



STUDENTS' READING-RELATED FACTORS AS PREDICTORS OF ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION IN LAGELU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

Secondary school students are reportedly deficient in English language reading comprehension, and this partly accounts for the poor results recorded in English language at public examinations. Studies indicate that some students really have low interest in reading, just as a number of researchers have queried availability of reading materials for students' poor achievement in reading comprehension. The argument is that availability and use of appropriate instructional resources will tend to facilitate effective learning in schools. Thus, the study examined students' interest in reading and availability of reading materials as they relate to and predict students' achievement in English reading comprehension in Lagelu Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo State, Nigeria. Survey research design of the correlational type was adopted for the study, which was guided by four research questions. The study population comprised SSS II students in this LGA. Five secondary schools were randomly selected; and a simple random technique was used to select 40 students from each school, thus, a total of 200 participants in the study. Three properly validated instruments – English Reading Comprehension Achievement Test, Students' Interest in Reading Scale, and Availability and Utilization of English Reading Materials' Inventory – were used to gather data, which was analyzed using frequency count, percentage, Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regressions. Results show that the current level of students' achievement in English reading comprehension is generally low. There is no significant relationship between students' interest in reading and academic achievement ($r=0.04$, $p>0.05$). There is a statistically significant and positive relationship between reading materials and students' achievement ($r=0.14$, $p<0.05$). A linear relationship exists among the variables in the study, $R=0.14$, $R^2=0.02$ and Adj. $R^2=0.01$. However, availability of reading materials [$\beta=0.14$, $t(200)=1.93$, $p<0.05$] is a potent and significant predictor of

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achievement in English reading comprehension. The study concludes that students' interest in reading and availability of reading materials are significantly related to students' achievement in English reading comprehension, though only reading materials could substantially predict students' achievement in reading comprehension. Governments should increase reading materials in schools. There should be adequate and regular supervision of the use of instructional materials in all schools to enhance effective teaching and learning towards boosting students' achievement. Teachers should always try their best to make use of available instructional materials, or improvise, to make lessons more interesting. Principals should provide teachers with enabling environment for the use of available instructional materials to make learning more meaningful.

Keywords: students' interest, availability of reading materials, English reading comprehension, academic achievement, secondary school, Lagelu LGA

1. Introduction

Reading is basic to all learning, both in learning in general and in acquisition of languages. Indeed, every society is highly dependent on knowledge and information. There is a constant overflow of information from numerous sources – the traditional: books, newspapers and magazines, and more modern, digital sources (Braten and Stromso, 2007). It is vital for everyone to be able to navigate in these sources and search out what is needed. This requires multiple skills, as the ability to navigate in the text overflow, to read multi-medially, digitally, and inter-textually, in addition to mere comprehension of the written text and its words, phrases, structure, and genres. In a knowledge society, it is necessary to acquire the ability to understand, integrate, and combine information from multiple sources.

Kolawole (2005) posits that listening, speaking, reading and writing are the four essential language skills that are globally accepted by language experts. When reading a text, the goal is to understand its content. It is a process that exceeds decoding; and includes comprehension processes of the word, sentence, and text level. A child who does not learn to read and comprehend in the early school years has severe difficulties also in studying other school subjects (Bowyer-Grane and Snowling, 2005; McGee and Johnson, 2003). The good proof of reading is the extent to which the reader is able to comprehend what he has read (Fakeye, 2017).

Although reasons for reading may vary, the primary purpose of reading is to understand the text. Reading is a thinking process. It allows the reader to use what he or she may already know, also called prior knowledge. Pressley (2000) and Birsch (2011) conceptualized reading comprehension as the ability to get meaning from what is read. Reading comprehension needs different reading skills such as word recognition, fluency, lexical knowledge, and pre-existing knowledge to be undertaken quickly so that the reader gets knowledge from text.

According to Block (2004) and Graves, Juel, and Graves (1998), reading comprehension is a complicated process in which readers have an important role in making meaning from the text through applying existing skills. Reading comprehension is a complex process: the reader has to construct meaning by interacting with text using his or her previous knowledge and experience and the information that can be found in the text. The more background information related to the text the reader possesses, the easier it is for him or her to understand the text. Moreover, each text is unique in regard of the structure of the text, its genre, vocabulary, and language. Several factors influence a reader's interaction: how easy the text is to read, how accurately it follows the conventions of its genre or structure, the language it is written in, and even the type and the size of font (Pardo, 2004). Reading is thinking cued by written language.

Snow, Sweet, Alvermann, Kamil and Strickland (2002) suggest that reading comprehension is, in part, made up of nine cognitive components: fluency, vocabulary, world knowledge, motivation, purposes and goals, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, linguistic knowledge, discourse knowledge, and integrating non print information with text.

The importance of English reading comprehension, nonetheless, the failure rate of students in this aspect of the English language is alarming. In fact, students' poor academic performance in it in Nigeria is no longer news in recent years (Ogundele, Olanipekun and Aina, 2014). Also, Akinsolu (2010) axiomatically noted in the public's unhappiness which becomes more prominent following the annual release of the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination results, since the students' outcomes did not match government and parental investments in the school system. The situation is so pathetic that stakeholders keep on wondering why this level of education has persistently failed to meet the yearnings and aspirations of the society. According to Adesulu (2014), 38.81%, 36.57% and 31.28% had six credits including English and Mathematics in WASSCE in 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively in Nigeria. This has been a major concern for government and the society.

Academic achievement is the outcome of education the extent to which a student, teacher, institution or school administrator has achieved their set educational goals. A major factor which several studies have linked with academic achievement is students' interest. Based on a growing body of experimental work spanning three decades, Hidi (2006) defined *interest* as a unique motivational variable, as well as a psychological state that occurs during interactions between persons and their objects of interest, and it is characterized by increased attention, concentration and affect. Interest is a motivational variable that involves not only the emotions but also the intellect, making it a powerful energizer indeed (Hidi, Renninger and Krapp, 2004). Kamil, Borman, Dole, Kral, Salinger, and Torgesen (2008) included this as one of the five key recommendations for improving adolescent literacy. Among many conceptualizations of interest, the most common are to consider interest as a state and/or as a disposition. It has also been demonstrated that interest has both cognitive and affective (emotional) components. Researchers also distinguish between individual and situational interest,

with the former targeting personal interest and the latter focusing on creating appropriate environmental settings. Furthermore, interest may serve to jumpstart the struggling reader in any subject area, because when students are interested they are attentive and focused. Such focus often results in better strategy use, prompting inference facilitation, and yielding qualitatively deeper levels of comprehension and more reliable retrieval of information (Hidi, 2001a; Schiefele and Krapp, 1996).

Interest has a strong influence on learning. Interested individuals exhibit higher levels of recall. Capacities important to learner autonomy, such as the ability to attend and find meaning, set goals, and use effective learning strategies, are enhanced by interest (Renninger, 2000). While interest is well-studied in a range of domains in educational psychology, it remains relatively unexplored in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). This is surprising, given the potential for benefits to second language teaching practice if more were known about the influence of interest on SLA and ways to use interest in classrooms. Interest is commonly categorized as situational interest, individual interest and topic interest. Situational interest is an emotional state aroused by features of environmental or textual stimuli. Characteristics that have been found to arouse situational interest include textual coherence and comprehensibility, novelty and personal relevance (Hidi and Baird, 1986; Schiefele, 1999).

Besides, availability of reading materials is another variable of interest in the study, which some researchers have associated with academic achievement. For a rich conducive literacy environment, reading materials or instructional resources are necessary. The development of English reading skills depends on many factors and among them is the availability and use of appropriate instructional resources. It was argued that when instructional resources in a school are inadequate, it generates enormous reading problems. N'Namdi 2005; Lindsay and Knight, 2007). Ambuko (2013) support this view by arguing that availability of reading resources is a crucial aspect in language learning. He notes that a student will require a variety of reading material. Junias (2012) conducted a study and established that insufficient reading resources, poor teaching methods, insufficient teachers' and learners' interactions and overcrowded classrooms were significant factors that made the teaching of reading skills unsuccessful. Junias' study gives some insight to the current research especially in looking at the availability and use of instructional resources as they relate to and determine academic achievement in reading comprehension.

This study examined the reading materials available for students' use, that is, how much exposure students have to different reading materials. In particular, the study will look into the accessibility of books and other resources. Results of previous studies indicate that students are likely to engage in reading more frequently in classroom environments with a higher quantity and variety of literacy materials (for example, genres, dictionaries, relevant textbooks, and so on). In keeping with the Piagetian perspective that children are natural explorers who construct knowledge and meaning from hands-on learning experiences, it is important that children are in environments where they are surrounded by opportunities to read and to see concepts of print.

2. Statement of the Problem

English reading comprehension is an important aspect of English Language at Senior Secondary School because of the role it plays in the overall success of learners. Success in all school subjects is largely predicated on the ability of students to read and comprehend notes and textbooks in various school subjects. However, reports have shown that secondary school students are deficient in reading comprehension and this partly accounts for the poor results recorded at public examinations.

Studies indicate that some students really have low interest in reading. Besides, a number of researchers have queried availability of reading materials for students' poor achievement in reading comprehension. The argument is that availability and use of appropriate instructional resources will tend to facilitate effective learning in schools.

Although previous studies largely focused on teachers' and students' factors as they relate to and influence reading comprehension, not much has been reported on how students' interest in reading and availability of reading materials predict achievement in this aspect of English Language. Besides, there is no known empirical study which combined all these three variables of interest with particular reference to SSS II students in Lagelu LGA of Oyo State. In view of these, this study sought to examine students' reading interest and availability of reading materials as they relate to and predict academic achievement of students in English reading comprehension.

3. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in this study:

1. What is the current level of students' achievement in English reading comprehension among secondary schools that are situated in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria?
2. What relationship exists among students' interest in reading, availability of reading materials and students' achievement in reading comprehension?
3. What is the composite contribution of students' interest in reading and availability of reading materials to students' achievement in reading comprehension?
4. What are the relative contributions of students' interest in reading and availability of reading materials to students' achievement in reading comprehension?

3.1 Significance of the Study

The study revealed that students' interest in reading and availability of reading materials could predict students' achievement in English reading comprehension. It is believed that findings from the study will be of significant benefit to classroom teachers by sensitizing them as to the factor they would address in order to help the students to improve their interest towards reading and also seeing to the availability of necessary reading materials for the benefit of the students. Also, the study would add to the pool

of research findings on the solution to the poor performance of students in English reading comprehension. In addition, curriculum planners, Ministry of Education officials, school heads and the general public will find the findings of this study very useful towards the advancement of Nigerian educational system.

3.2 Scope of the Study

This study focused on students' reading interest, availability of reading materials, and students' achievement in English reading comprehension. The study covered five senior secondary schools (SSS) and two hundred students in Lagelu Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopted the survey research design of the correlational type. Data were collected to explain possible relationship between the variables of interest in the study, without any manipulation or randomization.

4.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all the senior secondary school (SSS) II students in the public schools in Lagelu LGA of Oyo State, Nigeria. SSS II students were chosen for the study because they have had a fair amount of exposure to reading as they are in their intermediate year of senior secondary and so must have read many texts which would have developed their interest in reading.

4.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

Five secondary schools were randomly selected from Lagelu Local Government Area. Afterwards, simple random sampling technique was used to select forty SSS II students from each of the chosen secondary schools, to participate in the study. Thus, a total of two hundred SSS II students were used as respondents for the study.

4.4 Research Instruments

Three properly validated instruments were used by the researcher to gather data from the field. These were:

A. English Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (ERCAT)

English Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (ERCAT) was designed to measure the students' achievement in English reading comprehension. The ERCAT instrument was adopted from Basic Skills in Comprehension and Summary by Olumi Makanjuola (2012). This was different from the English textbooks being used in the schools. The questions were in line with those of the external examinations. The test was based on supply-response format. The questions were shown to experts for scrutiny and necessary input; their suggestions were factored into the final structuring of the questions.

B. Students' Interest in Reading Scale (SIRS)

Students' Interest in Reading Scale (SIRS) was constructed by the researcher in order to assess students' interest in English reading comprehension. The Scale measured the level of students' interest in reading comprehension aspect of the English Language. It has two sections: while the first section of the Scale was for bio-data such as respondent's class, age, and sex; the second section has a total of twenty items which measured students' interest in reading. The instrument was a Likert-type scale, with four response options – strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). This Students' Interest in Reading Scale (SIRS) was validated by experts. The reliability coefficient of this instrument was estimated as $r = 0.84$, using Cronbach Alpha.

C. Availability and Utilization of English Reading Materials Inventory (AAUMI)

Availability and Utilization of English Reading Materials Inventory (AAUMI) was a self-designed observational check list. This was used to elicit information on the availability and utilization status of various reading materials that are generally related to English reading comprehension. The first section of the inventory elicited information on respondent's class, age, sex and school. While the second and main section of the inventory has forty items in all, with four-option response format – available (A), not available (NA), utilized (U) and not utilized (NU). The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by some educational experts. Having effected their corrections and useful remarks, the final copy of the instrument was produced. Using test-retest method, the reliability of the instrument was established.

4.5 Procedure for Data Collection

The randomly selected forty students in each of the five schools were given each of the three instruments to respond to in turn. After the administration of the instruments, researcher retrieved all the copies administered, sorted and coded them for data analysis.

4.6 Methods of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using frequency count, percentage, Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regressions were used to analyze the data in order to answer the earlier stated research questions.

5. Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the current level of students' achievement in English reading comprehension among secondary schools that are situated in Lagelu LGA of Oyo State?

Table 1: Students' Achievement in English Reading Comprehension

Scores	Frequency	Percentage (%)
2	12	6.0
3	16	8.0
4	14	7.0
5	24	12.0
6	14	7.0
7	22	11.0
8	24	12.0
9	20	10.0
10	12	6.0
11	18	9.0
12	8	4.0
13	10	5.0
14	4	2.0
15	2	1.0
Total	200	100%
Mean Score (\bar{x}) = 7.44		
Standard Deviation = 3.28		

Table 1 shows the current level of students' achievement in English reading comprehension among secondary schools that are situated in Lagelu LGA of Oyo State. In the test with a maximum obtainable score of 20, the lowest score was 2 (12%) while the highest score was 15 (2%). Table 1 reveals that many of these secondary school students performed below average in the achievement test ($\bar{x} = 7.44$, $SD = 3.28$). Results clearly show that the general performance of these students in English reading comprehension is poor, with a positively skewed distribution. Overall, these students' achievement level in English reading comprehension is low, even though English language is a compulsory subject in Nigerian secondary schools, which is taught virtually on every day of the week.

Research Question 2: What relationship exists among students' interest in reading, availability of reading materials and students' achievement in reading comprehension?

Table 2: Correlation between Students' Interest in Reading, Availability of Reading Materials and Achievement in English Reading Comprehension

		Students' Interest	Reading Materials	Achievement Scores
Students' Interest	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	200		
Reading Materials	Pearson Correlation	.362*	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033		
	N	200	200	
Achievement	Pearson	.036	.137*	1

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Scores	Correlation			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.612	.025	
	N	200	200	200

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 2 reveals the results of the correlation among students' interest, reading materials and academic achievement in English reading comprehension. There is no significant relationship between the students' interest in reading and students' achievement in reading comprehension ($r = 0.04$, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that students' interest in reading does not really or substantially relate to students' levels of achievement. Also, there is a statistically significant and positive relationship between reading materials and students' academic achievement ($r = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$). These results imply that the availability and utilization of reading materials has important association with the level of students' achievement. In other words, the more the reading materials (in terms of their availability and utilization), the higher students' achievement in reading comprehension will tend to be.

Research Question 3: What is the composite contribution of students' interest in reading and availability of reading materials to students' achievement in reading comprehension?

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error
	.141	.020	.010	3.261
Predictors: (Constant), Reading materials, Students' interest				

Table 4: Regression ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	42.342	2	21.171	1.991	.139
Residual	2094.938	197	10.634		
Total	2137.280	199			
Dependent Variable: Students' achievement in English reading comprehension					

Results in Table 3 reveal that there is a linear relationship among the variables in the study, $R = 0.14$, $R^2 = 0.02$ and $Adj. R^2 = 0.01$. This indicates that the two predictor variables (students' interest and reading materials) jointly accounted for 2% observed variance in students' achievement scores in English reading comprehension, though it is not statistically significant, $F_{(2, 199)} = 1.99$, $p > 0.05$, as shown in Table 4. These results imply that the criterion variable (students' achievement in English reading comprehension) cannot be reliably predicted by the predictors in the model (i.e. students' interest and reading materials).

Research Question 4: What are the relative contributions of students' interest in reading and availability of reading materials to students' achievement in reading comprehension?

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.182	2.860		1.462	.145
Students' Interest	.013	.031	.031	.436	.663
Reading Materials	.017	.009	.136	1.929	.045

Further results in Table 5 show that availability and utilization of reading materials [$\beta = 0.14$, $t(200) = 1.93$, $p < 0.05$] on its own is a potent and significant predictor of achievement in English reading comprehension unlike students' interest in reading [$\beta = 0.03$, $t(200) = 0.44$, $p > 0.05$]. This means that reading materials alone could individually predict students' achievement in English reading comprehension.

5. Discussion of Findings

The results of the study clearly show that the general performance of senior secondary students in English reading comprehension is poor, with a positively skewed distribution. Overall, these students' achievement level in English reading comprehension is low, even though English language is a compulsory subject in Nigerian secondary schools, which is usually taught virtually on every day of the week. This finding corroborate earlier reports of some scholars like Ogundele, Olanipekun and Aina (2014), Akinsolu (2010), Adesulu (2014), Ogundele *et al.* (2014), and so on, who have variously submitted that the Nigerian educational system is bedeviled by abysmal failure of students in public examinations, including English Language, particularly at the secondary level of education.

The study reveals the results of the relationship between students' interest and academic achievement in English reading comprehension. The results show that there is no significant relationship between the students' interest in reading and their achievement in reading comprehension. This suggests that students' interest in reading does not really or substantially relate to students' levels of achievement in English reading comprehension. The immediate import of this finding is that apart from students' interest in learning this aspect of the English language, there are other important factors beyond the control of the students which wield significant influence on their level of academic achievement. This contradicts earlier findings that interest propels better strategy use, prompting inference facilitation, and yielding qualitatively deeper levels of comprehension and more reliable retrieval of information (Hidi, 1990, 2001a; Schiefele and Krapp, 1996). Results also contradict Schraw, Flowerday and Lehman (2001) who concluded that interest has a strong positive influence on readers' comprehension and recall after experimenting repeatedly with the effects of interest on reading.

It is revealed that there is a statistically significant and positive relationship between reading materials and students' academic achievement. These results imply that the availability and utilization of reading materials has important association with

the level of students' achievement in English reading comprehension. In other words, the more the reading materials (in terms of their availability and utilization) the higher students' achievement in English reading comprehension will tend to be. This finding aligns with earlier results of previous studies that students are likely to engage in reading more frequently in classroom environments with a higher quantity and variety of literacy materials, like genres, dictionaries, relevant textbooks, and so on. Result also supports Ambuko (2013) who argued that availability of reading resources is a crucial aspect in language learning. The study finding also confirms earlier report by Junias (2012) that insufficient reading resources, among other things, were significant factors that made the teaching and learning of reading skills unsuccessful.

Furthermore, the study has shown that the two predictor variables (students' interest and reading materials) jointly accounted for little observed variance in students' achievement scores in English reading comprehension, which is not statistically significant. These results imply that the criterion variable (students' achievement in English reading comprehension) cannot be reliably predicted by the predictors in the model. However, finding also show that availability and utilization of reading materials on its own is a potent and significant predictor of achievement in English reading comprehension unlike students' interest in reading. This means that reading materials alone could individually predict students' achievement in English reading comprehension. These results essentially underline the fact that, apart from reading materials and students' interest, there are other weighty factors that actually affect students' academic performance. For instance, Kolawole (2011), Osunde and Ogiegbaen (2005), Teachernet (2008) reported that poor teaching strategies, poor school learning environment, negative attitude among learners, teachers lack of commitment, overcrowded classrooms with consequent pressure and collapse of facilities, mother tongue interference, etc are some of the problems that plague English Language in Nigeria.

6. Conclusion

Based on these findings, the study therefore concludes that, unlike students' interest in reading, availability of reading materials is significantly related to students' achievement in English reading comprehension. Besides, only reading materials could substantially predict students' achievement in this vital aspect of the English language.

6.1 Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made. Government should increase the availability of reading materials through the provision of adequate funds for procurement of these learning resources, supply teaching aids, finance schools to improvise unavailable and inadequate instructional materials to make teaching and learning easier, practical, appealing and enjoyable.

There should be adequate and regular supervision of the use of instructional materials in all the government owned senior secondary schools to enhance effective

utilization of these reading materials so as to improve on the academic performance of the students. Provision of spacious and furnished libraries along with ICT tools prominently including computer, internet, printer, scanner and photocopier machines must be provided to them to maximize the library utilizations.

Teachers should always try their best to make use of available visual instructional materials where necessary to make their lessons more interesting and should also be encouraged to search for necessary visual instructional materials that can appeal to the senses of learners, arouse their interest, encourage their participation, make learning more meaningful and promote academic standard. School principals should provide teachers with enabling environment for the use of available instructional material to give room for participatory studentship and make learning more meaningful.

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