

TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS FOR TEACHING READING AT BASIC LEVELS IN ILORIN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study assessed the techniques and materials used for teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin, Nigeria. Reading is essentially mechanical and activities deployed by the teacher. Hence, teaching reading skill is very crucial for pupils, if they are to acquire the necessary information and understanding of the subjects being taught in schools. All elementary school teachers who teach English in Ilorin constituted the population of this study. The target population comprised all the basic level English language teachers. Ten schools were randomly selected based on school types, while six elementary English teachers were selected from each of the ten (10) selected schools using the simple random sampling techniques. Percentage was used to answer the research questions, while the T-test was used to test the research hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that, the techniques and materials for teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin, Nigeria are assuredly effective and efficient. Also, it was discovered that, female teachers employed various techniques in teaching reading at the basic level than their male counterparts. Again, teachers' qualification influenced the use of materials in teaching reading at the basic levels in Ilorin, Nigeria. Based on these findings, it was recommended that teachers should make concerted efforts to employ at all times, fruitful techniques and materials for teaching reading at the basic level. Also, it was recommended that school administrators should employ qualified and certified English language teachers, in order to enhance the effective use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level. Equally, administrators should allow teachers to attend refresher courses, workshop, seminars and conferences, with a view to improving their skills in teaching reading.

Keywords: *Techniques, materials, reading, basic level.*

Introduction

Reading informs what goes on in the writer's mind as expressed in a conventional or universal letters, signs or symbols. Crystal (1999) in Aina &

Olubakin (2006) views reading as the recognition of printed or written symbols, which serves as stimuli for bringing to the mind the meanings built up through the reader's past experience. Reading habit is purposive, mechanical, hierarchical and communicative between the writer and his audience (Olajide, 2010). Reading which is the third language skill, is essentially a learner - activity in the learning process. Reading is more than simply picking out words on a page; it is a process of critical thinking which involves evaluating ideas and applying them to everyday situations.

Ojo (2003) believes that teaching learners how to read in order to grasp written information in time past had suffered neglectfulness, due to some learners' experience of difficulty in spending time to read. Therefore, teaching reading skill is very crucial for pupils. Ojedokun (2007) agrees that teaching learners how to read is a fundamental prerequisite for lifelong learning and a basic requirement for studies in the present information age. Hence, pupils should be equipped with the intellectual framework for identifying, understanding, evaluating and using informative materials.

One of the major responsibilities of teachers is to select instructional materials that would fit learners' reading needs and performance. No doubt, instructional materials are resources used to make lesson interesting and easy to follow by learners. According to Joshua in Abiodun - Oyebanji and Adu (2007) instructional materials are all things (television, films, audio-visual, radio, visual printed materials like books, magazines, periodicals, newspapers, ephemerals and computers), that are used to support, facilitate, influence or encourage acquisition of knowledge, competency and skills. Paul (2007) encouraged teachers to improve teaching aids because they are, in great measure to enhance learners' pay full participation in the lesson, gives room for inquiry, problem - solving, discussion and clarification of issues and ideas among learners and teachers. To further strengthen the importance of selecting instructional materials, it was observed that a good instructional material should be meaningful and purposeful, accurate, simple, cheap in every aspect; should be able to be improvised and be large enough for the learner to see properly, etc.

Danmole (1999) concludes that, there is need for appropriate materials and resources. Qualifications must also be considered as most important. The teachers need to be trained to make effective use of resources in enhancing their teaching. Teachers as facilitators of learning deserve the best and good education with necessary knowledge and skills that would make them effective (Nwosu, 1998).

Therefore, if the appropriate techniques and instructional materials are used in Basic schools, it would no doubt help to improve the teaching and learning of reading in Basic schools. Hence, the academic performance of pupils in English language would improve tremendously and effectively. In view of this, the need to identify appropriate or suitable techniques and materials used in teaching reading at basic levels by which students can be made to comprehend the extent of the subject matter easily and intelligibly is the focus of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The attainment of educational goals depends on the quality of instruction given to the learners at a particular level. For this reason, this study is concerned with the extent to which the use of techniques and materials would or has influenced the teaching and learning of reading at the basic level in Ilorin, Nigeria. Many studies have been carried out on the assessment of techniques and materials in teaching in Nigeria. For instance, Bamgbose, (2005), observes that, there has been a lot of hue and cry about the Nigeria students' inability to read. Yusuf, (2005) also attempts to link poor performance in reading among Nigeria pupils with various spelling problems. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, most of these studies were not carried out on the assessment of techniques and materials in the teaching of reading at the basic level, especially in Ilorin, Nigeria. This is the gap this study wants to fill.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study, aimed to examine teachers' materials and techniques used in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study was carried out to:

1. Assess materials used by teachers in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.
2. Assess techniques used by teachers in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.
3. Determine the influence of teachers' gender in the use of techniques and materials in teaching reading at the basic level.
4. Determine the influence of school type in the use of techniques and materials in teaching reading at the basic level.
5. Determine the influence of teachers' qualifications in the use of techniques and materials in teaching reading at the basic level.

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the influence of the materials used in teaching reading at the basic level?
2. What is the influence of the techniques used in teaching reading at the basic level?
3. Does teachers' gender have any influence in the techniques and materials used in teaching reading at the basic level?
4. Does school type have any influence in the techniques and materials used in teaching reading at the basic level?
5. Does teachers' qualification have any influence in the techniques and materials used in teaching reading at the basic level?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are tested in the study:

- H01:** There is no significant influence of the materials used in teaching reading at the basic level.
- H02:** There is no significant influence of the techniques used in teaching reading at the basic level.
- H03:** There is no significant difference between male and female teachers in the use of techniques in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.
- H04:** There is no significant difference between public and private school teachers in the use of techniques in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.
- H05:** There is no significant difference between qualified and unqualified teachers in the use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on teachers' materials and techniques used in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. This has been prompted by the cries from stakeholders over the poor reading levels of pupils, students and graduates of schools, especially the basic level.

The study involved all Basic school pupils of the English language in Ilorin, Nigeria. The target population includes ten randomly selected Basic schools in Ilorin, Nigeria. A research-designed questionnaire was used to elicit information from the subjects. Data collected was analysed using Frequency counts and percentage, mean and standard deviation (SD) to answer the research questions. Also, all the hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistical technique.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this study would assist pupils to gain more reading skill which could facilitate improvement in their reading and comprehension, as well as boost and enhance their learning activity. The findings of the study would inform teachers to further appreciate the need to teach reading skill to primary school pupils, and identify further, the best techniques and materials to be used in teaching reading at the basic levels. It is believed that, this study would also assist policy makers, curriculum developers and syllabus designers, since it would provide directions for necessary review in the English language curriculum, especially, in the aspect of reading skill. Finally, textbook writers would also review the contents of their works in light of the findings of this study. Hopefully, the findings of this study would indicate the direction of future researchers, particularly, in the use of various techniques and materials in teaching reading at the basic level.

Reading at the Basic Level

There is no better time to start the teaching of reading skills to pupils than when they are in the lower Basic level. This may have informed why, at the nursery and primary school levels, language teachers make use of various techniques and

materials in teaching pupils reading. Oyerokun (1993) emphasises the need to use appropriate techniques and materials in teaching. Some English teachers are lagging behind in their approach to teaching reading. The effect is poor performance among the elementary school pupils. The condition is so bad that some pupils find it difficult to read and understand a simple sentence.

Teaching Techniques in Reading at the Basic Level

The following are some of the techniques used in teaching reading at the basic level:

Phonological Awareness: Refers to the child's ability to manipulate mentally the sounds that make up words. In this area of reading research, Peter Bryant's work with Lynette Bradley is of great significance (Bryant, Bradley, Maclean and Crossland, 1989). Bryant *et al.* (1989) substantial evidence pointed to a causal link between awareness of rhyme and later success in reading. Most researchers agreed that, phonological awareness is not spontaneously acquired by all children. A number of studies suggest that teaching phonological awareness is especially helpful for 'at risk' readers.

Whole Word Method: Learners are guided by word appearance principles. Learners are expected to look through the shape of the word's appearance, memorise the sounds that should be spoken. The goal is for learners to see each word as a little picture and associate the teacher's spoken word with the little word-shapes on the page.

The Phonics Strategy: The phonics method, mostly embraced by teachers at the basic level requires learners to think of sound(s) that should normally be associated with syllables in each word. This method requires a lot of 'sounding out' exercises in which a whole classroom 'sounding out' together and this can be accomplished with aid of DVDs or videos and PowerPoint projected exercises.

Linguistic Method: Teachers adhere to phonics method above and try to avoid the deception of deliberately showing misspelled words to learners. Instead, they search for those few English words that are already spelled consistently to instil the concept that letters are trustworthy indicators of sounds to be uttered.

Initial Teaching Alphabet: This is an initial teaching alphabet only. It is used in similar ways to phonics methods. It's a process that introduces children to a reliable system, where letters are always used in trustworthy ways to give us cues about pronunciation. After one or two years, children are weaned from the comfort of the ITA alphabet nursed over to normal spelling standards.

Word in Colour Method: Learners are introduced to normal colour coding, dictating the sounds that should be spoken or imagined English words. The English speech sounds are accurately signalled to children regardless the illogical spelling a word might contain. For example, wherever the 'EE' sound in FEET was to be spoken, regardless of the letters in the word, that syllable was coloured pea green whether the letter 'A' sounds in ATE was there or not.

Materials for Teaching Reading at the Basic Level

Lawal (2001) sees resources as a concept that subsumes materials or any object, place or person that stands to facilitate the planning, implementation and evaluation of learning together with feedback that goes into the system, makes up what is popularly referred to as learning materials. Olajide (2010) asserts that all normal children like pictures, so this forms one of the bases for selecting the materials that they will need for reading. Children can then easily 'look and say'. In the same vein, Olajide (2010), goes further to say that materials used in teaching reading at the basic level are full of illustrations. Children enjoy reading illustrations a lot, and it goes a long way to determine children's attitude to books. The attitude in turn forms the children reading habit, and the experiences gained from illustrations partly constitute the world view that the children will carry into every author's work, that they will need. Hence, materials used in teaching reading should emanate from the children socio-cultural experiences, as this would go a long way to sustain their interest and make them academically functional (Olajide, 2010).

Materials used in teaching initial reading are ranging from audio, visual and audio visual aids depending on the availability and richness to the teachers in the school and the community. Instructional (Salami, 2008) are collections of equipment that can be used to facilitate the process of communication otherwise known as instruction in the process of teaching and learning. There are three major classifications of instructional materials. They are audio, visual and audio-visual aids. Salah (1974) identifies materials for visual recognition and comprehension such as flash cards and reading cards (question-answer cards, completion cards, vocabularies cards matching cards and real life cards). Salah (1974) also distinguishes between flash cards and reading cards as the former are usually big enough in size and lettering to be shown to a large group of learners while the latter are much smaller in size with ordinary typing on them.

Factors Influencing Techniques and Material in Teaching Reading in Primary Schools

According to Andrejs and Ozola (2008), researches have shown that there are many different and usually very complex causes for the difference in the achievement level. For example, often those are factors beyond school influence, such as the income level and education, which correlates with the academic achievements of students, but there are quite many factors that influence students' learning achievements at school (Goodwin, 2000).

A child's reading ability can be influenced by many factors including background knowledge, ability, home environment, school experiences and interest level. However, pure reading performance is most directly linked to a child's success with five early literacy skills - phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. By understanding and nurturing these five

fundamental skills, parents and teachers can better encourage successful reading performance.

Methodology

All the basic school teachers who teach reading in Ilorin constituted the population of this study. The target population constituted all the teachers that teach reading at the basic level in the selected lower basic schools in Ilorin, Nigeria. Ten (10) schools were randomly selected based on school type (5 private and 5 public) while six (6) elementary reading teachers were selected from each of the ten (10) selected schools using simple random sampling techniques. The instrument used for gathering the data was a researchers' designed questionnaire.

Research Findings and Discussion

Data collected in this study were collated, analysed and interpreted along the research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1

What is the influence of the techniques used in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin?

Table 1. Frequency counts and percentage distribution on effects of techniques in teaching reading.

	Frequency	Percent %
Low Effective Technique	3	2.5%
High Effective Technique	117	97.5%
Total	120	100.0 %

From the table 1, 2.5% of the techniques used in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin are low while 97.5% of the techniques are highly effective. This shows that the techniques used in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin are highly effective.

Research Question 2

What is the influence of materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin?

Table 2 Frequency counts and percentage distribution on effects of materials in teaching reading.

	Frequency	Percent %
Low Effective Materials	38	31.7%
High Effective Materials	82	68.3%
Total	120	100.0%

From the table 2, 31.7% of the materials used in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin are low while 68.3% of the materials are high. This shows that the materials used in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin are efficient.

Research Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between male and female teachers in the use of techniques in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Table 3

	Gender	N	Mean	Std	T	Sig	Decision
Technique	Male	60	34.33	4.63	-2.052	.007	Rejected
	Female	60	35.80	3.15			

P<0.05

From table 3, based on the result calculated, the hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference between male and female teachers in the use of techniques in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

There is no significant difference between male and female teachers in the use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Table 4

	Gender	N	Mean	Std	T	Sig	Decision
Materials	Male	60	24.45	3.81	-1.310	.105	Not rejected
	Female	60	26.50	4.89			

P<0.05

From table 4, based on the result calculated, the hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between male and female teachers in the use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Research Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between public and private school teachers in the use of techniques in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Table 5

	School Type	N	Mean	Std	t	Sig	Decision
Technique	Private	32	25.90	4.58	-.660	.149	Not rejected
	Public	88	26.00	3.80			

P<0.05

From table 5, based on the result calculated, the hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between public and private school teachers in the use of techniques in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

There is no significant difference between public and private school teachers in the use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Table 6

	School Type	N	Mean	Std	t	Sig	Decision
Materials	Private	32	34.32	5.22	-.103	.079	Not rejected
	Public	82	35.80	4.09			

P<0.05

From table 6, based on the result calculated, the hypothesis was not rejected. There is no significant difference between public and private school teachers in the use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Research Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between the experienced and less experienced teachers in the use of techniques in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Table 7

	Experience	N	Mean	Std	t	Sig	Decision
Technique	Less Experience	59	35.34	3.78	.753	.560	Not rejected
	More Experience	61	34.79	4.24			

P<0.05

From table 7, based on the result calculated, it can be seen that the hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the experienced and less experienced teachers in the use of techniques in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

There is no significant difference between the experienced and less experienced teachers in the use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Table 8

	Experience	N	Mean	Std	t	Sig	Decision
Material	Less Experienced	59	25.73	4.62	-.600	.136	Not rejected
	More Experienced	61	26.21	4.20			

P<0.05

From table 8, based on the result calculated, the hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the experienced and less experienced teachers in the use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Research Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference between qualified and unqualified teachers in the use of techniques in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Table 9

Technique	Teaching Qualification	N	Mean	Std	t	Sig	Decision
	Qualified	110	35.00	4.08	-.444	.537	Not Rejected
	Not Qualified	10	36.00	3.31			

P<0.05
 From table 9, based on the result calculated, it can be seen that the hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between qualified and unqualified teachers in the use of techniques in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

There is no significant difference between qualified and unqualified teachers in the use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Table 10

Materials	Teaching Qualification	N	Mean	Std	t	Sig	Decision
	Qualified	110	25.88	4.13	-.500	.004	Rejected
	Not Qualified	10	27.00	6.96			

P<0.05
 From table 10, based on the result calculated, it can be seen that the hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference between qualified and unqualified teachers in the use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Conclusion

Having calculated all the research questions and tested the research hypotheses, the conclusion of this study was that the techniques and materials used in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin are highly effective and efficient respectively. Teachers' gender (male and female) though has significant influence on the use of techniques. But it has no significant influence on the use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin. Also, school type has no significant influence on the techniques and materials used in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin. In the study, it was discovered that though, teachers' qualification has no influence on the use of techniques in teaching reading but it has significant influence on the use of materials in teaching reading at basic level in Ilorin. Teachers' experience has no significant influence on the use of techniques and materials in teaching reading at the basic level in Ilorin.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study therefore, the study strongly recommended that:

1. Teachers should make concerted efforts to employ at all times fruitful techniques and materials for teaching reading at the basic level. This situation demands ingenuity and creativity on the part of the teacher. A resourceful and innovative teacher would use local resources and materials to improve upon.
2. School administrators should employ qualified and certified teachers in order to enhance the effective use of materials in teaching reading at the basic level. Equally, School Authorities should encourage the use of instructional materials by providing teachers with some affordable materials.
3. School administrators should provide enabling environment for teachers to attend refresher courses, workshop, seminars and conferences regularly.
4. Generally, teachers should provide materials, which would provide learners with opportunities to function effectively at the receptive and productive level of English language. Materials for language teaching and especially reading, produced by teachers should be interesting, realistic and encouraging.

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