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ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UPPER BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS IN LAGOS ISLAND; EXPLORING THE ADVANCE ORGANIZERS IN CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

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Abstract

This paper assessed the effect of using the Advance Organizer Strategy to improve Upper Education students' understanding of English reading comprehension. The pretest-posttest control group design was adopted for the study. The sample comprised of 140 Upper Basic Education Students (JSS) who were randomly selected. The students were assigned to experimental and control groups. The results showed that the Advance Organizer Strategy was the most effective (X = 29.30) compared to the conventional strategy (X = 17.6). In conclusion, it was observed that while the conventional strategy is effective in the teaching and learning of English reading comprehension, the Advance Organizer Strategy is more meaningful, effective and functional. Recommendations are provided.

Keywords; strategies, academic performance, upper basic education, advance organizers, classroom interactions.

Introduction

The class teacher is key to the success or failure of the school curriculum in the teaching-learning process. The strategy he/she adopts may make or mar the success of the curriculum. The school curriculum represents the total experiences to which all learners must be exposed; the contents, performance objectives, activities

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for both teachers and learners, teaching and learning materials and evaluation. Consequently, effective strategies must be put in place if the aims and objectives of the school curriculum are to be fulfilled. This is why the National Policy on Education NPE, (NERDC, 2013) Section 5, sub-section B, 92 (a) states clearly that in recognition of the pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels, teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development. In furtherance to this intention, the goals of teacher education (section 93 a & b) shall be to:

1. produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system; and
2. encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.

According to the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council NERDC, (2009), in organizing the content of the National English Studies Curriculum (JSS1-3), topics are arranged around four basic language skills. The four unifying skills are: listening and speaking, grammatical accuracy, reading and writing. The English language teacher is therefore expected to pay special attention to the teaching of these basic skills woven and arranged under five themes: listening and speaking theme, grammatical accuracy theme, reading theme, writing and literature themes. The hypothesis behind this curriculum is that learners' reading abilities and communicative competence will be highly developed and with the effective implementation of the English Studies Curriculum, products of the Nigerian school system will be sufficiently empowered for the world of work (NERDC, 2009).

Secondary school students' exposure to English Studies over the years has taken a down-ward trend which has continuously reflected in their performance over the years. An examination of the West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) Chief Examiners' Reports (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012) describes a consistent decline in the way students use English language. Babalola and Akande (2002), Adepoju (2004) and Eyengho (2011, 2022, 2021, 2024) point to the fact that students' English Studies skills should be systematically enhance. They particularly stressed on the need to properly correct students' errors at all levels (especially those who are second learners of English language (L2) e.g., Nigerian students). This is where the language teacher is an important variable in ensuring that the strategy, he/she adopts enhances students' English Studies skills. This is why the NPE (FGN, 2013) section 5, sub-section B,92(a) states clearly that in recognition of the pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels, teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development. In furtherance of this intention, the goals of teacher education shall be (section 93(a and b) shall be:

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(a) Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system;
(b) encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.

Fillmore and Snow (2002) argue that today's teachers need access to a wide range of information to function well in a classroom. The challenge of providing excellent teacher preparation and ongoing professional development for teachers especially in a nation as diverse as Nigeria is enormous at any time. Few teachers understand the challenges inherent in learning English Studies in the Nigerian context. Experts in language (Zentella, 1997; Hoyle & Adger, 1998; Valdes, 1996 and Fillmore & Snow, 2002), distinguish five functions for which prospective and practicing educators need to know more about language. They opine that education programmes should focus among others on the teacher as communicator, educator, evaluator, educated human being and agent of socialization. Effective understanding and internationalization of these functions will better equip the teachers for the challenges ahead. According to Claxton (2006), effective teaching should aim at assisting individuals and groups to develop the intellectual, personal and social resources that will enable them to flourish in a diverse and changing world.

The strategy or strategies being adopted by a majority of English language teachers (English Studies) especially in public secondary schools in Nigeria appear to be inadequate due to the conventional nature of such strategies. These strategies may not have been yielding the needed results as regards improving students' English Studies skills. This is perhaps why majority of the students have been performing below expectations in their final WASSCE, National Examination Council (NECO) and other examinations in English language (English Studies). Awopetu (2006) attributes the poor performance of students in English language to: poor quality textbooks, poor teaching methods, lack of teachers, poor quality of teachers, inadequacy or dearth of instructional materials. This is why Marzano, Pickering and Pollock (2001), submit that educators stand at a special point in time because the "art" of teaching is rapidly becoming the "science" of teaching. This therefore implies that the most important factor affecting students' learning is the teacher. The teacher is a very important human resource in the English Studies classroom and the strategy/approach he/she adopts in the classroom could promote or hinder the effective learning of English in the school. Researchers; Sanders and Horn (1994), Wrigth, Horn and Sanders (1997) note that the individual classroom teacher has even more of an effect on students' achievement than originally conceived. Therefore, urgent and effective means should be sought after in the teaching learning process.

There are different strategies at the disposal of the language teacher. These strategies are often premised on different pedagogical ideologies on language learning and

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language teaching. For this study however, other strategies being used by language teachers in the teaching learning process are grouped as Conventional Strategies as against the Advance Organizer. In other words, this study uses the Advance Organizer and Conventional Strategies as groupings. Although research studies have evaluated the various methods of improving teacher effectiveness in English Studies as a school subject, much is yet to be done in the Nigerian educational setting in terms of providing research information on the use of the Advance Organizer as a veritable strategy in enhancing students' reading skill. The present study is therefore geared towards assessing the effectiveness of the Advance Organizer on students' academic performance vis-à-vis their reading skill. The strategy is capable of helping the teacher to guide classroom practice in such a way as to maximize the possibility of enhancing students' academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of spirited efforts being made to tackle the problem of failure in learners' performance in English in Nigerian secondary schools, especially at the Upper Basic level, the situation continues to take a downward trend. The effectiveness of the teacher's strategy on the aspect of the reading skill of students in English has not been given adequate attention. There is therefore a need to find out if students' exposure to the Advance Organizer Model will enhance students' academic performance especially in the domain of the reading skill and teachers' effectiveness in the teaching-learning ecology hence, the study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to assess the effective strategies on the academic performance of Upper Basic Education English Studies students with the introduction of Advance Organizer in order to improve teachers' effectiveness and students' performance in English in English reading skill. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

a. assess the type of teaching given to students so as to assist them in understanding reading comprehension in English studies.
b. Assess the Advance Organizer on teachers' dissemination of reading comprehension and students'
c. performance in English Studies.
d. Compare the use of the Advance Organizer conventional strategy in the teaching of reading comprehension on students' performance in English studies.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated tested for the purpose of the study:

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1. There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students exposed to the conventional strategy before and after the treatment.
2. There is no significant difference between the academic performance of English studies students exposed to the Advance Organizer before and after the treatment.
3. There is no significant difference between the academic performance of English studies students exposed to the conventional strategy and those exposed to the Advance Organizer.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Ausubel's (1968) Advance Organizer Model. Ausubel (1968) proposes the notion of an advance organizer as a way to help students link their ideas with new materials or concepts. In Ausubel's view, "to learn meaningfully, students must relate new knowledge (concepts and propositions) to what they already know. Ausubel's learning theory captioned "Resumption Learning" recognizes the sequencing of learning concepts and the need for simultaneous formative evaluation to provide necessary feedback. The theory recognizes the need for teachers to identify relevant subsuming concepts to act as advance organizers. Ausubel stresses meaningful learning as opposed to rote learning or memorization. Ausubel's Advance Organizer model helps learners' understanding of how to solve problems if the situation is well arranged without making blind repetition drills. The current researcher believes that this model will be suitable for the teaching and learning of reading comprehension in schools.

Research Design

The study adopted the pretest-posttest control group design. There were two groups namely, the experimental and control groups. The experimental group was exposed to the treatment employing the advance organizer strategy while the control group was taught using the conventional strategy. Both groups were tested and their performances were compared.

Population, Sampling Procedure and Sample

The study population for the research comprised public Upper Basic Education Students of Lagos Island Area of Lagos State. The sample consisted of 140 students from two purposively selected schools in Lagos Island. These schools were selected based on their population which was deemed large enough to minimize interaction between the experimental and control groups.

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Research Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was English Reading Comprehension Test tagged "Achievement Test in English Reading Comprehension (ATERC)". The comprehension passage was used to measure learners' entry level, the extent of learning and also served as a means of comparison between the two groups of interest after exposure of one of the groups to treatment. Instrument.

Validation of the Instrument

To ensure content validity, the achievement test was validated and modified for the pre and posttest by two experienced secondary school teachers of English Studies, Language expert and an expert in Test and Measurement.

Reliability of Research Instruments

The comprehension test consisting of ten (10) questions were administered to 30 students from Ajumoni Grammar School, Lagos, who were not a part of the study using test-retest method. After two weeks interval, a retest of the instrument was carried out on the same trial respondents. The results from the retest were subjected to item analysis and a coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. This shows that the comprehension test was reliable to perform the purpose for which it was designed.

Procedure for Data Collection

There were three main stages in this research: the pretest, treatment and posttest administrations. The pretest was administered to all the students in the two groups before the exposure of one of the groups to treatment. Secondly, both groups were exposed to the conventional strategy. Later on, the experimental and control groups were exposed to the Advance Organizer strategy and conve ional strategy respectively. A posttest was given to both groups in order to determine the effect of the strategies used for the participants.

Data Analysis

Students' responses (scripts) were marked and graded as percentage score. The achievement test for both pre and posttest were scored by simply ticking (V) right and wrong responses for the two groups. The total number of correct responses was added and calculated for each student on the two test administrations. Results of the pretest and posttest given to the groups were analysed using the t-test to determine the significant difference between the two groups. All the analysis were made at P = 0.05 probability level of significance.

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Results

Scores generated from the pretest conducted were first analyzed to determine the entry level of the students and to find out whether the students assigned to the two groups in the study had equal academic ability at the outset of the experiment.

Table 1: t-test Summary of the Difference in the Pretest between the Experimental and Control Groups.

Group	n	Mean	Sd	df	tc	tt	P
CS	66	7.5	4.61	138	0.83	1.98	0.459
AO	74	8.3	5.99				

P>0.05

* CA = Convention Strategy

* AO = Advance Organizer

Table 1 shows that pretest mean score of the control group was (7.5) while the pretests mean scores of the experimental group was (8.2). Results therefore showed that there was no significant difference in the reading comprehension performance of students assigned to the control group and those assigned to the experimental group in the pretest (tc = 0.83, df = 138, p > 0.05). The result indicates that students assigned to the two groups had uniform academic ability at the commencement of the experiment.

HO1: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students exposed to the conventional strategy before and after the treatment.

Table 2: T-test Summary of the Difference in the Pretest and Post Test Scores of the Students Exposed to Conventional Strategy

Group	n	Mean	Sd	df	tc	tt	p
CS	66	7.5	4.61	138	14.03	1.98	Sig.
AO	66	17.6	3.88				

Table 2 shows a difference in the mean score of students exposed to the conventional strategy before the treatment and after the treatment when subjected to t-test analysis. This difference was also found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance (Mean 1 = 7.5, Mean 2 = 17.7 to = 14.03 = tt = 1.98, df = 138, P < 0.05). This result shows that the conventional strategy is effective in teaching reading comprehension to students.

HO2: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students exposed to the conventional strategy and those exposed to the Advance Organizer Strategy.

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Table 3: T-test Summary of the Difference in the Pretest and Students Exposed to the Advance Organizer.

Group	n	Mean	df	tc	tt	P
CS	74	8.20	138	24.09	1.98	Significant
AO	74	29.30				

P<0.05

The results in Table 3 indicate that there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students exposed to the Advance Organizer strategy before and after they were exposed (Mean 1 = 8.20; Mean 2 = 29.30, tc = 24.09, tt = 1.98, df = 138, at P<0.05). P<0.05

HO3: There is no significant different in the academic performance of students exposed to the conventional strategy and those exposed to the Advance Organizer Strategy.

Table 4: T-test Summary of the Difference in the Performance of the Students to Exposed the Conventional and Advance Organizer Strategies.

Group	n	Mean	Sd	df	tc	tt	P
CS	66	17.6	3.88	138	17.08	1.98	Significant
AO	74	29.30	4.22				

P<0.05

The results in Table 4 indicate a significant difference in the academic performance of the students exposed to the conventional strategy and those exposed to Advance Organizer Strategy with better academic performance in favour of those taught using the Advance Organizer Strategy (Mean 1 = 17.6, Mean 2 = 29.30, tc = 17.08; tt = 1.98; df = 138 at P <0.05).

Discussion

The results indicate that the employment of the conventional strategy in the teaching of reading comprehension could be effective. In the same vein, the results also revealed that students exposed to the advance organizer strategy also performed creditably well in their reading comprehension exercise.

However, when the two groups' scores were compared and analysed after exposure to treatment it was discovered from the findings that the use of the Advance Organizer in the teaching of reading comprehension is more effective than the conventional strategy because the students taught using Advance Organizer Strategy were found to perform better than those taught using the conventional strategy. This goes to show that students should be exposed to learning contents in systematic, organized and meaningful ways in

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order for them to be able to relate whatever the teacher is passing across to them with their previous experiences or knowledge. This study therefore corroborates the findings of Bricker (1989) and Peeck (1970) that the References advance organizer strategy is useful in the teaching learning process.

It should be painted out that meaningful language teaching and learning can only take place when the teacher of English recognizes the learner in the classroom. The learner is made to be active and involved in activities going in the classroom. This is why this study is in line with the submissions of Harley and Davies (1976), Ausubel (1960), Ausubel and Youseff (1963) and Ausubel and Fitzgerald (1962), Eyengho (2011, 2021,2022, 2024), Fillmore and Snow (2003) and Wrigth, Horn and Sanders (1997) They all support the use of the Advance Organizers as a means of improving students' academic performance. According to Ausubel (1967), the teachers should provide the students with a structure of ideas representing the disciplines in such a way that these ideas and information are meaningfully related to the students' cognitive structure and implanted in the learners' information - processing system in a stable way. This is the focus of the Advance Organizer Strategy tested in this study.

Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from this study is that the conventional strategy which happens to be the strategy majority of English Studies teachers fancy in the teaching learning process is ineffective in enhancing students' reading comprehension skill. The Advance Organizer Strategy which is not currently in use is a more effective strategy in the teaching and learning of English reading comprehension especially at the upper basic level.

Recommendations

Following the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. Teachers (especially English Studies) should be more innovative and adaptive to new and creative pedagogical skills father that sticking to the old usual practice of making students to listen while the teacher talks/reads the prescribed comprehension passages.
2. Many more writers of English Studies textbooks should be more current in order to produce textbook materials that will align with global practices in the teaching of reading comprehension.
3. Curriculum planners should develop dynamic curriculum materials that would be more flexible to accommodate teachers' innovations and creative ideas.
4. Planners and organizers of conferences, seminars and workshops are encouraged to hold regular facilitate English reading programmes comprehension using the Advance Organizer Strategy

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