Indigenous Storytelling and Pupils' Early Comprehension Skill in South-Western Nigeria

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Abstract- Comprehension is the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning. However, in Nigeria, achievement of pupils continue to be low and many researchers have pinpointed teachers' use of inappropriate teaching strategies as well as insufficient and inadequate teaching materials among others as reasons for pupils poor academic achievement. This study therefore investigated indigenous storytelling and pupils' comprehension skill in south-western Nigeria. The pretest-posttest control group quasi-experimental research design was used. The research also adopted a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial matrix design which consisted of instructional strategy at two levels (indigenous storytelling group and one control group), moderator variable of gender (male and female) and home language (yoruba and other languages). Participants were selected from Two (2) Local Government Areas that were purposively selected in Ibadan, Nigeria. Also, basic I Class was purposively selected. This is because primary one pupils are still at the formative period of their comprehension skills. Indigenous story instructional guide, conventional method guide, comprehension skills scale were the research instruments used. Treatment lasted for 6 weeks. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test null hypotheses 1 to 7 formulated. These hypotheses were tested at 0.05 as the p-value. In addition, estimated marginal means was used to reveal the difference in the mean scores across groups. The study found out that there is a significant main effect of treatment on pupils comprehension skills $(F_{1,34}= 178.90; P<0.05;$ Partial $\eta^2=0.84)$. The effect size accounted for 84%. The table also reveals that pupils exposed to indigenous storytelling intervention had the highest mean (34.35) in terms of comprehension skills while those in the conventional method had the least mean score (16.75). There is also a significant interaction effect of treatment, gender and home language on pupils comprehension skills $(F_{(1,34)}=5.000; P<0.05; \eta^2=0.12)$. The effect size accounted for 12%. Male pupils exposed to indigenous storytelling intervention who speak yoruba language at home had the highest mean (36.28) than those who speak other languages at home (34.26). Indigenous storytelling was effective in improving the comprehension skills of pupils in Ibadan Nigeria. The study recommends that, the mother tongue should be priotised in educating year one pupils.

Key words: Indigenous storytelling, comprehension skills, south-western Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

Comprehension is a critical learning skill for all students. It is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Reading comprehension is the application of skill that evolves other purposes (listening or oral comprehension) to a new form of input (text). The reader must be able to construct meaning and make correction based on what they know and what they are reading. (Arinze, Osadebe & Numdi, 2024) Reading comprehension is an exercise a reader engages in to extract meaning out of a text. According to Hennesy (2020), it is the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning. It relies on two interconnected abilities: word reading (being able to decode the symbols on the page) and language comprehension (being able to understand the meaning of the words and sentences). Simply put, it is reading with understanding.

Learners need reading comprehension skills to successfully accomplish the educational goals and expectations, which are required in the classroom settings (Capin, 2023).Reading for comprehension has been indicated to be very important in academic achievement as it helps pupils to construct meaning from text as well as to examine the meaning of the text (Anidi,Obidike & Anyachebelu, 2023). In Nigeria, around 73% of children aged between 7 and 11 years lack foundational reading skills, highlighting a significant challenge (UNICEF, 2022). Estimates suggest that children in rural areas account for 63% of this total, and 84% of this amount are from the lowest income quartile (UNICEF, 2023).Unfortunately reading comprehension has constituted a huge problem which has made it to be a subject of prime interest worldwide especially in developing nations (Hennesy, 2020)

Literature on pupils achievement in reading comprehension revealed that achievement of pupils

continue to be low and many researchers have pinpointed teachers' ignorance of appropriate teaching strategies and teaching materials among others as the reasons for pupils poor academic achievement. It has also been revealed that teachers' use of conventional method in teaching reading comprehension in schools presently contribute to low achievement (Arinze, Osadebe and Numdi, 2024). According to Acedillo (2023). Poor reading comprehension has a crucial impact on understanding the context. This is one of the most common problems among students and teachers in basic education in Nigeria. Reading with comprehension lay the foundation for future learning and comprehension in all subject areas. Without this foundation, students would find it difficult to succeed academically, particularly in reading and writing as well as in subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies (Requiso-Jimenez & Bascos-Ocampo, 2022). Given the levels of reading comprehension namely: literal, inferential, evaluative, and appreciative, it is not surprising that most young learners have difficulties in reading. Learners lack fluency and are inefficient in decoding the text. They are not capable of making connections between what they read and what they already know (Gonzales 2020; Lubaton, Palado & Mosqueda, 2024).

It has been observed that students' performance in reading comprehension has been generally poor. According to some studies, although students can decode words, they have difficulty understanding what they read. In Nigeria, there is a general consensus by various investigators that reading comprehension is a problem (Obiageli and uchena, 2023). There have been downward trends in pupils' performance in external examinations among Nigerian Primary School Pupils. Equally, most pupils' reading abilities are very poor and this has led to low performance in reading comprehension (Okika, 2021). Menakaya et al. (2022) stress that in most schools, conventional/traditional approach is the most common strategy of teaching used by teachers in carrying out the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. Also, researches have established that one of the reasons for this failure is the poor method of teaching employed by teachers as well as the fact that reading is not recognized as a separate school subject. Thus, teachers are not adequately trained to teach it. Most teachers use traditional methods to teach English and by extension reading. The weaknesses of these methods directly impede

students' comprehension, the consequence of which is the mass failure in both internal and external examinations (Akubo, Oyetunde, Anyebe & Anyebe, 2024)

The transfer of literacy related skills occurs both ways and is hence bidirectional in the Nigeria context (Humble, Dixon, Gittins & Counihan, 2024). Some other researchers have claimed that when a person is taught in the mother tongue, such a person understands what is being taught faster and more easily than when he/she is taught in another language. One of the major issues that students face in learning in Nigeria has to do with the inadequate grasp of the language of instruction that plays an important role in the students' development of conceptual understanding. Hence, students learning with a language background other than the Mother Tongue at the early stage might be faced with tremendous difficulty in comprehending the textbooks, teaching aids and discussions in an unfamiliar language (Alimi, 2020).

Storytelling is one of the effective ways of presenting a comprehension task. It is an important method of teaching and it can be beneficial in improving students' speaking as well as listening skills. Sharing experiences through the medium of storytelling enable individuals to build understanding between one another. Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman (2011) have found that listening to stories read aloud help the students to develop sound listening habits and at the same time pave the way to promote comprehension through consistent exposure to the interesting and meaningful content of the stories. According to him, reading stories aloud has positive impact on language skills. Storytelling may increase students' language comprehension in quite remarkable ways (Sahibzada, Ahmadzai, Niaz & Laftah, 2020). According to Rivera (2016), by using storytelling, learners may demonstrate and show progress in comprehension, recalling information, and arrangement of events in the correct order.

Through storytelling teachers engage learners actively in class participation. Also, learners are able to construct their own understanding, by building upon their previous knowledge. Promoting students' social instruction on meaningful tasks enhances learning. Storytelling offers unlimited opportunities for developing students' authentic awareness and respect for children with diverse language and

cultural backgrounds (Sahibzada, Ahmadzai, Niaz & Laftah, 2020). Stories contains elements such as inferences, suspense, exploring themes, general symbols, thinking and literary terms that lead learners to think for the meaning and comprehension (Sahibzada, Ahmadzai, Niaz & Laftah, 2020). Indigenous storytelling can be used as an effective strategy for students' comprehension, especially for the students having reading comprehension problem. To boost up comprehension, teachers can help students monitor their own understanding as they read (Goudvis & Harvey 2000). Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman (2011) asserted that listening to stories, read aloud helped the students developed sound listening habits and at the same time paved the way to promote comprehension through consistent exposure to the interesting and meaningful content of the stories. Some studies have shown the effects of traditional storytelling in ESL classrooms. Traditional stories can be a valuable resource for language learning in the ESL classroom because they are regularly told in multilingual households (Sanaeifar 2018; Hilda & Pelokazi, 2023). In the same vein, Widdowson (2015) describes factors that affect reading comprehension which include the readers" background and prior knowledge, quality of reading materials and types of teachers, text instruction as well as gender. Adesoji et al. (2015) observe that researchers have differed on the impacts that gender has on these instructional strategies leading to inconclusive findings.

Hypotheses

$H_{01:}$ There is no significant main effects of treatment on pupils' comprehension skills
$H_{02:}$ There is no significant main effects of Gender on pupils' comprehension skills
$H_{03:}$ There is no significant main effects of home language on pupils' comprehension skills

$H_{04:}$ There is no significant interaction effects of treatment and gender on pupils' comprehension skills

$H_{05:}$ There is no significant interaction effects of treatment and home language on pupils' comprehension skills

$H_{06:}$ There is no significant interaction effects of gender and home language on pupils' comprehension skills

$H_{07:}$ There is no significant interaction effects of treatment, gender and home language on pupils' comprehension skills

II. METHODOLOGY

The research used the pretest-posttest control group quasi-experimental research design. The design was used because it is most appropriate when carrying out a group quasi-experimental research. The research also adopted a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial matrix design which consisted of instructional strategy at two levels (indigenous storytelling group and one control group), moderator variable of gender (male and female) and home language (Yoruba and other languages). Two (2) Local Government Areas were purposively selected from the eleven Local Government Areas in Ibadan. From each of the Local Government Areas, one school was randomly selected making a total of two schools. Also, basic one class was purposively selected. This is because primary one pupils are still at the formative period of their comprehension skills. Indigenous story instructional guide, conventional method guide, comprehension skills scale were the research instrument used. Treatment lasted for 6 weeks. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test null hypotheses 1 to 7 formulated. These hypotheses were tested at 0.05 as the p-value. In addition, estimated marginal means was used to reveal the difference in the mean scores across groups.

III. FINDINGS

$H_{01:}$ There is no significant main effects of treatment on pupils' comprehension skills

Table 1: Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of pupils' comprehension skills by Treatment, gender and home language

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4012.547[a]	8	501.568	37.805	.000	.899
Intercept	976.353	1	976.353	73.592	.000	.684

pre_test	31.041	1	31.041	2.340	.135	.064
Treatment	2373.486	1	2373.486	178.900	.000	.840
gender	21.143	1	21.143	1.594	.215	.045
Home_language	1.289	1	1.289	.097	.757	.003
Treatment * gender	1.249	1	1.249	.094	.761	.003
Treatment * Home_language	1.770	1	1.770	.133	.717	.004
gender * Home_language	16.437	1	16.437	1.239	.273	.035
Treatment * gender * Home_language	66.337	1	66.337	5.000	.032	.128
Error	451.081	34	13.267			
Total	33324.000	43				
Corrected Total	4463.628	42				

a. R Squared = .899 (Adjusted R Squared = .875)

Table 1 reveals that there is a significant main effect of treatment on pupils comprehension skills ($F_{1,34}$= 178.90;$P<0.05$; Partial η^2=0.84). The effect size accounted for 84% (Partial η^2 x 100). Therefore, the null hypothesis 1 was rejected. In order to determine the magnitude of significant main effect across the treatment groups, the estimated marginal means of the treatment groups is shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Estimated Marginal Means on pupils comprehension skills

Variables		N	Mean	Std. Error
INTERCEPT				
	Pre-test	43	21.23	-
	Post-test	43	25.55	0.578
TREATMENT	Control	21	16.75	0.848
	Experimental	22	34.35	0.903
GENDER	Male	23	26.29	0.829
	Female	20	24.81	0.818
HOME LANGUAGE	Yoruba	25	25.73	0.750
	Others	18	25.37	0.881

Table 2 shows that pupils comprehension skills ($\overline{X}$ =25.55) is higher than the pretest mean score ($\overline{X}$ = 21.23) after exposure to treatment. The table also reveals that pupils exposed to indigenous storytelling intervention had the highest mean ($\overline{X}$ =34.35) in terms of comprehension skills while those in the conventional method had the least mean score ($\overline{X}$ = 16.75). This implies that indigenous storytelling intervention is more effective in improving pupils' comprehension skills. The table also shows that male pupils ($\overline{X}$ = 26.29) had a higher mean score than female pupils ($\overline{X}$ = 24.81). Those whose home language is Yoruba ($\overline{X}$ =25.73) had a higher mean score than those who speak other languages at home ($\overline{X}$ = 25.37).

H_{02}: There is no significant main effects of Gender on pupils' comprehension skills

Table 1.0 shows that there is no significant main effect of gender on pupils comprehension skills ($F_{(1,34)}$=1.594;$P<0.05$; η^2=0.05). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was not rejected.

H_{03}: There is no significant main effects of home language on pupils' comprehension skills

Table 1.0 shows that there is no significant main effect of home language on pupils comprehension skills ($F_{(1,34)}$=0.094;$P<0.05$;η^2=0.00). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was not rejected.

H_{04}: There is no significant interaction effects of treatment and gender on pupils comprehension skills

Table 1.0 shows that there is no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on pupils comprehension skills ($F_{(1,34)}$=0.094;$P<0.05$;η^2=0.00). Therefore, hypothesis 4 was not rejected.

H_{05}: There is no significant interaction effects of treatment and home language on pupils' comprehension skills

Table 1.0 shows that there is no significant interaction effect of treatment and home language on pupils comprehension skills ($F_{(1,34)}$=0.133;P<0.05; η^2=0.00). Therefore, hypothesis 5 was not rejected.

$H_{06:}$ There is no significant interaction effects of gender and home language on pupils' comprehension skills

Table 1.0 shows that there is no significant interaction effect of gender and home language on pupils comprehension skills ($F_{(1,34)}$=1.239;P<0.05; η^2=0.04). Therefore, hypothesis 6 was not rejected.

$H_{07:}$ There is no significant interaction effects of treatment, gender and home language on pupils' comprehension skills

Table 1.0 shows that there is a significant interaction effect of treatment, gender and home language on pupils comprehension skills ($F_{(1,34)}$=5.000;P<0.05; η^2=0.12). The effect size accounted for 12%. Therefore, null hypothesis 7 was rejected. In order to determine the magnitude of significant main effect across the treatment groups, the estimated marginal means is shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3.0: Estimated Marginal Means of treatment, gender and home language on pupils comprehension skills

Treatment	gender	Home language	Mean	Std. Error
conventional methods	male	Yoruba	15.316[a]	1.520
		Others	19.312[a]	1.631
	female	Yoruba	18.123[a]	1.643
		Others	14.253[a]	1.722
Indigenous storytelling	male	Yoruba	36.283[a]	1.227
		Others	34.257[a]	2.218
	female	Yoruba	33.206[a]	1.675
		Others	33.665[a]	1.631

Table 3.0 reveals that male pupils exposed to indigenous storytelling intervention who speak Yoruba language at home had the highest mean ($\bar{X}$ =36.28) than those who speak other languages at home ($\bar{X}$ =34.26). The table also reveals that female pupils exposed to indigenous storytelling intervention who do not speak Yoruba language at home had a higher mean ($\bar{X}$ =33.21) than those whose home language is Yoruba ($\bar{X}$ =33.21).

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Main effects of treatment on pupils comprehension skills

Findings show that there is a significant main effect of treatment on pupils' comprehension skills. The effect of size accounted for 84%. Pupils' comprehension skills is higher than the pre-test mean score after exposure to treatment. The table also reveals that pupils exposed to indigenous storytelling intervention had the highest mean in terms of comprehension skills while those in the conventional method had the least mean score. This implies that indigenous storytelling intervention is more effective in improving pupils' comprehension skills. The table also shows that male pupils had a higher mean score than female pupils. Those whose home language is Yoruba had a higher mean score than those who speak other languages at home. This is in line with the findings of Rivera (2016), who established that by using storytelling learners demonstrate and show progress in comprehension, recalling information, and arrangement of events in the correct order. Through storytelling teachers engage learners actively in class participation. Also Sahibzada, Ahmadzai, Niaz & Laftah, 2020) also agree that learners are able to construct their own understanding, by building upon their previous knowledge. This may be because, stories contains elements as (inferences, suspense, exploring themes, genera, symbols thinking and literary terms) lead learners to think for the meaning and comprehension (Sahibzada, Ahmadzai, Niaz & Laftah, 2020). Goudvis & Harvey (2000) are also of the opinion that Indigenous storytelling can be used as an effective strategy for students' comprehension, especially for the students having reading comprehension problem.

Interraction effects of treatment, gender and home language on pupils comprehension skills
Male pupils exposed to indigenous storytelling intervention who speak Yoruba language at home had

a higher mean than those who speak other languages at home. Also female pupils exposed to indigenous storytelling intervention who do not speak Yoruba language at home had a higher mean than those whose home language is Yoruba. This is in line with the submission of Widdowson (2015) who opined that factors that affect reading comprehension includes the readers" background and prior knowledge, quality of reading materials and types of teachers , text instruction as well as gender. Adesoji et al. (2015) observe that researchers have differed on the impact gender has on these instructional strategies leading to inconclusive findings. They further assert that gender stands to be a moderating variable which others say that it has no impact on these instructional strategies.

V.   CONCLUSION

Indigenous storytelling was effective in improving the comprehension skills of pupils in Ibadan Nigeria. The study also shows that male pupils exposed to indigenous storytelling intervention who speak Yoruba language at home had a better comprehension skill than those who speak other languages at home, while female pupils exposed to indigenous storytelling intervention who do not speak Yoruba language at home had a higher comprehension skill than those whose home language is Yoruba.

VI.   RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, it was recommended that,
1.   Indigenous stories should be used to enhance pupils' comprehension abilities
2.   Mother tongue should be used in educating year one pupils
3.   More attention should be paid to the comprehension skills of female pupils

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