

Effects of Retelling on Adult Learners' Literal and Interpretive Comprehension Levels among Extramural Learners in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of retelling on extramural students' literal and interpretive comprehension in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria. The study adopted the pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design. The population included all the extramural adult learners in the city of Ibadan. Through the use of purposive and random sampling, a total number of fifty-six (56) students was selected for the study. Three hypotheses were raised and the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was utilized for the analysis of data. The findings from the study revealed that retelling had significant effect on extramural students' literal comprehension ($F(1,36) = 63.742, P < 0.05$). Treatment also had significant effect on students' interpretive level of reading comprehension ($F(1,37) = 67.774, P < 0.05$). Gender had effect on students' performance in reading comprehension ($F(1,28) = 95.326, P < 0.05$). Based on these findings, the study recommended that retelling strategies which can motivate learners in class should be utilized in extramural classes. It also recommended that such non-formal educational activities should be encouraged.

Keywords: extramural, retelling, reading comprehension,

Introduction

It is no gainsaying the fact that the famous formal education with its well structured and rigid tradition cannot cater for all the educational requirements of various categories of learners in our developing country – Nigeria. Trends in general education show that certain individuals have benefited from non-formal education and many more are exploring its benefits to make themselves resourceful in society. Such individuals range from the highly educated professionals (who need some kind of non-formal education) to the under-privileged individuals and school drop-outs, who, for certain reasons could not complete their formal education. According to Radcliffe and Colletta (1989),

the universal compulsory formal education with its high costs and labour intensive technology was not necessarily the most means for meeting the diverse learning needs of a developing society. Pp 60.

The implication of the assertion above is that non-formal education complements formal education in any developing society to enable it to achieve its national and educational goals. Defining non-formal education, Radcliffe and Colletta viewed it as “any organized educational activity outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity that is intended to serve identifiable learning clientele and learning objectives.” This type of education is characterized by flexibility in timing and is strictly patterned to meet the goals of the learners.

A significant aspect of non-formal adult education programme which this study is focusing on, is the extramural programme. Described as “second chance” or “alternative education” by Owusu – Boampong (2008), this type of learning caters for individuals (both youths and adults) who did not have access to, or who withdrew from formal primary or basic education. The essence of this educational activity is to equip them with the learning content equivalent to that of formal schools in a given nation so that they can gradually be mainstreamed into the formal school system. Extramural educational programme is usually an evening learning where learners gradually get exposed to the primary and secondary school curriculum, after which they will participate in the state’s organized formal examinations. Such examinations include those organized by the National Examination Council (NECO) for Junior Secondary School III pupils as well as the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE).

According to Adegoke (2001), “extramural studies refer to an organized teaching and learning activity aimed at remediating the performance of students in some subjects after the first attempted examination....” This definition holds that extramural programme is that which presents a second chance for a learner to make adjustments and avail himself or herself an opportunity to pave way towards higher education. Adegoke (2001) further identifies the barriers to effective extramural studies as: time, money, ignorance or lack of direction and absence of infrastructure. These factors, coupled with the constant failure recorded by students prior to their enrolment into the extramural programme, may account for their low level of performance in comprehension tasks. Teachers and facilitators have to put in extra efforts to ensure that they are adequately equipped to sit for various examinations that can earn them the much needed certificates. It is therefore pertinent to engage learners in some comprehension strategies that can aid them in understanding basal and expository texts. This study, in a bid to enhance extramural students’ comprehension skills, examined the effects of retelling on extramural students’ reading comprehension of expository texts.

In a study carried out by Fasokun (1984), he identified the educational intentions of learners who attended extramural classes in a state in Western Nigeria. In the order of importance, the following reasons were given by students:

- to be able to comply with formal requirements
- to enable them to reach personal goals

- to acquire more knowledge
- to reach a social goal
- to change their profession
- to take part in social activities
- to reach a religious goal.

The various reasons given show that adult learners in such centres are desperately in need of social, economic and religious inclusion. These goals can only be attained if the basic skills and sub-skills of reading are internalized by them. There is hardly any goal set by these learners that can be reached without using literacy as a tool, particularly the reading skill.

Levels of Reading Comprehension

The basic meaning of the word “comprehension” is “understanding”. It is a subskill of reading which is in turn, a major literacy skill. Reading is a creative process of building meaning. Odiaka (2002) stated that as a literacy skill, reading involves building up meaning from a text through the interaction between a reader’s previous experience and the information in a text. It is an essential literacy skill without which an individual may not achieve self development in the modern adult world.

Comprehension, which is a sub-skill of reading has been defined in various ways by scholars in the field of reading. Quoting Dooley (2010), Koskinen, Cambrell, Kapinus and Heathington (1988) stated that comprehension is equated with the making of meaning. They stated that comprehension emerges over time; it is not automatic. However, while some researchers uphold the fact that comprehension of texts happens after learners have mastered decoding skills, others believe that it involves direct building of meaning from texts (Chall, 1996b). The latter set of researchers probably adhere to this school of thought owing to their cognitivist orientation in language learning.

Onukaogu (1994) stated that reading comprehension is “a process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among reader’s knowledge, the information suggested in the written language and the context of the reading situation”. From this definition of the reading comprehension process, there are certain factors that can affect a reader’s ability to build up meaning from a text. These factors include a reader’s intelligence, his or her background knowledge about the topic of discourse, the level of sophistication of the text and the reader’s knowledge of syntax and vocabulary.

Comprehension, as a thinking process of building meaning is characterized by varying levels of complexity. These are literal, interpretive and critical levels (Mohamad 1999 and Lasisi 2005). According to Mohamad and Lasisi, the literal level involves internalizing and understanding “overtly stated facts, opinions or ideas”. A reader’s ability to master the meaning of words in context enables him or her to excel at this level.

The interpretive or inferential level involves reading to draw conclusions and make generalization. When we read to arrive at implied meaning, in other words, making some kind of analysis to arrive at meanings not overtly stated, then we are making inferences. To realize this level of comprehension, readers should be taught how to critically analyse items read to unravel deeper meanings.

At the critical reading level, a reader should be able to pass judgment or evaluate items read. The following skills are usually tested at the critical level:

- the ability to differentiate between facts and opinions.
- the ability to recognize persuasive statements
- the ability to judge the accuracy of information given in the text.

In this write-up, the researcher has concentrated on the first two levels of comprehension which are the literal and the interpretive levels. This is because the extramural learners utilized in this research are more or less struggling readers even though they are at the advanced literacy level (Junior Secondary School III).

Retelling as a Method of Teaching Reading Comprehension

Retelling can be used as a pre reading, during reading or post reading activity to enhance learners' reading comprehension. As a post reading strategy, retelling is an important way of ascertaining that an individual has understood the content of a written material. According to Koskinen, Gambrell, Kapinus and Heathington (1988), retelling is a strategy that less proficient readers can use to improve their reading comprehension. They also noted that good readers use retelling to identify and remember important ideas or sequences of what they need to know or recall.

Owing to the rigid question and answer strategy adopted in most reading comprehension classes, teachers and facilitators hardly have the time to carry out the skill of retelling as a reading strategy. A story retold after an adult learner or a child has thoroughly read a passage would help a facilitator to assess the following: the client's fluency, organisational skills, knowledge of main ideas and details as well as ability to make inferences. Retelling as a teaching strategy appears to be very successful where students are urged to speak out and their efforts are rewarded by the teacher. Texts spoken out and originally organized by learners can also be put into writing and graded by the teacher or facilitator.

Retelling can be guided or unguided (Jegede 2003). In the guided retelling, 'Wh' questions are asked to unravel the content of the text. Examples are:

- How did the story begin?
- Who is the most important person in the story?
- What is the story about?

For unguided retelling, a student uses his or her discretion to retell the story around themes or elements of his interest. In this study, the following steps were adopted to implement the use of retelling in adult learners' reading classes.

- i. The facilitator, together with the research assistants, informed students about the essence of retelling.
- ii. Manuals containing fifteen passages on various life activities were distributed to the learners.
- iii. Learners read each passage properly.
- iv. Each adult learner was called upon to retell the passage treated during a given interactive session.
- v. The weak retellers were guided by research assistants on how to initiate answers to the questions asked.
- vi. 'Wh' questions were gradually asked and responses were received before learners presented retold written versions. Such "Wh" questions included: (a) What is the passage about? (b) What is the content of the second paragraph? (c) What next did the author say about the topic? (d) What major lessons have you learnt from the passage?

Studies on Retelling

Lu Fang Lin (2010) examined the impact of retelling on Chinese students' reading comprehension. Result showed that students retained read items as well as improved their vocabulary repertoire after being exposed to retelling. The strategy did not aid their retention of expository texts. Another study by Koskinen, Gambrell, Kapinus and Heathington (1988) involved the manipulation of the skill of retelling on the reading comprehension of fourth grade struggling readers. Result showed that the strategy improved their literal and interpretive comprehension level.

The studies carried out by Yusuf (2011) and Reed and Vaughn (2011) respectively, used retelling as a measure for ascertaining students' ability in reading comprehension. Yusuf experimented on the effect of instructional conversation method on the teaching of

comprehension among some Junior Secondary School Students in Kaduna. Retelling, cloze technique and word recognition were used for assessment. It was revealed through their measures that ICM enhanced pupils' achievement in reading comprehension. Reed and Vaughn (1988) noted that retell as a method of assessing reading correlated moderately with other standardized methods of testing reading achievement.

From the literature on retelling, it is evident that studies concentrated on using retelling to teach comprehension at the secondary school level, among adolescents. Also it has been frequently used as a method of assessing reading achievement. The present study examines the effect of retelling on adult learners' literal and interpretive comprehension.

Adult Learners' Reading Problems

The nature of adult learners' reading problems has necessitated the choice of the strategy of retelling and the steps to be adopted. Investigating into the myriads of adults' reading problems, Abe (1987) itemised these as perennial problems:

- Wandering mind and lack of concentration
- Lack of reading speed
- Inability to comprehend read items

These reading weaknesses were found out through direct interviews carried out on adult learners. The author attributed these negative reading habits to adults' personal problems, family problems and depression.

Hypotheses:

To guide the investigation carried out in this study, the following null hypotheses were stated:-

H₀₁: that there is no significant main effect of treatment on extramural students' literal level of reading comprehension.

H₀₂: that there is no significant main effect of treatment on extramural students interpretive level of reading comprehension.

H₀₃: that there is no significant effect of gender on students' reading Comprehension.

Method

The pretest-posttest control group quasi – experimental design was utilized for the study. The population comprised all the extramural students in Ibadan metropolis. The purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select fifty-eight (58) extramural students for the study. These were grouped into experimental and control groups. Only fifty-six students completed the study.

The instruments used for the study were twofold. The first one included the reading comprehension test which acted as the pretest and post test. The content, construct and face validity of this instrument were confirmed by experts in language testing.

The reliability index of the instrument was 0.82 so it was found highly reliable for the research. Students were asked to indicate their names, gender and age on their answer sheets. The second instrument was the reading manual which had fifteen reading passages for treatment. Attached to this was the training manual on how to adopt the strategy of retelling in the adult classroom. The pretest and posttest were administered by the researcher in conjunction with the research assistants. While the retelling strategy was used in the experimental groups the conventional method was used in the control group. Data collected were analysed using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA).

Results

H₀₁: There is no significant main effect of treatment (retelling) on extramural students' literal level of reading comprehension.

Table 1. Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on the effect of Retelling on Participants' Literal Comprehension.

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig (p)
Corrected model	1175.092	19	61.847	4.841	.000
Intercept	212.094	1	212.094	16.604	.000
Post literal	741.311	1	741.311	30.793	.000
Treatment	814.234	1	814.234	63.742	.000
Residual	459.890	36	12.774		
Total	5905.000	56			
Corrected Total	1556.571	55			

The result presented on Table 1 above shows that there was a significant main effect of treatment (retelling) on participants literal level of reading comprehension ($F(1,36) = 63.742, P < 0.05$). Based on this, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant main effect of treatment on extramural students' literal comprehension is rejected.

H₀₂: There is no significant main effect of treatment (retelling) on extramural students' interpretive level of reading comprehension.

Table 2: Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on the Effect of Retelling on Participants' Interpretive Level of Reading Comprehension

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig (p)
Corrected model	1574.305	18	87.461	2.398	.000
Intercept	2245.829	1	2245.825	58.679	.000
Post interpretive	1470.528	1	1470.528	61.570	.000
Treatment	2472.172	1	2472.172	67.775	.000
Residual	1349.623	37	36.476		
Total	7004.000	56			
Corrected Total	2923.929	55			

The results presented in Table 2 shows that there is a significant main effect of treatment (retelling) on extramural students' interpretive level of reading comprehension. ($F(1,37) = 67.775, P < 0.05$). Premised on this, the null hypothesis stated above is rejected. The result shows that treatment was responsible for the high level of performance of students at the interpretive level of reading comprehension.

H₀₃: There is no significant main effect of gender on students' reading comprehension.

Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) showing the Effect of Gender on Students' Reading Comprehension.

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig (p)
Corrected model	2112.486	27	78.240	17.381	.006
Intercept	2341.021	1	2341.021	80.780	.026
Gender	1171.795	1	1171.795	40.431	.007
Treatment	2762.540	1	2762.540	95.326	.000
Residual	811.442	28	28.980		
Total	7004.000	56			
Corrected Total	2932.929	55			

From Table 3, it is revealed that there is a significant main effect of gender on extramural students' reading comprehension post test scores $F(1,28)=95.326, P < 0.05$). The

null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect on gender on extramural students' reading comprehension is therefore rejected.

Discussion

This study was carried out to investigate the effect of retelling on extramural students' literal and interpretive comprehension levels. It also examined the effect of the moderating variable of gender on achievement in reading comprehension. The findings arrived at, show clearly that retelling and gender had significant effect on extramural students' reading comprehension.

These findings corroborate the findings arrived at, by Koskinen, Gambrell, Kapinus and Healthington (2010). After experimenting with the strategy of retelling on fourth grade struggling readers, it was found out that the students excelled in the comprehension skills of recall and making inferences. The uniqueness of this study lies in the fact that retelling, a strategy popularly used to teach comprehension among teenagers has proven to be effective among adult learners who are struggling readers. Participants' performance in literal and interpretive comprehension appeared similar as they had the mean scores of 10.71 and 10.91 in the literal and interpretive comprehension respectively. It can therefore be said that retelling did not have a higher impact on one comprehension level than the other. Also, the mean scores of males and females were roughly equal within the experimental group. While the males had the mean score of 21.21, females had the mean score of 21.24. The popular belief that females perform better than males in language tasks is not upheld by the findings **of this study.**

Conclusion and Recommendation

This research carried out in a typical extramural centre has helped to ascertain the fact that school learning can be enhanced if facilitators and learners arrange and carry out worthwhile learning. Appropriate strategies that can stimulate learning must be worked out to motivate adolescent and adult learners who are utilizing their "second chance" in any lifelong learning programme.

The following recommendations follow from the findings of this study:

Efforts should be made by organizers of extramural learning to employ strategies that can provide extramural students with intensive learning, particularly in reading comprehension.

Retelling as a strategy is characterized by the ability of the facilitator to give individual attention to learners. It is believed that approaches that can make educators give individual attention to learners would be more effective than the lecture method.

Extramural learning need not be abandoned; instead, more facilities and instructional materials needed to make learning effective can be provided. Since comprehension test equates to intelligence test, practical steps should be taken to teach comprehension skills to students enrolled in non-formal education centres. This will help to build their intellectual abilities. Other methods of retelling can be incorporated into the teaching-learning processes. These can include drawing, writing, group assignments, audio-dramatizing. These activities will enhance learning in other content areas.

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