

PAPER 1

TEACHING READING FLUENCY: A STUDY AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN ILA -ORANGUN, NIGERIA

By

OGUNREMI, Foluke Stella ¹ and OLUSANJO, Michael Oluwole ²

Ila-Orangun, Nigeria.

+2348065282723; folukestella99@gmail.com ¹

Department of Curriculum and Instruction ²

Osun State College of Education,

Ila-Orangun, Nigeria.

+2348068316276; moolusanjo@ossceila.edu.ng, sanjo_mike@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

One of the problems confronting the teaching of fluency in reading as a basic language skill is the little or lack of awareness of the strategies for teaching the skill. This study, has, therefore, investigated the extent of awareness of the strategies for teaching reading fluency among public lower primary school teachers in Ila -Orangun. Specifically, this study has investigated the overall extent of awareness of strategies for teaching reading fluency. The study also investigated which of the strategies the teachers are most and least aware of. This study is anchored on a quantitative research method that adopted descriptive research of the survey type. Using a total population purposive sampling technique, a total of 35 teachers participated in the study. A validated structured questionnaire designed by the researchers tagged “*Primary School Teachers’ Awareness of Strategies for Teaching Reading fluency Questionnaire*” was used for the study. Descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage, Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse answers to the research questions, using SPSS version 25. The findings of the study are that teachers are moderately aware of the strategies for teaching reading fluency and that assisted reading is the most familiar strategy while reader’s theatre is the least familiar of the strategies for teaching reading fluency. Hence, the study concludes that teachers are not fully aware of the strategies for teaching reading fluency at the lower primary school level. Therefore, it is recommended in the study that teachers at this level of education should be regularly trained and retrained in order to optimally raise their awareness of the teaching strategies for teaching reading fluency as a basic language skill.

Keywords: lower primary school, reading fluency, awareness, teaching strategies

INTRODUCTION

The English Language is a subject in both lower and upper primary schools and it involves developing the basic language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. The teaching and learning of English in primary schools is essential because English is the lingua franca (medium of

communication) and the language of instruction in Nigeria and many other countries of the world. Various studies have been conducted on the aforementioned basic language skills. Some documentary pieces of evidence have shown varying findings in areas such as reading, speaking, writing and listening. Again, previous studies such as

Adunyarithigun (2021), Hlaing and Chan (n.d.), Asikcan and Saban (2018) and Hossu (2019) relating to awareness of reading fluency show a strong link between awareness of teaching strategies for reading fluency and mastery for it, generally. In view of the above already available scholarly insights, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the awareness of reading fluency teaching strategies among teachers in lower primary schools.

There are different strategies for teaching reading fluency. These strategies depend on the precise reading fluency theory adopted by the teacher. The theory of Automaticity and Raspoody theory are some of the reading fluency theories the teacher can adopt to teach reading fluency as a basic language skill. The adoption process, usefulness and demographic variables are some factors that influence teachers' choice of strategies for teaching (Claessen, 2018; Olusanjo, 2020).

In this study, the strategies for teaching reading fluency in lower primary schools are investigated. The strategies investigated are based on the theory of automaticity by Samuel (1979). The investigation serves the purpose of ascertaining the extent of awareness of the strategies by lower primary school teachers. The teachers' extent of awareness is comparatively ascertained. Hence, the least and the most familiar strategies to the teachers are identified in the study.

Literature Review

What is reading fluency? Reading fluency has been defined by different scholars across levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary). In this study, reading fluency is defined as the act of voicing the contents of a given text or passage with the accurate pronunciation of words together with proper accent, stress and intonation. There are different reading fluency teaching strategies available that the teacher can adopt to teach this basic language skill. Teaching reading fluency based on the theory of automaticity is discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

Repeated Reading: There has been widespread agreement that the repeated reading approach is the most frequent method used to develop and improve reading fluency in pupils. (Al-kharusi, 2014; Berg & Lyke, 2012; Rasinski, 2014; Rubin, 2016; Samuel, 1979). Repeated reading entails asking pupils to read a given passage again and again until they realise fluency in reading.

Reading Practice: Practice makes perfect. Therefore, the more and more one reads, generally, the more fluent one becomes as a reader. (Rasinski, 2014). This assertion means that reading practice is not about a recurrent reading of the same text as in repeated reading. It rather entails cultivating reading habits with reference to varieties of text.

Modeling: Many studies have found that modeling is a vital approach for improving pupils' fluency as readers (Calo, Woolard-Ferguson & Koitz, 2013; Rasinski, 2009). Pupils might not recognize what it means to be fluent readers. They think that reading fluency means reading rapidly, which is not right because reading speed simply indicates automaticity (Rasinski, 2014). Modeling requires the pupils to read after the teacher, sentence by sentence. Hence, the teacher's reading serves as a model or an ideal exemplary reading for the pupils. Consequently, the pupils imitate or parody the teacher to achieve reading fluency.

Assisted Reading: In this strategy, pupils are exposed to an opportunity to read a text, while listening intermittently to a reading fluency of the same text (Meeks & Austin, 2003). This method helps pupils to decode words successfully and later helps them in word recognition and automaticity. Another form is that a fluent partner or a reading coach reads to pupils inside and outside the classroom (Rasinski & Padak, 2000). Teachers can deploy this strategy with the entire class or with specific pupils who are non-fluent readers.

Rhymed Poetry: Poetry is effective for developing students' phonics through learning about common orthographic patterns, word families and phonograms. Integrating a rhymed poetry approach in the classroom motivates the pupils to learn and explore the language in a relaxed, joyful way (Flores, 2016). Similarly, reading song lyrics is a powerful method to increase and enhance pupils' fluent reading cum phonological awareness (Patel & Laud, 2007).

Readers Theatre: In this activity, students read a particular script, poetic scenario or play many times to act it out in front of an audience. Students can rehearse independently or with the guidance of teachers, who model the reading to students until they can pronounce it fluently and expressively.

Choral Reading: Choral reading is also called unison reading. During the implementation of this strategy, the teacher expressively reads aloud a short text, poem or speech to the pupils who will also read the text to the teacher, subsequently. It entails a group of three or more pupils reading an assigned text in unison. (Moskal & Blachowicz, 2006; Rowen et al., 2015).

Paired Reading: With this strategy, two pupils read aloud to each other, a sentence or a paragraph. Usually, one of the pupils is less fluent or less confident in reading aloud alone than his or her partner. Paired reading strategy is one of the ideal ways to increase student's confidence and self-esteem (Berg & Lyke, 2012).

The issue of whether teachers use these strategies for teaching is dependent on the adoption process stages such as awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption. Regarding awareness, different scholars have defined it to mean attitude, existence, usefulness and exposure. (Tabassum & Shahzadi, 2018; Ziemba, 2016; Simtowe, Asfaw & Abate, 2016).

Awareness is taken in this paper to mean the process of knowing the existence of the foregoing strategies for teaching reading fluency among lower primary school teachers. Previous studies on awareness have been on awareness of reading strategies among Iranian high school students and metacognitive awareness of reading strategies among non-proficient college readers as well as awareness of behaviour modification techniques (Adunyaritting, 2021; Vijayalakshmi, 2019; Anori & Maftoon, 2010).

Other previous studies that have investigated awareness include awareness and utilization of library services (Ilori, 2019), learning disabilities (Sawhney & Bansal, 2014) reading comprehension strategies (Hlaing & Chan, n.d.), primary teachers' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies (Hossu, 2019), metacognitive awareness of primary teacher trainees (Memnun & Akkaya, 2009), metacognitive awareness levels of reading strategies among prospective teachers (Asikcan & Saban, 2018), awareness of semantic search engines for teaching (Olusanjo, 2020) and teachers' awareness of L2 research finding (Ogunyemi & Emmanuel, 2020).

Previous studies such as Olusanjo (2020) and Ogunyemi and Emmanuel (2020) have revealed varying findings on awareness. An example is a study to investigate colleges of education lecturers' awareness of semantic search engines for information retrieval. Olusanjo (2020) reported that college of education lecturers are not fully aware of semantic search engines for information retrieval.

Reviewed available works of literature disclose little or no empirical evidence that investigated lower primary school teachers' awareness of the reading strategies for teaching reading fluency in the lower primary schools in Ila-Orangun, in Osun State. The study further determines which of the strategies investigated is mostly aware and least aware of.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the awareness of strategies for teaching reading fluency among lower primary school teachers in Ila-Orangun, Osun State. The specific purpose of the study is to investigate:

- i. the extent of awareness of the strategies for teaching reading fluency among lower primary school teachers in Ila-Orangun.
- ii. the most familiar strategy for teaching reading fluency among the lower primary school teachers in Ila-Orangun.
- iii. the least familiar strategy for teaching reading fluency among the lower primary school teachers in Ila-Orangun.

Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions arise:

- i. To what extent teachers in lower primary schools are aware of the strategies for teaching reading fluency in Ila-Orangun?
- ii. Which of the strategies are lower primary school teachers most aware of?
- iii. Which of the strategies are lower primary school teachers least aware of?

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts the quantitative research method of descriptive design of the survey type since the aim is to describe lower primary school teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching reading fluency.

Population and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study consists of all public primary schools in Ila-Orangun, Osun State. The target population comprises the teachers teaching at the lower primary school level, primary 1-3. The total population purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample size in each of the schools that formed the target population for the study. Only teachers teaching at the lower primary level were selected for the study. Thus, a total of 37 teachers were selected for the study.

Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers tagged "Primary School Teachers' Awareness of Strategies for Teaching Reading fluency Questionnaire". The questionnaire consists of two sections: Section A served to elicit responses on background information, while Section B served to obtain information relating to the core research interests as already specified.

Data Collection Technique

The data for the study was collected using a manual survey. Out of 37 copies of the questionnaire given out, a total of 35 copies were collected.

Data Analysis Technique

Data collected were analysed using the SPSS version 25, statistical tools of frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The research questions were answered using these decision points: that is, 1.00-1.79=Not at all aware; 1.80-2.59=Slightly aware; 2.60-3.39= Somewhat aware; 3.40-4.19=Moderately aware and 4.20-5.00=Extremely aware.

Results and Findings

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents

VARIABLE	CATEGORIES	N	PERCENT
GENDER	MALE	6	17.1
	FEMALE	29	82.9
ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION	NCE	20	57.1
	B.ED	15	42.9

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question 1: To what extent lower primary school teachers are aware of strategies for teaching reading fluency in Ila-Orangun?

See Table 2 for the answers to research question 1. A look at Table 2 shows that the majority of teachers that participated in the study are extremely aware ($M=4.45$; $SD=.61$) of assisted reading strategy for teaching reading fluency in their class. A further look at Table 2 shows similar responses on teachers' awareness of reading practice strategy ($M=4.34$; $SD=.53$); repeated reading ($M=4.31$; $SD=.86$) and rhymed poetry ($M=4.31$; $SD=.79$). On the other hand, teachers reported being moderately aware of the modelling strategy ($M=4.14$; $SD=1.06$); paired reading ($M=4.09$; $SD=.97$) and choral reading ($M=3.71$; $SD=1.22$). Results shown in Table 2 further reveal that the teachers reported some moderate awareness of the reader's theatre ($M=3.31$; $SD=1.40$). The report on reader's theatre strategy revealed that most teachers have not been using the strategy for teaching reading fluency in their classes. On the whole, the teachers reported that they are moderately aware of the modeling for teaching reading fluency in their classes. This finding implies that pupils in the lower primary class in the schools sampled for the study have been taught reading fluency using one or two of the strategies investigated in the study. With this result, teachers of lower primary schools are moderately aware of the strategies for teaching reading fluency.

Research Question 2: Which of the strategies are lower primary school teachers most aware

of?

See Table 2 for answers to research question 2. A

further look at Table 2 shows that the teachers that participated in the study are extremely aware ($M=4.45$; $SD=.61$) of assisted reading strategy for teaching reading fluency in their class. This finding reveals that assisted reading strategy is the most familiar strategy in the context of this study.

Research Question 3: Which of the strategies are lower primary school teachers least aware

of?

See Table 2 for answers to research question 3. The result shown in Table 2 further reveals

that teachers' mean score on awareness of the reader's theatre for teaching reading fluency at

lower primary schools ($M=3.31$; $SD=1.40$) is the least among the strategies investigated in

the study.

Table 2: The extent of Lower Primary School Teachers' Awareness of Strategies for Teaching Reading Fluency

Reading Fluency Strategies	Extremely aware	Moderately aware	Somewhat aware	Slightly aware	Not at all aware	N	Mean	SD
Repeated Reading	17(48.6%)	14(40%)	3(8.6%)	0(0%)	1(2.9%)	35	4.31	.86
Reading Practice	13(37.1%)	21(60%)	1(2.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	35	4.34	.53
Modeling	16(45.7%)	13(37.1%)	2(5.7%)	3(8.6%)	1(2.9%)	35	4.14	1.06
Assisted Reading	18(51.4%)	15(42.9%)	2(5.7%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	35	4.45	.61
Rhyming Poetry	17(48.6%)	13(37.1%)	4(11.4%)	1(2.9%)	0(0%)	35	4.31	.79
Reader's Theatre	8(22.9%)	11(31.4%)	6(17.1%)	4(11.4%)	6(17.1%)	35	3.31	1.40
Chord Reading	9(25.7%)	16(45.7%)	5(14.3%)	1(2.9%)	4(11.4%)	35	3.71	1.22
Paired Reading	14(40%)	16(45.7%)	2(5.7%)	2(5.7%)	1(2.9%)	35	4.14	.97
Total						35	4.09	.47

Decision point: 1.00-1.79=Not at all aware; 1.80-2.59=Slightly aware; 2.60-3.39=Somewhat aware; 3.40-4.19=Moderately aware; 4.20-5.00=Extremely aware.

3. Reader's theatre is the least familiar to the teachers among all the strategies for teaching reading fluency in lower primary schools.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study based on the purpose of the study as well as the answers to the research questions are summarized below:

1. Teachers in the sampled schools are moderately aware of strategies for teaching reading fluency in lower primary schools.
2. The assisted reading strategy is the most familiar to the teachers among all the strategies for teaching reading fluency in lower primary schools.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that teachers are moderately aware of the strategies for teaching reading fluency at lower primary schools. Furthermore, the results of the study reveal that assisted reading is the most familiar strategy to teachers, while reader's theatre is the least familiar of all the strategies for teaching reading fluency in lower primary schools.

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusion, the study recommends as follows: Primary education studies curriculum should and must include strategies for teaching reading fluency.

Teachers at the lower primary school level should be exposed to training and retraining on strategies for teaching reading fluency from time to time.

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