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ANALYSIS OF READING MISCUES IN SELECTED JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EKITI STATE

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Abstract

The need to give attention to reading assessment that is both practical and accurate has become paramount more than ever before. This is because reading problems seem to be on the increase in our schools. This study therefore investigated reading miscues among Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) in Ekiti State. The study determined reading miscue patterns among the selected students and examined the influence of gender on their reading miscues. The population for the study consisted all Junior Secondary Schools in Ekiti State while the sample was 48 JSS students selected through simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. The instrument for the study was an informal reading inventory with a running record to obtain samples of students' reading. Data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings from the study revealed that reading miscue patterns among the students included: phonological miscue, hesitation, omission, insertion, repetition and substitution; the most prominent among them was phonological miscue. Gender did not significantly influence their reading miscues. It is recommended that teachers should carry out miscue analysis among their students in order to be able to help students overcome reading problems.

Keywords: Reading Miscues, Running Records, Reading Assessment, Phonological Miscues, Reading Fluency

Introduction

Reading is a major language skill that all students would have to equip themselves with in order to survive in the academic world. Reading therefore has been observed to be probably the most important activity one can do to 'get ahead' in life. One major language skill that a learner of any standard language needs to acquire is learning to read in that particular language. It is generally believed among experts that if the overall quality of reading is improved in schools, there is a likelihood that the quality of education and students' performance will improve. One major goal of education especially at the elementary level is to make students acquire the literacy skill of reading texts accurately and fluently. This implies that reading proficiency requires that

students be able to identify the words on the pages of paper and pronounce them accurately.

The acquisition of reading skill is an important pre-occupation of students from the lowest level to the highest level of education. Reading has been defined variously by experts and there is no single definition of reading. Leipzig (2001) puts it that reading in its fullest sense involves weaving together word recognition and comprehension in a fluent manner. That is, reading requires:

- identifying the words in print—a process called word recognition.
- constructing an understanding from the words—a process called comprehension.
- coordinating identified words and making meaning so that reading is automatic and accurate—an achievement called fluency.

These three processes are important in reading but many a times they do not happen the way they are supposed to happen. Sometimes, a reader can make meaning from print without being able to identify all the words. Readers can also identify words without being able to construct meaning from them. In addition, a reader can identify words and comprehend them, but if the processes do not come together smoothly, fluency will not be achieved. Reading in a way can therefore be said to be the act or practice of rendering aloud written or printed materials. However, reading apart from being a linguistic skill is also a tool for learning other subjects in the curriculum. This is the more reason paramount attention should be given to the issue of reading in schools.

There are types of reading like intensive and extensive reading, skimming and scanning. There are also reading processes or modes like oral and silent reading. Oral reading involves the reader reading aloud what is being read for others to hear while silent reading is done within the individual without sounding out the words being read. During oral reading, students sometimes or often read or say something that is different from what is actually written in the text they are reading. This kind of deviation from the text is what scholars have termed miscue. This term was initiated by Goodman (1969) who used the term 'miscue' rather than 'error' or 'mistake' to avoid value implications. He opined that the departures from the text are not necessarily a negative aspect of the reading process, rather 'windows on the reading process'. Deviations from text during oral reading are not simply random mistakes but form patterns that reveal useful information about students' reading ability. According to Weaver and Lee (2013), Ken Goodman used the term as a neutral way of saying what are traditionally called errors. A miscue is reflective of one or more 'missed cues' in reading the words of a particular text, that is, every departure a reader makes from what the text says is a miscue.

Miscue is a diagnostic procedure rooted in the psycholinguistic view of reading. The focus of its analysis is on the broad field of reading comprehension. It is based on the belief that

students' mistakes when reading are not random errors, but are actually their attempts to make sense of the text with their language skills. The kinds of miscues (incorrect guesses) a reader makes when reading from a text will give the listener clues about how familiar or unfamiliar the reader finds the content and how easy or difficult they find the text to read. Reading is a complex process that involves using a symbol system in order to understand a message. Readers come with personal experience, existing knowledge, preferences and different levels of sophistication for turning those symbols into something that speaks to them. In this sense, reading is not a precise symbol by symbol or word by word progression. Meaning is an integral part of reading. Goodman clarified that the whole idea of using 'miscue' rather than 'error' is to look at departures from the exact words of the text not as something 'wrong' but simply as data to be analysed in order to discover whether the reader is engaging in letter-sound relationships, syntax (grammatical cues), and semantics (meaning cues) while reading. Patterns of miscues might suggest in a way that a reader is over-attending to lettersound relationships and under-attending to meaning. In literature there are various ways authors have categorised miscues to indicate different types of miscue, according to Andy (2015), the following are types of Reading Miscues:

- Self correction: this is when the reader makes mistakes and corrects himself /herself as he/she reads along.
- Meaningful miscue: this is when a reader pronounces another thing other than what is on the page but this does not change the meaning of the sentence, e.g. Text: The dogs ran down the road.

Reader: The dogs run down the road.

 Schema related miscue: this is when the reader inserts related concept and the original/intended meaning is not retained, e.g.

Text: The grader made the road smooth.

Reader: The truck made the road smooth.

- 4. Significant miscue: this type of miscue is what we commonly think of as mistakes. It changes the meaning of the sentence and does not make sense within the sentence. Sometimes, the reader skips the word and may need to be helped, e.g.

 Text: The dogs ran down the road.
 - Reader: The dogs rammed down the road.
- A meaningless pronunciation: here, the reader correctly sounds the word out but clearly has no understanding of the word.

Students often commit one or all the above types of miscues while attempting to read and this prevents them from being fluent readers. This is a major problem in our schools these days. Many students find it difficult to read fluently and there is no way this will not distort how they make meaning from texts.

Miscue Analysis

Miscue analysis is an analytical procedure for assessing students' reading fluency based on samples of oral reading. A key assumption of miscue analysis is that what readers do while reading is neither accidental nor random; rather, it is cued by language and personal experience (Goodman, 1973). Miscue analysis has made an ideological shift from a deficit-oriented view of readers' weaknesses towards a view that appreciates the linguistic strengths that the reader brings to the reading process. Miscue analysis helps teachers gain insight into the reading process and helps them analyse students' oral reading (Goodman, 1973).

According to Roc, Smith and Burns (2005), analysis of the types of miscues each student makes helps the teacher interpret why students are having difficulties. This implies that the teacher will be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the individual student because in a way, miscues are the influence of the thought and language the students bring to the reading situation. Conducting a miscue analysis can therefore help teachers work more productively with their students in order to improve their reading skill.

Many scholars have worked in the area of miscue analysis since the pioneer work of Goodman (1969). Al-Oliemat, Al-Khatatneh and Al-Khotaba (2014) carried out a study on the sources and types of reading miscues by 6th grade students at public schools in Jordan and found out that students' miscues included reading omission, repetition, mispronunciation, pausing and word by word reading. The sources of such miscues according to their findings also include differences between languages (L1 and L2) and poor word recognition skills among others. Alabi (2009) investigated the effect of prior knowledge of texts on reading miscue of Junior Secondary School one in Ibadan South East Local Government of Oyo State, and found that students without prior knowledge of text committed more miscue than those with prior knowledge of text. He also reported that mispronunciation is the highest form of miscue committed by his participants and there was no difference in the miscue pattern of male and female students.

The issue of the difference between boys and girls in language tasks has generated a lot of arguments among scholars over the years. Studies have not reported any consistency on whether boys are better than girls or vice versa; some studies revealed that girls are better on language task while some revealed that boys are better. Elaine (2017) commented that, research on shared book-reading with young children consistently failed to find gender differences in the way parents were reading books with sons and daughters. However, many studies on reading ability have consistently reported that girls score higher than boys (Geffrey, 2015; Wang'eri and Mugambi, 2014; Watson and Boman, 2005: Younger, Warrington and MacLellan, 2002). Scholars are of the view that differences between boys and girls do not arise from innate differences in ability but from factors such as attitude, behaviour, engagement with learning and learning patterns among others (Watson, Kehler and Martino, 2010). The issue of gender therefore is inconclusive. There is need to further carry out miscue analysis in order to determine the prevalence of miscues in our schools and also investigate the influence of gender on reading miscues.

Statement of the Problem

One major objective of teaching the English make Language in schools is to students/learners competent at reading the language. Looking at the reality in many Nigerian schools, this objective seem not to have been fully achieved. Educators want students to become successful, independent and skilled readers. Many students especially at the junior secondary school level have difficulty to read fluently while some cannot even read at all. There seem to be no sufficient effort on the part of teachers and parents at solving this problem. Teachers have abandoned many of these students who have problem to fate thinking there is nothing they can do to improve the situation. Parents most of the time shift the blame on the schools; there also seem to be paucity of research in the area of miscue analysis among scholars and the few available ones are not communicated to schools to help teachers. Despite the fact that virtually all other school subjects are taught and read in the English Language at the junior secondary school, many students have difficulty reading in the English Language and this seems to have given rise to poor academic performance and low selfesteem on the part of the students. The need to pay attention to this all important but neglected aspect of the school system has brought about this study which sought to analyse students' miscues in junior secondary schools in Ekiti State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyse miscues among Junior Secondary School students in Ekiti State. It was to determine the patterns of miscue that are found among them and which one(s) is/are prevalent. The study also determined the influence of sex on the miscues found among the subjects in the study.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

 What patterns of miscues are found among junior secondary schools in Ekiti State? 2. Which reading miscue is the most prominent among the students?

Hypothesis

 There is no significant difference in reading miscue patterns of male and female students.

Methodology

The case study research method of the descriptive research was adopted and the study covered three secondary schools drawn from the three geopolitical zones in the State. These are government owned secondary schools. The subjects were also delimited to junior secondary class II students. The sample consisted of 16 students purposively selected from each of the three selected schools: this was to allow the selection of equal male and female students. This gave a total of 48 subjects in all. The instrument used for data collection was an informal reading inventory with a running record used to take sample of the oral reading of the subjects. The face and content validity of the instrument was ensured by giving it to experts in language education and tests and measurement. and their suggestions were incorporated to produce the final draft that was used to collect data.

The researcher personally visited the schools to seek permission from relevant authorities and the English Language teachers who assisted in organising the classes for the reading exercise. Each of the subjects read the passage while the researcher held the runner record to mark the reader's miscue. The runner records were later collated to identify the type of miscues committed by each of the subjects in the study.

Results

The results of data collected are presented below based on the research questions and the hypothesis.

Research Question 1: What reading miscue patterns are found among students in punior secondary schools in Unit State?

Table 1: Reading Miscue Patterns Found among the Students

Miscue pattern	No. of students	Total no.	% of	Weighted mean	Standard deviation
		miscues	species	Isau pignausi-s	enternal o
Phonological	48	500	69.44	10.42	0.47
Hesitation	48	17	2.36	0.35	0.09
Omission	48	79	10.97	1.85	0.19
Insertion	48	37	5.13	0.77	0.13
Repetition	48	8	1.11	0.98	0.14
Substitution	48	79	10.97	1.65	0.06
Total		720		Weighted mean	
				standard	
Marin Marin				2.63	

Table 1 shows that phonological (frequency of 500), hesitation (17), substitution (79), omission (79), insertion (37) and repetition (8) are the patterns of reading miscues found among the respondents

Research Question 2: Which reading miscue pattern is the most prominent among the students

Table 2: Prominence of Reading Miscues among the Students

Miscue pattern	No. of students	Total no. of error	% of the error	Weighted mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Phonological	48	500	69.44	10.42	0.47	1 st
Hesitation	48	17	2.36	0.35	0.09	5 th
Omission	48	79	10.97	1.85	0.19	2 nd
Insertion	48	37	5.13	0.77	0.13	4 th
Repetition	48	8	1.11	0.98	0.14	6 th
Substitution	48	79	10.97	1.65	0.06	2 nd
Total		720		Weighted		
				mean		
				standard		
				2.63		40.00

Table 2 reveals that phonological (mispronunciation) is the most prominent reading miscue among the students. This is followed by omission and substitution having the same rank,

insertion is next to the two while hesitation followed and repetition is the least among them.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in reading miscue patterns of male and female students.

Table 3: Summary of t-test showing the differences in male and female students' reading miscue

Miscue	Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	t _c	$Sig(\rho)$	Remark
Phonological	Male	24	9.24	2.98	alor o la	a tade b	ermedian seri	Home 12
	Female	24	11.42	2.57	46	2.49	0.01	S
Hesitation	Male	24	0.33	3.27				
i lesitation	Female	24	0.38	3.06	46	0.05	0.96	NS
Substitution	Male	24	2.13	3.51				
Substitution	Female	24	1.17	0.82	46	0.84	0.40	NS
Omission	Male	24	1.17	0.82			Vacar	
Omission	Female	24	0.79	1.02	46	1.42	0.06	NS
Insertion	Male	24	1.17	0.82				
msertion	Female	24	0.79	1.02	46	1.42	0.16	NS
Paratition 3	Male	24	0.08	4.49				
Repetition	Female	24	0.25	3.67	46	-0.14	0.08	NS

Table 3 shows that the only significant difference in male and female students' reading miscues is in phonological (mispronunciation) miscue (t=2.49, ρ <0.5). Hesitation (t=0.05, p>0-05), substitution (t=0.84, p>0.05), omission (t=1.42, p>0.05),

insertion (t=1.42, p>0.05), repetition (t=-0.14, p>0.05). Phonological miscue that is significant is when a reader pronounces a word wrongly during reading. It is also called faulty pronunciation. Other miscue patterns did not show any

significant difference between male and female students. Taking these analyses together, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is upheld that there is no significant difference in the reading miscue patterns of male and female students.

Discussion

Findings from this study revealed that miscues found in the reading of the students included phonological, hesitation, omission, insertion, repetition and substitution. This is in consonance with the findings of Alabi (2009) who found almost the same pattern of miscues among junior secondary school students in Ibadan South East Local Government Area of Oyo State. Al-Oliemat et al (2014) also found similar pattern in their study with 6th grade students at public schools in Jordan. One major reason for this could be the fact that those students are all students of English as Second Language (ESL), that is, English Language is not their mother tongue. The reason for this might be that most second language learners tend to transfer the phonological features of their first language into the second language and this leads to wrong pronunciation many times.

This study also found that the most prominent miscue among the participants in this study was phonological (mispronunciation) miscue. Though previous studies that the researchers read did not establish this but from the analysis of Alabi (2009), it could be inferred that phonological miscue was the most prominent. The reason for this might not also be unconnected with issue of English Language being a second language of the participants of this study as earlier explained. Also, Goodman (1969) who first coined the term 'Miscue' submitted that three 'cueing' systems underlay the reading process of which grapho/phonic-the relationship of letters to sound system is one. This constitutes a source of miscue and could be responsible for phonological miscue. The study also found that the influence of gender was not significant except in phonological miscue which was also the most prominent miscue among the subjects of the study. This is in

tandem with some scholars claim that girls can be better than boys in certain language tasks (Geffrey, 2015).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Miscue analysis can be carried out in order to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in students' reading. It can also give an insight into the sources of some of these reading problems. Furthermore, the study revealed that boys and girls differ significantly only in the phonological/mispronunciation miscue and students provided with required texts and those not provided with required texts differ in their miscue.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that teachers and researchers should be trained on how to carry out miscue analysis and carry out miscue analysis in order to help find solution to the reading problems of students in schools. Parents should be encouraged and if possible mandated to provide required texts for their wards as this can assist at improving their reading proficiency. Government at all levels should also help to provide reading materials/resources in schools.

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