

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES DURING READING: FOCUSES ON THREE SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ODE-IRELE

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Abstract

The study examined activities that learners carried out in the course of learning to read in three purposively selected primary schools in Ode-Irele community, Ondo State and used Constructivism as its learning theory. Primary school teachers and pupils formed the population and purposively, all the teachers in the selected schools, which amounted to sixty-eight in number and primary six pupils, twenty-six, twenty-nine and thirty-two respectively, in each of the three primary 6 classes of the schools selected formed the samples of the study. Three research instruments were employed, namely, a four-point fourteen item Likert scale questionnaire, observation and video recordings. The structured questionnaire was validated by two experts in tests and measurement and the credibility of the study was ensured by data triangulation, anonymity, confirmability and rich and thick description. To analyse qualitative data, thematic analysis was used while quantitative data were analysed with the use of descriptive statistics, that is, mean $\bar{X}$ 2.5 and above as agreed. The study found out that activities such as drawing, the use of the dictionary, dramatization and questioning enhance reading while talking to one another, lack of use of drills and reading aloud hinder reading comprehension. The study recommended among others that oral drills, the use of instructional materials teaching of distinctions between two similar sounds should be incorporated while talking to one another during reading should be discouraged.

Keywords: constructivism, comprehension, instructional materials, dramatization, oral drills

Introduction

Children are always found to be doing one thing or the other in any environment they find themselves and even in any activity given they carry out extra activities which may complement or be at variance with the set assignment. All these are normal for the

growth and development of the child. By activities, the study refers to what children do or what they are occupied with at a particular time, be it physical or mental. It is their interests or actions which can translate into results of beneficial or harmful magnitude. In the school setting, these activities include

indoor and outdoor activities; they are indoor or class activities when the objects are manipulated or interactions take place in the classroom and outdoor or field activities when children are occupied with some events outside the classroom. Most activities in the classroom centre around teaching and learning through teaching and interactions with books; reading is the mainstay of learning activities in this regards which must be handled properly.

During reading children do not only concentrate on decoding meanings; there are some accompanying goings-on in the classroom, which include but not limited to gesticulations, interactions, exchange of items, murmuring, standing, fighting over materials and looking up meanings of words in the dictionaries. Other activities are asking and answering questions, spelling drills, pronunciations of certain words, finger tracing of linguistic items, exchange of ideas, neck caning and summarisation. These activities, linguistic and non-linguistic, are very important in promoting reading, though some hinder comprehension. Writing on the importance of some children activities, like play with sand Ayoola (2009), remarked that play activities develop learners' power of creativity but should be well monitored or coordinated to avert being counterproductive (Machado 1999).

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria concentration on reading is always on the comprehension, test outcomes and memorisation of passages without adequate attention to other activities that promote effective reading skills, higher order thinking, reflective thinking and collaborative engagement in the classroom. This neglect gives room for rote learning, passive information, partial understanding of texts, comprehension breakdown and failure

in public examinations. This has always been a source of great concern for teachers and parents over the years. Though, some of these activities can be injurious to reading success of learners, there is the need to study them and explore the contributions of the both the helpful and the harmful in the reading classroom with a view to making suggestions that will be of great benefits to readers and the learning process.

Based on this premise, the study therefore, set to identify the activities that children engage in in the reading classroom and discuss how they aid and hinder the learning of reading.

Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve two these two objectives.

1. To identify activities that pupils carry out during reading comprehension lessons.
2. To examine the influence of these activities on reading comprehension outcome.

Research Questions

These two research questions guided the study.

1. What activities do pupils engage in during reading?
2. How do these activities impact on the learning of reading?

Literature Review

Engagements in the classroom take different forms but inform of play with different benefits that accrue. These activities include sensory, physical, creative, cooperative, explorative, musical and movement plays which develop the motor, cognitive, creative and explorative skills of learners (Asabe, et al., 2024). Specifically, Adepoju (2018),

identified questioning, peer tutoring, group discussion, classroom test and so forth as classroom reading activities while Linake & Adepoju, (2018); Adegoke (2020), acknowledged finger tracing, book back bracing, vocalisation and head movement as retarding activities learners are occupied with during reading. Fundamentally, in reading, three cognitive activities are involved; word decoding, the ability to identify words and comprehension which is the ability to deriving meanings from sentences (Kail, 2012).

Activities during learning in the classroom are not recent developments, they started long ago. In traditional or indigenous education, learning was by carrying out certain activities and equally, during the medieval period learning was by doing some specific activities such as observation, imitation and participation (Patton, 2015; Okeloeze, et. al, 2015). With these activities, learners are active participants in the learning process and classroom activities which lead to positive outcomes. The Nigerian guiding educational principle, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013), Sec 2 recommends activities, such as participation, exploration and experiment as driving forces in the learning process.

One of the fascinating activities in the reading classroom is questioning which is directed to teachers or the students. Ojo (2011), defined a question as an interrogative statement meant to elicit responses. It should be bore in mind that in forming a question, the auxiliary verb is placed before the subject and a question mark (?) used to punctuate it. For example, Olu is coming (statement), Is Olu coming? (question) (Farinde & Ojo, 1998). Questions are used by learners to seek clarifications from teachers and responded to by learners as a means of understanding concepts taught. The findings of Adepoju

(2020), revealed that comprehension questions include higher and lower order questions; higher order questions require reasoning because answers are not directly available in the passage and they include ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions while lower order questions are direct questions whose answers are readily available in the passage and examples include ‘what’ and ‘when’ questions.

Playful activities are part of the numerous activities that children engage in the reading classroom which if not done will retard their creative and motor skills for intellectual (Kaizar & Alordiah, 2023). Play is very important to children because it is through it that children interact with one another build concepts, engage in creative activities such as painting, drawing and construction and through repetitions of verbatim quotations in poems and songs that are relevant to real life situation, learning take place (Ayoola, 2009). These activities foster learners’ interest and social interaction, teach moral lessons and give learners the opportunity for self-expression (Adepoju, 2018). In addition, learners during reading touch books and reading picture which encourage reading and stimulate activities for successful reading and in dramatic play, teachers’ words and presence changes children behaviour from engaging in dangerous play (Machado, 1999).

Another activity identified by Adepoju (2018), is peer tutoring where a pupil teaches other pupils in the class which enables them to imitate one another. This impacts influence on children development, fosters learning and brings togetherness among children of diverse backgrounds (Olusola, 2009; Adebisi, 2010). Similar to this, is group discussion which is an exchange and interactive session where members, four to six, are allowed to express their views,



thereby, leading to collaboration, critical thinking and gives room for feedback (Bakare, 2015; Cruickshank, et al, 2009). In some cases, learners are asked to identify, analyse and proffer solution to a given task which makes them to think critically. For example, learners might be asked to give the theme of a poem and suggest a title for a comprehension passage. This is called problem solving where problems are identified and solved (Johnson & Halocha, 2010). Problem solving is better is better achieved when there is a collaboration with a more experienced person such as parent or elderly ones (Kail, 2012).

Vocal activities are always very noticeable during reading in the classroom. Sound associated learning actions in the reading classroom. Prominent among these are phonics, the learning of letters and associated sounds, the whole word method which is the learning of words at sight and the language method, that is, the use of stories to teach reading (Kail, 2012). The scholar went further to postulate that the use of phonic is a crucial activity during reading exercise and such activities include drills and the use of flash cards which can be uninteresting. As part of the oral activities during reading exercises, Machado (1999), posits that the use of reading aloud, poetic devices and figures of speech namely, rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and repetition are pivotal in the reading classroom; they provide learning opportunities for children.

The learning theory for this study is **Constructivism** propounded by Piaget in the year 1926 (Naughton, 2003). Constructivism is ‘...about the activities of the learners in constructing new understanding...’ and this makes learners to discover, analyse and proffers solutions to problems (Adepoju, 2018). The theory postulates that learners learn through active, not dormant,

engagement and interaction with the environment (Tran, 2013; Coruhlu, Bilgin & Nas 2016). Activities of the children during reading make them active learners which is the hallmark of Constructivism because Constructivism is all about activities in learning, which is the crux of this study.

Methods

The study is a multiple case study of three primary schools in Ode-Irele, a semi-urban community in Irele Local Government Areas of Ondo State (Sowemimo, 2012). The study purposively selected three primary schools in the community; the first being at the entrance of the community, the second at the centre and third at the extreme of the community to show spread. Three research instruments were used for data collection, namely a four-point fourteen item Likert scale questionnaire, observation and video recordings. Primary school pupils and teachers formed the population of the study while all the teachers, sixty-eight in number, in the selected schools and Primary 6 pupils, twenty-six, twenty-nine and thirty-two respectively in each of the selected schools were purposively selected as the samples of the study to get rich data and for efficiency. The four point Likert questionnaire were administered on the teachers, who were sixty-eight in number to obtain quantitative data, observation and video recording were used to detect children’s activities in course of reading (for qualitative data) and to corroborate and complement the findings of each other and these were done with the aid of a gatekeeper who led and assisted in the schools used (Creswell, 2015). In other words, a mixed method approach was adopted. The purposes of the observation and video recording were to get information as they occur and which the samples might not be willing or unable to express (Creswell, 2015 & Kawulich, 2017). To guide against

breach of research ethics, permissions were sought from relevant authorities, parents were informed and the consent of the pupils were obtained. Two research experts in Tests and Measurement validated the quantitative instrument while data triangulation, anonymity, confirmability and rich and thick description were used to establish the credibility of the study. Qualitative data were analysed by transcribing the video recordings and corresponding the information with the

observation notes, coded and given themes and analysed with the use of thematic analysis to explain complex situation in a simple, less rigorous and prosaic way. For the quantitative data, calculated mean $\bar{X}$ of 2.5 cut off point and above was used as agreed, that is, the use of descriptive statistics to analyse trend and discuss the situation with simplicity and without any complication.

Results

Table 1, tabulating fieldnotes-observational data and video recordings

S/N	Activities	Codes	Theme
1	Underlining difficult words, rereading, book sharing, oral reading	Vocabulary building, detailed making, collaboration, print recognition, fluent reading	In depth comprehension
2	Substitution of phonemes, close gazing, finger pointing, non-use aid, no drills	Mispronunciation, exchange of sounds, switching linguistic interference, resource gap	Reading retardation

Table 1 above showcases the observed activities and the information from the video recordings. Activities under item 1 are underlining unfamiliar words, book sharing and oral reading and under item 2, the

observed and the recorded activities are phoneme substitution, close gazing finger tracing absence of the use of drill and instructional materials.

Table 2, showing pupils' activities during reading

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	St.D
1	Pupils ask questions during reading comprehension exercises.	15	48	4	1	3.1	0.64
2	Pupils talk to one another in the course of reading	27	31	6	4	3.2	0.86
3	Pupils act stories like characters in the books.	11	28	21	8	2.6	0.92
4	Tutoring one another is done by pupils during reading.	15	25	9	19	2.5	1.20
5	Looking up the meaning of difficult words in the dictionary is one of the activities in the reading classroom	25	31	11	1	3.2	0.72
6	Readers read aloud during reading.	31	27	9	1	3.3	0.77
7	Learners draw to illustrate ideas during reading exercises.	13	24	25	6	2.6	0.88
	Total	137	214	85	40	2.9	0.86

The calculated mean $\bar{X}$ of items 1 to 7, which range between 3.3 and 2.6 and they are above the cut-off point of 2.5 on the table 2 above, shows that the respondent agreed that asking questions mean $\bar{X}$ 3.1, talking to one another, mean $\bar{X}$ 3.2, stage performance, mean $\bar{X}$ 2.6 and peer tutoring, $\bar{X}$ 2.5 respectively for

items 1, 2, 3 and 4 occur during reading. Others are the use of the dictionary, mean $\bar{X}$ 3.2, oral reading, mean $\bar{X}$ 3.3 and sketching of diagrams, mean $\bar{X}$ 2.6 for items 5, 6 and 7 respectively, that take place during reading exercises.

Table 3, showing the impacts of pupils' activities on reading

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	St.D
1	Reading activities bring about cooperation among pupils.	13	25	17	13	2.6	1.01
2	Reading improves listening skills.	28	37	3	-	3.4	0.57
3	Talking to one another during reading hinders reading comprehension.	15	47	5	1	3.1	0.58
4	Speaking skills are fostered through reading.	14	38	9	7	2.9	0.86
5	Reading aloud leads to interference during reading.	15	47	5	1	3.1	0.58
6	Vocabulary development is enhanced through reading.	13	41	11	3	2.9	0.73
7	Repeated reading boost comprehension of passages.	9	44	13	2	2.9	0.65
	Total	107	279	63	27	3.0	0.71

The table 3 above reveals that reading fosters cooperation among children, mean $\bar{X}$ 2. 6 for item 1, promote reading proficiency mean $\bar{X}$ 3.4 and 2.9 for items 2 and 4 respectively, but talking to one another and oral reading hinder comprehension mean $\bar{X}$ 3.1 and 3.1 for items 3 and 5 respectively. Reading, according to the table also, builds vocabulary mean $\bar{X}$ 2.9 for item 6, and repeated reading boosts understanding of passages read and enhances cognitive interaction, such as critical thinking and logical conclusion. These are evident on the table as the calculated mean $\bar{X}$ of items 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 range between 3.4 to 2.9 individually which is above the cut-off point of 2.5.

Discussion

The data collected and analysed showed that learners carry out different activities during

reading which have positive impacts on their academic achievement in reading. According to the qualitative data, (table 1), the two themes derived as displayed on the table are in depth comprehension and reading retardation.

In depth Comprehension

The hallmark of reading is understanding the contents of the passage or material read, which if not done, reading has not been carried out. The data got from observation and video recordings show activities like underlining difficult word, re-reading, book sharing and oral reading which result into vocabulary building, collaboration, fluent reading and print recognition. All these activities enhance reading and foster comprehension.

The quantitative data on table 2 also support these claims. For examples, the mean $\bar{X}$ of item 2 which is 3.2, the mean $\bar{X}$ of item 5 which is 3.2 and the mean $\bar{X}$ of item 6 which is 3.3 show that pupils talk to one another, use the dictionary and read aloud respectively in the reading classroom. In addition, the mean $\bar{X}$ scores of other items on the table, that is table 2, are above the cut-off point of 2.5 which implies that pupils engage in asking questions, dramatization and drawing as shown in the calculated mean of items 1, 3 and 7 which are 3.1, 2.6 and 2.6 respectively. All these, result in active learning and engagement of the learners during reading and lead to thorough comprehension.

These findings are in line with the findings of Adepoju (2018), which found out that questioning, peer tutoring and so forth are prominent activities among children during reading and are capable of developing the motor skills, creativity and cognitive skills of pupils (Asabe, et. al, 2024). When these skills are developed, they serve as enhancing factors for better comprehension (NPE, 2013). Asking and answering questions in comprehension lead to intellectual engagement of pupils and logical reasoning as revealed by Adepoju (2020), most especially when answering higher order question, that is, 'why' and 'how' questions. In addition, the mean $\bar{X}$ of item 2 table 2 which is 3.2 shows that pupils talk to each other which leads to collaboration and can also retard learning (Adegoke, 2020) because this can degenerate into noise making or a situation where extroverts dominate the introverts and also results in book back breaking (Linake & Adepoju, 2018).

Reading Retardation

Impedance in reading is a theme derived from that both data, qualitative and quantitative.

Activities observed include substitution of phonemes, close gazing at reading materials and finger tracing. The results of these hindering activities are mispronunciation, exchange of sounds and linguistic interference which are reading faults and retard progress in reading. Similarly, the quantitative data on table 3 depict reading retardation. See, mean $\bar{X}$ 3.1 for both items 3 and 5 which reveal that pupil's talking to one another and reading aloud are encumbrances to reading comprehension.

Adegoke (2020), avers that finger tracing, vocalisation, head movement and so forth, are hinderances to reading comprehension. These findings are in tandem with these positions. Touching books during reading can result in book back breaking, thereby destroying the spine of the book; a situation where pupils exert force when touching books can lead to defacing the material and a situation where excessive force is applied when touching books can scatter the pages of the book. This is similar to the position of Machado (1999), who posit that teacher's presence can prevent risk taking by children. The non-use of instructional materials and drills, such as spelling drills as observed and recorded leave much to be desired because these are enhancing aids that facilitate learning of reading. This finding is in line with the position of Kail (2012), who believes that non-use of drills and other aids can make learning of reading boring.

The study being an examination of activities pupils engage in during reading, also discloses other activities are prominent during reading. An x-ray of table 2 discloses that the respondent agreed that pupils ask questions during reading, mean $\bar{X}$ 3.1 on item 1, pupils act stories, mean $\bar{X}$ 2.6 on item 3, peer tutoring take place in the class, mean $\bar{X}$ 2.5 on item 4 and pupils also draw to

illustrate ideas, mean $\bar{X}$ 2.6 on item 7. Furthermore, table 3 showcases the impacts of these activities displays on tables 1 and 2 by showing the decision of the calculated mean $\bar{X}$ of items 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 which ranges between 2.6 and 3.1. These decisions are clear indications that activities during reading give birth to collaborative learning, creativity during reading and vocabulary development. However, these activities must be carefully carried out under the guidance of teachers to avoid damage to reading materials and causing injuries to children as advised by Machado (1999) and for better results, activities like problem solving should be carried out under the auspices of more experienced persons (Kali, 2012). These activities are in line with the theory Constructivism, the learning theory of this study, which hypothesises that learners learn through activities and they construct new ideas when they are actively engage in such activities (Tran, 2013; Coruhlu, Bilgin & Nas 2016; Adepoju, 2018).

Conclusion

The study has been able to establish that pupils carry out numerous activities in the course of reading, which include questioning, underlining difficult words, oral reading, drawing and dramatization. Others are book sharing, phoneme substitution, finger pointing, close gazing and others. All these activities impact positively and negatively on the reading outcome as confirmed by the study, as displayed on tables 1, 2 and 3.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, it is hereby recommended that:

1. reading aloud during reading should be eradicated to guide against interference;

2. talking to one another should be guided against to avoid hinderances to comprehension;
3. distinction between two similar phonemes should be well taught by teachers to avoid substitution of sounds;
4. pupils should be trained to read with their eyes to avoid finger pointing;
5. other activities such as poem recitation and so on should be incorporated into their curriculum.
6. oral drills should be used to promote reading; and
7. instructional materials should be procured to concretise teaching of reading.

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