

Effects of Extensive Reading Programme on Primary School Pupils' Achievement in Reading Comprehension in Mangu LGA, Plateau State

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out with the objectives to investigate the effects of extensive reading programme (ERP) on primary school pupils' achievement in reading comprehension in Mangu LGA, Plateau State. Two sets of primary four pupils from different schools were used as experimental and control groups respectively. The population consisted of 215 pupils from two Public Primary Schools, Quasi-experimental research design was adopted to conduct the research using the non-equivalent control groups on the basis of using intact group. All conditions were similar in each group on reading comprehension with emphasis on vocabulary development, grammatical structure and the three comprehension approaches. Two instruments were used: the Standard story book and class Achievement Test (CAT) which was administered to the pupils' before and after the treatment. Data collected were analyzed using the mean scores, standard deviation and t-test for independent sample. The results indicated that the experimental group performed significantly mean difference over the control group in their post-test in the area of vocabulary development, grammatical structure and the three comprehension approaches. It was therefore recommended that extensive reading should be considered an inevitable programme in the Public Primary Schools to improve their reading culture habit. Supplementary reading materials should be made available aside from the prescribed texts in all Public Primary Schools. Extensive reading programme was also recommended to be made compulsory on the school time table in order to ameliorate the reading challenges pupils have in Plateau state.

Key Words: Extensive Reading, Reading Comprehension, Achievement, Primary school

INTRODUCTION

English Language in Nigeria is our national language. It is the language of commerce and industry, language of judiciary and the law, and most especially to this work, language of communication and instruction. It is also a language of interaction among fellow beings in the country mostly used. This can become effective only when the speakers of the language are well grounded on reading material or text printed in English Language appropriately.

However recently, there is general outcry over learners' poor reading culture all over the nation as well as even observed by Chen, & Wang, (2024) who assert that "for many years poor reading has been an issue ravaging global and more especially Nigeria's educational system". For student to perform well in any field of endeavour, Bayraktar, & Firat (2020) state that they must form the habit of reading extensively. They also observe and categorically state that some primary school pupil find it difficult to read and understand despite the fact that reading is indispensable. Some show care-free attitudes towards reading. Hamada, and Yamashita, (2020) asserts that "children will endeavour to understand and be encouraged in anything they see adults doing provided the adults demonstrate enjoyment and satisfaction doing it".

Also, as an experienced primary school teacher in the public primary school, pupils are not exposed to extensive

reading programme that will give them the opportunity to walk through reading materials during one of the periods of teaching English language. This is mostly associated to lack of skills in teaching reading comprehension as observed by Kong & Li, (2021) that this could be due to “poor or incomplete lack of training for most Language teachers in our schools”.

What then is reading comprehension? It is possible to read and not understand what is being read. Al-Hoorie, and Vitta, (2023) refers to this kind of reading a mere word calling since the reader does not get any information from the text. He posits that “reading is when one reads anything that is written or printed and can explain it in your own words to yourself or to someone else” (p.3). Therefore, reading comprehension is the same as reading to learn. Renandya, & Jacobs, (2021)

observe that the much problem our school children face today is that “many more are unable to read to learn”. This category of children referred to as “schooled illiterates” for the fact that “the school system is not succeeding in developing basic reading and literacy skills that students need to cope effectively with the requirements and challenges knowledge-driven and print-oriented society”. Al-Hoorie, and Vitta, (2023) states that since reading is a process of meaning construction where the reader uses the information in the passage and his head, comprehension therefore occurs at three levels viz; literal, inferential and critical. This is where the reader uses his conceptual experience and language knowledge in association with the information provided in the text to generate meaning. As provided by Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) in National Policy on Education which stipulates that the Primary level of education in Nigeria is the key to success or failure of the whole system and that goals of primary education are to among others inculcate in the child the ability to communicate effectively and make the child develop a sound and reflective thinking to participate and contribute to the societal development. The Policy also states that English shall progressively be used as medium of instruction “from the fourth year of the primary education.

Since learners’ proficiency in the English Language is the focus, “reading must be given a priority place in the teaching learning process “as observed by Chen, & Wang, (2024). Reading, as one of the basic language skills is mostly neglected in most primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. Al-Hoorie, and Vitta, (2023) state categorically clear that as a matter of fact, no reading ever takes place in most primary school classrooms, while the teaching at the secondary school level is haphazard and unsystematic. In fact, most children who finish from public primary have nothing to offer functionally to prove they have passed through the basic education. This implies that the primary education today disservice to the average Nigerian primary school child. This is because it gives the false impression that he has being educated while he is not functionally literate (Oyetunde 2015). According to Renandya, & Jacobs (2021) the nature of reading process in Nigeria is not generally understood probably for the fact that English is still considered a second language, as well as many teachers of English do not precisely recognize the difference between teaching English and teaching reading.

Furthermore, the same authors still observe that even though there is reading on the timetable, many primary school teachers never teach it at all. And even if it is taught, it is most casually and superficially done. This is largely for the reason that being that or mostly assumed that once a child can speak English, he can equally read it. Even though reading comprehension plays a central role in the school curriculum, it is not yet given the attention needed in our primary schools (Wu, & Wang, (2020). This is largely not only due to the pupils’ inability to read, that their general of interest, indifference, sheer rejection to read and thereby leading to poor comprehension if they are made to read. Renandya, & Jacobs, (2021) also attribute this to lack of emphasis on reading by teacher-education programmes due to the fact that most teacher-trainers themselves lack the necessary background in reading, hence teachers mostly do not pay attention to the development of reading skills in students.

Since the goal of reading is for understanding rather than pronunciation and recitation of the letters of the alphabet, it should be geared towards meaning-searching and meaning-getting activity (Wu, & Wang, 2020)). Some of these reading skills include “surveying, skimming, scanning, identification of main ideas, summarization, retelling and ability to answer literal, inferential and critical questions based on is what read”. He also posits that the teacher must ensure that the learners have passed the stage of word recognition before teaching reading to learn. They must have eye contact with the printed text during instruction. This is why he says that they should be guided to practice silent reading since reading is a sustained, silent activity. The reader

must be made to be active and not passive by consciously and actively constructing information

making use of textual cues in line with the information already stored in his brain. The reader must also be made to associate printed words with their meanings, involving him or her in the intellectual activity of evaluating and synthesizing (Kong, & Li, (2021). The teacher is regarded as the most important variable in how well a pupil reads to learn as posited by (Kong, & Li, 2021). The teacher therefore should activate the learners' background based on the text to be read by guiding them to have an expectation for the silent reading that they will do (Wu, & Wang, 2020)). This is also in line with what Ahmed and Rajab (2015) assert that teachers of English need to have expertise and skills in order to engage their readers with fun and enjoyable experiences of learning English and reading in particular.

It is in the light of the above reasons that the researcher advocates for the use of extensive reading programme (ERP) in the primary schools. The researcher believes that ERP might help to build in our pupils the desired reading culture that is expected of our teeming youths considering the fact that English Language is offered as a core subject and a medium of instruction in their secondary school and higher education levels.

Extensive reading, as observed by Kong, and Li (2021) is reading a lot and for pleasure without having to reach for a dictionary after every bit of sentence. This is why Wu, & Wang, (2020) states that the more children read, the more they gain in language ability and reading comprehension. This shows the more they learn as well. Since reading is never "calling out words" from a text, but it is all about obtaining information from what is read by explaining "it in your own words" without prejudice to the meaning or thought of the writer (Oyetunde, 2015:8). The agitation for the use of extensive reading programme becomes necessary to help develop the comprehension ability of the primary school child. Wu, & Wang, (2020), also believes that some reading materials can go beyond language learning and rather into the realms of critical thinking. This implies that our children need to develop the skill of critical thinking in line with the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) which aims at inculcating reflective thinking and effective communication among our learners in the primary schools.

A research in ERP has been conducted Hsu, & Lee, (2022) undertook the study on developing students' reading ability through extensive reading among undergraduates. Another researcher, Loh (2009) undertook a study on the impact of teacher modelling on extensive reading program among Primary School Pupils in Singapore. All these researches indicate that "ERP help students to move from learning to read orientation to reading to earn framework" (Wu, & Wang, (2020). It is against this back drop that the researcher seeks to use ERP in primary school to find out the effects on primary four pupils reading culture and 'good' learning habit with particular focus on vocabulary development and the use of grammatical structure. It is in line with these facts that the researcher agitates for the introduction and use of Extensive Reading Programme in primary schools in Mangu Local Government Area, Nigeria. The researchers are of the opinion that extensive reading programme is one of the major activities that will curb the menace of poor reading culture and improve the desired proficiency in English language in the learners as comprehension will become easy for them too.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of the research work is to find out the effects of extensive reading programme (ERP) on primary school pupils' achievement in reading comprehension in Mangu LGA, Plateau State. The specific objectives include to:

1. assess the effects of ERP on primary school pupils' achievement in comprehension based on vocabulary development.
2. assess the primary school pupils' use of grammatical structure after being exposed the use of extensive reading.
3. determine the pupils' achievement using the three levels of comprehension approaches.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to guide the researcher on conducting this study. These are to:

1. What extent does the experimental group differ in the use of vocabulary development from the control group?
2. What extent does the experimental group differ in the use of grammatical structure from the control group?
3. What extent does the experimental group differ in essay comprehension approaches from the control group?
4. What is the level of primary school pupils' achievement using the reading comprehension approaches before and after treatment?

Theoretical/ Conceptual Frame Work

The current study is anchored on Jean Piaget's (1896-1980) constructivism learning theory, the latest teaching and learning theory in western countries, which contends that people produce knowledge and form meaning in connection to their past experiences (Qwisim 2020). This implies that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world upon personal experiences and reflection of those experiences. Constructivism is the belief that meaning exist only where there is the mind. Jean Piaget, a behavioural Psychologist, proposed the constructivism theory as a solid framework for understanding children's ways of doing and thinking at different levels of their development (Helpful Professor, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in this study was the Quasi-Experimental design. The population of the study was of 6544 primary four pupils in 228 public primary schools (2022/2023) in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State, the sample consisted of 215 pupils from two public primary schools in Mangu Local Education Authority (LEA). The schools that were used as samples are Mangu EKAN Primary School and Gindiri Demonstration Primary School respectively. Mangu EKAN Primary School was used as the experimental group while Gindiri Demonstration Primary School as the control group. Mangu EKAN Primary School had 146 primary four pupils while Gindiri Demonstration Primary School had 69 primary four pupils. Also, the two schools were selected because the pupils have the same learning characteristics and the distance between them also helped in the control of what Awotunde and Ugodulunwa (2004) call interaction effects of selection bias where the two schools represented two different districts in Mangu LGA of Plateau State. In each of the schools, the researcher used thirty (30) pupils for each school. That is, 30 pupils of Gindiri Demonstration Primary School who served as the control group while the other 30 pupils of EKAN Primary School served as the experimental group. The researcher used simple random sampling technique to sample the schools for the Experiment. Two public primary schools out of the 228 in Mangu LGA were randomly selected. being included in the sample. This implies that the probability that school has at the outset of the simple random sampling process is 0.004, that is 1/228 schools Therefore, the probability of a school being included in the sample will be independent of any other school being included in the sample.

The researcher used a Class Achievement Test (CAT) instrument to conduct the investigation. The instrument was divided into two sections; 'A' and 'B'. Section A was a fifteen- multiple choice objective test with four options lettered A-D for the pupils to choose the best alternative as the answer for each question aimed at testing the pupils ability in vocabulary development and grammatical structure, while section B was a six-essay question with the aim of testing the pupils' comprehension ability using the three comprehension approaches and each approach carried two essay questions. The instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.87, indicating that it is a very good instrument to be used for the research. Data was collected using trained research assistants.

RESULTS

Research Question One

To what extent does the experimental group differ in the use of vocabulary development from the control group?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Pupils' Vocabulary Development

Where N=number of participants, X mean and SD = Standard Deviation

Group	Test	N	\bar{X}	SD	Percentage (%)
Experimental	Pretest	30	8.73	3.50	51.4%
	Posttest	30	11.60	3.34	56.9%
Control	Pretest	30	8.27	3.92	48.6
	Posttest	30	8.80	3.54	43.1

Source: Field work, 2023

Table 1 presents the mean scores and statistics of pupils on vocabulary development and which shows that experimental group had pretest mean scores of 8.73 and standard deviation of 3.50 representing 51.4%, while control group had the pretest mean score of 8.27 and standard deviation of 3.92 respectively, which represents 48.6%. Also, posttest scores indicated that pupils in the experimental group had higher mean value (M=11.60, SD=3.39, 56.9%) than pupils in the control group (M=8.80, SD=3.54, 43.1%). From the analysis, it implies that pupils in the experimental group have high (Mean difference of 0.45) use of vocabulary development whereas, that of the control group is low for N number of participants.

Research Question Two

To what extent does the experimental group differ in the use of grammatical structure from the control group?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Pupils' Grammatical Structure

Where N=number of participants, X mean and SD = Standard Deviation

Group	Test	N	\bar{X}	SD	Percentage (%)
Experimental	Pretest	30	11.00	3.43	55.6
	Posttest	30	14.13	3.32	58.2
Control	Pretest	30	8.80	2.91	44.4
	Posttest	30	10.13	2.97	41.8

Source Field work: 2023

The Computation in Table 2 reveals that the pretest mean scores on the use of grammatical structure of pupils in the experimental group (M=11.00, SD=3.43, 55.6%) is higher than that of the control group (M=8.80, SD=2.91, 44.4%). Likewise, posttest mean scores of the experimental group (M=14.13, SD=3.32, 58.2%) is significantly higher than that of the pupils in the control group (M=10.13, SD=2.97, 41.8%). This suggests that primary school pupils exposed to extensive reading programme have high use of grammatical structure than those who are not.

Research Question Three

To what extent does the experimental group differ in essay comprehension approaches from the control group?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Pupils’ achievement in essay comprehension approaches

Where N=number of participants, X mean and SD = Standard Deviation

Group	Test	N	\bar{X}	SD	Percentage (%)
Experimental	Pretest	30	20.03	10.40	60.6
	Posttest	30	35.30	12.80	65.0
Control	Pretest	30	13.03	12.55	39.4
	Posttest	30	19.00	10.86	35.0

Source Field Work: 2023

The analysis in Table 3 showed that pretest mean scores of pupils in the experimental group (M=20.03, SD=10.40, 60.6%) on essay writing is higher than that of the control group (M=13.03, SD=12.55, 39.4%). Similarly, posttest scores of pupils in the experimental group (M=35.30, SD=12.80, 65.0%) is significantly higher than the pupils in the control group (M=19.00, SD=10.85, 35.0%). It implies that primary school pupils treated with extensive reading programme have high use of essay writing than those who are not.

Research Question Four

What is the level of primary school pupils’ reading comprehension achievement before and after the extensive reading programme?

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Pupils’ Reading Comprehension Achievement

Where N=number of participants, X mean and SD = Standard Deviation

Group	Test	N	\bar{X}	SD	Percentage (%)
Experimental	Pretest	30	39.77	13.31	56.5
	Posttest	30	60.70	15.41	61.5
Control	Pretest	30	30.67	15.81	43.5
	Posttest	30	37.93	13.87	38.5

Source: Field Work 2023

Table 4 shown reading comprehension mean scores of pupils between groups and analysis indicated that experimental group had pretest mean scores and standard deviation of 39.77 and 13.31 representing 56.5%, while pupils in the control group had the mean and standard deviation of 30.67 and 15.81 respectively, which represents 43.5%. In the same manner, posttest scores indicated that pupils in the experimental group had higher mean score (M=60.70, SD=15.41, 61.5%) than pupils in the control group (M=37.93, SD=13.87, 38.5%). From the foregoing analysis, it implies that pupils exposed to extensive reading programme have high reading comprehension than those who are not.

DISCUSSION

The findings on the pupils’ vocabulary development reveals that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups respectively. While the experimental group has the highest

mean score of 11.60 and the standard deviation of 3.34 greater than the Probability Value (p-value) of .003 at 0.05 level of significance, representing 56.9% of the sampled population. This is in line with the findings of Bayraktar, & Firat (2020) on the effect of extensive reading on vocabulary development in EFL learners which revealed a significant difference in vocabulary learning at the level of 0.05 between the experimental and the control groups of both levels. This present study also is in consonant with the authors' observation based on their findings that extensive reading could improve vocabulary learning among our pupils in the upper primary classes. If children are given the necessary guide on how to use new words found in the texts within the context of use and not based on dictionary meaning, they will certainly develop the interest in reading and will also have the zeal to read on their own. It shows that pupils can perform better in vocabulary development if they are exposed to ERP. The result of the present study also implies that when pupils are exposed to variety of books in their formative years, the more they develop good use of vocabulary within the context of use. In the same vein, Eziafa and George (2013) in their own investigation found that students who were engaged in extensive reading proved to have higher stock of vocabulary than the non-extensive reading students.

Similarly, pupils were tested on the use of grammatical structure where they were asked to read and answer multiple choice questions on the two texts supplied to them. The t-test result also shows that the experimental group performed higher than the control group who were not exposed to the use of ERP. The experimental group performed higher having the mean score of 14.13 and standard deviation of 3.32 representing 58.2% of the total sampled population which is also greater than the p-value .000 at the significance level of 0.05 for the degree of freedom of 58. There was no ground to accept the null hypothesis but to rather consider the reverse that the control group, who were not exposed to the treatment of ERP, were negatively affected as they performed below the performance of the experimental group. This significant difference between the two groups did not contradict the findings of Ozkan and Tongur (2014) that the use of literary works in the ELT reading classes makes the lesson motivating and valuable complement to the classroom materials. This is because it expands pupils' language awareness and language acquisition as they think critically when they get involved in the work. However, the result of this study opposes their findings that students dominantly rely on teachers to paraphrase, clarify, interpret and explain the text. This study reveals that mistakes can happen if only pupils are not properly guided on the use of vocabulary and grammar within the context of use. It therefore signifies that pupils in primary schools are expected to be exposed to variety of books in the classroom as a supplementary class library scheme attached to an English Course where learners are given the time, encouragement and materials to pleasurable read at their pace. This has to be implemented and strictly supervised by the school as suggested by Hamada, & Yamashita, (2020).

Further more, it was discovered that ERP has a greater influence and effect on pupils' use of the three comprehension approaches. The result on Table 7 also unveils that the experimental group in the post test had the mean score of 60.70 and standard deviation of 15.41 representing 61.5% of the sampled population, which is greater than the p-value of .000 at 0.05 level of significance for the degree of freedom of 58. While the control group had the mean score of 37.93 and standard deviation of 13.67 representing 38.5% of the sampled population. It was also discovered that even though the control group performed below the experimental group, there was a little improvement in their performance as they learned more in the course of their conventional English language teaching. This finding concurs with that of Adeniji and Omale (2010) which places teachers at the center in promoting reading comprehension among our primary school pupils. Similarly, Ogugua, Emerole, Egwim, Anyanwu and Obasi (2015) opined that if pupils are well exposed to the different practices of reading and reading materials, they would likely broaden their imagination and engage in the practice of reading regularly. In like manner, findings of this work is in line with the opinion of Bayraktar, & Firat (2020) that books provide information that goes beyond or deeper than just classroom discussion as one reads for pleasure and relaxation. In consonant with their findings, this work acknowledges the fact that when children are exposed to books, the more they learn as demonstrated by the control group who show little improvement in the post-test CAT. It then implies that some pupils also studied and understood the CAT instrument after the pre-test exercise.

This is in line with the belief Bayraktar, & Firat (2020) that the implementation of extensive reading goes along with teaching. Even though the control group were not exposed to the extensive reading programme approaches, the conventional teaching had a little positive impact on their learning as they were able to answer some literal questions in a one-word answer than before. Their improvement could be as a result of teacher modeling which

Qwisim, (2020) revealed that modeling is one of the best means of encouraging pupils to read. Since the teacher of the control group usually read to the hearing of the pupils and possibly offered explanations, they were able to improve in the literal comprehension approach over their pre-test result. It was even noted that the experimental group were able to put better answers during the post test as they were taught to read effectively with focus and purpose.

Similarly, it was also discovered that some pupils in the experimental group were able to answer the comprehension questions using the three approaches involved after the treatment. Even though there were many spelling errors, their full sentence answers were encouraging. The little improvement of the control group was mostly seen in the literal approach where most of them produced a one-word answers to the essay comprehension questions. It therefore, signifies that getting the pupils to read different books effectively and under the guide of a teacher will surely help to develop them academically.

The significant difference of the experimental over the control group may be due to the inherent principles adopted by Bayraktar, & Firat (2020) that Extensive Reading Programme helps in “activating the pupils’ background knowledge, building upon their background knowledge and skills, increasing the pupils’ verbal ability through the use of pictures and objects, and stimulating pupils’ higher-level thinking process through the use of evaluation and inferential question.” This could be the reason why the experimental group were able to answer the comprehension questions better than the control group. It further confirms Idogo’s belief that understanding the nature of question as well as being aware of the type of answers expected could equally improve the reading comprehension ability of primary school pupils. This is because they now realize that they have something to contribute to a text and that the author does not necessarily have the last say. This will also boost their morales in reading as observed by Akindele (2012) while encouraging parents to involve themselves in their children’s reading culture in their formative years. This is also in line with the findings of Bayraktar, & Firat (2020) which placed teachers at the centre in promoting reading comprehension among our primary school pupils when the children are well guided and encouraged appropriately, their achievement will be greater as Wang (2014) findings also supports the fact that teachers must be seen asking and not telling, making students come to conclusion on their own instead of being told by helping them activate their knowledge to generate meanings and ideas.

CONCLUSION

Evidence of this study has shown that there is significant difference or improvement in the pupils’ achievement in reading comprehension. While the control group gained some experiences during the treatment, the experimental group performed greater than the later. This is because of their new experience in reading and the approaches adopted in tackling the comprehension questions. While there was an improvement in both vocabulary and grammar by both groups, the experimental group indicated the difference in the use of the three comprehension approaches while tackling the essay part of the CAT. This implies that when learners are properly guided, they will get to read with proper understanding of what they are reading. Learners are supposed to be exposed to a variety of reading materials to enable them get hooked to books.

Since after the treatment, the experimental group gained efficiently than the control group, it implies that the ERP, which seems to be ignored by many teachers is one of the best method of teaching reading comprehension in the primary school sub-sector. It shows that ERP has a greater influence and effects on pupils’ achievement in reading comprehension positively. This is because the experimental group demonstrated this improvement by providing their answers in full sentences as against their pretest answers that were provided in one-word answers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the findings of this study, the researcher has offered some recommendations as follows:

1. The use of extensive reading should be considered an inevitable programme in the public primary schools.
2. The schools authority should provide variety of books in the school to supplement the school prescribed texts to encourage pupils to read even on their own.

3. Extensive reading should be made compulsory and be strictly supervised in all primary schools. This should be done by making every public primary school to have extensive reading as a lesson on the school time table in all senior primary classes.
4. English language teachers should always ensure that pupils are helped to develop the right strategies to approach reading comprehension.

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