respectively. In the reports it was observed that candidates lack skills in English grammar, comprehension and summarization of passages. These reports reveal that most of the candidates who wrote these examinations show evidence of lack of understanding of the content of the set reading comprehension passages, summary passages, and cloze texts, among others. The report also advised that teachers of English endeavour to give students more written assignments and practical work in order to improve candidates written expressions and articulation in English language.

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Therefore, it is the duty of the language teacher to increase the reading comprehension strategies of students; it is a vital aspect of the school improvement plan. Reading comprehension strategies are tools with which students determine the meaning of what they read. Teaching comprehension as a strategic process enables the students to make connections with what is read beyond literal recall to critical thinking and evaluation (Erickson, Hatch, & Clendon, 2010). These reading comprehension strategies are skills such as surveying, skimming, scanning, identification of main ideas, summarization, and retelling, among others. It is important to note that reading comprehension should not be introduced until the following principles are met as asserted by Oyetunde (2020). These principles include ensuring that learners have passed the word recognition stage, have eye contact with the printed page or written text during instruction, practice of silent reading, learners' background should be activated based on the passage to be read and reading comprehension instruction should be undertaken with clearly defined objectives in mind.

Diverse methods are used to teach reading. These range from isolated skill-based (intensive phonics/basal reading programmes) to integrated, whole language approaches that stress language experience, reading, writing, and critical thinking. The skill-based reading instruction is code-oriented and focuses on the mechanics and sub-skills of reading comprehension. This approach to reading demands students' knowledge of the main idea, sequence of the story, knowledge of the vocabulary and ability to make inferences. Hence, language is taught as separate sub-skills based on a drill and practice model. Current thinking in reading instruction is moving towards meaning oriented or whole language approach which demands creativity and students' participation during the reading instruction (Neuman, 2010; Hayles, 2010). Within the w3hole language philosophy, reading instruction becomes a cognitive and interactive activity during which students are provided with diverse opportunities to interact with texts and use language for their own purposes. The relevance of the whole language approach in this study, therefore, rests on the importance of students' engagement in independent silent reading and interactive activities that go on in whole language teaching classrooms. Thus, whole language supports students' preferences and personal responses to reading in multiple perspectives such as sustained silent reading, keeping of reading and writing journals, sharing book experiences with peers, re-telling of stories read, discussion of materials read, films watched or audio tapes listened to and many

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more (Elliot & Dupuis, 2000; Goodman, 2003;Ezeokoli, 2005). Teachers who adopt the meaning-oriented or whole language approach to reading comprehension provide students with opportunities to select reading texts from a robust provision of reading materials aside school recommended books, engage in sustained silent reading and are encouraged to respond personally to what they have read through various whole language based classroom literacy activities. This study, therefore, compared the effects of skill-based reading instruction and the whole-language reading instruction on achievement in reading comprehension of senior secondary school students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The success in reading is the success of education generally. To buttress this notion Kolawole (2015) asserts that the success of any further education depends entirely on the intensive and extensive reading a child is able to do. Similarly, Shoe bottom (2003), O' Conhor, White, and Swanson, (2007), postulated that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic processes as well as between reading and vocabulary knowledge.

As important as the art of reading is, the researchers' classroom observations show that students in secondary schools in Kontagora Local Government Area find reading problematic. They hardly read outside recommended textbooks but mainly for the purpose of passing examinations. Besides, teachers seem to adopt unproductive methods in their teaching. Against this background, this study compared the skill based reading instruction and the whole language reading instruction in the teaching of reading comprehension in senior secondary school, in Kontagora LGA, of Niger State. It is hoped that the findings from this study will help proffer suggestions on how to improve the teaching of reading comprehension.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

This section focused on the step-by-step procedure used for the study, it dealt with research design, population and sample, sampling techniques, instrument(s) for data collection, validity and reliability of instruments, procedure for data collection and method of data analysis.

Research Design

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According to Awotunde, Ugodulunwa, and Ozoji (2002, p. 18) a research design "is aplan that guides the researcher in structuring the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data". The study employed Quasi experimental design, using the t-test ANOVA: two- factor with replication for data analysis. The design involves comparing a group that will undergo treatment (experimental) and a group that treatment will not be given (control).

Population and Sample

The population for this study comprised all senior secondary school students in Kontagora LGA of Niger State. Out of the entire population of five (5) public secondary schools in the local government area the researcher sampled two schools for this research. The total population of SS2 in the two sample schools is four hundred and eighty (480). One hundred (100) SS2 students randomly selected from the 2 public schools as sample and each school had two groups. These groups have twenty-five students each making a total of fifty students in each school.

Sampling Technique

The simple random sampling technique was employed using the balloting. This method is effective for drawing a sample from a population, ensuring that every element of the population has equal opportunity to be selected to constitute the sample.

Instrument for Data Collection

The Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT) was the only instrument used for the study. It was administered at the pre-test before and post-test after the treatment. It is an expository passage at SS2 readability level with seventeen - point questions drawn at literal, inferential and critical levels, and summary. The questions covered the following aspects: ability to understand main ideas and themes, remember the skills taught, relate what they read to their own experiences and make their own responses to what is read.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

For the purposes of validation some selected passages were adjusted by a test and measurement expert from Test and Measurement unit of Federal University of Education, Kontagora for content and face validity. A cloze test using Fry's cloze test formula was

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designed and administered to S52students in a private school. The passage on which 50% of the students scored 35% and above was selected for the task. All passages were further administered to the same students to determine their reliability after an interval of two weeks. The responses were analysed using the Pearson's correlation formulae and reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained.

Procedure for Data Collection

The pre-test was administered on experimental group 1 and control group land scored by the researcher in week one. The two experimental groups received instructions; however, experimental group 2 received only instruction but no pre-test. The instructional programme was designed in a way that experimental group 1 received whole language instruction while experimental group 2 received skill-based instructions. The two instructions were geared towards guiding students to locate main ideas, answer literal, inferential and critical questions, write summaries, develop vocabulary. The instruction lasted for six weeks. The teaching sessions were conducted in a classroom to maintain the normal school experience. Each session lasted for 70minutes, once a week for the number of weeks the treatment used. The experimental group receiving the whole language instruction were exposed to other reading passages apart from the stated ones. The post-test was administered by the researcher on all the groups in week eight lasting for 50 minutes.

Method of Data Analysis

The research hypotheses were tested using, the t-test and ANOVA: two -factor with replication. They are parametric measures and are effective for determining differences between groups and whether the mean of two or more independent samples are drawn from population having the same mean at p= .05 level of significance (Awotunde & Ugodulunwa, 2004)., The t-testis used to determine the significant difference between the mean of two independent samples.

The formula is given as:

$$t = \frac{x_1 - x_2}{\sqrt{\frac{var_1}{n_1} + \frac{var_2}{n_2}}}$$

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The research questions were answered using the mean and standard variation of the data,

The formula is given as:

$$\chi = \sum \frac{x}{n}$$

FINDINGS

Some findings are summarized and discussed in this article to answer the objectives of the study. These were to: determine whether the choice of reading instruction influences students reading comprehension achievement; figure out the effects of using the skill-based reading instruction on students' reading comprehension; find out the effects of using the whole language reading instruction on students'- reading comprehension and find out which of the two reading instructions being compared will be most effective.

Research Question One

Does the choice of reading instruction influence students' reading comprehension?

Table 1: The Mean and Variance of Post Test Scores on Skilled Based Reading Instruction and Whole Language Reading Instruction

Group	N	Pretest Mean	Pretest SD	Posttest Mean	Posttest SD	Mean Gain	Mean Difference
Experimental	50	4.70	2.62	16.44	1.28	11.74	9.66
Control	50	5.58	2.80	7.66	3.79	2.08	

In the experimental group, which comprised of 50 participants, the pretest mean score was 4.70 with a standard deviation (SD) of 2.62. After the experiment, the post-test mean score significantly increased to 16.44 with a small standard deviation of 1.28. This indicates a substantial improvement in scores, as reflected by the mean difference of 1 1.74. On the other hand, the Control group, also consisting of 50 participants, had a higher pretest mean of 5.58with a slightly larger standard deviation of 2.80. However, the post-test mean score for this group was 7.66, indicating a modest increase. The mean difference between the pretest and post-test scores in the Control group was 2.08. These findings suggest that the

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intervention or treatment administered to the Experimental group yielded significant positive results. The Experimental group displayed a remarkable improvement in scores, as evidenced by the substantial increase in the post-test mean and the considerable gain in scores. In contrast, the Control group showed a smaller increase in scores, indicating a less pronounced impact of the intervention or treatment. Overall, these results highlight the effectiveness of the intervention employed in the Experimental group, demonstrating its ability to positively influence the outcomes of the experiment when compared to the Control group.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of students taught using the whole language reading instruction and that of the students taught using skill-based instruction in reading comprehension.

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Table 2: t-Test: Paired To Samples for Means

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	df	p	Decision
Experimental	50	16.44	1.28	15.506	98	0.000	Significance
Control	50	7.66	3.79				

The t-test result comparing the experimental group and the control group reveals a significant difference between the two groups. In the experimental group, which consisted of50 participants, the mean score was 16.44, with a relatively low standard deviation of 1.28. In the control group, also comprising 50 participants, the mean score was 7.66, and the standard deviation was 3.79.The calculated t-value for the comparison was 15.51, and it is associated with 98 degrees of freedom. The p-value obtained from the t-test was 0.000, which indicates an extremely low probability of observing such a large difference between the groups due to chance alone. Based on these results, we can conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the Experimental and Control groups. We therefore reject the null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The primary reason for conducting this study was to compare the skill-based reading instruction with the whole-language reading instruction in reading comprehension achievement of SS2 students as innovation into language teaching. Other reasons included finding out if choice of instruction has any effect on the achievement of students in reading comprehension. Findings indicated that the students in the skill-based group did not do as well as those in the whole-language group, which goes to show that the choice of instruction can have effects on student's achievement. This is in agreement where it is said that classroom instruction must meet the needs of students Oyetunde (2013).

Furthermore, the significant difference in mean scores of students in the whole language group as against those in the skill-based group may be due to the fact that the whole-language instruction encourages the use of everything at the disposal of both teacher and students. These include previous knowledge, interaction with text beyond what is read from print.

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The whole-language instruction allows for the easy manipulation of environment, text, previous knowledge and others, by the teacher and students to ensure that comprehension takes place; going by what is construed as the concept of reading comprehension and the connection which is made between what is read and background knowledge. The whole-language group when compared with its control group also shows a significant difference between the mean scores with the experimental group scoring higher than the control group. This was due to the fact that there was no named instruction used for reading comprehension prior to the time of the study Onukaogu (2012). What teachers do was to generally test comprehension by asking students to read a given passage and answer the questions that follow. Therefore, for teachers of English to develop adequate reading comprehension strategies in students they must explicitly teach reading comprehension using appropriate instruction, which will consequently change students from perceiving reading comprehension as difficult, problematic, wearisome and frustrating.

CONCLUSION

The use of students' friendly, interactive and integrative instructional methods that allow them to bring into the reading task a relevant schema which helps them to interact and relate with any reading material increases their ability to read, and comprehend texts more than the skill-based method of reading instruction, although the skill-based instruction could be used more effectively when teaching learning to read at the lower levels.

The problem of students' low reading proficiency is not much to be blamed on their inability to read, but on ineffective instructional methods which teachers use in the teaching of reading. Students become more reflective and engaged as readers when they are given opportunity to interact, relate and respond personally to these materials in ways that make meaning to them.

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