Literature Circles Instructional Strategy as Determinants of Students' Academic Performance in Yoruba Comprehension in Ekiti State Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The study examined literature circles instructional strategy as determinants on students' academic performance in Yoruba Language reading comprehension in Ekiti State Secondary Schools. Specifically, the research examined the difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups. The study adopted quasi – experimental pre-test and post-test two group design (one experimental group and one control group). The targeted population for the study consisted of all the 13713 Senior Secondary School (S.S.S.) two students in 203 public secondary schools in Ekiti state. The sample consisted of 119 (class intact size) students offering Yoruba drawn from six public secondary schools in Ekiti State. The sample was selected using multistage sampling procedure. A self-designed instrument titled "Yoruba Comprehension Achievement Test (YCAT)" was used to collect relevant data for this study. The face and content validity of Yoruba Comprehension Achievement Test (YCAT) was ensured by experts of Tests and Measurement, Yoruba Education and the researcher's supervisor. The reliability of the instrument was established using test-retest method which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.84. The study was carried out in three phases namely pre-treatment, treatment and post treatment Stage. The data collected for this study were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of this study revealed that the two groups (Literature circles and Conventional) were homogeneous at

the commencement of the experiment. The use of literature circles enhanced better performance of students in Yoruba Comprehension than the conventional strategy. It was recommended among others that the use of literature circles strategy should be encouraged in Yoruba language class so as to enhance better academic performance of students in Yoruba Comprehension.

Keywords: Literature Circles, Students, Academic Performance, Yoruba Comprehension,

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Introduction

One of the three major languages recognized by the Nigerian government of as a medium of instruction at school is Yoruba language (FGN, 2013). It is the language of the people living in the South western part of Nigeria. It is taught as the mother tongue, and it is also the language of learning and teaching. It should be noted that Yoruba is one of the three major native languages legitimately recognized by the federal government of Nigeria. It is spoken natively by over thirty million people in Nigeria and other West African countries, like Benin and Togo (Ojo, 2006). The language that is commonly spoken among the people living in the South-western region of Nigeria is Yoruba and it is regarded as the language of the immediate environment. The mother tongue which is supposed to be used for teaching in the first three classes in primary schools is Yoruba and it is offered as a subject in secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria (FGN, 2013).

Literacy in Yoruba which is the mother tongue creates an intellectual platform for learning other languages. When learners are well educated in their home language, they travel easily to the second language learning due to their academic skill in the home language (Ball, 2010). Though, reading of comprehension has all along being an important part of any language, Yoruba language is no exemption.

As explained by Green (2018)   that reading is the ability to process text, understand its meaning, and to integrate it with what the reader already knows. Understanding is the ultimate goal of reading. Comprehension is the process by which readers construct meaning by interacting with text through the connection of prior knowledge and previous experience in relationship to the text (Duke, 2003). Understanding goes beyond getting the facts straight. It is the interpretation and understanding of what is read. Understanding is not something that happens after reading. To be able to accurately comprehend written material, learners need to be able to interpret what they read, make connection between what they read and what they already know and think intensely about what they have read. Learners who read very well are those who read fluently and understand. Learners who do not read well, conversely, find it stimulating to learn how to read fluently and understand. These learners read laboriously and gradually and dedicate a great deal of energy to interpreting the letters on the page, with little attention to comprehension.

According to (Snow, 2002) reading comprehension is the process of instantaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. News of students massive failure in Yoruba Language from West African Examination Council (WAEC) external examiners is a pointer to the fact that there are possible huge numbers of low achieving learners in Nigeria secondary schools (Chief Examiners' Report, 2018). It has consequently, become necessary to pursue pains that will employ an approach or approaches that will improve better academic performance of students in Yoruba Language. Most parents want their children to speak and learn English at home and in school, whereas, language gives us the skill to think differently and retain the mentality of what it (English) communicates.

The researcher's observation is that some parents ban their children from speaking the language at home. Some people seem to define native languages as primitive idioms with limited communicative value which is supposed to be spoken only by illiterate hunters and farmers and for highly restricted cultural matters only. Yoruba language appears not to be used for any thoughtful or written communication in political, economic, cultural, and social matters of our times, and particularly for anything that has to do with modern technology, science, and political philosophy.

Literature Circles are student-led groups of peers who discuss a text guided by a common reading interest. The text could be a specific book, poem, story, or article. As members read their assigned or decided upon portion of the text, they take notes to aid them prepare and contribute to the forthcoming discussion either in the class or in their groups.

In each group, learners participated in reading the same text. After the establishment, group members meet on a regular basis to deliberate on their reading; some types of drawing or written responses to the text may be brought to share with their groups. The deliberations are learner centred and look like the natural conversations that would take place among friends deliberating a similar topic of interest. It may be of interest to some people that these students learn perfectly among peers. The teacher serves as facilitator and conducts observations of the various groups. The teacher may take on a number of various parts depending on what is needed by each group (Daniels & Steineke 2004).

There are many forms from literature circles, but essentially they are small, discussion groups consisting of learners who are studying the same text. Roles are typically assigned to members of the literature circle to let the group to function effectively and to help members remain attentive on the chosen book. Examples of five individual roles are: Discussion Director, Literary Luminary, Illustrator, Summarizer, and Vocabulary Enricher (Daniels & Steineke 2004).

The researcher is of the view that for learners to be engaged in their reading, teachers must make the experience as exciting as possible. Literature circles appear to create this type of attention-grabbing atmosphere, because learners are able to socialise during their group time, hence, they will actually become better readers through completing the different roles associated with literature circles (Daniels, 2002).

This study therefore investigated literature circles instructional strategy as determinants of students' academic performance in Yoruba Comprehension in Ekiti State secondary schools. The study specifically examined:
  i.   examined the difference in the pre-test mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups;
  ii. determined the difference in the academic performance of students exposed to literature circles and those who are not, in Yoruba comprehension; and
  iii. examined the difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups;

Research Question

This research question was raised to guide the study:
  1. What is the performance of students exposed to literature circles and conventional method in Yoruba language reading comprehension?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were generated for this study:
  1. There is no significant difference in the pre-test mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups.
  2. There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to literature circles and those in control group.
  3. There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups.

Methodology

This study adopted quasi – experimental pre-test and post-test two groups design (one experimental group and one control group). The pattern of the design is as shown below.

O$_1$ X$_1$ O$_2$:   Experimental group (Literature Circles)
O$_3$ C O$_4$:   Control group (Conventional method)

Where:

O$_1$, O$_3$ – Pre-test (Performance before treatment)

O$_2$, O$_4$ – Post-test (Performance after treatment)

X$_1$ – Treatment via Literature Circle Strategy

C – Control group: Conventional (Normal classroom interaction)

The targeted population for the study consisted of all the 13,713 Senior Secondary School (S.S.S.) two students in the 203 public secondary schools in Ekiti State. The sample consisted of 119 (class intact size) students offering Yoruba in Arts classes drawn from six public secondary schools in Ekiti State. The sample was selected using multistage sampling procedure. A self-designed instrument titled "Yoruba Comprehension Achievement Test (YCAT)" was used to collect relevant data for this study. It consisted of section A and B, section A sought for bio-data of the respondents while section B consisted of 5 Yoruba comprehension passages with 5 objectives items under each passage. The items covered all the topics to be taught for the 6 weeks.

The Yoruba Comprehension Achievement Test (YCAT) was given to experts in Tests and Measurement and 3 experienced Senior Secondary School Yoruba teachers. The face and content validity were ensured by professionals to assess the clarity of the wordings of the test items as well as their content coverage. The reliability of YCAT was carried out by administering it on 20 respondents in one of the schools outside the study area using test re-test method. The data extracted was collated and analysed using the Pearson Product Correlation Method which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.84 and it was considered high to make the instrument reliable

The data generated from the instrument were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were answered using means and standard deviation. Hypotheses 1 – 2 were tested using t-test while hypothesis 3 was tested using Analysis of Covariance at 0.05 level of significance.

Experimental Procedure

To carry out the research in the schools, the researcher obtained permission from the authorities of the six schools. Two days workshop was organised for the research assistants on the strategy used in teaching their students in the selected schools. The reading level of the students was established. Those who read at frustration and instructional levels were determined before the experiment.

The study was carried out in three phases:

Phase I: Pre-treatment Stage

The researcher administered pre-test instrument to all groups in order to ascertain the homogeneity of the two groups.

Phase II: Treatment Stage

a) Experimental group (Literature circle): The teachers grouped the students into a group of 5 – 6 members. Roles were allocated to members of the literature circle to permit the group to function effectively and to help members stay focused on the chosen textbook. The five individual roles are Discussion Director, Illustrator, Literary Luminary, Summarizer, and Vocabulary Enricher. The Discussion Director's duty was to develop at least five questions about the text and then share these questions with the group. The Literary Luminary identified important parts of the text for the group in order to arouse thinking and produce some interesting facts about the text. The

Illustrator's work was to draw pictures related to the reading and share the drawings with the group; the group members then guess the meaning of the pictures and connect them to their own ideas about the text. The Summarizer's role was to recall what happened in the reading and make a summary for the group, and the Vocabulary Enricher helped the group find and discuss new or difficult words. These roles can alternate with each discussion so that every student has the opportunity to perform each role.

b) Control Group: Control group has no special treatment. They were taught via conventional method (normal classroom interaction) for six weeks.

Phase III: Post-treatment Stage

At the end of the treatment stage, YCAT was re-administered on the students to determine the effects of the treatment on them. The same Yoruba Comprehension Achievement Test (YCAT) used during the pre-test was re-arranged to avoid test-wiseness and was administered to the experimental and control groups.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the performance of students exposed to literature circles and conventional method in Yoruba Language reading comprehension?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of pre-test and post-test scores of students exposed to literature circles and conventional strategies

Strategies	Test	N	Mean	S.D	Mean Diff.
Literature Circles	Pre Test	57	13.26	1.11	23.55
	Post Test		36.81	3.64	
Conventional	Pre Test	62	13.19	1.05	12.20
	Post Test		25.39	2.77	
Total		**119**			

From Table 1, it is shown that the mean difference in students' performance in Yoruba comprehension between pre-test and post-test scores for literature circle strategy is 23.55 and conventional method is 12.20. It appears that the use of literature circles and conventional strategies influence students' performance in Yoruba comprehension with literature circles strategy being the more effective method in the teaching of Yoruba comprehension. The graphical representation below further shows the more effective method in the teaching of Yoruba comprehension.
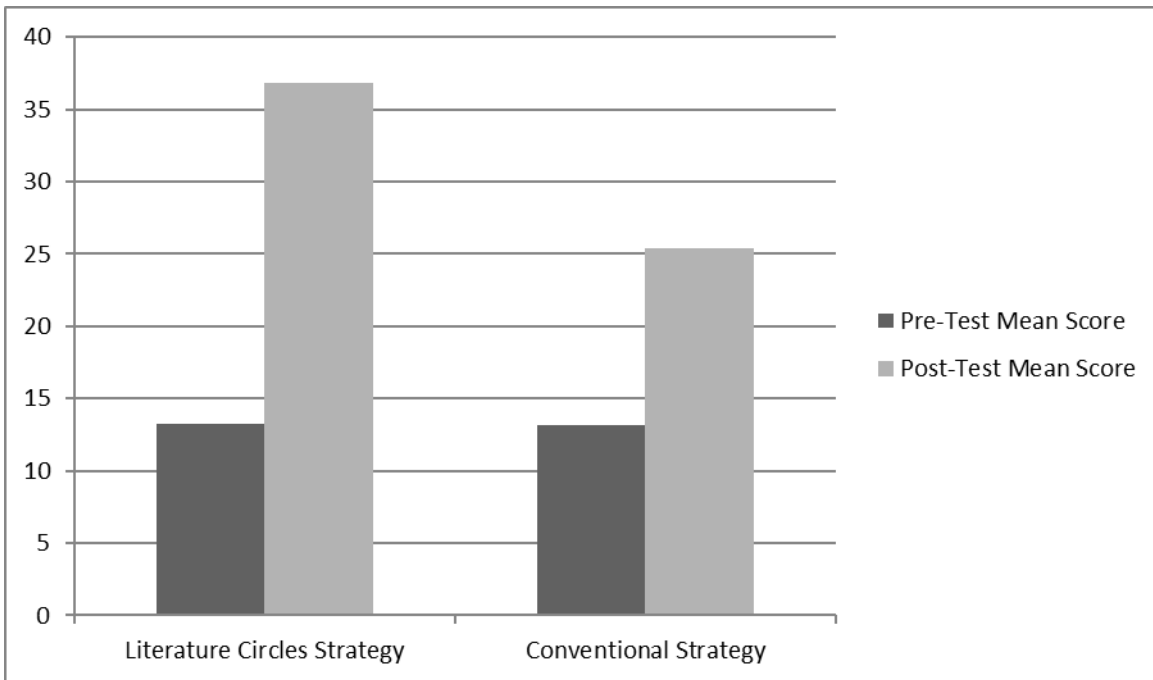
Figure i: Pre-test and Post-test mean scores of students exposed to literature circles and conventional strategies

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the pre-test mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups.

Table 2: t-test analysis for Pre – test Mean Scores of Students in Experimental and Control Groups

Variations	N	Mean	SD	df	t_{cal}	P (Sig)	Rem.
Literature Circle	57	13.26	1.11	117	0.351	0.726	Not Significant
Conventional	62	13.19	1.05				

P>0.05

        Table 2 shows that the t-cal value of 0.351 is not significant because the P value (0.726) > 0.05 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the null hypothesis is not rejected. Hence, there is no significant difference in the pre-test mean score of students exposed to literature circles and conventional strategies. The students in both groups are homogeneous at the commencement of the study.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to literature circles and those who are not in Yoruba comprehension

Table 3: t-test analysis for Post – test Mean Scores of Students in Experimental and Control Groups

Variations	N	Mean	SD	df	t_{cal}	P (Sig)	Rem.
Literature Circles	57	36.81	3.64	117	19.339	0.000*	Significant
Conventional	62	25.39	2.77				

*P<0.05

        Table 3 shows that the t-cal value of 19.339 is significant because the P value (0.000) <0.05 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to literature

circles and those who are not in Yoruba comprehension. The mean score showed a significant difference of 11.42 in favour of students exposed to Literature circles strategy.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups.

Table 4: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) for Pre – test and Post – test Mean Scores of Students under the Groups

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3879.030a	2	1939.515	186.625	.000
Intercept	890.956	1	890.956	85.730	.000
Pre-test	6.045	1	6.045	.582	.447
Groups	3878.837	1	3878.837	373.231	.000
Error	1205.541	116	10.393		
Total	**118392.000**	**119**			
Corrected Total	**5084.571**	**118**			

a. R Squared = .763 (Adjusted R Squared = .759)   * P < 0.05

The result presented in Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference in the pre – test and post – test mean scores of students in the groups (Literature circles and Conventional Strategies) as P= 0.000<0.05. There is a strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis. This result led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. By implication, there is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups. In order to find out the more probable effective strategy, Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) was carried out. The result is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) of students' performance in Yoruba Language by treatment

Grand Mean = 31.10					
Variable + Category	N	Unadjusted Dev'n	Eta^2	Adjusted for Independent + Covariate	Beta
Experimental (Literature Circle)	57	5.71	.93	6.51	.09
Control	62	-5.71		-6.37	
Multiple R					.874
Multiple R^2					.764

The result in Table 5 shows the Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) of students' performance in Yoruba Comprehension by treatment. It reveals that, with a grand mean of 31.10, students exposed to literature circles strategy had higher adjusted mean score of 36.81(31.10+5.71) than their counterparts in the control group with control group 25.39(31.10+(-5.71)). This means that literature circles strategy was the more effective strategy for teaching Yoruba Comprehension in Ekiti State. There was a very high multiple relationship (R= 0.874) between the two groups and academic performance of students in Yoruba Comprehension. The two treatment strategies can also account for 76.4% variability in academic performance of the students in Yoruba Comprehension. It means there is a need

for other researchers to find other teaching strategies (other than the two strategies under consideration) that could account for 23.6% of the variability in academic performance of students in Yoruba Comprehension.

Discussion

The finding of this study revealed that there was no significant difference in the pre-test mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups. The performance of students in both experimental and control groups in pre-test does not differ statistically. This finding established the homogeneity of the two groups involved in the study prior to the experiment. In other words, it could be said that the knowledge baseline for the two groups involved in the study are equal.

The findings of this study revealed that there was a significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to literature circles and those who were not in Yoruba comprehension. This implies that the use of literature circles strategy enhanced students' performance in Yoruba comprehension than the conventional strategy. There was an improvement in the performance of students resulting from their exposure to literature circles. Blum, Lipett and Yocum (2007) also stated that literature circles have effect on students' academic performance and encourage students to develop in meta-cognition of the works they read and can also help them understand the texts when reading them.

Zieger (2002) contends that literature circles have had a positive impact on her students. Daniels's (2002) reveals that literature circles improve students' achievement. The findings of Long and Gove (2003), Noll (2004), Clarke (2007) and Whittaker (2012) show that, literature circles strategy yielded better results than the conventional method. This justifies the earlier position of this study that literature circles could facilitate meaningful learning of Yoruba comprehension. The significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of students in the experimental and control groups further justifies the assertion that literature circles strategy was the more effective strategy of teaching Yoruba Comprehension.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that the two groups (Literature circles and Conventional) were homogeneous at the commencement of the experiment. The use of literature circles enhanced better performance of students in Yoruba Comprehension than the conventional strategy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. The use of literature circles strategy should be encouraged in Yoruba language class so as to enhance better academic performance of students in Yoruba Comprehension.
2. Yoruba Language teachers should be given adequate orientation through workshops and seminars to update their knowledge in the use of literature circles strategy in teaching.
3. Authors of Yoruba literature textbooks should adopt literature circles steps in developing all chapters of their books.

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