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THE EDITORIAL

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Notes to Contributors

Well researched articles on current issues, interdisciplinary fields, research findings and book reviews are mostly welcome.

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- The manuscript should be between 14 to 18 pages double-line spacing in A4 paper, Times New Roman, 12 point font size.
- Submitted articles will be peer-reviewed.
- Each article must be an original work of the author and has not been submitted to anywhere else for publication. Also, it should make significant contributions to the specific fields of interest.
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- All tables, figures and photographs are to be specially packed and camera ready.
- Author should submit articles as a soft copy through electronic mail (E-mail) MS-Word attachment to: **thegazelle@gmail.com**.

CONTENTS

EFFECTS OF LITERATURE CIRCLE AND MULTIMODAL LITERACY STRATEGIES ON ENGLISH AS-A-SECOND-LANGUAGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TO READING COMPREHENSION

By

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Abstract

This study determines the effects of Literature Circles (LC) and Multimodal Literacy strategies (MML) on public Senior Secondary School students' attitude to English reading comprehension in Niger State, Nigeria. The study adopted a pretest-posttest, control group, quasi-experimental design. Three out of 25 local government areas (LGAs) in Niger State were randomly selected. Three public schools purposively selected from each LGA were randomly assigned to LCS, MLS and Control groups.. One intact class of senior secondary II students from each of the schools was used. Treatment lasted eight weeks. The instruments used were: Verbal Ability Test (r=0.68), Attitude to Reading Comprehension Questionnaire (r=0.62), and Teachers' Instructional Guides. Data were analysed using Analysis of Covariance and Scheffe post-hoc test at 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed a significant main effect of treatment on students' attitude to reading comprehension ($F_{(2,386)}$= 3.404; η^2=.017). The participants in MLS group obtained the highest attitude mean score ($\bar{X}$=54.42) followed by those in LCS ($\bar{X}$=53.22) and Control ($\bar{X}$=51.96) groups. There was no significant main effect of gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension. Also, there was no two-way significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension. Two-way interaction of treatment and verbal ability had no significant effect on students' attitude. The three-way interaction of treatment, verbal ability and gender had no significant interaction effect on students' attitude. It was concluded that literature circles and multimodal literacy instructional strategies enhanced students' attitude to English reading comprehension in public senior secondary schools in Niger State. Based on findings, appropriate recommendations were made.

Keywords: Learning outcomes, English reading comprehension, Literature circles, Multimodal literacy strategies, senior secondary schools in Niger State

Introduction

The poor performance of secondary school students in English language examinations is a source of worry to language educators. It has been noted that the general performance of students in the Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) in Nigeria has been below average (Obemeata, 1995; Kolawole & Olatunji, 2006). The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) chief examiners reports (2005-2015) consistently stated that many candidates exhibited inability to express themselves correctly in their own words. The reports identified failure to critically read and answer questions correctly on comprehension passages as a probable cause of failure. The reports also identified lack of imagination on the part of candidates as they fail to answer correctly questions that demand inference from the textual information. As one of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, reading is very crucial because it is a basic requirement for academic advancement.

One of the major goals of education is to produce a literate citizenry who have acquired the "appropriate skills" necessary for effective reading and writing (Federal Republic of Nigeria: FRN, 2004). To be skilled in reading involves the ability to read well. However, reading comprehension skills seem to be eluding many Nigerian secondary school students going by their inability to read with comprehension and consequent poor performance in examinations. The challenge before language teachers is how to prepare learners of different abilities to read and successfully access information from different text types with ease. The teaching methods adopted by the teacher are of utmost importance because they are capable of encouraging or discouraging learning and influencing comprehension in and attitude to any subject area. Language educators, such as Ahmed (1992) and Jiboku (1998) attribute poor reading comprehension skills to teaching methods that give teachers dominance and control of classroom learning activities.

Research shows that many language teachers lack knowledge of the appropriate methods of teaching reading and hence tend to rely on the conventional method which gives the teacher dominance over classroom learning activities (Uwaifo, 1979; Ogunaike, 2002). Thus, Skehan (1996) and Aliyu (2002) advocate intellectual and active engagement of learners which traditional instruction has failed to provide. This position is rooted in constructivist ideas which advocate active participation of learners during lesson. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), immersing learners in task works that require them to negotiate meaning and engage in naturalistic and meaningful communication is the essence of language learning. Thus, when they get involved in what they are learning, they also think about what they are doing, thereby, taking charge of their own learning. Apart from the reading of the written text, activities like role playing, knowledge sharing, drama, music, and drawing are believed to provide a more active and participatory platform for learning. They also provide learners better context for activation of learning processes and better language learning opportunities.

Therefore, the present investigation focuses on Literature circles and Multimodal literacy instructional strategies which are both student-centred and participatory and have also been found effective in improving students' academic achievement and attitude in some subject areas.

Literature Circle (LC)

Literature circle (LC) has been described as a small peer-led temporary discussion group where members of diverse backgrounds and abilities meet to select, read books, make notes and contribute to the up-coming discussion meeting where every member comes with ideas to share (Daniels, 2002; 2006). LC is a strategy which provides opportunity to small groups of students to make meaning from what they are reading independent of the teacher. A lot of collaboration goes on among learners in LC meeting as learners share ideas and thoughts during class discussions. As an instructional strategy, LC has been found to promote learners engagement with texts, enhance reading attitude, promote students motivation to read, improve students reading levels and performance in tests (Snyder, Coffey and Kolawole, 2007; Ezenandu, 2012).

Multimodal Literacy

The Multimodal literacy, which is the second strategy, is a procedure that involves the use of different modes in reading, critically evaluating, and reconstructing texts based on individual readers' language abilities. This implies that each individual learner applies varied modes or ways to interpret a single text based on that individual's creative ability and understanding of text content, bringing his/her background experience to bear on the response. This approach was developed by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) in response to changes brought about by technological innovations which are directly and indirectly influencing and changing the way people learn and are also redefining literacy as a whole. It is also a challenge to monomodal strategy that focuses on the use of a single mode of instruction in reading and writing. In moving away from the traditional practice of teaching with one modality, scholars recognise that students learn in different ways. It implies that a reader can apply more than one meaning making mode in responding to a text. Multimodal concept, therefore, focuses on how learners use different modes of communication such as speech, music, written language, visual image, colour, drawing, drama performance, gesture, sound, sculpture, and so on, as resources to represent or make meaning. Each of these modes often goes with a different effect in promoting learning and literacy practices and problem solving. Thus, the weaknesses of one modality are offset by the strengths of another. Multimodal literacy strategy promotes independent and personal construction of meaning where each learner freely gives his personal interpretation of texts.

Multimodal literacy instructional strategy has been found to promote creativity, critical interpretation and communication, enhance learners attitude to text and promote problem solving (Stein & Newfield, 2004; Kendrick & Jones,

2008; Kuo, Yang & Kuo, 2010). Multimodal literacy strategy was investigated in this study to find out the effects of selected modes of writing, drawing and drama performance, on the reading comprehension attitude of senior secondary school students.

Statement of the Problem

One of the goals of language education is to impart literacy (reading and writing) skills on learners for effective living even after school. However, the average Nigerian student exhibits poor proficiency in reading comprehension as manifested in consistent poor performance in English language examinations (West African Examinations Council Chief Examiners Report, May/June 2005-2015). Teachers have made efforts to help students improve their performance through the use of various instructional methods but despite the efforts, the issue of students' poor performance remains unresolved. Scholars have called for the use of instructional strategies that are student-centred and participatory in the classroom. Success has been recorded in the use of Literature circles and Multimodal literacy strategies in improving learning but attention has not been paid to their use in improving attitude to reading comprehension passages. Against this background, this study determined the effects of literature circles and multimodal literacy instructional strategies on senior secondary school students' attitude to reading comprehension in Niger State, Nigeria. The moderating effects of verbal ability and gender on the dependent variables were also determined.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study.

HO$_1$: There is no significant main effect of treatment on students' attitude to reading comprehension

HO$_2$: There is no significant main effect of verbal ability on students' attitude to reading comprehension

HO$_3$: There is no significant main effect of gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension

HO$_4$: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and verbal ability on students' attitude to reading comprehension

HO$_5$: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension

HO$_6$: There is no significant interaction effect of verbal ability and gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension

HO$_7$: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment, verbal ability and gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension

Methodology

This study adopted a pretest, posttest, control group, quasi experimental design.

Population

The population for the study comprised all Senior Secondary School II students in Niger State public schools. Simple random sampling method was

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applied to select three out of 25 local government areas in the state: Rafi, Lavun and Paikoro, according to the three geopolitical zones of the state. The three schools that were purposively selected from each local government area were assigned to treatment and control groups. Altogether, nine schools were selected for the study.

Research Instruments

The following instruments were used for data collection

(i) Verbal Ability Test (VAT)

(ii) Attitude to Reading Comprehension Questionnaire (ARCQ)

Verbal Ability Test (VAT): This instrument was meant to test students' ability to reason, to measure their verbal intelligence and also to categorize them into High, Average and Low verbal ability groups respectively. It consisted of 30 multiple choice objectives test items with five response options. It was administered on all student participants before commencement of treatment. This test was subjected to face and content validity. Kuder Richardson (KR-21) formular was used to determine the internal consistency and reliability of the test items. The reliability value of 0.68 was obtained.

Attitude to Reading Comprehension Questionnaire (ARCQ): This instrument comprised two parts:

Part A: Student's background information, e.g. age, gender, school and class.

Part B: This comprised 20 attitude questions to elicit information on students' personal attitude towards reading comprehension including their interests, perceptions, feelings and views.

A four-point Likert type scale was developed by the researcher and placed in the range of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The students were expected to tick one of the options that best expressed their agreement or disagreement with the statement. Items were weighted thus: SA = 4; A = 3; D = 2; SD = 1. This weighting mode was reversed for items indicating negative statements. This instrument was administered on all participating students before and after the treatment to determine the effects of treatment on attitude to English language reading comprehension. After validation and administration of instrument, data collected were analysed for reliability and internal consistency using Kuder-Richardson (K-R 20) formular. A coefficient of 0.62 was obtained.

Research Procedure

The schedule for research procedure was made up as specified below.

Selection and Training of Subject Teachers	
Pretest administration	2 weeks
Treatment	1 week
Posttest administration	8 weeks
Total number of weeks	1 week
Pretest Administration	12 weeks

The following instruments were administered on the participating students in both treatment and control groups before commencement of treatment.

(i)   Verbal Ability Test (VAT)

(ii)   Attitude to Reading Comprehension Questionnaire (ARCQ)

Treatment Procedure

The treatment was conducted in line with the design where LC strategy is experimental Group I, ML strategy is experimental Group II, and then, the Control Group.

Post Test Administration

At the end of the eight weeks of treatment, posttest instruments were administered on both the control and experimental groups. The ARCQ was administered on the students by the participating teachers.

Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Inferential statistics of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test all hypotheses using pretest scores as covariates to analyze the data. The Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) aspect of ANCOVA was employed to detect the magnitude of the mean scores of each group while Scheffe Post hoc test was used as pair-wise comparison to detect sources of significant main effects. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance (P<0.05).

RESULTS

HO1: There is no significant main Effect of Treatment on students' Attitude to Reading Comprehension.

Table 4.4 Summary of ANCOVA of Posttest Attitude Scores of participants according to Treatment, Verbal Ability and Gender

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta squared (η^2)
Corrected Model	1031.239	18	57.291	1.232	.232	.054
Pretest Attitude	6.956	1	6.956	.150	.699	.000
Main Effect:						
Treatment Group	316.628	2	158.314	3.404	.034*	.017
Verbal ability	1.109	2	.555	.012	.988	.000
Gender	4.267	1	4.267	.092	.762	.000
2-way Interactions:						
Treatment x Verbal ability	90.985	4	22.746	.489	.744	.005
Treatment x Gender	108.092	2	54.0476	1.162	.314	.006
Verbal ability x Gender	170.309	2	85.154	1.831	.162	.009
3-way Interactions:						
Treatment x Verbal x Gender	78.501	4	19.625	.422	.793	.004
Error	17950.011	386	46.503			
Total	18981.249	404				

* Significant at P<0.05

Table 4.4 shows that there was significant main effect of Treatment ($F_{(2,386)} = 3.404$; $p<0.05$; $\eta^2=0.17$) on attitude to reading comprehension of participants exposed to treatment and control groups. There was significant difference between the attitudes of pupils exposed to Literature Circles, Multimodal literacy and Control groups, respectively. HO1 is, therefore, rejected. To find the magnitude of the Posttest mean attitude scores of participants exposed to the different treatment conditions, the Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) is presented on Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) of Posttest Attitude scores according to Treatment, Verbal Ability and Gender

Grand Mean = 53.50

Variable + Category	N	Unadjusted variation	Eta	Adjusted for independent + covariates deviation	Beta
Treatment Group:					
1. Treatment I	147	-.24		-.28	
2.	184	.83		.92	
3. Treatment II	74	-1.59		-1.74	
4.			.13		.14
5. Control Group	222	-.25		-.32	
Verbal:Low	125	.09		.25	
1. Average	58	.78		.67	
2.			.05		.05
3. High	199	.57		.78	
Gender	206	-.55		-.76	
1. Male			.08		.11
2. Female					

Multiple R-squared = .039
Multiple R = .178

Table 4.5 reveals that participants exposed to Multimodal Literacy strategy had the highest attitude mean score (53.50+.83) $\bar{x}$ = 54.33, followed by those exposed to Literature circles (53.50-.24) $\bar{x}$ = 53.26. Those in the modified lecture group ranked the least (53.50-1.59) $\bar{x}$ = 51.91. The teaching methods have an index relationship of 0.02 (0.14²). Thus, the observed relationship in favour of teaching methods shows that the teaching methods have a relationship of 0.02 (Beta value of .14²) with attitude of students towards English reading comprehension. Table 4.5 also shows a multiple regression index (R) of 0.18 with a multiple regression squared index (R^2) of 0.04. This implies that 18% of the total variance in the attitude of students in reading comprehension can be attributed to the influence of the teaching methods. In the verbal ability group, the High ability group had the highest mean score (53.50 +78) $\bar{x}$= 54.28 while the Average ability group had a mean score of (53.50 +.09)$\bar{x}$=53.58. The Low Ability group had the lowest mean score of (53.50-

25) $\bar{x}$=53.28. This shows there was significant attitude variation by treatment. In gender, the males had a higher attitude mean score (53.50 +.57)$\bar{x}$ =54.07 than their female counterparts (53.50-.55) $\bar{x}$=52.95. Hence, HO1 is rejected. To find the hierarchy of effectiveness of teaching methods and direction of significance by treatment, the Scheffe Post hoc test was conducted and results are presented on Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Scheffe Post-Hoc Analysis of Treatment Effect on Students' Attitude towards English Reading Comprehension

Treatment Groups	Verbal Ability	Sig.	N	$\bar{x}$
Treatment I	Average	.066	147	53.26
	High	.000*		
Treatment II	Low	.066	184	54.33
	High	.001*		
Control Group	Low	.000*	74	51.91
	Average	.001*		

*Pairs of groups significantly different at P<0.05.

Table 4.6 shows that there were pair significant differences between Treatment group I (Literature circles) and High verbal ability. Treatment Group II (Multimodal Literacy) and High verbal ability also significantly differ. There was significant difference between the Control group and Low verbal ability group and also between the Control group and Average verbal ability. However, there was no significant difference between Treatment Group I and Average verbal ability and also between Treatment Group II and Low verbal ability.

HO2: There is no significant main effect of verbal ability on students' attitude to reading comprehension. The summary of ANCOVA on Table 4.4 shows that verbal ability has no significant effect on students' attitude to reading comprehension ($F_{(2,386)}$= .012; P>.05; η^2=.000). The null hypothesis is not rejected. Further, Table 4.5 shows that students with high verbal ability obtained the highest post-test attitude mean score (53.50+.78)$\bar{x}$=54.28. This is followed by the average verbal ability attitude mean score (53.50+.09) $\bar{x}$=53.58 and finally the low verbal ability group post-attitude score (53.50-.25) $\bar{x}$= 53.25. However, these differences have been found to be insignificant.

HO3 There is no significant main effect of gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension.

The summary of ANCOVA on Table 4.4 shows that gender has no significant main effect on students' attitude to reading comprehension ($F_{(1,386)}$=.092, P>0.05; η^2 = .000). The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. The Multiple Classification Analysis on Table 4.5 indicates that males obtained an higher attitude mean score (53.50+.57) $\bar{x}$=54.07 while the female students obtained an attitude mean score (53.50-.55)$\bar{x}$ =52.95. This difference is not found to be significant.

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H04 There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and verbal ability on students' attitude to reading comprehension.

The summary of ANCOVA on Table 4.4 reveals that the interaction effect of treatment and verbal ability has no significance on students' attitude to reading comprehension ($F_{(4,386)}$=.489; P>0.05; η^2 = .005). The null hypothesis is not rejected.

H05 There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension.

The summary of ANCOVA on Table 4.4 shows that the 2–way interaction effect of treatment and gender has no significant effect on students' attitude to reading comprehension ($F_{(2,386)}$ = 1.162 P>0.05; η^2 = .006). The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

H06 There is no significant interaction effect of verbal ability and gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension

The summary of ANCOVA on Table 4.4 shows that the interaction effect of verbal ability and gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension was not significant ($F_{(2,386)}$=1.831; P> 0.05; η^2=.009). Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

H07 There is no significant interaction effect of treatment, verbal ability and gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension.

The summary of ANCOVA on Table 4.4 reveals that there is no significant interaction effect of treatment, verbal ability and gender on students' attitude score of reading comprehension ($F_{(4,386)}$= .422; P>0.05; η^2=.004). The null hypothesis is not rejected.

Discussion

Effects of instructional strategies on students' attitude to reading comprehension

Findings of this study revealed that there was a significant effect of instructional strategies on students' attitude to reading comprehension. Multimodal Literacy strategy had the highest mean score, followed by Literature circles strategy while the Modified lecture method had the least attitude mean score. This is in agreement with the earlier findings of Daniels & Steineke (2004); Stabile (2009) that Literature circles significantly improved students' attitude to reading literature texts. However, Ezenandu (2012) found no significant effect of Literature circles on students' attitude to prose literature, attributed to the duration of the treatment which was not sufficient to impact on students' attitude. Also, Oguntade (2012) found no significant effect of treatment on pupils' attitude to Yoruba reading comprehension, using creative drama strategy. On the other hand, multimodal scholars (Kendrick, Jones, Mutonyi & Norton, 2006; Stein & Newfield, 2004) revealed that Multimodal literacy strategy significantly enhanced students' attitude to reading comprehension.

Effects of Gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension

Results of this study indicate that there was no significant effect of gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension. Even though males obtained higher attitude mean scores than females, the difference is insignificant. This is in agreement with the findings of Oguntade (2012) which found no significant gender differences in attitude to English reading comprehension. Also, Ezenandu (2012) found no effect of gender on attitude to prose literature. This finding is however contrary to the result of Olaboopo (1999) which found significant differences in gender and attitude to prose literature.

Two-way interaction effects of Treatment and Verbal Ability on students' attitude to reading comprehension

Findings from this study revealed that there was no significant interaction effect of treatment and verbal ability on students' attitude to reading comprehension. This means that the verbal ability levels of the students have little or no effect on attitude to reading comprehension. This result is in consonance with research findings of Komolafe (2011) that verbal ability had no effect on students' achievement in and attitude to English reading comprehension.

Two-way interaction effects of Treatment and Gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension

Findings revealed that interaction effect of treatment and gender on students' attitude is not significant.

Two-way interaction effects of Verbal Ability and Gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension

The result obtained showed that there was no significant interaction effect of verbal ability and gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension. The implication of the result is that verbal ability combined with gender had no significant effect on students' attitude to reading comprehension.

Three-way interaction effects of Treatment, Verbal Ability and Gender on students' attitude to reading comprehension

Findings in this study revealed that the three-way interaction effects of treatment, verbal ability and gender on attitude to reading comprehension was insignificant. This finding implies that the teacher should be aware of different attitudes that these students bring into reading lessons especially those that need the attention of specific strategies to significantly improve.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the results of this study, it could be concluded that active engagement of students in the reading process, using Literature circles and Multimodal literacy strategies could promote positive attitude to reading comprehension levels. The following recommendations are therefore made:

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1. Literature circles and multimodal literacy strategies should be adopted in teaching reading comprehension to expose students to strategies that could promote their active participation and, hence, improve their attitude.

2. English language teachers should be trained on how to use active learning strategies like literature circles and multimodal literacy strategies to equip them with alternative strategies that could improve students' attitude to reading comprehension.

3. Policy makers, curriculum planners and textbook writers should incorporate these strategies into language education policy, language curriculum and English language textbooks for increased learner motivation.

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