

Scaffolding Instructional Strategy: A Tool for Enhancing Senior Secondary Students' Attitude towards Reading Comprehension in English Language in Ogun State

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of scaffolding instructional strategy on students' attitude to reading comprehension. The study adopted the pretest-posttest, control group, quasi-experimental design. Intact classes of SS II comprising 120 students from secondary schools in Odogbolu Local Government Area of Ogun State were purposively selected for the study. They were randomly assigned to: Scaffolding Instructional Strategy and Modified Conventional Method. The treatment lasted 12 weeks. Two instruments used were: English Language Reading Comprehension Achievement Test ($r = 0.84$); Students' Attitude to Reading Comprehension Questionnaire ($r = 0.87$). Instructional guides for each of the experimental and control groups were also employed. One null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data collected were analysed using Analysis of Covariance, Scheffe post-hoc test and a line graph to show significant difference. Scaffolding instructional strategy enhanced students' attitude to English Language reading comprehension. It is, therefore, recommended that teachers in secondary schools should adopt the strategy for teaching English language reading comprehension.

Keywords: Attitude, Comprehension, Reading Scaffolding, Strategy

Introduction

The development of all aspects of a nation's life is facilitated when much attention is given to literacy development. A nation's level of technology and scientific development is largely a reflection of its level of literacy development. It has been observed that a nation cannot be strong and competitive in a global economy and a democracy cannot fulfill its promise of opportunity for all, if a large percentage of its citizens are illiterate. It is at the school setting that the importance of reading is best appreciated because books constitute the bulk of learning resources. It is obvious that a student's success depends on the extent to which he can obtain information from print quickly and efficiently.

Reading proficiency is equated with scholastic excellence. Reading proficiency is not only important in academic pursuits, it gives wide reading interests and this in turn can influence the personal and social adjustment of people. Reading proficiency is the royal road to knowledge, it is essential to the success in all academic subjects. Reading involves a variety of interrelated activities: it is the ability of the brain to perceive, recognise, and interpret printed symbols. Reading is much more than word recognition; it is getting the meaning of individual words (Adejumobi, 2003). The essence of reading is therefore for comprehension purposes thus the major objective of reading instruction is to foster in each student the ability to understand printed symbols of a language.

Reading functions as a vital tool for information and knowledge processing. It is a pivot for all other school subjects that are content oriented. Reading experts noted that when the reading skill is mastered, transfer of knowledge to other school subjects is facilitated and reading helps students to tackle problems of comprehension (Jones, 1995; Lawal, 1999; Jacob, 2002; Isiugo-Abanihe, 2002, Myers, 2006 and Osikomaiya, 2017). Reading comprehension is reading to understand the passage or the content read. It is a skill which can be decomposed into a set of sub-skills for example, sequencing the events in a story, being able to paraphrase, knowing the vocabulary, predicting outcomes of a story, making inferences, finding the main idea, summarising, applying the information given and so forth. Therefore, a lack of competence in reading could reasonably be expected to present an obstacle to effective formal education. No effective learning can take place without students' competence in reading. Incompetence of students in reading leads to their dropping out of school. This is because reading comprehension does not limit itself to English Language only but also to other school subjects.

Most students do not possess enough vocabulary to cope with reading comprehension and as a result they do not only perform poorly in English Language but also in all other school subjects, they display absolute lack of understanding of the text as well as the rubrics (WASSCE Chief Examiners' Reports, 2007). Generally, students' poor performance in English Language is evidence that they do not read and do not have good command of the language of instruction (Otenaike and Osikomaiya, 2010). Most students spend very little time reading at home. Apari (2010) noted that lack of phonetic laboratory, faulty pedagogy, dearth of material resources, family background, dearth of English Language teachers and ill prepared English textbooks that flood Nigeria bookshops contribute to students' poor performance in English Language. Apart from these, poor study habit, poor motivation, lack of instructional materials, poor self-concept, poorly trained English language teachers, poor students' attitude are some of the factors responsible for students' unsatisfactory performance in English Language.

The importance of developing favourable attitude to reading is therefore a necessity since it has shown through various researches that students' attitude to reading affects their proficiency in reading tasks. Lawal (1985) asserted that positive attitude is likely related to high competence in reading comprehension and negative attitude relates to marginal competence in English Language. Ezeokoli (1986) said that positive attitude promotes learning while negative attitude hinders learning. Balogun (1981), Hamilton (1982) and Champeau (1997) concluded that achievement and attitude are mutually related. Attitude is a mental view, posture or disposition about a thing. Studies have identified variables such as age, status, gender, level of educational attainment, socio-economic status and experience, psychological, cultural and religious factors as some of the factors that can affect or influence the development of attitude towards a goal or an object (Oladunjoye, 2003 and Ezeokoli and Osikomaiya, 2011. If students see reading as a lifelong enablement, their attitude is bound to change. It is necessary therefore that students should be provided with the reading empowerment that will make them enjoy various school subjects. It is important then that reading is taught in such a way that it can

cut across the various aspects of the school curriculum (Onakaogu and Ohia, 2003). Since attitude is very important in whatever one is doing in life, its importance cannot be neglected in the teaching and learning of reading. It should be noted that attitude can be acquired or learnt. Hence, attitude will be examined as one of the variables that are likely to determine students' academic performance in reading comprehension.

An attitude is a product of socialization that is formed in the relevant environment through direct or indirect learning, and it helps to determine how people react to various people and objects. It is something that can affect the cognition, emotion and evaluation of people towards specific people or objects and as a result how they react or respond to the latter (Smith, 1982 and Wang, 1994). Gardner and Lambert (1972) said that learners who have favourable attitude towards a language, its speakers and culture tend to be more successful in their learning than those without it. It has been proven that a positive attitude, more often than not, leads to successful learning. Grojeans (1982) corroborated this by saying that attitude to language plays an important role in learning a language. Osikomaiya (2008) and Popoola and Osikomaiya, (2020) opined that negative attitude to school work produces unfavourable achievement among students. Teachers and other educators generally believe that students learn more effectively and achieve better when they are interested in what they learn. It is imperative to note that students' attitude would be improved when student-centered method of teaching is adopted by the teacher.

Scaffolding is a strategy that gives temporary support or assistance provided by someone capable that permits a student to perform a complex task. The scaffolding strength rests on the constructivist approaches to teaching and learning. Vygotsky (1978) argued that cognitive development is enhanced through collaboration and social interaction in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The Zone Proximal of Development is seen as the gap between what a learner can accomplish independently and what can be accomplished in collaboration or with the guidance of a more experienced other (Brinner, 1999). Hobsbaum (1996) said that ZPD is the distance between the children's observed developmental level of their potential development given guidance in collaboration with an adult or a peer. Jaramillo (1996) said that teachers activate this zone when they teach students concepts that are just above their current skills and knowledge level which motivates them to perform better beyond their current skill or knowledge level. Through increased interactions and involvement, the learner is able to extend to higher level of cognition (Bruner, 2001). The guidance provided by the More Knowledgeable Other - MKO - in the ZPD in the form of structural support mechanism is known as Scaffolding (Bruner, 1984). As the learner takes on more control of the task, the scaffolding is gradually removed, allowing the students full control and responsibility. Scaffolding occurs best in an environment where the learners are provided with the opportunity to communicate their thoughts through conversations which is facilitated or directed by a teacher (Osikomaiya, 2013)

The learning of English largely depends on the way the item to be learnt is presented to the learner and the creative ability of the teacher in his presentation to the students. There is a need to use instructional approaches that are designed to give students the skills that are necessary to construct their own meaning from the lesson. The use of conventional method by teachers who deliver the content to students passively should be discarded. The situation has no doubt informed

so many research efforts which have been directed towards finding alternatives to the use of conventional method by teachers.

Statement of the Problem

Deficiency in learning English language has substantial negative effect on students' performance in nearly all the school subjects. Furthermore, students' written communication in English bears evidence that contemporary Nigerian secondary school students can hardly read and comprehend text independently. The results of internal and external examinations in English language indicate that students' comprehension ability is poor. The situation has been among other factors attributed to English language teacher's use of ineffective methods of teaching reading and students' attitude to reading comprehension. It is against this background that the study examined the effects of scaffolding instructional strategy on secondary school students' attitude to English Language reading comprehension.

Hypothesis

A null hypothesis was stated thus:

There is no significant main effect of treatment (Scaffolding Instructional Strategy) on students' attitude in English Language reading comprehension was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Methodology

The research adopted pretest, posttest, and control group quasi experimental design. The study adopted two levels of the independent variable (instructional strategy) Scaffolding Instructional Strategy and Modified Conventional Method. The dependent variable used in the study was attitude to reading comprehension. The target participants of this study consisted of students in public secondary schools in Odogbolu Local Government Area, Ogun State. Senior secondary students in class II were selected and 120 students participated in the study. Two research instruments used in this study were used, namely: English Language Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (ELRCAT). A test re-test method was used to establish reliability of the test. The reliability co-efficient was 0.84. and Questionnaire on Students' Attitude to Reading Comprehension (QSARC). Cronbach's Alpha method was used to establish reliability of the test. The reliability co-efficient was 0.87. Twelve weeks was used for treatment procedure. The research was carried out by visiting the four selected schools and the investigator organized a training programme for the research assistants and they were trained for two weeks. Questionnaire was administered to the participants as the pretest assessment tools. The treatment was administered to the students for a period of 8 weeks and after the treatment, achievement test was administered to the participants as posttest.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the posttest students' attitude to reading comprehension

Treatment Group	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
Scaffolding Instructional Strategy	60	70.3500	7.93368	
Conventional Method Control Group	60	63.6500	9.59489	scaffolding method better
Total	120	67.0000	9.38979	

The result in Table 1 revealed that participants in the scaffolding instructional method group had a mean score of 70.35 with a standard deviation of 7.93 whereas participants in the conventional method control group had a mean score of 63.65 with a standard deviation of 9.59. This implies that the scaffolding method not only improves overall student achievement but also narrows the performance gap among learners compared to traditional teaching methods

Univariate Analysis of Covariance between-subjects effects of posttest students' attitude to reading comprehension

Table 2: Tests of between-subjects effects of posttest students' attitude to reading comprehension

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1348.886 ^a	2	674.443	8.631	.000
Intercept	11235.682	1	11235.682	143.778	.000
Attitude pretest group	2.186	1	2.186	.028	.867
Error	1348.272	1	1348.272	17.253	.000
Total	9143.114	117	78.146		
Corrected Total	549172.000	120			
	10492.000	119			

a. R Squared = .129 (Adjusted R Squared = .114)

The results in Table 2 indicated that there was a significant effect of scaffolding instruction on students' attitude to reading comprehension ($F_{(1, 117)} = 17.253$; $p < .05$). The hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of scaffolding on students' attitude to reading comprehension was rejected by this finding. The implication of the finding was that instructing students with scaffolding instructional method has significant gain on their attitude to reading comprehension.

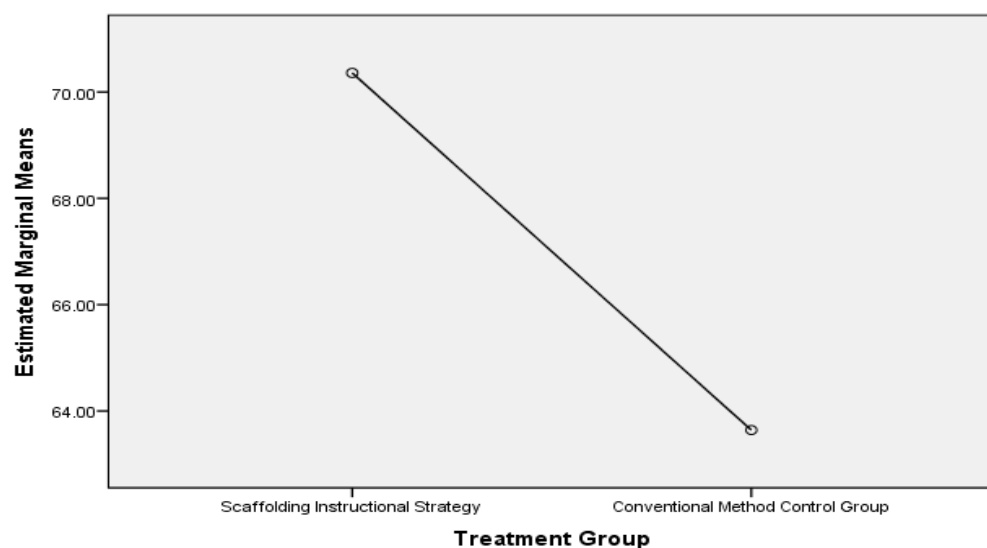
Table 3: Pairwise comparisons of group differences in posttest students' attitude to reading comprehension

(I) Treatment Group	(J) Treatment Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^b	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Scaffolding Instructional Strategy	Conventional Method Control Group	6.717*	1.617	.000	3.514*	9.919
Conventional Method Control Group	Scaffolding Instructional Strategy	-6.717*	1.617	.000	-9.919*	-3.514

Based on estimated marginal means, *. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Results in Table 3 showed that scaffolding instructional method has a significant effect on students attitude to reading comprehension over and above the conventional method control group (MD = 6.717; STD error = 1.617; $p < .05$). This means that scaffolding instructional strategy was more effective than the conventional method in the improvement of students' attitude to reading comprehension. Therefore, scaffolding instructional strategy was more effective than modified conventional method. This order can be represented as Scaffolding Instructional Strategy > Modified Conventional Method. The difference between the post attitude score of the control group and the two experimental groups is significant. This result is graphically illustrated in Figure 1.



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pretest Students' Attitude to Reading Comprehension = 69.4667

Discussion of Findings

Scaffolding Instructional Strategy on students' attitude in English Language reading comprehension

There was a significant main effect of treatment on students' attitude to English language reading comprehension. The study revealed a significant main effect of treatment on students' attitude to reading comprehension in English Language. Looking at the two groups (scaffolding instructional strategy and modified conventional method), modified conventional method had the lowest post attitude mean score. The study confirmed that the scaffolding instructional strategy significantly developed students' positive attitude to reading comprehension.

This corroborates the findings of Hawkers (1995), Adeosun (2002) and Salau (2005) who discovered that methodology is significantly relevant to students' attitude to learning. Furthermore, the study reveals that students in scaffolding had a significantly higher post attitude mean in reading comprehension than modified conventional group. This may be due to the fact that the students in scaffolding instructional strategy group had better learning opportunities through interaction, dialogue and discussion; this is because the strategy involves active participation of students. This showed that the more the students are exposed to language activities the better their attitude to learning the language.

Conclusions

This study has demonstrated that the use of instructional scaffolds strategy is more effective in fostering students' attitude to English reading comprehension than conventional mode of instruction. In addition, the use of conversational dialogues which scaffolding strategy embodied ensured students' engagement and active participation in English language lessons.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have profound implication for teaching of reading comprehension in Nigeria because scaffolding instructional strategy has been found to be effective and viable alternatives to the conventional method that is in practice in most of the schools in Nigeria. Scaffolding instruction should be utilised to improve cognitive achievement and positive attitude of participants to English language. This will help to reduce the rate of failures in English language

Recommendations

1. The teachers of English Language in Nigerian secondary schools should be encouraged develop interest in the use of student-centered instructional strategies in order to improve students' performance in English.
2. Curriculum planners and experts in English Language should design curriculum that are students' activity based.
3. Textbook writers should incorporate strategies that promote independent reading. Teachers should through seminars and workshops acquaint themselves with innovative strategies such as scaffolding so as to use it in class.

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