

Teachers' Awareness of and Disposition to Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate teacher awareness of and disposition to CIRCS in public SSS in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The mixed methods (QUAN+qual) design was adopted. The participants were 30 teachers of English Language selected from 30 public schools in Ekiti State. The instruments used were Awareness of CIRCS ($r=0.79$) and Disposition to CIRCS ($r=0.81$) questionnaires. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that teachers' awareness of CIRCS ($x = 2.81$) was high, against the threshold of 2.00. Teachers' disposition to CIRCS ($x = 2.94$) was favourable, against the thresholds of 2.50. Based on the findings it was recommended that teachers in public Senior secondary schools in Ekiti State teachers' awareness o and improve their disposition to this strategy

Keywords: Awareness, Disposition, Cooperative strategy, Reading Composition

Introduction

English Language has five aspects, they are; speech writing or oral, grammatical structures, vocabulary development, comprehension and composition. Students' achievement in the subject, therefore, rests on the strategies applied by the teacher. It is not good enough to teach each aspect in isolation. Teaching the English language in a way that each of the aspects will run on the other will enhance effective teaching and learning of the subject. For example, to write a story could be achieved through reading comprehension reading. Meanwhile, reading and writing are connected.

According to Adejumbi (2023), proficiency in one of them facilitates the development of the other because they are complementary. Competence in one aspect has the capability of promoting the acquisition of skills in the others; hence, difficulties in reading can result into problems in writing (Hirvela, 2004). To have academic success generally, reading and writing are very important. Therefore, there is a high expectation from students to be versed in the two skills as they are key to career and academic attainment.

Reading is an indispensable tool for learning. It is one of the four major skills in language which are crucial for educational achievement in general. As a language skill, reading requires psychological and non-

psychological processes in which the reader applies different strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the writer is assumed to have had in mind, by combining ideas in the text to the background knowledge. The inevitable role of reading in the quest for literacy and education cannot be overemphasised because reading and academics are two sides of the same coin. A good reader has the potential for a wide repertoire of vocabulary.

Reading comprehension, from a psycholinguistic perspective, is an interaction between language and thought, which is decoding language to reconstruct meaning (Alexander, 2011). Psycho-linguistics and cognitive psychology researchers who proposed the schema theory, established relationship between the prior knowledge of a reader and his comprehension capability (Aleme and Tayebi, 2011; Akinsowon, 2016; Awolere, 2016 and Adediran 2019). The aim of reading comprehension is the ability of readers to make meaning out of a written text. This may not be achieved if students do not have strong foundation of reading comprehension skills. Adebisi (2012) avows that the focus of efficient reading is to derive meaning and achieve comprehension of any given text. Therefore, an efficient reader must be psychologically and mentally sound to decode, recognise,

understand, question, evaluate and be able to make use of the printed symbols appropriately. Hence, learners should be able to fit in into the current literate world and be able to communicate effectively.

Reading comprehension determines the academic achievements of students to a large extent as reading and academic achievement are related for success in any academic pursuit (Tunde-Awe, 2014). Despite the indispensability of reading comprehension to academic success, many Nigerian public secondary school students could not read and comprehend the English printed texts (Chall, 2012), whereas, students are assessed on different aspects of English language in public examinations. For instance, in WASSCE, there are three papers of English language that candidates attempt. Paper one contains 80 objective questions on different topics such as lexis and structure, synonyms, antonyms and registers. Paper two is theory and divided into three parts; part one is essay writing (50 marks), part two is comprehension (20 marks) and part three is summary writing (30 marks). Paper three contains 60 multiple choice questions on test of orals. From the foregoing, paper two has the highest attainable marks.

As important as reading comprehension is to students' academic success and development, scholars, such as Ezeala (2020), have revealed that poor reading attitude resulted to students' low achievement. Though, reading as one of the core language skills, is has declined due to social media which has added to the carefree attitude of students to reading (Klinger, Vaughn and Boardman, 2007). The foregoing has underscored the importance of disposition of students to English RC as an important learning outcome (Akhmetora, Imambayeva, and Csapo, 2022) that needs to be improved upon in the teaching and learning of English reading comprehension. On the contrary, a negative attitude denotes that student's interest and desire are not on their studies. Kolawole (2016)

corroborates the previous submissions, while Lawal (2008), identified three types of attitudes that are related to reading as; intensive, literary and extensive reading behaviours.

It is stated that learners' attitudes to these three types of reading behaviours must not be negative/ambivalent/irregular (Herwiana and Laili, 2019), rather, should be positive and steady attitudes (Lawal, 2008). However, it is unfortunate to note that most learners at secondary school levels have negative attitudes towards the aforementioned reading behaviours that a great number of them focus on intensive reading which is carried out for the purpose of examination (Oribabor, 2014). It is also noted generally of learners, including adults that read for achievement of a desired goal and success in examination or job procurements (Mart, 2013).

Writing is invaluable because it is a medium of communication that involves the representation of a language with written symbols. Writing systems are not themselves human languages, they are means of rendering a language into a form that can be reconstructed by humans separated by time and/or space (Oyatope, 2018). It is also seen as a form of human communication by means of a set of visible marks that are related, by convention, to some particular structural level of language. Writing is equally the act of composing a text.

Notwithstanding the indispensability of reading comprehension and composition to academic success, most Nigerian students, especially at the senior secondary school level of education at public schools including Ekiti State, find it difficult to read and comprehend English printed text. They also find it difficult to write good essays. This, according to Enu (2016), is largely due to limited vocabulary knowledge of the average Nigerian students learning English as a second language. This submission has earlier been echoed by Umendu (2015). To Umendu, to write well, one must be a good reader and vice-versa. The unsatisfactory attainment of students in these two components

of English Language at public examinations is found in the report that many candidates failed to answer correctly simple questions on the comprehension passages. It also identified that many candidates could not express themselves intelligibly in essay writing in view of the fact that questions on essay writing were based on things happening around them. The reports then recommended that teachers of English language should intensify the teaching of reading comprehension to boost students' essay writing.

In the attempt to enhance students' reading comprehension and essay writing, there are many strategies that can be implemented during the teaching and learning in the classroom by the teacher, which could enlist the students' interest, attention and involvement. A notable mode of instruction that fosters connection of reading and writing is Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC). It is a technique that fuses reading instruction with writing (Slavin, 1995). This mode of instruction clearly utilises either of the two aspects of English Language as a platform for developing and fostering each other either individually or collectively among students. In CIRC, the teacher groups the students to read a comprehension passage and have students to collaborate in reading and explaining the story, identifying the main theme and sub themes, answering of the questions on the comprehension passage, dealing with difficult vocabularies, replacing given words from the passage with other words or phrases that will not alter the original meaning and expression. The understanding of the story and the lessons learnt from the story is what the students will expand and use to create and write their own story. For example, assuming one of the lessons learnt from the story is "The consequences of laziness" each student will then create his/her story based on the understanding and the lessons learnt from the story.

The teacher groups the students into a smaller unit and asks them to read silently,

starting from the comprehension questions while she monitors the exercise, the teacher asks each of the group to interact based on the story, narrate the story line of the passage read, and identify the main theme and sub-themes while he/she contributes. The gives room for question(s) from the students and answers appropriately. The teacher asks the students to answer all the comprehension questions while she comments on each of the answers given. The teacher asks the students to create their own story from one of the lessons learnt from the passage read.

Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) provides a structure to help teachers succeed in helping all students become effective reader and creative writer. It is an ideal strategy that can improve the students' skills in problem solving. It decreases the teacher's dominance in teaching-learning. Students are motivated when they learn in group; they are free with one another and happy with the outcome of their collective activities. Students are free to check the work of others and ask questions. CIRC helps the weaker ones among the group. The experience gathered from other members of the group during the learning helps in learners' development for future purposes.

Teachers must be aware that a particular mode of instruction is in existence before they can decide to embrace it or not in class. Factors that drive teachers' awareness and how they implement are numerous not excluding CIRC. Agharuwhe (2013) suggests that teacher's teaching experience is a factor and it has a positive correlation outcome with learners' performance at all levels because they have gathered more experiences and are able to contribute great insight and notions in the teaching and learning situations. They are eager for improvement and are less domineering in classroom. The probable reason for this is their ability to master the subject content and acquire

class control abilities to handle all forms of classroom challenges (Kosgei, Mise, Odera and Ayugi, 2013). Closely related to awareness is disposition of teachers to the use of CIRC. All these will influence the quality of implementation.

Previous research efforts dwelled more on effectiveness and efficacy of CIRC on attainment of students in English reading comprehension, summary and writing skill. Whereas these intervention programmes brought about improvement in attainment of students in these aspects of English Language, not much research search lights have been beamed on teachers' awareness of, disposition to and the quality of implementation of CIRC, especially in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This is the target of this research.

Statement of the Problem

Reading and writing skills are indispensable to academic success. However, observations have shown that most public senior secondary schools' students are deficient in these English language skills as evident in their poor learning outcomes in them. Among the factors implicated is the use of ineffective strategy in teaching the two skills and teachers' inability to teach the two skills in an integrated manner. Teaching English language reading and writing in an integrated manner will enhance effective teaching and learning of the subject. One of the effective strategies prescribed by the curriculum for teaching English reading and composition is Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition Strategy (CIRCS). Observation has shown that many teachers of English Language in public Senior Secondary School (SSS) in Ekiti State, Nigeria keep employing conventional teaching strategy for English reading and composition instruction in defiance of the CIRCS prescribed by the curriculum. Previous studies largely focused on the effectiveness of CIRC without considering teacher disposition to and awareness of it, especially in the teaching and learning of

English reading comprehension and essay writing in public senior secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This study therefore, was conducted to investigate teacher disposition to, awareness and implementation of CIRCS in public SSS in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Aims and Objectives of the study

The study was embarked upon with a view to:

- i. Find out the extent of awareness of CIRC by English Language teachers.
- ii. investigating the disposition of English Language teachers to CIRC strategy.

Research Questions

Derived from the objectives are questions that guided the study.

1. How aware of CIRC are EL teachers in public secondary schools in Ekiti State?
2. What is the disposition of English Language teachers to CIRC strategy in public secondary schools in Ekiti State?

Scope of the Study

The study examined English Language teachers' awareness of and disposition to CIRC in Ekiti State. The study covered the senior secondary school II English language teachers from 30 senior secondary schools in Ekiti State.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. Garnering data with questionnaires on teacher's awareness of, disposition to, and implementation of the cooperative integrated reading and composition strategy is the focus. The design is considered appropriate because the researcher did not manipulate any variable. Sixty teachers of English from 30 public senior secondary schools participated in the study. The instruments used were Awareness of CIRCS ($r=0.79$) and Disposition to CIRCS ($r=0.81$) questionnaires.

Data obtained from the administration of questionnaires were subjected to descriptive analysis of percentage, frequencies, mean and standard deviation.

Table .2 shows the disposition of English Language teachers to CIRC strategy in public secondary schools in Ekiti State. The result indicates a weighted mean of 2.94 which is greater than the threshold set at 2.50.

Discussion of Findings

Teachers' awareness of CIRCS in public SSS in Ekiti State

The study found that the selected teachers were highly aware of the CIRCS. This is predicated on the fact that majority of the teachers were aware that CIRCS is useful in reading and writing instruction; CIRCS involves students supporting one another in group works; It helps students to converse; It also allows students to work together; It fosters connection between reading and writing; It involves students exchanging ideas; CIRS permits role reversal during reading. It permits students to assimilate information; It uses heterogeneous groupings; The teacher acts as a facilitator in CIRCS.

Therefore, it can be extrapolated that many teachers included in the study knew about CIRCS because of the potential benefits it has. Definitely, the teacher must have been exposed to the strategy during their schooling or during their attendance at conferences, workshops and seminar they have been privileged to attend. This could be adduced to high qualification and experience of EL teachers. It thus means that their schooling which culminated into their certification had exposed them to the content and benefits of CIRCS. Similarly, their years of teaching experience suggests that they must have attended some conferences, workshops and training where they had the opportunity to be exposed to the CIRCS. The finding corroborates the works of Usher (2006), Schunk (2004), and Schunk and Zimmerman (2003) who all maintained that teachers highly knew about CIRCS and their awareness means that they knew about the benefits of the strategies in teaching English reading comprehension and composition.

The disposition of English Language teachers to CIRC strategy in public secondary schools in Ekiti State

The study had found that the selected teachers had positive disposition to CIRC strategy in public secondary schools in Ekiti State. The analysis explicitly established that the teachers believed that they enjoyed using CIRCS; using CIRCS enabled them to foster group relationship among students, they liked the use of CIRCS; Using CIRCS made their lesson delivery to be easy; they interact freely with their students when using CIRCS; they were able to pay individual attention to students when using CIRCS; they found teaching of reading comprehension and essay writing easier with the CIRCS; they were excited teaching with CIRCS; they felt fulfilled when deploying CIRCS; they found it difficult to manage the class when teaching with CIRCS; they believed in the use of CIRCS to teach reading and composition; they felt like utilising CIRCS always in class.

Teachers' positive disposition to CIRCS in teaching ERC and composition is predicated on their high awareness of the benefits of the strategy. It is generally believed that when human beings know about an object and the benefits it has to them, they are likely going to form a positive affects/attitude towards the object. The same applies to teachers' disposition to Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition Strategy, since teachers' awareness of the strategy has been found high. It is consistent with Oyatope (2019) and Blatchford, Kutnick, Baines, and Galton (2003) who also found that teachers had positive attitude to using the CIRCS.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that teachers are aware of CIRCS and this awareness is more important to their disposition to and implementation of the strategy than their qualification and experience are to it. The study, therefore, has argued that the teachers' qualification or teaching experience do

not really matter if the teachers are already aware of the CIRCS. This is due to the seemingly popularity of the cooperative learning strategies among teachers as a result of it being taught to students of education in the university. Therefore, teachers of English language in Ekiti State who have at least Bachelor's Degree are aware of the CIRCS and their awareness translated to their disposition to, and implementation of the strategy.

Recommendations

The study hereby recommends that:

1. Teachers of EL should be encouraged to acquire knowledge of more innovative strategies apart from CIRCS investigated in this study.
2. Government should employ teachers of EL who have at least the bachelor's degree in education, so that teachers will always have awareness of innovative strategies such as the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition Strategy.

English language teachers in Ekiti State should attend more conferences, seminars and training where they can learn other innovative strategies apart from CIRCS that they are already aware of and use according to this study.

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