



INTEGRATING THE CONCEPTS OF SAFETY AND SECURITY IN READING COMPREHENSION PASSAGES OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM FOR JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

Hanna Onyi Yusuf¹, Uduak Idoghor²

¹PhD, Department of Educational Foundation and Curriculum,
Faculty of Education Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

²PhD, Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology,
Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Abstract:

The paper listed and discussed safety and security values that can be integrated into the reading comprehension passages of the English Language curriculum for Junior Secondary Schools in Nigeria. The paper raised some challenges that English Language teachers may face in teaching some of the safety and security values. Suggestions were made on the possible ways of overcoming such challenges. The paper concluded with the need for English Language teachers to be trained in safety and security management. They should equally be encouraged to be more practical and resourceful in their teaching approach for meaningful, purposeful and impactful learning.

Keywords: safety and security, English language, reading comprehension

Introduction

Safety and security in the context of this paper is all about keeping the school environment free of hazardous situations that could put at risk the lives of students or school pupils. There are two areas that should always be considered in terms of safety, that is, unsafe conditions and unsafe acts. For most of the year, children spend more time at school than anywhere else other than their own home. At school, children need a secure, positive, and comfortable environment to help them learn.

Overall, schools are one of the safest places children can be. However, some schools have problems, such as bullying and theft, which make them less secure. These

problems make students and educators feel less safe, and it makes it harder for students to learn and for teachers to do their jobs.

Slippery floors, steep stairways without handrails all create opportunities for students to slip and fall. They are unsafe conditions that should be dealt with immediately. Hazardous chemicals in the school environment can lead to gas poisoning. And highly inflammable substances can start a wild fire. Crowded classrooms, classrooms with single doors, and narrow single exit gates can all result in students stepping on each other in the event of a fire or any other panicky situation. All of this jeopardizes school safety.

The truth is a large percentage of schools in Nigeria are not safe in the accepted sense of the word. Classrooms are crowded obviously, more money for the school but then more jeopardy for student safety. Fire exists and fire extinguishers are missing, fire drill is not a culture, and there is general lack of knowledge about safety among students. If a child's life is compromised or ruined because the school failed to do what is reasonably practicable to guarantee students' safety the school will find itself on the wrong side of the law. Besides, the parents of the kids affected by a tragedy in a school may not take it lying low. They could take vengeance on the school.

In addition, you risk losing your school's patronage and profitability as other parents begin to withdraw their kids from your school en masse because of safety concerns. You certainly don't want a crisis to happen in your school. So make safety a priority in your school now. There are often reports of missing kids especially during the 'ember' months, that is, September to December.

Stories of ritual killings make the rounds in Kaduna, Nigeria and most parts of the country towards end of the year period as people prepare for Christmas and the urge to make quick money for Christmas parties' heats up. Recently, there was a story of a school child kidnapped from a school. The kidnapper put the little boy in a sack and entered "keke napep". The boy's cry from the sack attracted the driver of the keke napep to ask about the content of the sack. The driver was not satisfied with the kidnapper's answer so he drove straight to the union's office where the kidnapper was arrested and beaten to death.

Some years back, a young boy was beaten up around Cement bus stop area in Lagos because he was accused of taking school kids to ritual killers for money making processes. How true those stories are, one cannot ascertain. But the missing people reports certainly increase around the 'ember' months. All schools should, ensure that school security is taken seriously as they improve on their school safety record.

There is nothing as disastrous as parent's pouncing on a school because their kids didn't get back from school. Rumours about missing kid's schools won't do any

school much good. Schools should strive to make safety a priority and safety and security should be the practice in every school.

Review of Related Literature

Prevailing research suggests that students' feelings of safety at school, and problems with peer relationships and bullying, are influenced by a broad array of factors, including students' own attributes, attributes of their schools, adults with whom students interact, families, neighbourhoods, and the broader society. A number of studies have shown that community-level factors, such as crime and poverty, while related to school safety, are not solely deterministic of school safety climate. However, it remains largely unknown how school policies and practices mediate the influence of neighbourhood and community-level factors on school safety. In particular, there is very little literature on the ways in which safety and security concepts can be integrated into the reading comprehension passages of the English Language Curriculum especially, in schools in Nigeria.

Educators, parents and students are concerned about the increased levels of violent incidences within schools and ensuring repercussions upon student performance. Children living with danger often develop defences against their fears interfere with their development as energy spent on these defences is not available for learning (Prothrow-Smith and Quaday, 1995). Researchers have recently examined school safety conditions and have considered the influence of bullying, gang violence, and violent activities within schools upon student outcomes (Baker, 1996; Furlong, Chung, Bates, and Morrison, 1995; Kimweli and Anderman, 1997).

Furlong et al., (1995) found that students who had been victims of violence had lower grades and higher levels of perceived danger within schools than their non-victim peers. The researcher suggests that high levels of school violence may have a "generalized retarding effect on a child's development and overwhelm coping and protective factors naturally present in the student's life" (pp. 294-295). Kimweli and Anderman (1997) concluded that students enrolled in violent schools are exposed to unpredictable events not under the student's control and found that smaller schools had lower levels of violence.

Based on the finding that extreme violence has been found to hinder academic cognitive, social, and emotional development (Furlong et al., 1995; Harris, 1995; Prothrow-Smith and Quaday, 1995), one can argue that an unsafe school environment would hinder academic achievement. In more violent schools, students have less time to focus on academic activities as they are concerned about other factor and personal

safety issues that is, too scared to learn (Kimweli and Anderman, 1997; Prothrow-Smith and Quaday, 1995). The review of the literature, however, did not uncover any study that addressed the influence of school safety conditions on student achievement. The safety characteristics of a school might explain some of the variance in student achievement between schools. Students with high levels of violence will be more apprehensive about their safety, distracted by violent events within classrooms and the school, and place a lower level of importance on components of learning than students in “safe” middle-level schools (Kimweli and Anderson, 1997). Because students within “safe” schools are not worried about victimization, they presumably have more time to devote to academic activities. Educators in “safe” schools would also be able to devote more time to teaching and less time disciplining students.

Researchers have also concluded that the following school-level conditions account for differences in educational effectiveness: Socio-economic background of the students within schools, ethnicity of the student body, school location, pupil-teacher ratios, number of experienced teachers, school organizational grade configuration, school size, and administrative leadership (Crone and Tashakkori, 1992; Eccles et al., 1991; Moore, 1984; Phillips, 1997; Rumberger, 1995; Tarter, Sabo, and Hoy, 1995; Weishew and Peng, 1987).

However, one important school-level variable—“safety” has not investigated within a multilevel study. Having a safe environment has been identified as a condition that directly influences individual student achievement within schools (Creemers, 1994).

From a policy perspective, it is important to know how schools effectively educate their students as communities rely on students to educate their children. It is difficult to alter the background characteristics of students, but it is possible to alter school conditions to improve the safety of the school environment.

Integrating the concept of safety and security into reading comprehension passages of the Junior Secondary School English language Curriculum

English Language is a subject that cuts across the curriculum. It is a compulsory subject for all students in all classes at the primary and secondary levels of education in Nigeria. Reading comprehension is one of the fundamental language skills children are expected to be exposed to all through their schooling (Yusuf, 2011, 2013). In view of this, young children need to be constantly inspired through meaningful reading comprehension lessons. This will make students to develop positive mental attitude that will ultimately help them in life. The author of this paper has created and

developed a few reading comprehension passages with concepts of safety and security that can be included in the reading component of the English Language curriculum for junior secondary schools in Nigeria. This author strongly believes that students should be security conscious and alert at all times. One way of making this to happen is by exposing students to reading more stuff about safety and security.

Challenges of Language Teachers in implementing concept of safety and security in reading comprehension lessons and possible solutions

- **Lack of creativity**

A language teacher should be creative especially in the reading comprehension aspect of language teaching. This is because children are bored when a subject, topic lacks the creativity to keep them aptly attentive. When the comprehension text lacks these attributes, the responsibility then falls on the teacher who should inject intriguing tit-bits momentarily, and make the comprehension lesson enjoyable. For instance, a comprehension lesson titled “safety in school” should include some practical examples of individuals demonstrating how to be safe in school. Children should be made to dramatize the virtue of safety as contained in the passage. When a teacher falls short of these expectations, the goal of reading comprehension with concept of safety and security defeated.

- **Poor command of English Language**

Many Nigerian primary school teachers are not competent to teach effectively in English language. For example, Gamut (1985) cited in Yusuf (2010) survey of English Language teaching conditions revealed 74% out of the 70 teachers studied could teach more effectively in Nigerian Language than they could in English Language. This type of situation compounds the pupil’s problem of acquiring English as a second language. Teachers should make conscious efforts to improve their level of competence in English Language by going for further training. They should also attend regular workshops, conferences and seminars.

- **Time**

Time here is related to portion of time belonging to particular events or situations, and this applies to the classroom situation. On one part, the teacher has a lot to do within so short a time. He marks assignments, teachers, goes round to correct erring ones, attends to special pupils – slow writers, slow learners etc. when it is time for reading comprehension lessons, an aspect that does not only enhance pupils’ language

proficiency but also exposes them to basic and pertinent safety virtues, he (the teacher) is already worn out.

This affects the learner too. Teachers should create time for children to relax in between lessons. Teachers should also adopt effective time management skills that will help them accomplish their task successfully.

- **Scarcity of “safety and security” related titles in reading comprehension passages**

In most primary English text books, comprehension passages are titled differently. Such titles include Air travel; Birthday parties, Train journey, visit to the zoo etc. There are hardly any titles with concept of safety and security.

It is recommended that comprehension passages should include concept of safety and security such as “keeping safe in school, war against violence, security gadgets among others. When children, from early age, learn how to stay safe, they are likely not to fall as victims in the hands of insurgents.

- **Poor teaching methods**

Most English language teachers do not have the knowledge of the appropriate method/technique to use in teaching children reading comprehension (Yusuf, 2009). Reading comprehension lessons can always be meaningful if teachers encourage and stimulate students to always make use of their relevant schema (that is, background knowledge/experience) to make and confirm predictions as they read the comprehension texts. Meaning does not always reside in the text. The reader has to activate his/her schema to make meaning out of print. The language teacher needs to guide children to achieve this by using interactive activities, active participation and collaboration and co-operative teaching/learning techniques. Teachers should use dramatization, miming, demonstration, pair reading, group work and interactive question and answer sessions. Teachers should encourage pupils to perform different activities before, during and after reading to enhance language proficiency.

- **Lack of reading specialist teachers**

In most primary schools, there are no specialist reading teachers. The English Language teacher assumes a dual role that is, as a language teacher and a reading teacher. Since the language teacher is not trained specially as a reading teacher, he/she is often found battling and trying to cope with the challenges in the classroom. In view of the fact that no education programme can rise above the quality of its teachers, the teacher factor becomes a critical one in the implementation of the concept of safety and security and

the improvement of reading efficiency. More effort is needed to raise their level of competence. Language teachers lack training in peace education. Safety and security concepts should be taught in teacher training colleges/colleges of education/universities.

- **Lack of adequate teaching facilities**

Most schools lack adequate teaching facilities/materials for teaching. This tends to hamper or incapacitate teachers. Facilities/teaching materials such as overhead projectors, television set, DVD players, VCD players, tape recorders, pictures, posters, etc. should be provided in adequate quantities for teachers. Jingles on safety and security, songs on safety and security and drama or playlets on safety and security need to be provided by schools/teachers in order to make learning more meaningful and interesting.

Proposed Reading Comprehension titles on safety and security

The following are safety and security that can be included in the titles of reading comprehension passages of the reading component of the English Language Curriculum for Junior Secondary Schools.

- Living in peace
- Security agencies
- Security personnel's
- Good neighbourliness
- Be your brother or sister's keeper
- Respect other people's religion/beliefs
- Say "No" to any form of violence
- Say "No" to any form of inhuman behaviour
- Keeping safe in school
- Respect for all lives
- Co-operation
- Equality and mutual benefit
- Competition without war
- Benefits of dialogue
- Peaceful Co-existence
- Mutual non-aggression

Sample Reading Comprehension Passages Developed by the Author of this Paper

Passage 1: Safety in Schools

Kids need a safe and comfortable environment to learn to the best of their capabilities. This means they have to feel safe in their school and be able to positively interact with their teachers and classmates. Parents and other adults can help make sure children

have a positive school experience by: Talking to your children about their day. Sometimes children won't tell you right away if they are having problems at school. Ask your children if they see anyone bullied, if they are bullied, or if anything else makes them feel uncomfortable. Look for warning signs, such as sudden drop in grades, loss of friends, or torn clothing.

Teaching children to resolve problems without fighting. Explain that fighting could lead to them getting hurt, hurting someone else, or earning a reputation as a bully. Talk to them about other ways they can work out a problem, such as talking it out, walking away, sticking with friends, or telling a trusted adult.

Keeping an eye on your children's internet use. Many elementary schools have computers with Internet or if there is a blocking devices installed to prevent children from finding explicit websites. Talk to your children about what they do online-what sites they visit, who they email, and who they chat with. Let them know they can talk to you if anything they see online makes them uncomfortable, whether it's an explicit websites.

Asking about the safety and emergency plans for your children's school. How are local police involved? How are students and parents involved? What emergencies have been considered and planned for?

Passage 2: Bullying

Unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behaviour, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture by an adult or student that is severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment, cause discomfort or humiliation, or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation. As with most harmful behaviour among children, in general bullying occurs wherever there is the least structure and adult supervision. Most incidents tend to occur on the playground, in bathrooms, in locker rooms, in cafeterias, in cyberspace, at bus stops, and in the school bus.

As a student

- Stay away from bullies.
- Tell an adult.
- Avoid bad situations.
- Make friends.
- If bullied, tell the bully to stop; then walk away
- Stay away from any unfamiliar person who is trying to trick you or force you to go with him or her.

- Let your parents and other trusted adults know about any suspicious persons or situations.
- Learn to describe people and vehicles.
- Know where to run and how to forcibly resist capture.
- Scream to be seen and to scare a stranger away.
- Stay with a buddy, a group, or parents at the bus stop.
- Report anyone hanging around or passing by regularly.
- Accept a ride only from someone approved by the school.
- Walk or bike only along a route that your parents or the school has determined is safe.
- Lock the door and never tell callers you are home alone.

Passage 3: Dauda's Truancy

Dauda, a soft-spoken African American student at Hampos School, describes an incident he was involved in during his first year. An older student from the same school assaulted Dauda outside school, beating him and knocking him to the ground, and then subsequently continued to threaten him after school. Wanting to avoid more conflict, Dauda spent the next four weeks leaving his house each morning in his school uniform, only to slip back into his house through the back gate once his mother left for work; all told, he missed almost five full weeks of school during the fall semester.

Dauda's truancy went unnoticed for more than two weeks before a staff member at the school began trying to reach his mother. When he returned to classes, his English teacher had resigned and been replaced with a woman he had never met, who didn't know him; his maths teacher was unhappy to see him back. Dauda's algebra teacher complained that a lot of the students at Hampos School, like Dauda, *"don't see education as a priority . . . They don't think it's important for them to be here every day."*

None of Dauda's teachers were informed about the reason for his prolonged absence from his classes, and none of them inquired. Instead, for many of his teachers, Dauda's unexplained absences reinforced their own negative stereotypes about Dauda and students like him: *"Pretty much,"* Dauda's maths teacher said one afternoon, *"you can give [those kids] work, but they will not do it."* Dauda felt that his maths teacher did not like him and went out of his way to pick on him. *"I am payin' attention sometime,"* he explained to an interviewer, *"but [my maths teacher] just turn[s] on me."*

After feeling like he was being repeatedly singled out in class, Dauda began withdrawing his effort in maths, and his grades plummeted. *"[My maths teacher] just get me so mad,"* Dauda explained, *"[that] I say forget it—I'm not doin' this [work] no more."* The weak bond between Dauda and his maths teacher crumbled quickly; in the absence of

any information about who Dauda really was—a shy, vulnerable, and frightened young man—his maths teacher fashioned a narrative about him in which he was cast as disinterested, unmotivated, and disruptive.

Dauda floundered in a school environment that lacked adult support. He was suspended twice during the school session for arguing with his maths teacher and missed over 35 full days of school that term. He failed every core subject both semesters, with the exception of one subject in which he earned a 'D'.

Passage 4: Halima's Determination

Halima at Lake Erie, had a very different experience, marked by much stronger and more supportive relationships with her teachers. Early in the year, two of Halima's close friends from primary school were shot and killed in gang-related violence. In a very short time, Halima's attitude towards school seemed to change dramatically—instead of an outgoing, cheerful girl, she became morose and fearful. In her classes,

Halima explained, she often had trouble focusing:

"[Bako's] desk was right next to mine," she told an interviewer. "I would be ready to do my work, and then all of a sudden, I would think about Bako, [and] then I just started crying." Halima continued to struggle, despite expressing strong motivation and talking regularly about joining her sister at college—she was distracted and had trouble completing work on time.

However, instead of pulling away from her, Halima's teachers—and particularly her algebra teacher—knit more closely together around her as she struggled. Her maths teacher offered to come in early before school to help her complete missed assignments encouraged her to join a club he sponsored after school, and kept in close contact with her family throughout the year. Halima slowly rebounded—eventually, her grades improved dramatically, until they exceeded her previous performance in school. She was selected for a national honour society, and one of her teachers observed that she had become one of the few students in her high school class for whom college was obviously attainable. Her maths teacher said of Halima, *"She's very independent . . . she's a great kid."*

Passage 5:

Walking and biking to and from school can be a great way to get exercise, interact with your children, and teach them lifelong traffic safety skills.

- Walk with an adult or responsible older child at all times.
- Children under 10 years old should cross the street only with an adult.
- Walk on the sidewalk if there is one.

- Walk facing the traffic, as far from the road/traffic as possible, if no sidewalk is available.
- Use traffic signals and marked crosswalks if available.
- Stop at the curb or edge of the road and look left, right and left for traffic before crossing the street.
- Walk; don't run.
- Give drivers time to see you before crossing the street.
- Keep looking for cars while you are crossing.
- Wear white clothing or reflectors when walking in the dark or in low light

Passage 6:

Every day, Aisha goes to school in a chaotic environment, where fights break out regularly, and teachers struggle to maintain order in their classrooms. Not all students in Kaduna attend schools as unsafe as Aisha's school, but concerns about safety are prevalent among students and teachers at many schools across the district. This is a basic issue that has serious consequences for students' academic growth and personal well-being.

Stay away from strangers

Safe environment

Chaotic environment safety tools

Security measures

The way forward

The way forward is to make foundational changes in our values, institutions and ways of living by cultivating the culture of safety and security consciousness and alertness. Security is the responsibility and business of all. All hands must be on deck to protect all vulnerable children against all forms of violence in human behaviour and the likes, in our schools and society at large.

Conclusion

The "seed" for building a safe and secure world free from any form of violence and in human behaviour are the young ones in junior secondary schools scattered all over the country/world. In view of this, the concepts of safety and security should be inculcated and planted in the hearts of children at the basic education level. The more children are exposed to the concepts of safety and security, the more conscious they will become of

their environment and possible intruders. They more the will be able to make informed decisions in future about being safe in an insecure world.

Recommendations

- Curriculum planners in Nigeria should include the concepts of safety and security in the English language curriculum for junior secondary schools in Nigeria. This will help to raise a new generation of security conscious citizens as well as citizens who will not take any security issue for granted. Interest in preserving and caring for the planet earth.
- Schools should set aside a day or time as “safety and security day”. On such days, students should be taught to practicalize or demonstrate the concept of safety and security through various activities within and outside the school community.
- Students should be exposed to practical activities such as field trips/educational visits. They should be exposed to projects and exchanges to heighten local and global awareness on safety and security.
- Schools should adopt a holistic and integral approach in promoting concepts of safety and security by encouraging students to engage in meaningful activities such as dramatization, miming, singing etc.
- Curriculum planners should ensure that the concept of safety and security such as keeping safe, security tools, war against violence, peaceful co-existence, etc are included in reading comprehension passages of the English Language curriculum.
- Workshops/seminars on safety and security should be organised periodically to acquaint teachers and school communities on knowledge of safety and security.

References

1. Baker, A. (1996). Major disciplinary violations In a Junior high school: exploratory study *Research in Middle Level Educational Quarterly*, 19(3), 1-20.
2. Creemers, B. P. (1994). *The effective classroom*. London: Cassell.
3. Crone, L. L., & Tashakkori, A. (1992, April). Variance of student achievement I effective and ineffective schools: Inconsistencies across SES categories. *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 346 613)

4. Eccles, J. S., Lord, S., & Midgley, C. (1991). What are we doing to early adolescents? The impact of educational contexts on early adolescents. *American Journal of Education*, 99, 521-542.
5. Furlong, M. J., Chung, C., Bates, M., & Morrison, R.L. (1995). Who are the victims of school violence? A comparison of student non-victims and multi-victims. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 18, 282-298.
6. Harris, J.M. (1995). *Relationship between violent experiences and academic performance in public schools*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Illinois State University.
7. Kimweli, D.M.S., & Anderman, E. M. (1997). Violence and substance abuse in schools: Adolescents' fear and school violence. *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association*, Chicago.
8. Moore, D.W. (1984, April). Impact of school grade organizational patterns on seventh and eight-grade students in K-8 and junior high schools. *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the New England Educational Research Association*, Rockport, ME (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 245 356).
9. Phillips, M.A. (1997). What makes schools effective: A comparison of the relationships of communitarian climate an academic climate to mathematics achievement and attendance during middle school. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34, 633-662.
10. Prothrow-Smith, D., & Quaday, S. (1995). *Hidden casualties: The relationship between violence and learning* (ISBN 0-937846-38-4). Washington, DC: National Health and Education Consortium and National Consortium for African American Children.
11. Rumberger, R.W. (1995). Dropping out of middle school: A multilevel analysis of students and schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32, 583-627.
12. Tarter, C. J., Sabo, D., & Hoy, W. K. (1995), Middle school climate, faculty trust, and effectiveness: A path analysis. *Journal of Research and development in Education*, 29, 42-49.
13. Weishew, N. L., & Peng, S. (1987). Effective high schools: What are their attributes? In J.J. Lane & H.J. Walberg (Eds), *Effective school leadership: Policy and process* (pp. 89-107). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).