

ATTITUDINAL DISPOSITION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARDS READING COMPREHENSION IN SOUTH - WEST STATES OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the attitudinal disposition of Secondary School students to Reading Comprehension in South - West States of Nigeria. One hundred and fifty Senior Secondary School 2 students from thirty schools were sampled. A self-designed questionnaire was used to collect data, which was analyzed using percentages. The findings showed that the parental educational background contributes towards the students' performance in reading comprehension. In addition, the parental environment plays a significant role in facilitating the reading of the children. Based on the findings it was recommended that the teachers, parents and school authority should provide solutions to the factors that hinder effective reading of the students.

Introduction

Reading is the crux of most formal learning and therefore becomes indispensable in this modern era, which depends on written communication for both personal growth and national survival. Reading is one of the most important skills in English language. It is an important factor in comprehension and success at examination. A child who cannot read and comprehend in English at secondary school level is doomed in the educational system (Otenaike, 2005).

Reading, which is a successful interaction of a reader with a text, is an indispensable skill for every learner in an educational environment. Nigerian students have over the years continued to perform poorly in the comprehension reading sections of the English language examination (Jiboku, 2003). This poor performance has been a source of concern to both the parents and teachers of English language.

Various researchers as Houghton (2001), Jacobs (2003), Jones (1995), Lawal (1997), have pointed out different factors that causes reading disabilities among Nigerian students. These include environmental, psychological and physical factors etc. Other researchers as Ayodele (1998), Adegbile (2003), Jiboku (2003), Odinko & Adeyemo (1999), worked on the relationship between socioeconomic and reading comprehension, and concluded that they have significant effect on the reading comprehension of the students. However, the findings are inconclusive in nature, because they did not investigate the students' factors as it affects their reading comprehension. This study therefore sought to examine the attitudes of students to reading comprehension. Specifically, the following research questions were answered:

1. Is there any significant difference between the students reading ability and the level of their parents' education and socio economic background?
2. Is there any significant impact the students' environment play in their reading ability?
3. What is the general attitude of students towards reading comprehension?

Methodology

The study adopted an expo facto design approach to examine the general attitude of students towards reading comprehension. The samples for the study consisted 150 Senior Secondary School 2 students drawn randomly from three states in the South western region. Proportionate sampling techniques to select ten co-educational schools each and five (5) English language students from each school, making a total of 30 schools and 150 students from the states involved in the study. The data collected was analysed using simple percentage.

Instrument

A self-designed instrument was used to examine the general attitude of students towards reading comprehension. The instrument was administered with the help of research assistants for proper coverage of the twenty local governments involved in the study. It took one month to complete the administration of the instrument. The instrument contained a list of fifteen (15) items for the teachers. They have a modified four point Likert Rating Scale from Strongly Agreed to Strongly Disagreed. The instrument had two sections – Section A is on the demographic information of the students on age, sex, level of education etc. Section B of the instrument contained items eliciting information from the subjects on the theme of the work.

Research Question 1

Is there any significant difference between the students reading ability and the level of their parents' education and socio economic background?

Table 1: Level of Parents Education and Students Reading Ability

Nos.	Items	Positive	%	Negative	%	Total
1.	My parents are well educated.	92	61.3	58	38.7	150
2.	My parents regularly teach me English comprehension.	68	45.3	82	54.7	150
3.	My parents often correct my pronunciation when reading.	90	60	60	40	150
4.	My parents encourage me to speak English language at home.	92	61.3	58	38.7	150
5.	My parents buy reader novels, newspaper and several magazines for me.	67	44.7	83	55.3	150

From the table, only 61.3% parents are educated out of 150 parents while 38.7% students come from illiterate homes. Although, many of these parents encourage their children to read at home as shown on item 4. also 44.7% of the students have reading texts at home and were encouraged or taught to read at home. These students are provided with necessary novels, newspapers and magazines that can aid their understanding of the language while 38.7 have no access to these.

This findings depicted that education of the parents contribute positively towards the students' performance in reading comprehension. Students should be encouraged to read novels, short stories, tales, letters, postcards, editorial, etc, as all these will expose and broaden their language proficiency (Awodele, 2003). Similarly, the literate parents bought novels for their children. This is in line with Jacobs (2002) and Williams (1999) who believed that the literate parents' help students activate and organize their background knowledge and experience they use in understanding tests, they are also of the opinion that their background experience facilitates comprehension.

Parental education background as perceived by the pupils has influenced on reading ability of the pupils and influenced students' choice of career tremendously (Ogunyemi 2004).

Research Question 2

Table 2: Is there any significant impact the students' environment play in their reading ability? Student's environment and reading ability

Nos.	Items	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%	Total
1.	Noise from my environment distracts me from understanding what I read.	90	60	60	40	150
2.	Our classroom is not bright enough to promote reading.	83	55.3	67	44.7	150
3.	Our classroom is not conducive for reading.	90	60	60	40	150
4.	Our school does have adequate facilities to promote effective.	80	53.3	70	46.7	150
5.	My home is not conducive for good reading and understanding of what we learn at schools.	58	38.7	92	61.3	150

From table 2 above, 60% of the students agreed that they have noisy environments that distract them from understanding what they read while 61.3% believed their different homes are adequate and conducive for reading. The subjects from motivating environment performed better than those from non-motivating environment. Parents and family environment play a significant role in facilitating the reading of the children. The intellectual and emotional atmosphere created either at home or school is very essential to reading. Parents who practice literacy at home with their children tend to participate in the academic activities of their children by helping with home reading with their children (Jiboku 2003).

The results corroborated the findings of Ogunyemi (2004), who asserted that if a child is given sufficient nurturing environments, the child is likely to be in a better position to provide reasonable answers when confronted with certain problems.

Research Question 3**Table 3: General attitude of students towards reading**

Nos.	Items	Agreed	%	disagreed	%	Total
1.	I forget what I read easily.	60	40	90	60	
2.	I cannot read well due to my poor sight.	73	48.7	77	51.3	
3.	I find it difficult to understand what I read because I did not concentrate.	87	58	63	42	
4.	My eyes move too fast when reading to the extend of skipping some words.	103	71.3	43	28.7	
5.	My eyes and hand do not centre on the same item when reading.	69	46	81	54	
6.	I enjoy reading.	91	60.1	59	39.3	

From the table, the most significant disability is lack of coordination of the eye and hand, which is 71.3% .60% of them, agreed that they enjoy reading while 40% easily forget what they read. Hassan (2006) explained that learning to read is a process which demands ability to make associations between visible symbols and auditing sounds. She also noted that reading disabilities could be caused partly by linguistic and partly by environment factors.

Schema theory explained that a reader's ability to comprehend is assisted by his experience and prior knowledge of the subject matter discussed in the text (Ogunniyi 2001). Similarly, Adegbile (2003) suggested that teachers should review their pedagogy, one of the ways to facilitate effective reading comprehension in schools.

Recommendations

The teachers, parents and school authority should find solutions to the factors that hinder effective reading of the students. Parents should encourage and develop the habit of reading in the students. Teachers of English language need to be provided with required facilities to teach reading. The government, parents, voluntary associations should be encouraged to help in providing equipment that will facilitate reading.

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