

COVID-19 and Nigerian Pupils' Reading Distresses: Experimenting Collaborative Technique for the Revitalisation of Lower-Basic School Pupils' Reading Culture

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Abstract

The development of lower-basic school was replicated prior to the attainment of independent in Nigeria. This is a move to look inward on how the country can lay a very good foundation for Nigeria education. The emergency of COVID-19 pandemic that compulsorily short down schools across the globe in no doubt affects Nigerian pupils reading culture. The trust of this paper therefore, is to experiment how collaborative as an instructional technique can close the reading-culture vacuum created by COVID-19 pandemic with a view to suggesting ways of improving the quality of teaching and learning reading comprehension. Quasi-experimental design with pre and post-test, non-randomised and non-equivalent was adopted for data collection. The population for this study consisted of all upper-basic school pupils in Ilorin metropolis. Two schools were purposively sampled. The sample was categorized into one experimental group and one control group of fifty respondents each. The data collected were analysed using the percentage, mean, standard deviation and analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA) to test the two formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that: the general level of pupils' achievement in reading comprehension was low before the treatments (42.79) but high after the treatments (77.76) irrespective of gender. The paper recommends that teachers of English language should wake up and move in line with modern trend through the use of collaborative instructional technique in order to improve the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. Teacher and other stakeholders should try and leave up expectation by encouraging collaborative technique for teaching reading. Curriculum planners and developers should not be left out in this regard.

Background to the Study

In the Nigerian upper-basic school educational programme, reading comprehension forms an integral part of the English language curriculum. Reading comprehension involves skills and emphasis should be placed on the development of these skills. Therefore, the English language curriculum (Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), 2013) spells out the teaching of reading comprehension as a component of the use of English language at the upper-basic school level with the aims of helping pupils to:

- i. Tackle reading comprehension deficiencies which they brought from lower-basic school level;
- ii. Develop language proficiency for upper-basic level;
- iii. Develop the language proficiency necessary for performing well in other subjects and future career endeavors (FGN, 2013)

The main objective of incorporating the English language into the Nigerian upper-basic school curriculum is to provide pupils with required language skills for effective communication with others (FGN, 2013). The general motive for the inclusion of English language as a subject in the upper-basic school education curriculum is to help pupils at that level of education to develop adequate and required linguistic competence in the use of English language as a tool for their present and future studies. This development makes pupils not to function effectively in academics at the upper-basic level, just as most cannot function effectively in their use of English while many pupils cannot fulfill their admission to senior secondary school level. Therefore, pupils require proficiency in English language. This proficiency calls for development of reading comprehension skills among others.

Teaching as an activity should aim at bringing about learning through methods, techniques or strategies that are morally and pedagogically acceptable. It involves the teacher, learner, and the content in the form of knowledge, facts, information and skills to be imparted (Lawal, 2019). It is observed that most teachers of English language at the upper-basic school level find it difficult to differentiate between 'teaching reading comprehension' and 'testing reading comprehension'. It is observed that pupils are more often conventionally taught to pay attention only to language knowledge and the structure of the text. However, research has shown that instructional techniques when employed by teachers make a very strong impact in the implementation of the curriculum content with a view to achieving the desired goals. Khaki (2014) opines that second language reading comprehension is an important skill required by pupils, especially in a foreign language context and that one way to help pupils improve their reading comprehension is strategic instruction.

On the 28 of February, Nigeria recorded its first case of COVID-19 through a Nigerian UK returnee. Nearly two month after, three hundred and forty six [346] cases was recorded and gradually, it increases on daily bases. Although some of the affected Nigerians were discharged while death were also recorded. Consequently, the federal ministry of education announced temporarily closedown of all schools in Nigeria with effect from

23rd of March, 2020 in a bid to contain the spread of corona virus. Considering the state of Nigerian education sector, pertinent questions arose rhetorically;

- i. Does school in Nigeria have the technology to cater for the forty six million students affected [closed down of school]?
- ii. Do the household have the facility to engage their children in remote learning environment?
- iii. Do the teachers have the resources to deliver live lesson or record a merciful open online course [MOOC] styled lesson?

Unlike other countries, Nigeria government did not come out with any clear-cut policy measures on how to mitigate learning disruption for children and how to address the digital device problems. This implies that education is not paramount in the mind of Nigeria government at this very crucial moment. Nigeria education in emergency working group technique [NEIEWGS] published on “April 7th” spelling out the strategy that could be adopted to address the negative impact of COVID-19 on school closure and on students and teachers in Ilorin metropolis.

Collaborative instructional technique [CIT] is a systematic pedagogical that encourages small group of students to work together for the achievement of a common goal. The term [CIT] is often use as a synonyms for cooperative learning and teaching instruction technique that encourages group interaction among learners, develops learning community, stimulates students' discussion, and encourages electronic exchange. This technique provides answers to the above rhetoric questions and stresses the important of faculty and students involvement in the learning process. When incorporating collaborating instruction technique in reading, careful planning and preparation are essential, understanding how to form groups and ensuring positive inter-independent, maintaining of individual accountability in the process and managing active learning environment are what the technique require and provided for the achievement of a successful collaborative learning experience.

One of the major reasons why learners perform woefully in English language and especially, in reading comprehension could be lack of learners' reading culture, awareness and knowledge of reading technique that is required to successfully comprehend texts. It is, therefore, imperative that consideration is given to a technique that can improve candidates' reading culture and in turn improve their performance in reading comprehension. Experience has shown that instruction in comprehension helps pupils in building their interest and serves as motivational tool in understanding what they read and remember, and communicate and what they read with others. Comprehension can be improved by realizing their potentiality, problems, interest as components of reading culture and be familiar with instructional technique that can help readers in a specific comprehension task.

An effort to develop reading ability requires knowledge of the factors underlying it. Grabe (2010) equally points to the importance of effective reading techniques and affirms that reading techniques should be accorded attention since they indicate how readers

manage their interactions with the written text and because these techniques are revealed to be connected to reading comprehension. This study presumes that reading is essential for the success of learning English language in Nigerian upper-basic schools. Pupils, therefore, need to be equipped with a number of reading techniques to help them in improving their reading culture and ultimately comprehending text information for good performance not only in English language but in all school subjects. As observed by Fola-Adebayo (2014), the poor state of reading in Nigeria is caused by a lack of knowledge of relevant reading techniques. Moreover, Hans (2013) opines that the use of effective comprehension techniques which provide specific instructions for developing and retaining comprehension skills, with intermittent feedback, have been found to improve pupils' reading culture and in turn improve their comprehension. Reading comprehension is increased when techniques are explicitly utilized to assist pupils during reading exercise (Sanford, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

The general purpose of this study was to carry out an experiment on how collaborative instructional technique could be employed for the teaching and learning of reading comprehension in Nigerian upper-basic schools to improve their reading culture. Specifically, the study examined the effect of collaborative teaching instruction on the achievement of male and female upper-basic school pupils in reading comprehension and enhancement of pupils' reading culture. Furthermore, empirical studies involving upper-basic school pupils revealed that, there is positive effect of use of collaborative technique on reading culture and comprehension achievement. From the literature reviewed, the researchers observed that a lot of research works have been carried out on techniques for teaching reading in and outside Nigeria. This is evident in the works of Tunde-Awe 2012; Olawuyi (2013, Lawal 2019). However, none has yet been done in the use of collaborative technique for the teaching of reading in Nigeria upper-basic schools to improve their reading culture in Ilorin metropolis; therefore, this forms part of the gap that the present study filled.

Purpose of the Study

Generally, this study examined the revitalising capacity of collaborative instructional technique on reading culture and comprehension achievement of Nigerian upper-basic pupils. Specifically, the study found out:

1. The general level of upper-basic school pupils' reading culture and comprehension achievement in Ilorin metropolis;
2. The revitalising capacity of collaborative instructional technique in improving upper-basic school pupils' reading culture and comprehension achievement in Ilorin metropolis
3. The revitalising capacity of collaborative instructional technique in improving upper-basic school pupils' reading culture and comprehension achievement in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of gender (male and female)

Research Questions

1. What is the general level of upper-basic school pupils' reading culture and comprehension achievement in Ilorin metropolis?
2. What is the effect of collaborative instructional technique on upper-basic school pupils' reading culture and comprehension achievement?
3. What is the effect of collaborative instructional technique on upper-basic school pupils' reading culture and comprehension achievement on the basis of gender?

Research Hypotheses

- Ho₁:** There is no significant difference in the achievement of pupils taught reading using collaborative instructional technique and pupils taught with conventional method.
- Ho₂:** There is no significant difference in the improvement reading culture and comprehension achievement of pupils' using collaborative instructional technique and pupils taught with conventional method on the basis of gender (male and female).

Methodology

The study was an experimental study using pretest, post-test and non-equivalent control group. The study consisted of 100 pupils from two upper-basic schools within the Ilorin metropolis. The study adopted a factorial design of 2 x 2 x 3 factorial design to test the null hypotheses. The study investigated the effect of collaborative instructional technique on upper-basic school pupils' reading culture and comprehension achievement in Ilorin metropolis. There are two groups (one experimental group and one control group). The experimental groups were exposed to treatment (using collaborative instructional technique for the teaching of reading and enhancement of pupils' reading culture) while the control group was taught with the conventional method, gender (male and female) as moderating variables, and the levels of reading: literal, inferential critical and creative levels are considered as the dependent variables. In carrying out the study, English Language Reading Comprehension Achievement Test was adapted from Upper-Basic School Certificate Examination (UBSCE) in English Language was used. It comprises of Fifty (50) multiple-choice items. The collaborative instructional technique was designed for the teaching of reading. This was validated by experts in field of English language Education and found appropriate.

Results

The analysis of the data collected and the results are reported as follow:

The first hypothesis was used to investigate the general performance of pupils taught using collaborative instructional technique as a tool for the teaching of reading for experimental group and conventional technique for the control group.

Table 1: Dependent variable: Post-test scores

Groups	Means	Std. Deviation	N
Experimental Group (use of collaborative technique)	62.5455	2.14673	50
Conventional Group	22.4412	5.01745	50
Total	42.1940	20.48527	100

Tests of Between-Subjects Effect

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of participants consisting of 100 pupils for the use of collaborative instructional technique and the conventional technique. The use of collaborative instructional technique was used for 50 pupils, while the control group was 50 pupils too.

Table 2: Dependent Variable: Post-test scores

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	f-value	Sig.	t-value	Decision
Corrected Model	53889.313 ^a	2	26944.656	1834.931	.000		
Intercept	4287.796	1	4287.796	291.999	.000		
Pretest	21.486	1	21.486	1.463	.229		
Groups	13353.336	1	13353.336	909.362	.000	3.92	Rejected
Error	1923.642	131	14.684				
Total	294378.000	134					
Corrected Total	55812.955	133					

a. R Squared = .966 = (Adjusted R Squared = .965).

Table 2 above indicates that calculated f-value is 305.524 and the table value is 3.92 with 1,133 degree at freedom computed at 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis 1 (H_{01}) is hereby rejected. There is significant difference in the general achievement of pupils exposed to the use of collaborative as instructional technique for teaching reading compared to that of the conventional method of teaching.

Table 3: Dependent variable: Post-test scores

Gender	Means	Std. Deviation	N
Male	42.3448	20.98166	46
Female	42.0789	20.23776	64
Total	42.1940	20.48527	100

Tests of Between-Subjects Effect

Table 2 above shows the total number of male and female pupils involved in the study. This is in addition with the means and standard deviation of the pupils. The table revealed that 46 male pupils and 64 female pupils were involved in the study.

Table 4: Dependent Variable: Post-test scores

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	f-value	Sig.	t-value	Decision
Corrected Model	40562.410 ^a	2	20281.205	194.213	.000		
Intercept	3826.025	1	3826.025	32.365	.000		
Pretest	40560.084	1	40560.084	316.405	.000		
Groups	26.433	1	26.433	.227	.635	3.92	Rejected
Error	15250.546	131	116.416				
Total	294378.000	134					
Corrected Total	55812.955	133					

a. R Squared = .727 = (Adjusted R Squared = .723).

Table 4 above revealed that the calculated f-value is 316.405, while the table value is 3.92 with 1.133 degree of freedom computed at 0.05 levels of significance. Hypothesis two is hereby rejected because the f-value 316.4 is greater than the table value 3.92. The table above showed that there was a very great significant influence of the use of collaborative instructional technique on the improvement of upper-basic pupils' reading culture and achievement in Ilorin metropolis. A total number of 100 upper-basic school pupils were involved in the study. A total of fifty (50) pupils were taught reading using collaborative as an instructional technique while fifty pupils were taught using the conventional technique. The results were analysed at 0.05 significant levels. Pupils taught reading with collaborative instructional technique achieved better than the group taught reading using the conventional technique.

Conclusions and Recommendation

Findings from this study revealed the importance of the use of collaborative instructional technique for the teaching of English reading as an instructional tool indicated that it is an effective tool for the teaching of reading and capable of closing the learning vacuum COVID-19 created amongst Nigerian upper-basic learners. This is in tandem with Joclova's (2009) finding. Muhammed (2016) and Lawal (2019) findings revealed that teachers of reading need to have adequate knowledge of teaching techniques suitable for the teaching of reading comprehension. It is very important therefore, to include a variety of stimuli in teaching" for the learners to elicit appropriate response (p.42) more so that the gap their staying at home have created can be closed. The study is also in support of Lawal and Obateru (2019) which concluded that posters can be a useful for the teaching of reading to arose students' motivation and increase their confidence, encourage them to become part of a group and broaden their range of reading and summary writing skills.

The study recommended that English language teachers should include the use of collaborative as an instructional technique for the teaching reading. It is also recommended that teachers of English language should understand how to form groups to ensure positive inter-independent groups in his/her use of collaborative instructional technique. This is very essential because learners at level are coming from the same environment and exposed to the same opportunity. Government and the school administrators should have made available all needed materials that will assist teachers

closing the gap among learners from rural and the urban areas in making good use of collaborative instructional technique for the teaching of reading comprehension and enhancement of pupils' reading culture. It also recommended that there should be constant orientation programmes on the effective use of collaborative instructional technique for the teaching of English language reading comprehension. Teacher-education programme should be re-oriented towards the use of collaborative instructional technique. Future researchers can carry out studies on the use of collaborative instructional technique for the teaching of English language reading comprehension in different geographical location involving larger sample and in other subject areas.

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