# READING ABILITY OF MIDDLE BASIC EDUCATION PUPILS IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA: A CHALLENGE TO SUSTAINABLE HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

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**Abstract**

*This study, "Reading Ability of Middle Basic pupils in Imo State, Nigeria: A Challenge to Sustainable Higher Education in Africa" is a quasi-experimental study using 3 by 2 factorial design to examine gender and reinforcement effects on pupils' reading ability. The two experimental groups were exposed to material and non-material reinforcers with pretest-posttest respectively. 168 Basic five pupils from 3 of the 26 public schools in Owerri Education Zone 1 of 20,107pupils' population were involved in the study using non-equivalent intact class method to sample 58 pupils for Material Reinforcers Experimental Group One, 55 pupils for Non-material Reinforcers Experimental Group Two, and 55 pupils for Control Group. English Language Reading Ability Test with r = 0.89 was used to generate data. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the four research questions and ANCOVA to answer the four hypotheses drawn for the study. Pupils taught with material reinforcers had the Mean Gain Score higher than the pupils taught with non-material reinforcers. Gender-wise, material reinforcers' group male mean gain score was higher than females' while non-material reinforcers' group female mean gain score was higher than males'. Teachers should use material reinforcers more than non-material reinforcers to sustain students' reading ability.*

**Key words**: material reinforcers, non-material reinforcers, reinforcement, gender, middle basic pupils

Reading is an act of getting meaning from printed or written text. It is the ability to understand the information, instructions, directions or messages that are in written form. Reading is a vital skill in educational attainments and any pupil who, at middle basic education level finds it difficult to develop a suitable reading ability may be disadvantaged to a sustainable higher education benefits in life. Good reading ability is one of the most important skills that a child should acquire to endear him/her to a sustainable higher education, not only in Africa but across the world. Alabi (2005)

asserts that reading is a basic tool in the living of good life. He affirms that reading is to the mind what exercises are to the body. According to Ikoh (2004), reading involves being able to decode, assimilate mentally and understand the meaning of symbols, signs, gestures, etc. Anstey and Bull (2006) see reading as an essential tool for the acquisition of all kinds of human knowledge and as a means, whereby information stored in books can be obtained and utilized for a variety of purposes. This explains reading as the key which opens all knowledge that have been printed or written down. This means that if a child does not have the ability to read, that child will be unable to decode printed messages with understanding. This will eventually inhibit the child's academic endeavours in life.

Nigerian government has come to realize that literacy is very essential to national development. For that reason, education of the child has been given support by the National Policy on Education. The policy declares that the rest of educational level is built upon the foundation laid at the basic level because it is the key to the success or failure of the whole system (FRN, 2013). Eka (2005) attests that, the world in which we live in is very vast that, there is much to know about the world through learning and observing it. In that, much of the information we need to know about the world are stored in books in the form of writing using printed symbols. Then, the printed symbols are decoded in the process of reading.

In the same vein, Rubin (2002) notes that through English language; communication or impartation of knowledge in other field is also made possible. Also in our socio economic, cultures, political, educational and technological advancement within and outside the country, English has played important role. This is to say that any child that is well trained to develop reading skills will stand a better chance in any field he or she would want to belong. Egong (2014) asserts this in confirmation of importance of knowing how to read that, a child who does well in English Language will acquire a lot of vocabulary. Since English is a language of the curriculum, the mastery of English language will aid other subjects done in school and so help the pupils to understand them better and acquire more of what is taught. The satisfaction derived from the knowledge of English will also help the pupils to tackle other reading materials on their own, and so form some desirable reading habits.

Reading among pupils in the primary school is not impressive, that is why Udosen (2009) complains about the declining standard of education especially in the primary and secondary schools. He stated that most of the products of basic schools can no longer read or write correctly. This handicap is enough to discourage the pupils from furthering their studies. If a pupil cannot read in the class during an English lesson, he will find it difficult to read examination questions. This deficiency in reading will lead to his failure in examinations. Poor performance of the pupils in English Language in public examination portrays the teachers in bad light to the public and makes them feel that their efforts in the classroom are wasted. This situation makes some teachers to condescend so low to feel passive to exam malpractices in order to save the face of

their schools. The situation at hand is so pathetic that teachers have to read the examination questions and interpret what each of the questions demands to the pupils before they can scribble some likely- to-be-answers down. This is not peculiar to the study area alone but it depicts the general environment that permeates our public basic schools in Nigeria, the giant of Africa, where basic education is being fiddled with. Then, the question that comes to a rational mind is to examine if teachers could use material or non-material reinforcements, in spite of their being poorly treated by the government, to save the basic education foundation from total collapse.

Reinforcer is any environmental event programmed as a consequence of a response that can increase the rate of response. It is anything used to encourage some desired responses or discourage an undesired habit. Goodman (2005) stated that "Psychologists distinguish between several kinds of reinforcers. Describing a reinforcer as 'positive' simply means that it adds something rewarding to a situation. Such a reinforcer could be food, music, gifts, praise, etc. while negative reinforce is the withdrawal of rewards in unpleasant manner in order to encourage desired response. In other words, to this study, positive reinforcers is the presentation of tangible or intangible objects towards a respond to stimulus in order to increase the occurrence of a desired behaviour, whereas the negative reinforcer is the removal of aversive stimuli in order to increase the repetition of the desired behavior. That is why the use of reinforce in this study to improve pupils' reading ability is considered necessary. Essuman, Nwaogu, Nwachukwu (1999) state that material reinforcers are things like cake, bread, pencil, erasers, sharpeners, crayons, exercise books, sweet, biscuits, rulers, balloons, toys, tea, clothes and balls. Non materials reinforcers are verbal remarks and body signs to express approval or disapproval in a mild way, such as praises (Good! Well-done! Good boy! Good girl! Oh yes! Correct! Say it again! Wonderful! Oh no! Try again! etc); or commendations such as award of high scores, clapping of hands, words of appreciation (Thank you! Grateful! 'M impressed! Giving of handshakes, etc).

The use of reinforcement to improve pupils' reading ability in the study area is the focus of this study. It is generally observed that most pupils in public schools at this level of education are unwilling to pick either their readers or any reading material to read except by compulsion. And when they do, they do not spend meaningful time on it. Therefore, the researcher is trying to find out if material or non-material reinforcers can be used to improve the pupils' (male and female) reading ability; find out between the two reinforcers, the one that is more effective and the gender effect on the study groups of Middle Basic pupils in public schools in Owerri North of Imo State, Nigeria.

**Statement of the Problem**

It is not uncommon to see teachers yelling, out of frustration, on pupils that lack reading ability in their classrooms, "If you can't read this passage very well, I'm going to flog you!" Or parents shouting lamentably on their children, "You can't read for the past years in school! What are your teachers doing? At your age, I have been

reading! The standard of education has fallen! etc". Yet, these threats and expression of disgust to pupils' inability to read have not produced any positive change in such pupils' reading ability to influence their learning outcomes in English. What is the missing link? The truth about this fact is that pupils in this category should be motivated. How? Should the teacher use material or non-material motivation? This is the focus of this study.

The study sought to identify the relevance of material (gifts) and non material rein-forcer (praise and commendation) on the reading improvement of pupils. It also examined the effect of material and non material rein-forcers to improve the reading ability of male and female pupils in public Basic schools in Owerri Education Zone 1 of Imo State, Nigeria.

Consequently, the following research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide this study.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the mean difference in the reading ability scores of subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforce (gifts) at pretest and post test?
2. What is the mean difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at pre test and post test?
3. What is the mean difference in the reading ability of subjects based on gender (males and females) exposed to material reinforce (gifts) and non- material reinforce (praises and commendations) at post test?
4. What is the mean difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed to material reinforcer (gifts and non-material reinforce (praises and commendations) at post test and follow up?

**Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and were tested at 0.05 level of significance;

**$Ho_1$** There is no mean difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforcer (gifts) and control group at pre test and post test do not differ significantly ($p \leq 0.05$).

**$Ho_2$**: There is no significant difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed through material reinforcers (gifts) and those exposed through non-material reinforcers ( praises and commendations) at pre test and post test ( $p <_ 0.05$)

**$Ho_3$:** There is no significant difference in the reading ability of subjects based on gender (males and females) exposed to material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at pre test and post test ($p _< 0.05$).

**$Ho_4$** There is no significant difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed to material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at post test and follow up ($p \leq 0.05$).

## Methodology

The study is a quasi-experimental research as it involves the pre-test, post-test non-equivalent control group. Quasi-experimental design, according to Dinarlo (2008) is a research design used to estimate the causal impact of an intervention on its target population. Quasi-experimental design does not use random assignment of subjects; rather, intact classes are used. This design is a 3 x 2 factorial design. This design represents two experimental groups and a control group: the material reinforce (gifts) and non-material reinforce (praise and commendations) (experimental groups), and a control group (conventional teaching method). Because the classes were intact, there was a slight variation in the number of subject used for the experiment. The material reinforce experimental group 1 had 58 pupils, non material reinforcers experimental group 2 had 55 pupils, while the control group had 55 pupils. Each group had both male and female subjects. Five (5) research questions and five (5) null-hypotheses were drawn for the study. Descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation was used to answer the research questions while inferential statistics of Analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA) was used to test each of the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

A reading test was the instrument adopted from the Macmillan New Primary English 5, UBE Edition newly revised in line with NERDC, 2009 Curriculum by Biola Odejide, Wale Osisanwo, Agatha Bajah, Ikechukwu Kanu, and Mohammed Audu (2010). The instrument was a test-retest instrument, validated and pilot-tested on 25 pupils in public Basic 5 outside the study area but within the Education Zone 1. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics used to measure the reliability of the instrument gave a reliability index of 0.89 to mean that the instrument was reliable. The instrument was used for their pretest, posttest and follow up. The reading comprehension from the reader (Macmillan English Book 5) was used also during the treatment. The pre-test was used to measure the pupils' entry behaviour and the pos-test was used to measure the improvement (Mean Gain) in their reading ability after the treatment was administered.

To control the extraneous variables, all the groups were taught by the researcher and the researcher assistants (students' permanent English teachers that were trained by the researcher on how to apply the treatment); all the groups were taught with one lesson plan and same text book; all the groups had the same pretest, posttest, and follow up; each school has only one group and the treatment lasted for the same period of time for all the group; all the tests written were marked by the researcher with the same marking guide; the subjects used their numbers in the Class Attendance Registers for their names to avoid bias at marking and favouritisms; all the groups were given the same condusive learning environment.

**Results**

**Research Question 1**

What is the mean difference in the reading ability scores of subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforce (gifts) at pretest and post test?

**Table 1: Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Achievement Scores of the Students Exposed to Reading Ability Test through Material Reinforce (Gifts) Method**

| Tests | N | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pretest | 58 | 15.62 | 3.519 |
| Posttest | 58 | 36.64 | 4.212 |
| Gain Score | | 21.02 | |

The result in table 1 shows the pre test and post test mean achievement scores and standard deviations of the pupils exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforce (gifts). The result reports that the achievement mean scores of pupils at pre test recorded for 15.62 with a standard deviation of 3.519 while at post test, the ,mean achievement score accounted for 36.64 with a standard deviation of 4.212 amounting for a mean gain score of 21.02. This shows that the experiment using material reinforce (gifts) method had effect on the subjects. In order to make a decision on whether there is a significant difference between subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through mate

**Table 2: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Result on the Achievement Mean Scores of Subjects Exposed to Reading Ability Test through Material Reinforce (Gifts) and Those in Control Group**

| **Tests of Between- Subjects Effects** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dependent Variable: Post test score | | | | | |
| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Corrected Model | 6600.816[a] | 2 | 3300.408 | 363.741 | .000 |
| Intercept | 1199.556 | 1 | 1199.556 | 132.204 | .000 |
| Pre test scores | 1240.976 | 1 | 1240.976 | 136.769 | .000 |
| Treatment | 5062.200 | 1 | 5062.200 | 557.909 | .000 |
| Error | 998.087 | 110 | 9.074 | | |
| Total | 107864.000 | 113 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 7598.903 | 112 | | | |
| a.R Squared = .869 ( Adjusted R Squared = .866) | | | | | |

**Source: SPSS 19 Model Summary Output**

Table 2 presents the ANCOVA result on the achievement mean scores of subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforce (gifts) and those in control group. The result shows that the calculated F-value for the effects of treatments on the achievement mean scores of subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforcer (gifts) and those in control group was 557.909 while p-value account for 0.000. A decision shall be made based on p-value, stating that if p-value< 0.05 then the

null hypotheses will be rejected. From our result, p-value which accounts for 0.000<0.05, they study therefore reject the null hypotheses and accept the alternative which states that the mean difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforce (gifts) and control experiment at pre test and post test do differ significantly (p<_ 0.05). Therefore, there is a significance difference between the achievement mean scores of subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforce (gifts) and control experiment.

**Research Question 2**

What is the mean difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforce (gifts) and non-material reinforce (praises and commendations) at pre test and post test?

**Table 3: Mean Achievement Gain Scores of Students at Pre Test and Post Test Level Exposed to Reading Ability Test through Material Reinforcer (Gifts) and Non-Material Reinforce (Praises and Commendations)**

| | **MRG (58)** | | **NMRG(55)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Test | Mean | Standard Deviation | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Pre test | 15.62 | 3.519 | 15.07 | 3.415 |
| Post test | 36.64 | 4.212 | 34.00 | 3.776 |
| Gain score | 21.02 | | 18.93 | |

The result in table 3 shows the mean achievement gain scores of subjects at pre test and post test level exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforcer (gifts) and non- material reinforcer (praises and commendations). It was indicated from the table that a gain score of 21.02 was reported for the treatment group 'material reinforcers' while the group that were taught through the non-material reinforce (praises and commendations) accounted for a gain score of 18.93. this result shows that the treatment group exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforcers (gifts) had more achievement gain score than those exposed to Reading Ability Test through non-material reinforcers ( praises and commendations). In order to make a decision on whether there is a significant difference between subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at pre test and post test, hypotheses 3 was tested.

**$Ho_2$:** There is no significant difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed through material reinforcers (gifts) and those exposed through non-material reinforcers ( praises and commendations) at pre test and post test ( p<_ 0.05)

**Table 4 : Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Result on the Achievement Mean Scores of Subjects Exposed through Material Reinforcers (Gifts) and Those Exposed through Non- Material Reinforcers ( Praises and Commendations)**

| **Tests of Between- Subjects Effects** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dependent Variable: Post test score | | | | | |
| Source | Type 111 Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Corrected Model | 7865.235[a] | 3 | 2621.745 | 370.629 | .000 |
| Intercept | 2380.356 | 1 | 2380.356 | 336.505 | .000 |
| Pre test scores | 1616.826 | 1 | 1616.826 | 228.566 | .000 |
| Treatment | 6028.298 | 2 | 3014.149 | 426.102 | .000 |
| Error | 1160.098 | 164 | 7.074 | | |
| Total | 172214.00 | 168 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 9025.333 | 167 | | | |
| a. R Squared = .871 ( Adjusted R Squared = .869) | | | | | |

**Source: SPSS 19 Model Summary Output**

Table 4 presents the ANCOVA result on the achievement mean scores of subjects exposed through material reinforcers (gifts) and those exposed through non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) The result shows that the calculated F- value for the effects of treatments on the achievement mean scores of subjects exposed through material reinforcers (gifts) and those exposed through non- material reinforcers (praise and commendations) was 426.102 while p-value accounts for 0.000. The decision shall be made based on p-value, stating that if p-value$\leq$0.05 then we shall reject the null hypothesis. From the results, p- value which accounts for 0.000$\leq$0.05, the study therefore rejects the null hypotheses and accepts the alternative which states that there is a significance is difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed through material reinforcers (gifts) and those exposed through non- material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at pre test and post test ($p\leq0.05$). Therefore, there is a significance difference between the achievement mean scores of subjects exposed to reading ability test through material reinforce (gifts) and those exposed through non-material reinforce (praises and commendations).

**Research Question 3:** What is the mean difference in the reading ability of subjects based on gender (males and females) exposed to material reinforce (gifts) and non-material reinforce (praises and commendations) at post test?

**Table 5: The Reading Ability Mean Gain Scores of Male and Female Pupils' Exposed to Material Reinforcer (Gifts) and Non-Material Reinforce (Praises and Commendations) At Post Test**

| | Material Reinforcers group (gifts) MRG | | Non- Material Reinforcers group (Praises and Commendations) NMRG | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Test** | **Male** | **Female** | **Male** | **Female** |
| Pre test | 15.74 | 15.52 | 14.44 | 15.6 |
| Post test | 37.93 | 35.52 | 32.52 | 35.23 |
| Gain score | 22.19 | 20 | 18.08 | 19.63 |

The result in table 5 shows the reading ability mean scores of male and female pupils exposed to material reinforcer (gifts) and non-material reinforcer (praises and commendations) at post test. The result reports a gain score of 22.19 and 20.00 exists for male and female respondents respectively in the treatment (MRG) group. Subjects exposed to material reinforcer (gifts) and non-material reinforcer (praises and commendations) at post test shows a mean gain score of 18.08 and 19.63 for male and female subjects respectively. This result indicates that the male and female subjects in the treatment group (MRG) perform slightly higher than the male and female participants in the other ( NMRG) treatment group. In order to make a decision on whether there is a significant difference in the reading ability of subjects based on gender (males and females) exposed to material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers ( praises and commendations) at pre test and post test, hypotheses 2 was tested

**$Ho_3$:** There is no significant difference in the reading ability of subjects based on gender (males and females) exposed to material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at pre test and post test ($p _< 0.05$).

**Table 6: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Result on the Reading Ability of Subjects Based on Gender (Boys and Girls) Exposed to Material Reinforcers (Gifts) and Non Material Reinforcers (Praises and Commendations) at Pre Test and Post Test**

| **Tests of Between- Subjects Effects** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dependent Variable: Post test score | | | | | |
| Source | Type 111 Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Corrected Model | 7962.102[a] | 6 | 1327.017 | 200.944 | .000 |
| Intercept | 2416.662 | 1 | 2416.662 | 365.943 | .000 |
| Pre test scores | 1550.263 | 1 | 1550.263 | 234.749 | .000 |
| Treatment | 6005.551 | 2 | 3002.776 | 454.696 | .000 |
| Sex | .028 | 1 | .028 | .004 | .948 |
| Treatment*Sex | 96.852 | 2 | 48.426 | 7.333 | .001 |
| Error | 1063.231 | 161 | 6.604 | | |
| Total | 172214.000 | 168 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 9025.333 | 167 | | | |
| a. R Squared = .882 ( Adjusted R Squared = .878) | | | | | |

**Source: SPSS 19 Model Summary Output**

Table 6 reports the SPSS 19 Output on Analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA) result on the reading ability of subjects based on gender (male and female) exposed to material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at pre test and post test. The result in table 4 reports that there is a significant difference in the reading ability of subjects based on gender (male and female ) exposed to material reinforce (gifts) and non-material reinforce (praises and commendations) at pre test and post test ( $p \leq 0.05$) as the result recorded F-value of 7.333 and a p-value $(0.001) \leq 0.05$ significance level. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and report that there is a significant difference in the reading ability of subjects based on gender (boys and girls) exposed to material reinforce (gifts) and non-material reinforce (praises and commendations) at ost test and follow up ($p \leq 0.05$).

**Research Question 4:** what is the mean difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed to material reinforcer (gifts and non-material reinforce (praises and commendations) at post test and follow up?

**Table 7 : Mean Achievement Gain Scores of Students at Post Test Level and Follow Up Exposed to Reading Ability Test through Material Reinforce (Gifts) and Non-Material Reinforce (Praises and Commendations)**

| | **MRG (58)** | | **NMRG(55)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Test | Mean | Standard Deviation | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Pre test | 15.62 | 3.519 | 15.07 | 3.4 |
| Follow up | 33.78 | 5.512 | 30.53 | 3.696 |
| Gain score | 18.16 | | 15.46 | |

The result in table 7 shows the mean achievement gain scores of students at post test and follow up level exposed at Reading Ability Test through material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers ( praises and commendations). It was shown from the table that a gain score of 18.16 was reported for the treatment group 'material reinforcers' while the group that were exposed through the non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) method accounted for a gain score of 15.46. This result shows that at follow up, the treatment group exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforce(gifts) had more achievement gain score than those exposed to Reading Ability Test through non-material reinforce(praises and commendations).In order to make a decision on whether there is a significant difference between subjects exposed to Reading Ability Test through material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at post test and follow up hypotheses 5 was tested.

**$Ho_4$** There is no significant difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed to material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at post test and follow up ($p \leq 0.05$).

**Table 8: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Result on the Reading Ability Achievement Mean Scores of Subjects Exposed to Material Reinforcers (Gifts) and Non-Material Reinforcers (Praises and Commendations)**

| **Tests of Between- Subjects Effects** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dependent Variable: Post test score | | | | | |
| Source | Type 111 Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Corrected Model | 3221.708[a] | 2 | 1610.854 | 202.528 | .000 |
| Intercept | 60.272 | 1 | 60.272 | 7.578 | .007 |
| Post test scores | 2436.886 | 1 | 2436.886 | 306.383 | .000 |
| Treatment | 583.001 | 1 | 583.001 | 73.299 | .000 |
| Error | 1312.564 | 165 | 7.954 | | |
| Total | 161916.000 | 168 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 4534.071 | 109 | | | |
| a. R Squared = .711 (Adjusted R Squared = .707) | | | | | |

**Source: SPSS 19 Model Summary Output**

**Table 8** reports the SPSS 19 Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) model summary output on the reading ability achievement mean scores of subjects exposed to material reinforcers (gifts) and non- material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at post test and follow up. The result in table 6 reports that there is a significant difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed to material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at post test and follow up ($p \leq 0.05$) as the result recorded F-value of 73.299 and a p-value ($0.000 \leq 0.05$ significance level. Therefore, the study reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which reports that there is a significant difference in the reading ability of subjects exposed to material reinforcers (gifts) and non-material reinforcers (praises and commendations) at post test and follow up ($p \leq 0.05$).

**Discussions of Findings**

The results showed that the material reinfocers have positive effects on the pupils. The pupils treated with the material reinforcers made more improvement than those in the non material reinforcers' and control groups as it could be seen in their pre test and post test scores. That does not mean that those taught without material reinforcers did not learn, but the mean gain of each group clearly shows that students taught with material reinforcers were more enthusiastic to learn and this enhanced them better achievement. Pupils voluntarily put in more efforts to improve on their reading ability when material gifts or prizes are attached to better achievement. Competition

gender-wise was noticed in a healthy, well motivated English Language classroom interactive reading ability atmosphere. This agrees with Agulanna and Onukaogu (2002), who, explaining B.F. Skinner's experiment of Behavioral Learning Theory stated that if an individual does something and he is reinforced immediately, he will deliberately find a way to continually do that thing in order to be reinforced again. The findings also agree with Nwachuckwu (2000), who also found out that material reinforcers are very effective way of improving students' learning achievement though Udosen (2009) did not perfectly agree with this study. He was on the contrary as the trend of material reinforcement is not a daily exercise to be seen in our public schools. This may be due to the fact that it not easy for a classroom teachers in public schools to use their meager monthly salary on material gifts in order to motivate their pupils to improve on their reading ability. However, it is believed if teachers' monthly income/ salary or personal emolument is improved, and extra allowances are paid teachers in that respect, the use of material reinforcers will be of regular, daily practice.

Results of the research questions and hypotheses show that non material reinforcers are also a very effective way to motivate pupils improve on their reading ability. According to Kolawole, (2009) non material reinforcers massage ego and pride into the pupils to make them feel very special. When the pupils are praised, it does not only have effect on them, but it goes a long way to affect the other pupils' morale in the class. When a particular pupil is always being clapped for in the class during classroom interactions, other pupils may naturally become jealous and may also want to be clapped for. This agrees with Nwachukwu (2000) and Kolawole (2009) who both opined that praises and commendations from superior officers increase one's prestige, signs of approval, giving attention to the child, expressing nice gestures, smiles, applause, shaking of hands, positive comments like- great, good, fine, yes, beautiful, correct, right, etc are the things that encourage a desired behavior and create room from frequent occurrence of such behaviors.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1) The government should collaborate with the education stakeholders and the schools to organize seminars and workshops, which will educate the teachers on the right way to use both material and non material reinforcers to motivate the pupils they are teaching.

2) Since it will not be easy for the teachers to provide the material reinforcers, the school heads should solicit for help from the government, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and non-governmental organizations to provide the schools with adequate material reinforcers.

3) Parents, through the PTA meetings, should be educated on how to adopt the use of reinforcers at home to motivate their children towards their studies and also used it for effective upbringing of their children.

4) The school head should advice the teachers to reduce punishments on the pupils and go for reinforcers.

5) The school authority should try to attach prizes to the school reading competitions, debates, and other school activities. This will enhance active competition which will at the long run motivate the pupils toward reading their books.

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