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Using Vocal and Silent Reading Approaches for the Enhancement of Effective Teaching and Learning of Reading Skills in English Language (pp. 399-413)

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Abstract

This study used the quasi experimental design to investigate the effectiveness of teaching reading skills in English Language through the use of vocal and silent reading approaches in Ini Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A total of 182 junior secondary two (JS II) students made up the sample of this study. The instruments used for this study were Reading Instructional Package (RIP) and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). From the findings, it was observed that vocal and silent reading approaches enhanced the academic performance of students in English Language. However, there was no significant difference in the academic performance of English Language students taught with vocal and silent reading approaches. The results also showed that gender is not a significant factor in the academic performance of students in English language when taught with vocal and silent reading approaches. It is therefore recommended that silent reading must precede vocal reading and both approaches should be adopted by the English Language teachers for the enhancement of reading skills of the students.

Keywords: Reading Skills, Vocal Reading, Silent Reading, Students' Performance, English Language, Effective Teaching and Learning.

Introduction

Language is a means of communication in the society. It is a tool for learning and the most important medium through which knowledge is acquired.

According to Oyinloye (2004), language is a method by which a person expresses his thoughts and feelings in such a way that the person can be understood by others. Language refers to that specific human possession which is used for communication in the society. Communication is an important means by which people describe and project their inner and outer world, share ideas and feelings and exchange information.

Reading involves the meaningful interpretation of words, phrases and sentences requiring all types of thinking such as judgemental, imaginative, creative, critical and evaluative. Reading is a process of extracting meanings from the written language. It is an important skill in language teaching. It is a process of communication involving the writer and the reader, the encoder and the decoder (Ogunsiji, 2004).

Silent reading involves reading without vocalization. No sound and no noise while students read silently. Vocal reading involves vocalization or talking out loud. It involves reading aloud to the other people's hearing. This activity is done so that one can find out how fluently the students can read (Gbenedio, 1996). According to Okwilagwe (1998) children who seem to be poorly endowed with general ability have more difficulty in mastering the process of learning to read than those who are well endowed.

Robinson (1972) describes a child's ability to read print as obviously connected with the quality of his sight. These ability or skills include visual acuity, visual discrimination, left to right orientation and visual memory. Visual acuity refers to the fact that a child's ability to read print is closely connected with the quality of his sight. Visual discrimination involves the power to discriminate among shapes. With left to right orientation, the student must learn how to move his eyes smoothly along the page to avoid backward movements. Reading can never be fully efficient until the child has mastered this process of reading from left to right because order and memory not only requires the student to perceive words but also to recognize them. This involves some forms of recognition of words or letters. Some students appear to remember a word in one lesson and seem to have forgotten the word in another lesson.

Since comprehension is an essential ingredient of reading, it is necessary for the reader to be ready to learn and be matured in knowledge and understanding. Codes and Jenkins (1998) maintain that comprehension

requires knowledge, not knowledge only of the meaning of the words, but of their relationships in sentences, paragraphs and longer passages. It involves understanding, the intent of the author and may go beyond literal recorded fact to hidden meaning. Aldridge (2005) explains that a learner who has difficulty with spoken language is at a disadvantage in learning to read. Aldridge further claims that lack of ability in the use of language can stem from speech defects and poor linguistic environment. Alo (2003) states that all learning takes place more easily when the child is in full health. Illness, poor diet and lack of sleep have an effect upon the ability of the student to learn or read. Other factors are defects of sight and that of hearing, which can also lead to the poor performance of the students in reading.

For the maintenance of good reading progress, it is better for the student to have good atmosphere for learning. Aldridge (2005) makes his points on the essential factors that help in creating an atmosphere which stimulates and encourages language development in the learners. These include the classroom must be an interesting and exciting place with a good supply of attractive objects and pictures (instructional materials) and the teacher must give the student the opportunity to read freely among his mates.

Reading is a matter of searching for the thought that was in the mind of the author and now lies in the meaning of the words which are before the reader. The concept of reading readiness has its roots in developmental psychology which views the development of a child as a gradual unfolding of the latent powers within. According to Codes and Jenkins (1998) the psychological factors that exert influence on reading readiness in learning process include reader's level of cognitive thinking process; reader's level of intelligence; reader's level of efficiency and reader's level of motivation. The implication is that readiness in reading is entirely governed by a process of maturation which will remain unaltered by any offer made by the teacher or parent. The idea of reading readiness in a learner's life is when his abilities and skills are sufficiently developed, his personality adequately stable, and his interests sufficiently lively for him to make a successful start on reading, that is, to be able to comprehend, and to summarise what he has read.

Among the main reading skills according to Dumont (1990) include the word recognition skills. This is the ability to pronounce and recognize the meaning of unfamiliar words: To do this, the student may use a combination of:

- Configuration clues:- recognition of the word by its overall shape;
- Context clues:- getting the meaning from the sentences in which word is used;
- Phonics;
- Analysis of word structure and
- Use of dictionary

The comprehension level requires the student to derive literal meaning from sequential words and their grammatical relations to each other (the syntax) in sentences, paragraphs and chapters. This ability to weave words together, giving each its proper weight and understanding the accumulation of significance in successive structures is what is known as “reading the lines” (Dumont, 1990). To achieve full comprehension, the reader must know not only the semantic and structural meaning but he must have had some experience related to the author’s ideas

Statement of the Problem

Research has shown that some students could not read to understand texts, to discuss issues read and consequently could not answer questions appropriately from the passage read. Hence, there is need to develop appropriate reading skill that will enhance the effective teaching and learning of English language. Therefore, what reading skill should teachers adopt to improve and enhance students’ academic performance in English Language?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to determine the effectiveness of vocal and silent reading skills in the teaching and learning of English Language. The study is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- (1) To assess if the vocal reading is an effective means of teaching reading in English Language.
- (2) To examine if silent reading is an effective way of teaching reading in English Language.
- (3) To compare the difference in the academic performance of students taught with vocal reading and those taught with silent reading .
- (4) To compare the difference in the academic performance of male and female students taught with vocal reading.

- (5) To compare the difference in the academic performance of male and female students taught with silent reading.

Research Hypotheses

- Ho1: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to vocal reading before and after the treatment.
- Ho2: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to silent reading before and after the treatment.
- Ho3: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to vocal reading and those exposed to silent reading after treatment.
- Ho4: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students exposed to vocal reading.
- Ho5: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students exposed to silent reading.

Research Method

The design adopted for the study was quasi-experimental design. The population of the study comprises of all the junior secondary two (JS II) students in the seven public secondary school in Ini Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Two schools were randomly selected from the population using simple random sampling technique. In each school, two intact classes were randomly selected for the study. The sample size of the study was 182 junior secondary two students.

Two instruments, namely Reading Instructional Package (RIP) and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) were used for the study. The Reading Instructional Package (RIP) consisted of five passages. The passages are:

- (i) Strange friendships between birds and other animals.
- (ii) Do dreams come true?
- (iii) Why we need to sleep
- (iv) Turning deserts in green pastures
- (v) The success of failure

The English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) consisted of fifty multiple choice item generated from the passages read. The ELAT was used for both pretest and post-test. The validity of ELAT was ascertained by two English Languages teachers and two English Language educators. The ELAT was

trial tested to establish reliability with 40 students in a school within the population but not used for the main study. Kuder Richardson formula – 21 was used to establish reliability coefficient and the internal consistency was found to be 0.81.

Teachers' quality variables were ensured by using the English teachers in each school who served as research assistants to teach their respective students. The teachers were trained and they were provided with detailed instructions on different types of reading skills. The ELAT was initially administered to the two groups as pretest and the scores obtained were analyzed in order to account for possible pre-existing differences in the overall ability between the two groups. Hence, the pretest was used to measure learners' entry behaviour on the specific passage read without any teaching as shown in Table 1. After the administration of the pretest, treatment was given to the two groups. The subjects in the experimental group 1 were taught with silent reading while the subjects in the experimental group 2 were taught with vocal reading. The passages were read by the students either orally or silently. The teacher embarked on the general discussion during which new words were tackled from the passages.

In the first week, the research assistants taught the oral and silent reading group students the passage "Strange friendship between birds and other animals". The difficult words were treated in the two groups. They gave the pattern of reading and explained the passage to the students. Students in the vocal learning group were allowed to read aloud one after the other and the difficult words were treated in the same vein. For the silent reading group, the researcher allowed the students to read silently within a given time. The teacher went round to supervise the student and helped them where necessary. The teacher also asked some questions from the students on the passage read.

The students were taught "Do dreams come true" in the second week, "Why we need to sleep" in the third week, "Turning deserts into green pastures" in the fourth week and "the success of failure" in the fifth week to both oral and silent reading groups respectively. The same procedure was used during the second, third, fourth and fifth weeks respectively. The students were made to answer the printed questions after each passage. The post-test was administered after the treatment to both groups during the sixth week. The

data obtained were analysed using t-test. All hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

Results

The analysis in Table 1 shows that the calculated t-value of 1.08 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at $P < .05$ alpha level. Therefore, the result shows that there was no significant difference in the background knowledge of the students used for the study. Hence, any significant change in the course of the experiments would be attributed to the treatment.

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that *there is no significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to vocal reading before and after the treatment.*

In testing the hypothesis, the pretest scores and the posttest scores of the English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) of the vocal reading group were used. The data obtained were analysed as presented in table 2.

The analysis in table 2 shows that the calculated t-value of 39.66 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at $P < .05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating a non-significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to vocal reading before and after the treatment was rejected. This implies that the students performed significantly better after the treatment.

Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis states that *there is no significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to silent reading before and after the treatment.*

In testing the hypothesis, the pretest scores and post-test scores of the English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) of the silent reading group were used. The data obtained were analysed as presented in Table 3.

The analysis in Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of 37.38 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at $P < .05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating a non-significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to silent reading before and after the treatment was rejected. This implies that the students performed significantly better after the treatment.

Hypothesis Three

The null hypothesis states that *there is no significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to vocal reading and those exposed to silent reading after treatment.*

In testing the hypothesis, the post test scores of the English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) of vocal reading group and silent reading group were computed. The results were analysed using t-test as presented in Table 4. The analysis in Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value of 1.37 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at $P < .05$. Thus, the null hypothesis stating a non-significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to vocal reading and those exposed to silent reading after treatment was retained.

Hypothesis Four

The null hypothesis states that *there is no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students exposed to vocal reading.*

In testing the hypothesis, the post test scores of the English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) of male and female students exposed to vocal reading were computed. The results were analysed using t-test as presented in Table 5.

The analysis in table 5 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.92 is less than the critical t-value of 1.98 at $P < .05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating a non-significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students exposed to vocal reading was retained.

Hypothesis Five

The null hypothesis states that *there is no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students exposed to silent reading.*

In testing the hypothesis, the post test scores of the English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) of male and female students exposed to silent reading were computed. The results were analysed using t-test as presented in Table 6.

The analysis in Table 6 shows that the calculated t-value of 1.52 is less than the critical t-value of 1.98 at $P < .05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating a non-significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students exposed to silent reading was retained.

Discussion of Findings

The data analysis for hypothesis one showed that there was a significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to vocal reading before and after the treatment. This indicated that the treatment has shown a remarkable improvement on the performance of the students exposed to vocal reading. This might be due to the fact that reading is an integral part of the child's development and has implication for his personal and social development as well as for mental growth. If the sound element can be removed from the reading process, the ability to comprehend will be off. Also, the reading process involves acquisition of the meanings intended by the writer and the contributions of the reader in form of interpretation, evaluation and reflection about the meanings. The above findings agree with the research work of Gbenedio (1996) that reading enhances the academic performance of students. Gbenedio also states that much preparation on the part of the teacher is necessary, if maximum values are to be derived from oral reading practice. That is, the teacher must prepare instructional materials to aid his teaching and also must fully prepare for the lesson before coming to the class to teach. Gbenedio also suggests that the teacher's attitude, personality and method of teaching have a great influence on the performance of the students; therefore teachers must be friendly with the learners.

The result of hypothesis two showed that there was a significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to silent reading before and after the treatment. This indicated that the treatment has shown a remarkable improvement on the performance of the students exposed to silent reading. This might be due to the fact that when there is no sound or noise while students read silently, they tend to concentrate more and this enhances comprehension and retention of the concept learnt. This pursuit is in line with the finding of Goodacre (1978) that there is little justification for a situation in which the teacher asks every student in the class to read orally a common set of items regardless of the reading levels of the individual students. Those who have trouble in reading the material are embarrassed and the better readers are bored by having to listen and wait for their turn. The result is also in agreement with the findings of Aldridge (2005) that the classroom must be an interesting and exciting place with a good supply of attractive objects and pictures as materials for the students to read silently.

The result of hypothesis three indicated that there was no significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to vocal reading and silent reading after treatment. This means that no group is better than the other. This implies that both vocal and silent reading approaches are very good for teaching English Language because, they show remarkable improvement on the performance of the students. This might be due to the fact that when one is reading either silently or aloud, one should be thinking, defining, predicting, redefining, questioning and evaluation what is being read.

Since comprehension is an essential ingredient of reading, it is necessary for the reader to be ready to learn and be matured in knowledge and understanding. Hence, students who are poor readers cannot do well in their school work. This is in line with the findings of Aderounmu (1991) that in teaching reading, the teacher should know how to adjust to different circumstances and should involve the students and encourage them to participate fully in the lesson. Gbenedio (1996) also indicated in his study that the way English Language teachers handle reading skill contributes to the poor performance of students, in that reading lessons which should be exciting, fruitful and rewarding are only too often boring and disappointing. The results of hypothesis four and five showed a non-significant effect of gender on students' academic performance in English Language when exposed to vocal and silent reading approaches. Thus, performance in English Language is not related to gender irrespective of reading skills approaches. This is in line with the findings of Erinsho (1994) that both male and female students would perform equally well if exposed to the same conditions of learning.

Conclusion

The study has provided useful insights into the enhancement of effective teaching and learning of reading skills in English language through the use of vocal and silent reading approaches. The results from the findings showed that neither the vocal reading approach nor the silent reading approach is better than the other in teaching and learning of reading skills. In other words, each method is as good as the other provided the teacher can make the class lively, friendly and interesting for the students to learn easily. The study also showed that, there exists no significant difference between the academic performance of male and female students exposed to vocal and silent reading approaches. Also, gender is not a significant factor in the academic

performance of English Language students taught with vocal and silent reading approaches.

Recommendations

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

- (1) Both the vocal and silent reading approaches should be adopted by the English language teachers for the enhancement of reading skills of students.
- (2) Silent reading must precede vocal reading unless the objective of such vocal reading activity is primarily that of diagnosis.
- (3) Curriculum planners for junior secondary school English Language should incorporate different types of reading skills in the curriculum in order to enhance academic performance of students in the subject.
- (4) The frequent use of a tape recorder should be encourage during English Language lesson so that the students can detect their oral reading errors. This will also serve as a guide to further oral reading instructional needs of the students with regard to such aspects as sight vocabulary, general word-track skills, use of pronunciation and use of context.
- (5) A balance must be maintained regarding the amount of vocal and silent reading that is used during a given period especially as it relates to the level of students.

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Table 1: t-test analysis of the pretest scores of students in the vocal and silent reading groups

Reading Groups	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	DF	t-cal	t-critical	Decision P<.05	at
Vocal	90	18.42	3.42	180	1.08	1.96	NS	
Silent	92	18.98	3.60					

NS = Not significant

Table 2: t-test analysis of the pretest and posttest scores of the students exposed to vocal reading

Reading Groups	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	DF	t-cal	t-critical	Decision P<.05	at
Vocal	90	18.42	3.42	178	39.66	1.96	*	
Silent	90	40.26	3.94					

* = Significant

Table 3: t-test analysis of the pretest and post-test scores the students exposed to silent reading

Reading Group	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	DF	t-cal.	t-critical	Decision P<.05	at
Vocal	92	18.92	3.60	182	37.38	1.96	*	
Silent	92	39.48	3.74					

* = Significant

Table 4: t-test analysis of the post test scores of the students in vocal reading group and silent reading group

Reading Group	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	DF	t-cal.	t-critical	Decision P<.05	at
Vocal	90	40.26	3.94	180	1.37	1.96	NS	
Silent	92	39.48	3.74					

NS = Not significant

Table 5: T-test analysis of the post test scores of male and female students exposed to vocal reading

Reading Group	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	DF	t-cal.	t-critical	Decision at P<.05
Vocal	43	39.88	4.06	88	0.92	1.98	NS
Silent	47	40.64	3.82				

NS = Not significant

Table 6: T-test analysis of the post test scores of male and female students exposed to silent reading.

Reading Group	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	DF	t-cal.	t-critical	Decision at P<.05
Vocal	44	40.08	3.60	90	1.52	1.98	NS
Silent	48	38.88	3.88				

NS = Not significant