ACHIEVING COMPREHENSION INTERACTIVELY: PEARLS OF DIRECTED READING AND THINKING ACTIVITIES AND KNOW-WANT TO KNOW-LEARN IN BENUE STATE

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Abstract
This study investigated the Pearls of interactive strategies on Junior Secondary Two (JS.2) students' achievement in reading comprehension. Specifically, the study was designed to find out whether students taught reading using the interactive strategies of Directed Reading and Thinking Activities (DRTA) and Know-Want to Know-Learn (KWL) would perform better in reading comprehension tasks than those taught reading using the conventional method. The study used a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent pre-test and post-test control group design. Nine JS.2 intact classes from nine schools in the three education zones of Benue State were randomly sampled and assigned to the two experimental groups and one control group in each of the zones. The sample size was made up of 324 JS.2 students. One research question was addressed and four hypothesis were tested at P<0.05 level of significance. Data were collected using researcher-made Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT) which comprised pre-test and post-test. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test the hypotheses. The findings indicated the significant effect of DRTA over KWL and the significance effect of KWL over the Conventional Method. Based on the findings, it was recommended that reading comprehension teachers should expose their students to DRTA and KWL strategies so that reading lessons will become more participatory, meaningful, functional and pleasurable.

Keywords: Reading comprehension, Interactive strategy, Directed reading and Achievement

Background to the Study

An international study of reading achievement found Nigerian children of 15 years and below to be the third poorest readers out of 31 countries of the world surveyed

(Elley, 1992). In support of this finding, Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999) list three reasons for reading failure in schools as ignorance of what reading is, inadequate preparation of teachers and poor methodology. The poor performance of students in public examinations is also traced to minimal daily contact with the language (Oyetunde, 2002). These may be the reasons why majority of Nigerian secondary school students are said to be poor at reading and comprehending.

Abiodun-Ekus and Onukaogu (2009) contend that most Nigerian students are not being empowered to benefit optimally from formal education. It is undisputable that reading is so interrelated with the total educational process therefore, educational success requires successful reading. However, the Nigerian educational processes fail to empower her students in the skills and strategies that can make them effective, efficient and strategic readers. This means that the basic comprehension skills necessary for effective interaction with texts at the secondary school level are lacking in Nigerian secondary schools.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the reading ability in the country and consequently among the secondary school students is poor. In spite of this, the students are daily bombarded with a wide range of reading materials as a result of social, economic, political, scientific, technological and informational changes. The secondary school student especially at the junior school level needs to be taught strategies to enhance his or her comprehension so as to be better prepared for the volume of reading at the senior secondary level and beyond.

The reading problems of students are further compounded by classroom teachers. Again, Abiodun-Ekus and Onukaogu (2009) argue that the generality of teachers who were not taught how to read and how to teach reading during their pre-service training continue with the tradition of testing instead of teaching reading. This is why many experts agree that the reading and language problems in Nigerian students can be traced to the classroom for that is where most of the children encounter the language (Adegbile & Igweike, 2002).

There are however, interactive strategies that classroom teachers can use to help learners monitor what they learn and also engage their interest. An interactive strategy according to May (1986) engages the reader in hypothesis making as he/she reads. The strategy encourages the reader to reflect on his or her cognitive processes. It is therefore important to investigate and see if the interactive strategies of Directed Reading and Thinking Activities (DRTA) and Know-Want to know-Learn (KWL) would improve students' reading comprehension.

Investigating the interactive strategy may be significant to classroom teachers and students because it might provide insights into currently existing methods of teaching/learning of reading comprehension skills, which have been known to motivate students. The findings of the study may be useful guide for teachers to help students gain a love of reading and the concept of reading as sharing of ideas. The strategy might help readers to make sense out of their reading exercise.

Statement of the Problem
The poor performance of students in public examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and the National Examination Council (NECO) in Nigeria are traced to poor reading comprehension ability, arising most often from minimal daily contact with the language (Oyetunde, 2002). Although reading forms the greatest bulk of the content of the English language syllabus at all levels of secondary school education, the Chief Examiner's Reports in the past two decades lament the poor performance of Nigerian students in English. The Reports stress the need to inculcate reading culture among secondary school learners (2004, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2014). The teaching methods adopted by the teachers may have contributed to the poor preparation and inability of the students to acquire reading comprehension skills. This is because such methods have failed to consciously develop reading comprehension skills in students.

There is urgent need for improvement. This improvement is dependent on the use of interactive instructional strategies that could bring about learners comprehension of texts. Such interactive strategies like the Directed Reading and Thinking Activities (DRTA) and Know-Want to Know-Learn (KWL) that involve the interaction of the teacher and students in the teaching and learning of reading comprehension would be most beneficial. Moreover, there is no known record of the use of such strategies in Benue State.

Literature and Theoretical Issues
This study is anchored on the Schema and Vygotsky's Social Constructivist theories. The schema theory states that when we reconstruct information, we fit it into information that already exists in our mind (Santrock, 2004). A schema is a framework that exists in an individual's mind to organize and interpret information. It entails that a person with more background knowledge is better at comprehension than a person with less. Schema theory can positively influence the teaching of reading. This is because pre-reading activities such as building up absent schemata (plural for schema) and activating resident ones may improve second language (L2) readers' comprehension in many situations. This is why the current study (on DRTA and KWL) intends to employ activities that will help to activate learners' background knowledge or build the schemata needed for fuller enjoyment of texts.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivism argues that the learner is much more actively involved in a joint enterprise with the teacher in creating new meanings.   It emphasizes how meanings and understandings grow out of social encounter and that children learn through interactions with their surrounding culture. Vygotsky (1978) concludes that when children are tested on tasks on their own, they rarely do as well as when they are working in collaboration with an adult or a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO).   It does not necessarily mean that the adult may be teaching the children how to perform the task but that the process of engagement with the adult enables children to refine their thinking or performance to make it more effective. The social constructivist classroom entails that the teacher should collaborate with students in order to help facilitate meaning construction by students.

In view of the foregoing, the current study will expose Junior Secondary Two (JS. 2) students to strategies of DRTA and KWL; when they have to as a matter of fact tap on their existing knowledge and this might foster meaningful reading. This is because the strategies will draw students attention to what is important in the incoming material, highlight relationship among ideas that will be presented; and remind learners of relevant information they already have concerning the incoming material.

Reading is a tool that facilitates success in all school subjects and further education. This may be why Adegbile (2002), Omojuwa (2005), Opega (2008) contend that achievement in reading influences understanding of other subjects in the school curriculum. Effective teaching of reading is therefore an important first step in the march towards literacy and formal education. The reading instruction where the teacher asks students to turn to an appropriate page or chapter in the class reader, then read and answer the comprehension questions is not helping the learners. Or after the reading, the teacher spends time asking students questions until the desired answer is got. This conventional approach to reading has been criticized for not helping the ever-widening problem of reading comprehension and the consequent mass failure of students in English language (Adegbile and Igweike, 2002).

Another issue is that reading is not taught as a core subject in the Nigerian school system. It is considered as part of English language curriculum unlike what obtains in developed countries, where reading occupies a central position in the school curriculum and time-table (Uwatt, Odey, & Ebam, 2007). Reading comprehension is more than what is happening in Nigerian classrooms. It is an activity in which participants construct meaning by integrating their existing knowledge with the new one in the text. This process can be increased when a teacher supports students' comprehension. Moore, Moore, Cunningham and Cunningham (1994) believe that the supportive role of the teacher involves activities before students read so as to help build background knowledge and set a reading purpose. Engaging students in discussion or interactions before reading encourage them to share what they

collectively known.   Reutzel and Cooter (2007) believe that the teacher can select strategies that socially involve students in comprehension activities.

To remedy reading problems, there have been several interactive instructional strategies developed by language and curriculum experts.   For instance, Stauffer (1975) proposes Directed Reading and Thinking Activities (DRTA) as guide for children's reading. The strategy entails that readers are first required to predict what the passage will be about based on titles, illustrations or pictures. Children read to check on the accuracy of their predictions, revisit and revise as necessary their predictions based on the reading.

Stahl (2008) explains that DRTA requires the teacher to select an instructional level text, separate the text into meaningful sections and lead a discussion on each section of the text. This is done by asking questions about what will happen in the text, generating predictions, justifying the predictions that were made and verifying or revising predictions based on evaluation of information in the text during the teacher-led discussion of each section. DRTA, a text-based discussion strategy encourages close reading facilitated by teacher's guidance. The teacher directs the children's attention to important ideas and assists them with hand-to-grasp concepts.

Santoro, Chard, Howard and Baker (2008) maintain that a teacher could ask why a student made a particular prediction, asks the student to explain whether the prediction was correct after reading the story. In this way, students become true partners in discussion about the text. In using DRTA, students set reading purposes by the predictions they make and then read to prove or refute the predictions. This makes them read more actively and enthusiastically because they are interested in finding out what happened. They often remember more information even after much time has passed. This may be due to students' increased curiosity.

Another interactive strategy is the Know-Want to Know-Learn (KWL) developed by Ogle (1986). KWL is a three column chart that helps capture the before, during and after reading components of a text selection. It is a meaning making strategy that engages students in active text learning. The strategy creates an instructional framework that begins with what students know about the topic to be studied, then moves to what the students Want to know as they generate questions about the topic and finally the reading and recording of what students Learn as a result of their engagement in the strategy (Vacca & Vacca, 1999).

McAlister, French and Hudgins (2004) explain that KWL can be modelled by the teacher first. The teacher draws the columns/charts on the board or paper, fills in the Know column as he/she thinks out loud, describing his/her thought process. The teacher then asks aloud what he/she Wants to know more about the topic or

interested in learning about the topic. After completing the question generation phase, he/she reads aloud the passage. The teacher completes the Learn section of the KWL. After modelling, the teacher suggests another topic and allows students to independently complete the Know section, share individual answers, brainstorm over others and discuss responses. This allows students to benefit from their collective experiences and reveal any misconception they may have. After students have completed the chart, they are encouraged to share their findings. At this stage, misconceptions are corrected by referring to the text or by having students plan to find out.

The current study therefore investigated the effect of DRTA and KWL on Junior Secondary Two (JS 2) students' achievement in reading comprehension. These interactive strategies are not found to have been used in the Nigerian school system from the researcher's search. It will therefore, be interesting to find out how they could help students in comprehension achievement.

Objectives of the study
1·   To determine the relative effect of using Directed Reading and Thinking Activities (DRTA), Know-Want to know-Learn (KWL) and the conventional method of teaching reading on students' achievement in reading comprehension.
2·   To compare the effect of DRTA and the conventional method of teaching reading on students' achievement in reading comprehension.
3   To compare the effect of KWL and the conventional method of teaching reading on students' achievement in reading comprehension.
4·   To compare the relative effect of DRTA and KWL strategies of teaching reading on students' achievement in reading comprehension.

Research Question
The study answered the following research question:
Would exposure of students to DRTA, KWL and the Conventional Method affect their mean achievement scores in reading comprehension?

Hypotheses
        The null hypotheses stated below were tested at P< 0.05 level of significance.
1.   There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to DRTA, KWL and the Conventional Method in a Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT).
2.   There is no significant difference in the scores of students exposed to DRTA and those exposed to the Conventional Method in a Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT).

3. There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to KWL and those exposed to the Conventional Method in a Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT).

4. There is no significant difference in the scores of students exposed to DRTA and those exposed to KWL in a Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT).

Methodology

The study adopted a quasi-experimental non-equivalent (pre-test and post-test) control group design. The sample consisted of 324 Junior Secondary Two (JS 2) students located in nine intact classes in nine different schools in the three Education Zones (A, B and C) of Benue State in Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used to select government owned co-educational schools to ensure uniformity of participants. The experimental classes had 216 students while the control classes had 108 students. The instruments used for data collection were the Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT) and the lesson plans. The RCAT contained 17 multiple choice items and 3 short answers that tested reading achievement at the three levels of comprehension (literal, inferential and critical). The items were generated based on the contents of reading comprehension in English language curriculum for JS 2 students in Nigeria. The pre-test and post-test were the same except that the title of the passage was omitted and the multiple choice items were reshuffled in the post-test.

The pre-test was administered a week prior to the commencement of treatments to ascertain the participants' achievement in reading comprehension before intervention. Treatments for the experimental groups were class instructions. Group A was exposed to DRTA, Group B was exposed to KWL and Group C was the Control Group and was exposed to the Conventional Method. The treatment lasted six weeks during which six comprehension passages were taught. Five of the passages had pictures related to the stories. The DRTA and KWL strategies were explained and modeled for the participants before the lessons started.

The post-test was administered in the eighth week to establish effect of the strategies on students; achievement in reading. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question. Inferential statistic of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: Would exposure of students to DRTA, KWL and the Conventional Method affect their mean achievement scores in reading comprehension?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of DRTA, KWL and Conventional
Method on Achievement of Students.

Method	N	Pre-test	SD	Post-test	SD	Mean gain	SD
DRTA	122	6.3033	2.74506	11.2787	3.72675	4.9754	0.98169
KWL	94	8.8511	3.38230	12.5106	2.98651	3.6595	0.39579
Conv. Method	108	9.0833	3.66799	10.2778	3.77987	1.1945	0.11168
Total	324						

Table 1 presents the mean scores of the various groups on Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT). The data reveal that there are differences in the performance of students exposed to the various treatment conditions as shown in the mean scores of the various groups. The group exposed to DRTA has the highest mean gain of 4.9754 indicating highest performance. This is followed by the KWL group (3.6595). The Conventional Method group has the lowest mean gain of 1.1945 which indicates low performance. This means that students in the experimental groups achieved higher than those in the Control group, with DRTA having the highest achievement. To ascertain if the difference is significant, hypothesis one was tested.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to DRTA, KWL and the Conventional Method in a Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT).

Table 2: ANCOVA of mean achievement scores of students exposed to DRTA,
KWL and the Conventional Method.

Source	Type III Sum of squares	df	Mean square	f	Sig.
Corrected model	2636.143	6	439.357	70.405	0.001
Intercept	1344.393	1	1244.393	199.404	0.001
Pre-test	2087.762	1	2087.712	334.554	0.001
Method	526.142	2	262.071	42.156	0.001
Error	1978.215	317	6.240		
Total	46004.000	324			
Corrected Total	4614.358	323			

From Table 2, the value, 42.156 at df 2 and 323 degrees of freedom is significant at 0.001. Since this level of significance given by the statistical analysis is less than the alpha level (0.001<0.05), it therefore means that there is a significant difference in the mean achievement of students exposed to the different reading methods (DRTA, KWL and the Conventional method) ($F_{2, 323}$ = 42.156, P, 0.05). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to DRTA, and those exposed to the Conventional Method in a Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT).

Table 3: Pair wise comparison of students' achievement scores based on method of instruction.

Method	Mean	Mean diff (I – J)	Sig.	Decision
DRTA	12.554	3.076	0.001	P< 0.05
Conventional Method	9.477			significant

Table 3 shows that the mean difference of 3.076 is significant at the alpha level of 0.001< 0.05. This means that there is a significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to DRTA and those not exposed to it. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to KWL and those exposed to the Conventional Method in Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT).

Table 4: Pair wise Comparison of students' achievement scores based on method of instruction

Method	Mean	Mean diff (I – J)	Sig.	Decision
KWL	11.859	2.382	0.001	P< 0.05
Conventional Method	9.477			significant

Table 4 shows that the mean difference of 2.382 is significant at the alpha level of 0.001 < 0.05. This means that there is a significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to KWL and those not exposed to it. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to DRTA and those exposed to KWL in Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (RCAT).

Table 5: Pair wise comparison of students' achievement scores based on method of instruction

Method	Mean	Mean diff (I – J)	Sig.	Decision
DRTA	12.554	0.695	0.05	P< 0.05
KWL	11.859			significant

Table 5 shows that the mean difference of 0.695 is significant when the alpha is 0.05 0.05. This means that statistically there is significant difference in the mean achievement scores of students exposed to DRTA and those exposed to KWL. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Discussion

This study investigated the Pearls of the interactive strategies (DRTA and KWL) and the conventional method on students' achievement in reading comprehension. Results revealed that the mean difference of students exposed to the DRTA was highest followed by that of KWL and the Conventional Method with the least mean difference. The hypotheses testing also showed that there was a significant difference among the groups exposed to the different treatments. This finding is in agreement with the findings made by earlier researchers on a similar subject matter (Hake, 2010; Keen-Reinhart, Eisen, Eaton, & McCormack, 2009; Stahl, 2008; Isiugo-Abanihe, 2002; Oyetunde, 2002). These researchers found from their investigations that exposing students to interactive activities or engagements enhance performance and problem-solving abilities. Keen-Reinhart, Eisen, Eaton and McCormack (2009) also found that students who were exposed to interactive methods achieved significantly higher on immediate and delayed post-test measures of comprehension and retention.

Improvement in the performance of students who were exposed to the interactive strategies could be attributed to the positive and enriching experience of engaging learners in interactive discussions. The strategies encourage teachers' guidance and monitoring at various points during reading. The strategies also emphasized the broad-based post reading skills which facilitated text comprehension and learners' attention as well.

In the same vein, Vangundy (2005), Morrison, Shetlar and Marwitz (2001); Silbermen, (1996) argued that in using interactive strategies, students are revived from their passivity of merely listening to a lecture and instead become attentive and engaged. The authors further asserted that the method helps teachers to assess if students have really mastered the material. They argued that the very nature of the assessment drives interactivity and bring several benefits. The method therefore gives learners hands-on experience.

The results also supported Stahl's (2008) finding that students' comprehension of texts were greatest under DRTA condition than other control conditions. The researcher argued that DRTA's advantage was likely enhanced as a result of the close reading facilitated by this particular instructional method. This, she espoused was the teacher's guidance of directing the learners' attention to important ideas and assisting them with hard-to-grasp concepts in a manner in which other intervention strategies do not offer. However, Stahl (2008) found that DRTA and KWL do not

differ in the quality and quantity of students retellings. The author argued that students were not differently affected by the treatments in the way they integrated textual information with prior knowledge. She therefore suggested that different emphasis employed by text-based (DRTA) versus experience-based (KWL) treatments did not reveal much difference and are therefore very similar. This may be so because the two treatments are interactive. It, therefore, means that a teacher is responsible for aiding the children in gaining deeper meaning from reading by assisting them to form mental representations from the text; by linking questions that encourage children to apply prior knowledge to the context of the reading, and by getting children to think about what is really going on and then the children to make relevant and practical predictions.

The findings also confirmed the finding of Isiugo-Abanihe (2002) that reading was handled poorly in most schools. The author found that teachers' strategies and pupils' activities were inadequate for any meaningful reading instruction to take place. Oyetunde (2002) also found that poor instructional practice in schools lead to poor performance of the students in reading. These findings agreed with the findings of the current study where the performance of the students exposed to the conventional method was significantly lower than those exposed to the experimental treatments.

The significant mean achievement gain under the experimental conditions as compared to the conventional method showed that it is no longer tenable for the reading teacher to wait for the students to complete the reading exercise before questions are asked. The questioning and prediction activities of the DRTA and the KWL activities that allow learners to focus on their needs, lacks and wants help to arouse and maintain students attention and curiosity and they follow the storyline. It therefore means that inattentive or daydreaming students could gain from such strategies.

Conclusion
The study has established the fact that the use of interactive strategies of teaching does improve performance in reading comprehension. The results also imply that the teacher is responsible for helping learners to get a better understanding of texts by the type of reading activities that he/she encourages before, during and after reading exercise.

It is evident from the study that the use of DRTA leads to improved performance. This means that teachers should encourage activities whereby reading lessons begin with questions that will make students predict what the content of the text will be from the title or pictures. This will encourage students to read to find out if their predictions were correct or not.   The students' attention is captured and the

discussions that ensue after the reading of each of the sections and at the end of the whole reading exercise make the children remember more information even after much time has passed.

Apart from DRTA, it is evident from the study that the use of KWL also leads to improved performance, though not as much as DRTA. It implies that when the teacher helps students to tap on their background knowledge by saying or writing what they already know about a topic and asking questions on what they would like to know; the students will out of curiosity, be encouraged to read and learn or find answers to their questions.

The study has also established the potency of any of the interactive methods far and above the conventional method. It is therefore imperative that teachers begin to utilize those interactive strategies for improved reading comprehension in schools.

Policy Implications
Based on the results of the study, the policy implications can be adduced thus:
1   English language teachers should use interactive strategies like DRTA and KWL to teach reading comprehension because they have been found to be effective in teaching reading comprehension.
2   Publishers of books (class readers) should incorporate interactive strategies like the DRTA and KWL in their books. That will encourage reading teachers to ask relevant questions that will help students to be involved in the activities that enhance comprehension.
3   The Ministry of Education and schools should employ reading teachers and coaches. Better still; the school time-table should include reading so that it will be taught as a subject just like any other subject in the curriculum.
4   Seminars, workshops and symposia should be organized by Language Teachers'. Association of Nigeria (LTAN), Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN) and the Teaching Service Board (TSB) to enlighten language teachers on the advantages of using the DRTA and KWL strategies to teach reading.

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