The Effect of Language Experience Approach on Junior Secondary School Students` Reading Skill in English Language in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria

By

[1]Muhammad Ali Mustapha, [2]Dr Mohammed Bularafa Waziri, [3]Dr Iya Aliyu Gana [4]Amdo Philip, [5]Blessing Anthony, [6]Grace Abdulazeez Jonas and [7]Veronica Gondak Garba

Department of Education, Faculty of Education, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria
Correspondence e-mail address: mali@unimaid.edu,ng,
bularafa@unimaid.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This study explored the effect of Language Experience Approach on Junior Secondary School Students` Reading Skill in English Language in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria. Four objectives and four hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study focused on four main sub-components of readings skill. These are: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Quasi-experiment was the research design used to examine the effect size. The target population for the study comprised Junior Secondary School II students of a selected school. Eighty-nine (89) students were sampled using purposive sampling technique. Self-developed instrument entitled "English Language Reading Skill Testing" (ELRST) was used to determine the baseline and endline performance of the students. The data collected were analyzed using Independent t-test. The findings of the study revealed that deployment of LEA has significant effect on students reading skills. Therefore, it is recommended that students should be actively engaged in learning to read through participation in LEA activities to enable them gain background knowledge and experiences from which they will use it to generate their reading materials.

Keywords: *Language Experience Approach, Pronunciation, Grammar, Vocabulary & Reading Comprehension.*

1. Introduction

The teaching and learning of English language has gained a global recognition in today's world. English occupies the highest position among all the languages and it is the language that is used by people of various states, countries and continents of the world. English is the language taught in higher education level and majority of books are available only in English. In the era of global communication, there is a specific need to learn English since it is widely used in all spheres of life around the world.

Research in the field of Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition has an essential role in constructing and modifying different approaches and methods for ELT for the purpose of guiding language learners to communicate effectively in the new language (Celce Muria, 2001). Teaching strategies are subsets of a method, which are formed by sequences of techniques (activities) that teachers use when designing their lesson plan to accomplish certain goals (Larson Freeman & Anderson, 2011 Wright 2010).

The history of ELT shows the development of different types of approaches and methods as a response to meet the demands of English Language teaching and learning (Richards & Rogers, 2014). ELT has experienced three phases of instructional approaches and methods: The first phase was based on multiple instructional approach and method, which includes the Grammar translation method, the direct method (also called the natural method), the audio lingual method, the community language teaching approach and the total physical response approach (also called the comprehension approach). Each of these has emerged subsequently unsuccessful method as well as a way to meet and fulfil particular demands regarding (Celemurcia, 2014).

Reading skills are abilities that pertain to a person's capacity to read, comprehend, interpret and decode written language and texts. However, reading skills have six (6) major components. These are: Phonemic awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, Grammar, Fluency, comprehension and fluency.

1.1 Phonemic awareness:

Phonemes are the smallest units making up spoken language, combine to form syllables and words. Phonemic awareness refers to the student's ability to focus on and manipulate these phonemes in spoken syllables and words.

According to the National Reading Panel, teaching phonemic awareness to children significantly improves their reading more than instruction that lacks any attention to phonemic awareness (Celemurcia, 2014).

1.2 Phonics:

Phonics is the relationship between the letters (or letter combinations) in written language and the individual sounds in spoken language. Phonics instruction teaches students how to read and spell words. The National Reading Panel indicated that systematic phonics instruction enhances children's success in learning to read and it is significantly more effective than instruction that teaches little or no phonics (Celemurcia, 2014).

1.3 Vocabulary:

Vocabulary development is closely connected to comprehension. The larger the reader's vocabulary (either oral or print), the easier it is to make sense of the next. According to the National Reading Panel, vocabulary can be learned incidentally through storybook reading or listening to others, and should be taught directly and indirectly. Students should be actively engaged in instructions and use of computer that include learning words before reading, repetition and multiple exposures, learning in rich contexts, incidental learning, and use of computer technology (Mehta, Foorman, Branum-Martin, & Taylor,2005)

1.4 Grammar:

Grammar is the study of the classes of words, their inflections, and their functions and relations in the sentence. It is a set of rules that explain how words are used in a language (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

1.5 Fluency:

Fluent readers are able to read orally with appropriate speed, accuracy, and proper expression. Fluency is the ability to read as well as speak and to make sense of the text without having to stop and decode each word. The National Reading Pane's research finding concluded that guided oral reading and repeated oral reading had a significant and positive impact on word recognition, reading fluency, and comprehension in students of all ages (National Reading Panel, 2000).

1.6 Comprehension:

Comprehension is the complex cognitive process readers use to understand what they have read. Vocabulary development and instruction play a critical role in comprehension. The National Reading Panel develops text comprehension through a variety of techniques, including answering questions (quizzes) and summarization (retelling the story).

Reading skill is the bedrock of almost all process of learning which necessitated learners not only to acquire language and study literature, but also to learn other subjects. If pupils have low acquisition of knowledge in several other subjects and this consequently affects the learner's educational achievement. Indeed, studies have established that a significant number of learner's complete the primary school cycle without having achieved the basic levels of reading and comprehension (Commeyras and Iyenga, 2007 Asukwo, 2018). According to Ikoh (2004), reading refers to a meaningful interpretation of printed or verbal symbols. He further sees reading as a constructive thinking process which includes the comprehension of the explicit and implicit meaning of passages. Children in primary schools encounter problems that result to ineffectiveness in reading which is attributed to certain factors, amongst which are poor vocabulary or word power, poor word recognition, poor comprehension skills and poor linguistic background (Moointyre et al, 2011) stated that many of our children struggled with reading difficulties due to lack of phonological awareness.

Teachers encounter myriad of challenges in teaching reading skills that affects pupil's reading. Inadequate teaching facilities is one of the biggest challenges that the teachers face. According to Unoh (1983) most Nigerian primary schools lack facilities in teaching reading such as library, conducive classrooms, local developed instructional packages, materials for programmed and individualized reading instructions, well graded teaching aids; locally developed materials of appropriate readability levels in both English and local Nigerian languages. Ayodele (2004) also pointed out that the availability of adequate chairs, desks and other classroom facilities are necessary for the accomplishment of any educational goals and objectives.

Language Experience Approach

The LEA is a flexible reading approach and there are many variations of the LEA. In addition, Bromley (1992) supports that the LEA is highly for motivating and personal approach with which potential for flexibility and creativity. LEA has the advantage of following great flexibility in organizing school activities for the teacher and can work with entire class, small group, and/or individual on the basis of the statements above, the LEA program allows each teacher to suit instruction to the specific needs and interest of the students. The exact procedure to be followed may be modified in numerous ways. It also means that the LEA can be used with students of all ages and abilities.

Many students' ability to read comprehensively is very low. Such students found reading very difficult and frustrating. They have limited vocabulary for use to communicate their feelings and ideas. During reading, they are not motivated to set purpose for what they are going to read about. Milaham (2018) states that the technique and strategy use in teaching and learning to read are mostly traditional such as; recitation, memorization and choral reading. Andzayi and Umolu (2004) note that students are often asked to read passages from texts which are either at their frustration level or read in language that is not familiar. In some instances, they are taught to read a passage which they have no background knowledge about its content or the text is far removed from their experiential background. Most texts are not based on the students' instructional level. Eka and Yunita (2012) and Milaham (2018) express that couple with frustration students with learning disabilities experience during reading, teachers also teach them to learn to read using memorisation, recitation and choral approach. These methods only make the student call words without understanding their meanings. In the class, teachers do not consider the difficulty level of the text the students are given to read, such as; independent level (students read and answer questions on their own), instructional level (students read and answer questions with teacher's assistance) and frustration level (student cannot read the text even with teacher's assistance). Teaching students with poor method and using text or passage that is at their frustration level only makes reading a bored and frustrating activity.

2. Statement of the problem

The issue of poor performance in English language in Nigeria has been of much concern not only to teachers but also parents and educational stakeholders. Teachers personal experience and observation in working with students reveals that most students have poor literacy skills and poor vocabulary in English language especially among junior secondary school students. The students saw reading as the most difficult subject to understand. Reading is a bored activity. Most sentences in their class textbooks are very long, unfamiliar words are use. In fact, the students are made to read texts that are at their frustration level, they are always asked to read and answer factual, inferential and critical comprehension level at the same time.

Many factors are believed to have contributed to the current trend of English and subsequently the poor performance of students' in other subjects. It is clear that teachers` inability to use proper methods might contributes to the poor learning.

3. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to examine:

1. effect of language experience approach on student pronunciation
2. effect of language experience approach on grammatical skills
3. effect of language experience approach on vocabulary
4. effect of language experience approach on reading comprehension

4. Research Hypotheses

H_{o1} Language Experience Approach does not have significant effect on students` pronunciation

H_{o2} Language Experience Approach does not have significant effect on students` grammatical skills

H_{o3} Language Experience Approach does not have significant effect on students` vocabulary

H_{o4} Language Experience Approach does not have significant effect on students` reading comprehension

5. Scope of the Study

The study deals with of Language Experience Approach on Students`Reading Skill in English Language. The study focused on the four subcomponents of reading skills. These are: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. The study was delimited to Junior Secondary Schools II of a selected school in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State Nigeria.

6. Review of the Related Literature

The Concept of Reading

Reading is the term used to refer to a deliberate looking at, and understanding written language (Willians in Kalindi, 2005). Reading is the process shaped partly by the text, partly by the reader's background and partly by the situation the reader occurs in (Hunt, 2004). On the other hand, reading skills are the cognitive process that a reader uses in making sense of a text (Beatrice, 2008). Reading is an activity of the reader to get information from what they are read. Furthermore, reading is not only an activity to read a text but also the process of the reader to build meaning based on the context of the text related their reading experiences and background knowledge. As Hartman and Stork (cited by Zainudin) stated that reading is the skill of recognizing and understanding written language in the form of sequences of graphic signs and its transformation into meaning full speech (Zainudin, 2015).

The Language Experience Approach

The language experience approach (LEA) is a whole language approach that promotes reading and writing through the use of personal experiences and oral language. It can be used in tutorial or classroom settings with homogeneous or heterogeneous groups of learners (Marcia Taylor, JobLink 2000).The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is a literacy development method that has long been used for early reading development with first language learners. It is also perfect for diverse classrooms. It combines all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Working on the four language skills side by side aids fluency.

Pronunciation

The pronunciation goals and needs of English language learners are diverse. These goals and needs depend on a variety of factors, which may include the learners' uses of English (in what settings and for what purposes), their motivation to identify with specific English-speaking groups, the degree to which they want to sound like native speakers, and the frequency with which they speak English (Flege, Frieda, & Nozawa, 1997; Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005; Moyer, 2008).

Although pronunciation is part of the curriculum in many education programs, it is often not included in state language proficiency standards or addressed systematically in instruction (Levis, 2005). In addition, some ESL teachers working with learners do not have training in teaching pronunciation (Derwing& Munro, 2005; Levis, 2005). As a result, teachers may not be able to identify the patterns of or reasons for learners' pronunciation problems or have a systematic way to teach the sound, stress, intonation, and rhythm patterns of English. This brief reviews features of languages (particularly English) that can have an impact on the teaching and learning of English pronunciation, discusses the research on learner acquisition of pronunciation, and describes how teachers can teach pronunciation in their classes.

Recent discussion of and research on the teaching and learning of pronunciation have focused on the following issues: the importance of accent, stress, intonation, and rhythm in the comprehensibility of the speech of nonnative speakers; the effects of motivation and expo- sure on the development of native-like pronunciation; and the intelligibility of speech among speakers of different English varieties.

Shallaita (2015) explored on the effect of Language Experience Approach (LEA) on students' reading recount text ability. It was experimental study at grade ten science program of SMAN 3 Mataram West Nusa Tenggara Academic year 2014/2015. Pretest and posttest work used to examine the effect size. The population of the study comprised 234 student. 37 students were sampled. The finding revealed that (1) the t-value is higher than the confidence level of 95%, 99%, and 99.9%; and (2) the contribution that LEA gives on students' reading recount text ability is 72%.

Rao (2018) in similarly manner explored on the English Spelling and Pronunciation, it was a Brief Study on English Spelling and Pronunciation.

Pretest and post-test in the study to collect data. The study use twenty-eight (28) letters and the whole category represent one sound only whereas English language has twenty-four (24) consonants. The finding reviews that there are forty-four (44) phonemes.

Figuigui (2020) explored on the English Pronunciation and Spelling. It was an empirical study on the Problems and Difficulties of Adrar University Students. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The population of the study comprised of 40 students and 10 teachers. The finding revealed that the majority of the students are face with errors in spelling and pronunciation of English words.

Grammar

Grammar is an important element of a language. Mastering the grammar of a language will affect the mastery of language skills. Therefore, in studying language formally, grammar is a subject that should be studied in depth. The students need to be given adequate provision of grammar so that they have good language skills. Grammar, for many students, is considered a difficult and unattractive subject. They do not like learning grammar and therefore they cannot have good achievement in learning it. Even students who have learnt grammar for some years in college still get difficulty to construct good and correct sentences. Some students still make grammar mistakes when they write their graduating paper and lecturers have to work hard helping them correcting the mistakes.

There are several definitions of grammar. First, according to Richards and Schmidt (2010) grammar is a description of the structure of a language and how language units such as words and phrases are formed into sentences. The next definition, grammar is a set of rules or principles of the working of a language, its system or structure (Brinton, 2000). While Yule stated that grammar is the process of describing the structure of phrases and sentences by considering its order in a language (2006). In addition to these definitions of grammar, Weaver divides grammar into two definitions. First, grammar is a description of the syntax of a language, and the second is a set of rules or prescription of how to use language (1996).

Meanwhile Larsen-Freeman (2009) states that the definition of grammar when associated with language learning has some meanings. They are: a. mental systems that generate and interpret novel utterances b. a set of

prescription and proscription about language forms and their use for a particular language c. description of language behaviour by proficient users of a language d. the focus of a given linguistic theory e. a work that treats a major structures o f a language f. structures and rules that are compiled for instructional and assessment purposes g. structures and rules that are compiled for instructional purposes of the teacher From the definition described above a conclusion can be drawn that grammar has always been the elements of a language and the rules of how to arrange these elements into a meaningful unit. For example: how words are arranged into phrases and how phrases are arranged into sentences.

Grammar can be grouped into several types. Cook (2008) classifies grammar into 5 (five) types, namely:

(1). Prescriptive grammar: is a way to explain how someone should say something, not explaining how someone says something.

(2). Traditional grammar: a system of how sentence structures are used in schools, based on the classical language grammar.

(3). Structural Grammar: a system for describing language sentence based on the preparation of smaller structures into a larger structure.

(4). Linguistic/grammatical competence: seen from this angle, grammar is the knowledge of a person (speaker) about the structure of a language that has regularity. The owner of a language knows how to use grammar without studying it.

(5). EFL grammar: a person who is not a native speaker of a language will know the grammar of a language by studying it. Therefore, this type combines elements of traditional and structural grammar.

According to Ellis (2009) the difficulty in learning grammar can be grouped into three, namely: the difficulties associated with environmental factors of language, with linguistic factors, and psychological difficulties. Factors related to language environment are how often the input obtained from the environment. Linguistic factor refers to the nature of the grammar of a language and psychological factors refer to the ability to learn.

7. Methodology

Quasi experimental design was deployed to examine the effect of LEA on students reading skill in English language. According to Campbell and Stanley (2000)the term quasi experimental design refers to a type of research design that lacks the element of random assignment. The rationale behind the selection of this design is because of the nature of the research which involves two groups: The control group and experimental group. The control group will have taught using conventional classroom teaching method while the experimental group will be taught using writing skills. The baseline and the end-line performance of the two groups is compared to determine if any differences exist in the performance of the two group as it will be indicated in the scores of the pre-test and post-test.

The target population for the study comprised year two students at a selected Junior Secondary School in the location under the study. Eighty-nine (89) students were sampled using purposive sampling technique. Self-developed instrument entitled "English Language Reading Skill Testing"(ELRST) was used to determine the baseline and endline performance of the students. The data collected were analyzed using independent t-test and ANOVA.

8. Results and Discussions

To test the hypotheses, ANOVA was used to examine the effect of Language Experience Approach on Students`Reading Skill in English language.

Hypothesis One: Language Experience Approach does not have significant effect on students` pronunciation

Table 1: ANOVA Result on Effect of LEA on Students Pronunciation

Pre-test result	1	0.524	0.523	0.305	0.13248
Post-test result	1	2.405	2.405	10.586	0.00161
Total	**89**	**20.22**			

Table 1 above presents analysis of variance on the performance of the control and experimental group in both pre-test and post-test. The result indicated that there is no significant difference in the performance of the two group in the pre-test. However, post-test result showed a significant effect size in favour of the experimental group. Therefore, we reject the hypothesis.

Hypothesis Two: Language Experience Approach does not have significant effect on students` grammatical skills

Table 2: ANOVA Result on Effect of LEA on Students Grammar

Pre-test result	1	0.524	0.523	0.305	0.13248
Post-test result	1	2.405	2.405	10.586	0.00161
Total	**89**	**20.22**	**0.2272**		

Table 2 above presents analysis of variance on the performance of the control group and experimental group in both pre-test and the post-test. The result in indicates that there is no significant difference between the two groups in pre-test achievement scores. However, in the post-test the experiment group outperformed the control group at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Three: Language Experience Approach does not have significant effect on students` vocabulary

Table 3: ANOVA Result on Effect of LEA on Students Vocabulary

Groups P	N	Average	SS	SD	+
Pre-test result	1	0.524	0.523	0.305	0.13248
Post-test result	1	2.405	2.405	10.586	0.00161
Total	**89**	**20.22**	**0.2272**		

Table 3 above presents analysis of variance on the performance of the control and experimental group in both pre-test and post-test. The result indicated that there is no significant difference in the performance of the two group in the pre-test. However, post-test result showed a significant effect size in favour of the experimental group. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Four: Language Experience Approach does not have significant effect on students` reading comprehension

Table 4: ANOVA Result on the Effect of LEA on Students Reading Comprehension

Pre-test result	1	0.524	0.523	0.305	0.13248
Post-test result	1	2.405	2.405	10.586	0.00161
Total	**89**	**20.22**	**0.2272**		

Table 4 above presents analysis of variance on the performance of the control group and experimental group in both pre-test and the post-test. The result in indicates that there is no significant difference between the two groups in pre-test achievement scores. However, in the post-test the experiment group outperformed the control group at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

9. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is confirmed that Language Experience Approach has significant effect on students pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. When teachers deploy this strategy, it tends improves students overall performance in reading.

10. Recommendations

It is recommended that school management should be organizing orientation session for teachers to update their knowledge and teaching skills so that they can implement novel techniques, method and approaches in their classroom. Students should also be made to readtexts that are based on their background knowledge and experiences. They should be actively engaged in learning to read through participation in LEA activities to enable them gain background knowledge and experiences from which they will use it to generate their reading materials.

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