

EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF READING AND PUPILS' ACHIEVEMENT AT PRIMARY SIX IN KANO STATE

Dr. S. P. Orame Alaku

Abstract

Reading is one of the major skills of English language. It is a key to attaining knowledge from all forms of prints. Acquisition of reading skills is therefore very important to pupils' education. However, reading poses a problem with the result that most pupils graduating from primary schools lack the necessary competence to read effectively. Efforts by State and Federal Governments with the assistance from UNICEF and World Bank for teaching and learning improvement seem to yield no better outcome. This study investigated the ineffectiveness of teaching reading skills and poor performance in the skill among primary six pupils in Kano State. Through the instruments of modified language observation scheme and questionnaire indicating teaching qualification and teaching performance vis-à-vis pupils' achievement, modified common entrance examination into Government Secondary Schools, the problems encountered in teaching reading such as teachers' incompetence and inadequate provision of reading texts were identified. Recommendations like providing adequate reading periods on the timetable, workshops, textbooks and reviewing the reading skill aspects of curriculum to meet up with the current academic standard needed in the country were adduced for remediation.

Introduction

Reading is one of the main language skills in the study of English Language. It is an aspect that seems problematic for children within the school system. Consequently, majority of the pupils in schools are failing to learn to read and many more are unable to read to learn (Umolu, 1998; Bunza, 1997). The pupils' performance in reading and English in general appears to be poor on graduation from primary school in Kano State and Nigeria in general. As a result, there have been complaints among parents, teachers and the general public about the ineffectiveness and poor performance in reading skill at the elementary level of education (Olaofe, 2005; Oyetunde, 2009). In Primary six, most of the pupils lack the necessary knowledge and competence in English language to pass entrance examinations into post-primary institutions. In Kano State public primary schools for example, out of 3,174 candidates that sat for 2007/2008 entrance examination into State Government Secondary Schools, only 1,550 (48%) were successful in English language examination section that had to be read and comprehended before writing the correct answer (Bello, 2008). Therefore, pupils' reading achievement was low in the examination.

It could be argued that one of the reasons for poor performance of the children is teachers' ineffectiveness in teaching reading. The findings of Umolu (1998) and Olaofe (2005) revealed inadequate preparation of teachers, ignorance of teachers in appreciating the difference between teaching English and teaching reading with the result that reading is not usually conceived of as something separate from English to be on the timetable of most primary schools in Nigeria; and that attempt to teach reading is casually and superficially done, resulting in reading being caught and not adequately taught in the classroom.

Attempts by Federal and State Governments to improve primary school teachers' effectiveness through Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and assistance from some international agencies like UNICEF, UNESCO and World Bank seem a failure as there appears to be no significant improvement (Adeyanju, 2008). This study is desired to explore ways the teacher could be effective to enhance pupils' performance and achievement in the skill of reading at the primary school in Kano State.

Statement of Problem

The major problem of this study is teachers' low effectiveness in teaching reading skills and pupils' poor attainment at the primary school with particular reference to primary six.

One other problem is in the area of the teachers' qualification and subsequent on-the-job-training to confidently handle the teaching of reading skills in the syllabus at the primary level, as inadequate preparation of the teacher is said to be one of the major causes of teachers' ineffectiveness and pupils' poor performance in reading (Umolu, 1998). Another area of the study is the teacher of English's apparently low competence and ineffectiveness in using instructional materials and approaches to teach reading skill, which is one of the major components of English for pupils' attainment of proficiency in the language. These make the teaching of reading at the elementary school deplorable as most graduates of the school cannot read effectively.

Research Method

The study is an empirical one that explored the relationship between teachers' effectiveness in teaching reading skill of English and pupils' achievement in the skill at primary six public schools in Kano State. Through random sampling by hat and draw method, the field work was carried out in 120 out of 2,061 public primary schools in the State. Primary six teachers of English in the sampled schools served as respondents to the teachers' questionnaire, making a total of 120 teachers. Four (4) out of the average population of forty (40) pupils per class were also sampled as respondents to pupils' test questions, making a total of 480 pupils.

Instruments used for the study included questionnaire for teachers of oral English, classroom observation of teachers of English, teaching reading skills

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with the use of modified Target Language Observation Scheme (TALOS) and modified state common entrance examination into Government Secondary Schools in the State. Respondents' answer scripts were marked by the classroom teachers of English themselves. Each teacher's marked scripts were assessed against the correct model answers. The researcher's assessment of the teachers' marked scripts was to find out the extent of teachers' competence in the reading skill. The main items of the questionnaire and observation rating include teachers' qualification and pupils' performance, pre-lesson preparation and effectiveness in teaching reading skill.

Simple percentage and chi-square statistics at 0.05 significant level were used to find the degree of the effectiveness in teaching the reading skills. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also used to find out the extent of pupils' performance by the qualification of the teachers.

Findings

Teachers' Qualification and Pupils' Performance

The qualifications of teachers and their corresponding achievement in teaching reading were the variables involved in the test. One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for the statistical analysis. The use of the one way analysis of variance was informed by the more than two groups of the independent variables on teachers' qualifications (Olomolaiye, 1986). In table I, the result showed no significant difference existed between the different qualifications of the teachers and their effectiveness with regards to pupils' performance in reading at primary six. That is, NCE, Grade II passed and Grade II failed.

Table I: One Way Analysis of Variance on Pupils' Performance by Teachers' Qualifications

Variable	DF	SS	MS	F	P
Between groups	2	33.3778	16.6889	2.8899	0.0567
Within groups		2390.7980	5.7749		
Total	416	2424.1758			

F-Critical = 3.00; P = 0.06 (not significant)

The table showed that no significant difference existed among the teachers between their qualifications and their effectiveness in teaching reading skill. This means that the teachers with the various qualifications of NCE, "Grade II passed" and "Grade II failed" teach with the same degree of effectiveness and pupils' achievement in reading skill.

Teachers' Effectiveness in Teaching Reading and Pupils' Achievement in the Language Skill

The teachers' perceived effectiveness in teaching reading and the researchers' actual observation rating were also summarized as shown in table II.

Table II: Teachers' Perceived Effectiveness in teaching Reading and Actual Observation

Rating Options	Teachers' Perception		Actual Observation	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Options				
Extremely low	-	-	-	-
Low	4	3.3	27	22.5
Fair	21	17.5	91	75.8
High	44	36.7	2	17
Extremely high	51	42.5	-	-

DF = 4; Chi-square = 147.37 P < 0.05 (significant)

The perception rating was exaggerated. 1.7% of the teachers were observed to be high in their effectiveness in teaching reading while the teachers over-rated (36.7%) themselves to be so high. However, majority (75.8%) of the teachers were observed to be fair (average) in their teaching effectiveness.

Reading faults like repetition, regression and head-movement were common features among the teachers during the observation of teaching reading skill. The reading of almost every sentence was followed by its translation and explanation in L₁. Pupils were not initiated to provide meanings to seemingly new words. The teacher gives the meaning of the new words in L₂ and L₁ without its practice and use in context. There was only one classroom reading text with inadequate number for the pupils. Consequently, two or more pupils had to share a text. Only few teachers had the Teachers' Guide to the text.

The text was followed strictly without regard to modern methods of teaching reading such as group activities, pair activities, cooperative reading activities, role play, lesson plan and use of instructional aids. At the end of the lesson, the textbooks were collected from the pupils by the teacher.

Discussion

It is seen from the findings that the teachers' perception on reading as rated in the questionnaire was generally higher than that of the observational rating. Inadequate knowledge and incompetence in the reading skill among the teachers might be the cause of the rating nature. It could as well be that the teachers were ignorant of the precise things to do. Furthermore, it could be that the teachers have a higher opinion of their performance in reading than they can actually perform. Indeed, this portrays that the teachers' preparatory training knowledge in the reading skill might have been grossly inadequate and not

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achieved. This is because an appropriate and adequately trained teacher of English should teach more effectively to enable pupils' achievement in the language skills, and the reverse is the case with an inappropriate and inadequately trained teacher of English. This is in agreement with the assertion of Olaofe (2005) that when a considerable number of teachers are untrained and unqualified the tendency to teach the language inefficiently and provide poor models for the pupils to imitate and learn is real. This situation does not make for pupils' achievement in the language skill.

The findings revealed no significant difference between the NCE, "Grade II teachers passed" and "Grade II teachers failed" in their effectiveness and pupils' achievement in the reading skill as seen in table I analysis of the data. This implies that the three categories of teachers teach with equal degree of effectiveness. Teachers with NCE possess higher qualification and are supposed to be more knowledgeable and teach better than "Grade II teachers passed" and "Grade II teachers failed" who have ordinary level qualification only. The implication is that NCE reading skill curriculum needs to be reviewed to meet the current education standard required in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Teachers' performance in teaching reading portrayed inadequate knowledge of teacher training preparation programme and its application in classroom situation for pupils' achievement in the language skill. There was lack of fluency in reading coupled with head-movement, regression and reading word by word instead of reading in phrases. The classroom English reader was inadequate for the number of pupils in the classes. Pupils were lacking reading textbooks.

The conclusions above imply that teacher effectiveness in teaching reading skill for achievement of pupils in the language at primary six is greatly lacking. In order to solve this problem, it is recommended that all teachers of English should be trained to attain the minimum qualification of NCE in the language. The reading skill curriculum should be reviewed adequately to meet up with the current academic standard required in the country. Workshop in reading skills should be organized annually to update the teachers' knowledge on the language skill, its teaching methods and techniques. Furthermore, adequate number of classroom English readers should be provided for each pupil. The pupils should be allowed to keep the reading textbooks with them for their own reading practice at home after school. A table-library should also be provided with suitable books for the pupils in the classroom. Teachers should have lesson plans prepared with appropriate instructional aids for every lesson before commencement of teaching. Finally, reading periods for English lessons should be adequately fixed on the timetable.

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