

Strategies for Promoting Reading Skills for the Educational Development of Learners in Anambra State, Nigeria

¹Anyachebelu Faith Ebele; ²Anyamene Ada and ³Adebola Helen Egunoluwa

¹Department of Early Childhood & Primary Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka-Nigeria

²Department of Guidance & Counseling
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka-Nigeria

³Department of Adult Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka-Nigeria

Corresponding Author: Adebola Helen Egunoluwa

Abstract

Knowledge of reading skills goes a long way to facilitate learning for life. The study sets out to investigate the reading skills teachers teach children to apply when reading a text, and the strategies teachers use to teach reading skills to children. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. All the teachers about 3574 in public primary schools, in Anambra State constituted the population. Proportionate random sampling technique was used to select 1050 teachers. A validated and reliability tested 35-item researchers-developed questionnaire was used to analyze the research questions while t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis. Findings revealed that greater percentage of teachers do not teach learners to apply reading skills to texts and the number of strategies they use in teaching reading skills is not encouraging. The implication of the finding was highlighted. Researchers recommended that curriculum planners should make teaching reading skills a subject in schools in Anambra State.

Keywords: strategies, promoting, reading, educational, development

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a crucial learner-activity in the learning process. Teaching learners 'how' to read in order to grasp information has for some years been suffering neglect (Ojo, 2003) with the result that some learners experience difficulty spending time to read. The worrisome aspect of this issue is that all information acquisition must occur through reading. Teaching reading skills therefore is very crucial for learners if they are to acquire the necessary information in the different content areas. The acquired information no doubt develop learners in so many ways viz increase the individual's wealth of knowledge, develop in learners new insights for solving problems, develop new attitudes in learners or aid them change old ones. Observation of what prevails in some tertiary institutions in Nigeria concerning students apathy to reading suggests that learners know little or nothing about the skills to be applied while reading to facilitate acquisition of information.

Observation shows that 70% of teachers in public primary schools in Anambra State are not aware that reading skills should be taught. It is pertinent to state that teaching reading skills must begin in the primary school. The essence is to consolidate strong reading culture by the time children attain the secondary level of education. Research evidence shows that children's attitudes and motivation for academic

reading cultivated early in life goes a long way in shaping their information acquisition pattern throughout life (Mckenna et al., 1995). Such attitude toward reading school is encouraged because it spurs individuals to continue to acquire information so long as life exists. Lifelong education is all about individual's continued search for information to develop self even at old age (Ojedokun, 2007). The ability to locate information in a text is virtually non-existent if the habit is not inculcated early in life.

Instructional practices for textbook reading used in most classrooms commonly focus on collaborative reading, and virtually no independent reading takes place (Armbruste et., 1991). Independent reading fosters deeper comprehension, good construction of meaning and positive attitudes toward reading (Snyder, 2008). Snyder collaborates the idea that collaborative reading fosters leadership and cooperation among children; it makes for open natural conversation, children freely share ideas from the text with others. Studies in Nigeria collaborate the view that teaching children 'how' to read is very necessary. Ojedokun (2007) believes that teaching 'how' to read is a fundamental prerequisite for the lifelong learning, and a basic requirement for the information age. Children should be equipped with the intellectual framework for identifying, finding, understanding, evaluating and using information.

'How' to read embodies the essential skills and attitudes required to function successfully in this information age.

Although classrooms today have a better selection of well-written and brightly illustrated information texts, the task of teaching learners reading skills remains undaunting. Learners need to learn that they do not read for information in the same way they read narrative text. The skills needed when reading differ according to the text. Teachers may consider teaching learners 'how' to read not crucial but it is a classroom practice that would greatly to a large extent equip learners for lifelong education.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study sets out to find the:

- i. Male and female teachers' indication of the reading skills they assist learners apply while reading and
- ii. The strategies they use to teach reading skills.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study will benefit teachers as they would come to realize the need to teach children skills that facilitate information acquisition, boost and enhance their learning.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the reading skills teachers teach learners to apply while reading?
2. What strategies do teachers use in teaching reading skills?

Null hypothesis

The following null hypothesis guided the study at 0.05 level of significance. The instructional strategies used by male and female teachers in public primary Schools in Anambra State to teach reading skills will not differ significantly.

METHODS

The design for the study was descriptive survey in which the researchers used a representative of the population from whom the data was collected in their natural setting without manipulation (Nworgu, 1981; Ali 1996). The area of the study was Anambra State, south eastern part of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all the public primary school teachers in Anambra State. There are twenty-one local government areas in Anambra State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten public primary schools from each local government area. In effect a total of one hundred and ten schools were involved in the study. Proportionate simple random sampling technique was used to select five teachers from each school; bringing the total sample size to one thousand and fifty teachers (650 females

and 400 males). The instrument was a 35-item researchers-developed questionnaire titled Instructional Strategies for Teaching Reading Skills for the Educational Development of Learners (ISTRSEDL) the instrument had three parts-A, B and C. Part A sort information such as sex, name of school and local government. Part B had 15 questionnaire items structured on 'Yes' No' through which the researchers sort to know teachers' percentage use of the individual reading skills to teach learners how to read. Part C had 20- items designed on a four point rating scales of strongly Agree (4 points) Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and strongly Disagree (1 point).

The researchers sort to know the instructional strategies teachers use in teaching reading skills. Respondents were required to tick against the column that applied to them. The instrument was validated by experts in educational psychology and reading. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. It yielded coefficient values of 0.78 and 0.87; the instruments were considered suitable for the study because the high reliability value. Five assistants were used in each local government area for data collection. Percentage was used to analyze research question one, mean values were used to analysis research question two. Mean values of 2.5 and above were accepted while mean values below 2.5 were rejected. T-test statistics was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

The results were presented in the order of the research questions.

Research Question One

Table I. Male and female teachers' percentage responses on the reading skills they teach learners to apply to reading text. (See appendix)

Table I shows that the greater percentage of teachers in public primary schools in Anambra State do not teach learners to apply reading skills to text. Very few percentage of male teachers indicated teaching learners to apply reading skills to text. Greater percentage of female teachers (54.5%) indicated use of think aloud, 33.1% indicated use of personal. Vocabulary journal, 44.2% indicated collaborative learning, 37.1% indicated inquiring learning while 49.5% indicated semantic feature analysis.

Table 2: Mean response of male and female public primary school teachers on the instructional strategies they use to teach reading. (See appendix)

Table two shows that female teachers do not teach pupils to use these strategies; questioning the narrators beliefs and intentions, interpreting and

synthesizing recurring themes recognizing the effect of one's own points of view in formulating interpretations of texts, comparing/contrasting information from one or more texts, relating text to reader's experiences, values and ideas, combing knowledge of text within knowledge of other culture and people and combing knowledge of reader's own experiences with other pieces of literature; to read for information. These are questionnaire items serial numbers (ISN) 4, 10, 16,17,18,19 and 20. They scored mean values 2.3, 2.2, 2.1, 2.1, 2.4, 2.4 and 2.1 respectively.

Male teachers do not teach learners to use these strategies beliefs or intentions, discriminating between apparent message and hidden agenda, interpreting and synthesizing recurring themes, posing personally relevant questions about texts, recognizing the effects of one's own point of view in formulating interpretations of texts, company/contrasting information from one or more texts relating text to renders experiences, values and ideas, and combing knowledge of reader's own experiences with other pieces of literature. These are ISN 4,5,10, 11,16,17,18 and 20. They scored mean values 2.1, 2.1, 2.3, 2.2, 2.4, 2.0, 2.2 and 2.4 respectively.

Table 3: t-test comparison of female and male teachers' mean responses on the strategies they use to teach reading skills.

Table III above reveals that the calculated value of t (0.55) is less than the critical value of t (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom (DF) 1048. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of female and male teachers in the strategies they use to teach pupils reading skills. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

DISCUSSION

The findings of research question one revealed that greater number of teachers do not teach learners to apply reading skills to texts. This finding collaborates the findings of Ojo (2003). Teaching and encouraging learners to apply reading skills to texts is very necessary as application of reading skills facilitates information acquisition.

The number of strategies used by teachers to teach reading skills as revealed by findings in research question two is not encouraging; yet all the items are necessary strategies for teaching reading skills. (Frey & Fisher, 2007). Purposeful instruction as far as reading is concerned plays a key role in comprehension. Ability to identify, find, understand evaluate and use information is developed through activities designed to teach children about what good readers do. In particular, good readers are purposeful

in reading; and they use strategies to extend their understanding (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). Three approaches are essential in developing reading skills:

- building metacognitive awareness by teaching students what to do before, during and after the reading
- developing learners' ability to formulate questions as they read.
- providing intentional instruction in using strategies to support their comprehension. This finding is supported by the findings of Hurkjian & Livingston, 2008; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro & Cammack, 2004; and McLaughlin & Devoogd (2004) who believe that generation of questions during reading, interpretation and synthesis of recurring themes, sharpen the reader's ability to make connections between prior learning and the new text, between the reader and the text to the world. The research findings of Kristo and Bamford (2004) collaborate the findings of Hurkjian and Livingston (2008); Leu, Kinzer, Coiro and Cammack (2004); and McLaughlin & Devoogd (2004). Kristo and Bamford (2004) believe that readers should be taught to not only be analytical by asking questions concerning the text, but that they should in addition interpret, synthesize ideas and build connections. One fact notable is that skills are necessary in reading. Vasquez (2004) believes there is no better time to teach reading skills that enable learners read than the primary education level. One major strength of teaching reading skills to children is the fact that it aids acquisition of knowledge, retention of same, and retrieval of ideas. With a solid background the child forges ahead with education, adapting suitable strategies to read the diverse content areas.

Implications of the Findings

Results of the study imply that learners are not aware of the skills to apply while reading. In effect learners read not grasping the totality of the needed information, all because the greater percentages of their teachers are not aware of these skills. This therefore means that learners' may not inculcate good reading culture, may not achieve well and may lack the needed ability to locate and identify information in a text; which is the basic reason education is being embraced by all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Curriculum planners should make reading skills a subject to be taught in schools. It is very necessary because all subjects are read and information or idea is best grasped if the reader applies appropriate skills. This would equip learners with the skills required to acquire knowledge. The ministry of education should

organize a workshop to teach teachers reading skills and their application to texts with particular reference to the various content areas. Teachers should teach learners the different reading skills and their application to texts. This will discourage the age-long practice of rote learning found in primary education. Learners should be encouraged to ask questions before, during and after reading. These questions will persistently keep learners' memories at alert and enable them link ideas, build connections that make comprehension easier, aid retention and retrieval of information.

CONCLUSION

Teaching strategies that enable the reader identify, evaluate and synthesize information is very ideal, especially in this information age. Reading for information is necessary in the life of every learner. It boosts academic achievement, facilitates knowledge for self reliance equip individuals to function meaningfully and effectively in the scheme of things concerning nation-building. Particularly, strategies that facilitate reading for information should be taught in primary schools, with these foundation children will confidently progress in the learning process. Reading skills should be taken as a key enabling competency for lifelong learning in an ever-changing information environment.

REFERENCES

Ali, C. K (1996): Measurement and Evaluation. Enugu: Parkes.

Armbruster, B.B; Anderson, T. A; Armstrong, J.O; Wise, M.A; Janisch, C. & Meyer, L .A. (1991): "Reading and Questioning in Content Area". Journal of Reading Behaviour.23:35-60.

Dreher, M.J. and Sammons, R.B (1994): "Search for Information in a Textbook". Journal of Reading Behaviour, 26: 301 – 314.

Duke, N.K. (2007): The Case for Informational Text. Educational Leadership. 61 (2004): pp.40-44.

Frey, N. and Fisher, D (2007): Reading for information in Elementary School. New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Kristo, J.V. and Bamford, R.A. (2004): A Comprehensive Framework for Helping Students Become Independent Readers. K-6. New York: Scholastic.2004.

Hurkjian, C and Livingston, N (2008): Learning to Read and Reading to Learn: Informational Series Books. The Reading Teacher, 58:592-600.

Leu, D.J, Kinzer, C.K; Coiro, J.L & Commack, D,W. (2004): Toward a Theory of New Literacies

Emerging from the Internet and Other Information and Communication Technologies. In R.B. Ruddells & N.J Unran (Eds.), Theoretical Model and Processes of Reading. Newark, DE International Association.2004.

Mekenna, M.C. Kear, D. J. and Ellsworth, R.A (1995):"Children's Attitudes Toward Reading: A National Survey". Reading Research Quarterly, 30: pp 934-956.

Mclaughlin, M and Devoogd, G.L (2004): Critical Literacy: Enhancing Students' Comprehension Text. New York: Scholastic.2004.

Ojedokun, A.A (2007): Information Literacy for Tertiary Education Students in Africa. Ibadan: Sam-Adex.2007.

Nworgu, B. G (1981): Educational Research. Enugu: Numark.1981

Ojo, S.O (2003): Information Skills Fundamentals. Lecture note series. Gaborone: University of Botswana.

Paris, S. G; Wasik. B.A. and Turner, J.C. (1991). "The Development of Strategic Readers". In R. Barr, M.L. Kamil, P. Mosenthal & P.D. Pearson (Eds.) Handbook of Reading Research 2 (1991): 609-640. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Snyder, A. F (2008): "Literature Circles". Lecture Presented at a 3-day workshop at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. April 29- May 1.

Vasquez, V. M (2004): Negotiating Critical Literacies with Young Children. Mahwah, N.J: Laurence Erlbaum Associates.

APPENDIX

Table I. Male and female teachers’ percentage responses on the reading skills they teach learners to apply to reading text.

S/N.	Items	Male N= 400				Female N=650			
		Yes	%	No	%	Yes	%	No	%
1	Think aloud	101	25.2	299	74	354	54.5	296	45.5
2	Use of personal vocabulary Journal.	56	14	344	86	215	33.1	435	66.9
3	List, group, label and write	44	11	356	89	103	15.8	347	84.2
4	What learners know, what they want to know and what they learned (KWL).	24	6	376	94	96	14.8	554	85.2
5	Collaborative learning	78	19.5	322	80.5	287	44.2	363	55.8
6	Inquiry learning	158	39.5	242	60.5	241	37.1	409	69.9
7	Paired reading	53	13.3	347	86.7	86	13.2	564	86.8
8	Talking drawings	20	5	380	95	53	8.2	597	91.8
9	Web page evaluation	21	5.3	379	94.7	54	8.3	596	91.7
10	Semantic feature analysis	15	3.8	385	96.2	322	49.5	328	50.5
11	Language charts	23	5.8	377	94.2	46	7.1	604	92.9
12	Generating interaction between schemata and text (GIST)	45	11.3	355	88.7	55	8.5	595	91.5
13	Anticipation guide	66	16.5	334	83.5	76	11.7	574	88.3
14	Possible Sentence	32	8	368	92	44	6.8	606	93.2
15	Compare writing	46	11.5	354	88.5	58	8.9	592	91.1

Table 2: Mean response of male and female public primary school teachers on the instructional strategies they use to teach reading.

S/No	Items	Females N=650		Males N=400X	
		X	Decision	X	Decision
	To teach children strategies that would equip them to read for information, teachers should teach them				
1	To formulate thought provoking questions	3.4	Accepted	2.8	Accepted
2	Make predictions based on information presented in the text	2.7	Accepted	2.5	Accepted
3	Confirm predications based on information presented in the text	2.5	Accepted	2.8	Accepted
4	Questions the narrators beliefs or intentions	2.3	Rejected	2.1	Rejected
5	Discriminate between apparent message and hidden agenda	2.7	Accepted	2.1	Rejected
6	Interpret multiple levels of meaning	2.6	Accepted	2.5	Accepted
7	Formulate questions in response to the text	2.6	Accepted	2.8	Accepted
8	Make inferences and draw conclusions based on explicit and implied information	2.7	Accepted	2.5	Accepted
9	Summarize ideas and information	2.8	Accepted	2.5	Accepted
10	Interpret and synthesize recurring themes	2.2	Rejected	2.3	Rejected
11	Pose personally relevant questions about texts	2.5	Accepted	2.2	Rejected
12	Relate new information to prior reading by making text to text, test to self and text to world connections	2.6	Accepted	2.7	Accepted
13	Use textual evidence to substantiate interpretive claims	2.5	Accepted	2.5	Accepted
14	Recognize and use text features to aid comprehension	2.8	Accepted	2.6	Accepted
15	Evaluate validity, accuracy and usefulness of information by distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant materials	2.7	Accepted	2.6	Accepted
16	Recognize the effects of one’s own point of view in formatting interpretations of texts	2.1	Rejected	2.4	Rejected
17	Compare/contrast information from one or more texts	2.1	Rejected	2.0	Rejected
18	Related text to reader’s experience values and ideas	2.4	Rejected	2.2	Rejected
19	Combines knowledge of text with knowledge of other culture and people	2.4	Rejected	2.5	Accepted
20	Combines knowledge of reader’s own experiences with other pieces of literature.	2.1	Rejected	2.4	Rejected

Table 3: t-test comparison of female and male teachers’ mean responses on the strategies they use to teach reading skills.

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	DF	T-cal	T-crit	Prob.
Female	650	2.8	0.57	1048	0.55	1.96	P< 0.05
Male	400	3.1	0.67				