

The Effect of Using Instructional Conversation Method in Teaching Reading Comprehension in Selected Junior Secondary Schools in Kaduna Metropolis

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Abstract—This study was designed to compare the effectiveness of the instructional conversation and the vocabulary methods in teaching reading comprehension in Junior Secondary Schools. The population for the study comprised all the Junior Secondary Schools in Kaduna State. The schools randomly selected within Kaduna metropolis were used for the study. The study was quasi experimental. G.S.S. U/Rimi was used as the treatment group, while G.S.S. Sabon Tasha was used for the control group. Both groups were assessed after six weeks of teaching, using three different reading assessment instruments namely cloze, word recognition and retelling tests. T-test was used to test the hypothesis raised in the study. The findings revealed significant differences in the performance of students taught reading comprehension using Instructional Conversation method. The study further revealed that students from both groups made appreciable gain in the pre-test. Based on these findings, teachers are encouraged to adopt a thematic integrated approach (i. e combining the salient features of the instructional conversation method and the vocabulary method) since both methods could complement each other, if effectively used.

Index Terms—instructional conversation, reading comprehension, vocabulary method, cloze test, word recognition test, retelling test

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY/PROBLEM

Deficiency in the reading ability students has become a concern to specialists in reading. (Unoh, 1983, and Oyetunde 1989). The alarming rates at which such concerns are expressed have precipitated the need to continually carry out research in primary and post primary schools. It is hoped that the findings of this research will be useful in helping teachers to teach reading comprehension effectively and efficiently.

Most of the studies so far conducted in Nigeria (Oyetunde 1989, Umolu 1990, Unoh 1983) have concentrated on examining reading difficulty of students at the primary and secondary levels. This study is based on the opinion that there are other non-text factors that can effect reading comprehension as well. Literature search reveals that such non-text factors as pedagogic factors have largely received little or no attention in Nigeria as far as this researcher is aware of. The absence of such crucial information as the actual effect of pedagogic factors on reading comprehension constitutes a problem, which has motivated the present study.

Given the situation above, any effort to upgrade the quality of reading instruction is neither wasted nor misplaced. Such effort should be considered to step in the right direction since it constitutes an investment capable of yielding valuable dividends in the long run.

A. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to ascertain the difference in the performance of students taught reading comprehension, using vocabulary method and those taught using instructional conversation in cloze, word recognition test and retelling test.

B. Research Question

What is the difference in the pre-test and post test gain scores of students taught using the instructional conversation method and those taught using the vocabulary method in cloze word recognition and retelling tests?

C. Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the post-test scores of students taught reading comprehension using instructional conversation and those taught using vocabulary method in cloze, word recognition and retelling tests.

D. Research Design

The research design of the study was quasi experimental in nature and employed the test re-test method. This involved a pre-test and post-test as advocated by Cambell and Stanley (1986).

In this research, the treatment group was taught, using the instructional conversation method which is a new approach to teaching reading comprehension, while the control group of the study was taught, using the traditional method of teaching reading comprehension (i.e. vocabulary method).

1. The Population/Sample

The population from which the sample was drawn was made up of JS two students in all the three hundred and eighty four (384) Junior Secondary Schools in Kaduna metropolis. An urban population was selected in order to ensure that a wide range of reading abilities was represented among the students. Similarly, the urban population was made up of students from all over Nigeria, representing a wide range of ethnic groups and socio-cultural background. JS two was selected because students at this basic education level should have recorded reasonable progress in reading and acquired adequate skills to carry out the various reading tasks, in the reading comprehension tests.

2. Sample / Sampling Technique

The instrument of the study included was used to select two schools and twenty students. A total of sixty students used for this study could be justified based on the assumption that the mean performance of students was likely to vary by a random selection of thirty students per school. (Borg and Gall, 1998).

E. Instrumentation

The instruments of the study included cloze test, word recognition and retelling test. Three passages were carefully selected from the Junior Secondary English project textbook 2 currently in use in Kaduna. The passages were selected because the:

- (i) passages were interesting in nature;
- (ii) subject matter of the passage were of interest to both male and female students;
- (iii) content of passages were educative and informative.

1. The Cloze Test

The cloze procedure is employed in the study because of its value as a valuable and reliable assessment technique both in the first and second language situations (Umolu, 1990). Cloze has been documented as discriminating effectively between 'good' and 'poor' comprehenders; and between high and low achievers (Smith, 1975). Thus one can safely assume that a good reader will perform better on close reading comprehension tasks than would a poor one.

In this study, the cloze test was based on "The rainmakers". There were twenty blanks in all, based on seventh word deletion ratio.

2. Word recognition test

In the word recognition test used for this study, twenty words that were crucial to the understanding of the passage, titled "The machete Wound" were written on flash cards and students were asked to identify the words in the passage.

Five marks were awarded for each correct word identified. A total of 100 marks were awarded to the twenty words correctly identified."

3. Retelling

Retelling is a power compression strategy and assessment tool. Students learn to identify, clarify and organize their thinking as well as evaluate other's use of language and interpretations of meaning. Research confirms that students' retelling result is increased in understanding of story structure, oral language development and reading comprehension. Retelling also emphasizes key components of literary elements and genres. The key concept of retelling include:

- (a) develop an understanding of story structure, oral language and reading comprehension.
- (b) examine key components of literary elements and genres.
- (c) become aware of the development and instructional steps that lead to written retelling.
- (d) learn to scaffold comprehension with oral retelling and story props.

Retelling can specifically reveal the point or points that students can recall in the stories they read. Some may recall little of the story but communicate a point while retelling. Others may recall a good deal more and yet communicate largely the same point. The retelling text used in this study was based on a passage titled "School bullies."

4. Treatment

The teacher:

- (i) arranges the classroom to accommodate conversation between the teacher and a small group of students on a regular and frequent basis;
- (ii) has a clear academic goal that guides conversation with students.
- (iii) ensures that students talk occurs at higher rates than teacher talk;
- (iv) guides conversation to include student's views, judgments, and rationales using text evidence and other substantive support;
- (v) ensures that all students are included in the conversation according to their preferences;
- (vi) listens carefully to assess levels of students' understanding;
- (vii) assists students learning throughout the conversation by questioning, restating, praising, encouraging etc;
- (viii) guides the students to prepare a product that indicates the Instructional Conversation's goals was achieved.

II. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Research Question

What is the difference in the Pre-test and Post-test scores of students taught using the instructional conversation method and those taught using the vocabulary method in cloze, word recognition and retelling tests?

TABLE 1

SHOWING THE DIFFERENCE IN THE PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST MEAN SCORE OF STUDENTS TAUGHT USING THE INSTRUCTIONAL CONVERSATION METHOD AND VOCABULARY METHOD IN CLOZE TEST

Method	Pre-test (x)	Post-test (x)	Deference Gain score	Standard Deviation
Instructional conversation	48	79	31	24
Vocabulary Method	49	68	19	25

N = 30

TABLE 2

SHOWING THE DIFFERENCE IN THE PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST MEAN SCORE OF STUDENTS TAUGHT USING THE INSTRUCTIONAL CONVERSATION METHOD AND VOCABULARY METHOD IN WORD RECOGNITION TEST.

Method	Pre-test (x)	Post-test (x)	Deference Gain score	Standard Deviation
Instructional conversation	53	75	22	27
Vocabulary	49	60	11	26

N = 30

TABLE 3

SHOWING THE DIFFERENCE IN THE PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES OF STUDENTS TAUGHT USING THE INSTRUCTIONAL CONVERSATION METHOD AND VOCABULARY METHOD IN RETELLING TEST

Method	Pre-test (x)	Post-test (x)	Deference Gain score	Standard Deviation
Instructional conversation	52	78	26	26
Vocabulary Method	49	61	12	26

Looking at table 1-3, one can observe that the difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of students taught using instructional conversation method was higher than those of the students taught using the vocabulary method in cloze, word recognition and retelling tests. The answer to the research question, therefore, is that there were indeed, differences between the pre-test and post-test scores of the students taught using Instructional Conversation and those taught using vocabulary method in cloze, word recognition and retelling tests.

The hypothesis below was tested using T-test statistic.

There is no significant difference in the post-test gain scores of students taught reading comprehension using instructional conversation and those taught using vocabulary method in cloze, word recognition and retelling tests.

TABLE 4

SHOWING COMPARISON OF THE GAIN SCORES OF STUDENTS OF THE TWO GROUPS IN TEST NO1 (CLOZE TEST)

Method	Pre-Test	Post-test	Gain	Df	SD	t-Cal	t-critical	Decision
Instructional conversation	48	79	31	29	24	1.123	0.21	Rejected
Vocabulary Method	49	68	19		25			

N = 30

TABLE 5

SHOWING COMPARISON OF THE SCORE OF STUDENTS OF THE TWO GROUPS IN TEST NO 2 (WORD RECOGNITION TEST)

Method	Pre-Test	Post-test	Gain	Df	SD	t-Cal	t-critical	Decision
Instructional conversation	53	75	22	29	25	1.121	0.210	Rejected
Vocabulary Method	49	60	11		26			

N = 30

TABLE 6

SHOWING COMPARISON OF THE GAIN SCORES OF STUDENTS OF THE TWO GROUPS IN TEST NO 3 (RETELLING TEST)

Method	Pre-Test	Post Test	Gain Score	df	SD	t-Cal	t-Critical	Decision
instructional conversation	52	78	26	29	26	1.221	0.002	Rejected
Vocabulary Method	49	61	12		26			

N = 30

The hypothesis was tested using T-test statistic. From table 3-6, one would observe that performance in the post-test scores generally improved in the three different tests irrespective of the method that was used. Although, students taught using instructional conversation method performed much better than those taught using the vocabulary method. One could, therefore, conclude that both methods were effective in teaching students reading comprehension.

The findings in tables 1-6 agree with Tharp et al (2002) and Smith (1975) who have all stressed the use of instructional conversation, knowledge of vocabulary items or words as effective in enhancing the teaching of reading comprehension. Williams (1990) also stressed the need for language teachers to be sensitive to variables within the teaching situation in selecting methods of teaching.

This study has carefully included such consideration in using both methods.

The findings in this study are also in line with earlier studies which indicated increased gains in students achievement when one of the five pedagogical method was used in teaching (Tharp 2002).

The findings in this study shows that the effectiveness of instructional conversation method could depend on a number of factors or considerations such as variation in school type and in classroom situation, background experiences of the learners, pedagogical issues, location in terms of facilities, the psycho-social factors and so on.

III. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the result obtained from the study one can conclude by encouraging teachers to adopt a thematic integration of the two methods (i.e. combining the salient features of the instructional conversation method and the vocabulary method as Oyetunde (2009) and Willaims (1990) put it “no one method of teaching holds the answer for all purpose and situations”. Therefore, in striving for the new method, we must be careful to preserve what is worthwhile in the old.

The instructional conversation method is effective in enhancing students’ language proficiency, thereby, improving their reading efficiency while the vocabulary method helps to increase students’ knowledge on words and their meanings and knowledge of word meaning is a basic component of reading ability. Both methods could, therefore, be used to complement each other. An integration of the vocabulary method with the instructional conversation method will enrich the reading comprehension lesson.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The instructional conversation method should be used during the introductory and first part of the reading comprehension lesson. The vocabulary method should be used during the second or middle part of the lesson when students are given the opportunity to read the passage silently to bring out difficult or new words. Such words should be discussed in the context in which they appear as well in a variety of content using well-structured guided questions. A regular practice of this kind of exercise will facilitate and enhance students’ reading comprehension.

In using instructional conversation method, teachers should make sure that they set clear academic goals that will guide the conversation with students in class. Teacher can achieve this by using good questioning skills or techniques. Questions should be relevant to the topic at hand and they should be thought– provoking as well.

Teachers should ensure students–talk occurs more than teacher–talk. As much as possible, teachers should encourage all students to participate actively in class conversation.

Teachers should guide conversation so as to include student’s views, judgment, rationales, using text evidence and other substantive support.

Teacher should praise students’ effort no matter how little such efforts may be. This will encourage students especially, the introverts to speak out.

In using the instructional conversation method, teachers should always consider the peculiarities of learners, their background experiences and psycho-social factors as well as other pedagogical issues. There is need for teachers to always stimulate students’ existing knowledge in order to make them relate their background knowledge to the text. The use of instructional conversation would help teachers to engage their students in purposeful conversation/dialogue. Such purposeful conversation could assist students in providing relevant information needed for the comprehension of the text.

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