ENHANCING PUPILS' INTEREST IN READING USING PHONICS INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES: IMPLICATION FOR ENGINEERING CAREER

DR JACINTA CHINWE OMILE¹, JOSEPHINE UZO AKABOGU^{2*} & DR IJEOMA EUCARIA
UGWUANYI¹

¹School of Languages, English Department, Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunze, Nigeria

²Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

ABSTRACT

The researchers sought the instructional efficacy of phonics on pupil's interest in reading. Anon-equivalent control group quasi-experimental research design was adopted using 116 primary two pupils as study participants. A properly validated and trial-tested English Language Reading Interest Scale (ELRIS) was used for data collection. The items of the ELRIS demonstrated a good internal consistency reliability index of .84. The duration of the treatment sessions was five weeks. A mean statistical tool was used to answer the research question while analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. It was revealed that the phonics approach had a significant ($p < .05$) effect on pupils' interest in reading. This finding implicates pupils' career choice in Engineering in that as the pupils' interest in reading is enhanced, they will be able to think of picking a career in Engineering education through effective reading.

KEYWORDS: Engineering Career, Instructional Approaches, Interest in Reading, Phonics, Pupils

Received: Dec 10, 2020; **Accepted:** Dec 29, 2020; **Published:** Apr 20, 2021; **Paper Id.:** IJMPERDJUN202119

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem and Conceptual Clarifications

Despite the efforts by researchers in trying to instill effective reading culture at the foundation phase, learners still encounter different levels of difficulty in reading. Research evidence showed that a greater percentage of Nigerian pupils could not pass the common entrance and first school leaving certificate examinations as a result of a lack of basic reading skills (Omile & Akabugo, 2021). This may be attributed to the lack of pupils' interest in reading. According to Krapp (2000) in Ifeicho (2017), interest is a psychological state which results from the interactions between persons and their objects of interest. For Hidi (2006), interest is an enduring predisposition to better accept particular contents which can be objects, events, ideas, or tasks. According to Zosia, Raymond and Hadi (2013), interest is a kind of feeling that follows particular or special attention to an object. Interest is a behavioral trait based on emotion that influences a learner's urge and vigor to tackle certain activities which can be educational or otherwise (Torty & Offorma, 2013).

In essence, interest is a regularly occurring inclination to pay attention to certain activities as a result of likeness developed in performing such activities or tasks. Learners perform better in the activities that they are interested in and could achieve less in activities they lack interest in. This suggests that interest is a motivational variable that could influence teaching and learning activities or tasks. Researchers such as Ifeicho (2017), Egbe (2015), and Torty (2010) found that there is a close connection between pupils' interest and their achievement in the English Language. Consequently, pupils' interest in reading could enhance their academic achievement when taught using appropriate instructional strategies. This is because interest in reading is reading activities undertaking

voluntarily without any encouragement or external commands. Therefore, when learners are taught reading properly, they can spontaneously self-initiate reading without being asked to do so, but this is not the case with most primary school pupils because most of the children show less interest in reading.

In the phonic method, instruction begins with a word a child already knows which is broken down into components. It is an indirect method of teaching phonics in which the teacher allows and guides the child to work out the letter-sound relationships themselves by presenting them with a group of words containing the same sound. The phonic method involves teaching children the link between individual letters and pairs of letters as well as all the 44 sounds of the language. In this method, the associations among the letters, pairs of letters, and the sound of the language are first systematically introduced before the unfamiliar words are taught by sounding out the letters and blending those letters to pronounce a recognizable word (Eshiet, 2014). Phonics helps the learners or pupils learn how to read in any language by matching the individual letters or letter groups of the alphabet with its appropriate sound(s). This can be seen in the child's association of sound "k" with the letters "k," "c," and even "ck" when the letters are written on the board (Schmitt, 2012). The use of the phonics method helps the learners learn phonemic awareness.

Phonemic awareness helps learners to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes to learn about the correspondence between these sounds and the spelling patterns that represent them (Schmitt, 2012). It is understanding of the ways that sounds function in words. However, based on the numerous benefits phonics method, this study seeks to investigate their effect of phonics instructional method on pupils' achievement and interest in reading. While phonemic awareness concerns the ears, phonics concerns both the eyes and ears. Eshiet (2014) emphasized that children read words and pseudo-words through the use of instruction in phonemic awareness. Besides, phonemic awareness instruction had helped to improve normally developing readers, students who have been identified for being at risk for reading problems, and students with reading disabilities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Torty (2010) indicated that the experimental group taught through collaborative strategy had a higher mean interest score than the control group. The study revealed that the collaborative learning strategy increased students' interest in learning English language tenses. Dunst, Jones, Johnson, Roab and Hanby (2011) showed that the different children's interest measures were related to all outcomes. The result indicated that young children's interest was directly related to the manner of presentation of learning items and contribute to their literacy and language learning. Zurine (2013) revealed that the students had very low interest in learning English. In their responses, the students attributed their lack of interest in the English language to the methods and techniques used, the teachers in teaching English as well as some teacher characteristics.

The foregoing indicated that there is a dearth of literature on the effect of phonics instructional approaches on pupils' interest in reading. This is for the fact that no such study was found in the course of the literature review. Thus, the researchers sought the effect of phonics instructional approaches on pupils' interest in reading in Anambra State, Nigeria. The researchers, therefore, hypothesized that there was no significant effect of phonics instructional approaches on pupils' interest in reading.

METHODS

The researchers adopted a quasi-experimental design specifically pre-test, post-test non-equivalent control group. In similar studies, this design has been adopted by Ugwuanyi et al (2019) and Ugwuanyi et al. (2020), Njoku et al. (2020), Adene et al. (2021), Onah et al. (2020), Ejimonye et al. (2020a, b). A sample of 116 pupils was drawn from the study population using a purposive sampling technique. Four schools were purposively selected from the school population in the Awka South LGA. In these four schools, two schools were assigned to the experimental group while the other two schools were assigned to the control group. One intact class of primary two pupils was used in each of the four schools making a total of four intact classes. The instrument used for data collection was English Language Reading Interest Scale (ELRIS). ELRIS structured on a 4-point Likert type scale was used to elicit information from the pupils on their interest in reading. ELRIS was properly face validated by validators in Language Education as well as Measurement and Evaluation units. The items of the ELRIS had an internal consistency reliability index of 0.84 which was estimated using the Cronbach Alpha method. Before the treatment started, the participants were pretested to collect baseline data for the study. After that, the participants of the experimental group were exposed to a 5-week instructional engagement using the phonics instructional approach while their control group counterparts were exposed to look and say instructional approach for the same period. Thereafter, both groups were post-tested using ELRIS. The data collected were properly organized and analyzed using mean and analysis of covariance statistical tools to answer the research question and test the associated hypothesis at 5% probability level.

RESULTS

Table 1: Mean Analysis of Interest Scores of Pupils in Reading

Group	Pre-Test			Post-Test		
	n	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean Gain
Phonics Instructional Method	120	36.67	9.48	50.51	12.63	13.84
Look and Say Instructional Method	120	34.09	10.75	45.97	6.18	11.88

Table 1 shows that the pupils exposed to the phonics method of teaching had a mean interest of ($M = 36.67$, $SD = 9.48$) while their counterparts had a mean interest of ($M = 34.09$, $SD = 10.75$) at the pre-test stage. At the post-test, pupils exposed to phonics method of teaching had mean interest of ($M = 50.51$, $SD = 12.63$) while their counterparts had mean interest of ($M = 45.97$, $SD = 6.18$). Mean gain scores of 13.84 and 11.88 for the two groups, respectively, showed that the phonics method group had higher post-test mean interest than their counterparts.

Table 2: ANCOVA for the Effect of Phonics Approaches on the Interest of Pupils in Reading

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1360.014 ^a	4	340.004	3.410	.010	.055
Intercept	46524.735	1	46524.735	466.668	.000	.665
Pre-interest	120.511	1	120.511	1.209	.273	.005
Treatment	1113.493	1	1113.493	11.169	.001	.450
Error	23428.481	235	99.696			
Total	705217.000	238				
Corrected Total	24788.496	237				

a. R Squared = .055 (Adjusted R Squared = .039)

Table 2 shows that there is a significant effect of the phonics method on mean interest scores of pupils in reading, $F(1, 235) = 11.169, p = .001$. The effect size of 0.450 implies that 45% variation in the pupils' interest of pupils in reading is attributed to the effect of the phonics method.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This result revealed that the phonics instructional method had a significant effect on pupils' interest more than the Look and Say method. This finding demonstrated that the pupils who were exposed to the phonics instructional approach had a higher interest in reading after the treatment period than their counterparts exposed to the look and say approach. This finding aligns with the proposition of Vygotsky's theory of social interaction. This theory is an explanation of language development emphasizing the role of social interaction between the developing child and linguistically knowledgeable adults. According to Vygotsky, social interaction plays an important role in the learning process and proposed the zone of proximal development (ZPD) where learners construct the new language through socially mediated interaction. The social interaction methods rest on the premises of a social-cognitive model, emphasizing the child's construction of a social world which then serves as the context of language development.

This is in agreement with the findings of Torty (2010) and Eshiet (2014) that pupils prefer to learn reading using the phonics instructional method as opposed to the Look and Say method. It also agrees Maddox and Feng (2013) whose findings reveal that suitable teaching methods/methods increase learners' interest and that there is a strong relationship between students' interest and achievement. The phonics instructional method was able to stimulate higher interests in the pupil irrespective of their young age because it is activity-based. The Look and Say method in its abstract nature may have been responsible for the fear and anxiety manifested in learning reading. This could also have been the reason why it was not able to generate as much interest in the pupil as the phonics instructional method. This finding implicates pupils' career choice in Engineering in that as the pupils' interest in reading is enhanced and they will be able to think of picking a career in Engineering education through effective reading. It was, therefore, recommended the use of the phonics instructional approach in teaching reading should be adopted by the English language. School authority should ensure that workshops/seminars on the use of phonics instructional approach are organized for the English language teachers from time to time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researchers are thankful to all the study participants and those who provided help in one way or the other to see to the success of this research. Most importantly, **Prof. Josephine UzoAkabogu** (josephine.akabogu@unn.edu.ng) is appreciated in a special way for serving as the corresponding author for this research.

REFERENCES

1. Adene, F.M., Umeano, E.C., Adimora, D.E., Ugwuanyi, C.S., Okeke, C.I.O., Offordile, E.E., Amaeze, F.E., Uzodinma, U.E., Abdullahi, Y., Ejiofor, J.N. & Ishiwu, E.N. (2021). *Effectiveness of Peer Collaborative Learning Strategy on Self-Esteem of Pupils with Behaviour Problems in Nsukka Education Authority*. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 8(1), 1055-1069. <http://www.jcreview.com/fulltext/197-1615692041.pdf?1615708380>
2. Egbe, C. I. (2015). *Effects of integrative language teaching method on secondary school students' achievement and interest in English grammar*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of Arts Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

3. Ejimonye, J. C., Onuoha, J. C., Ugwuanyi, C. S., Eneogu, N. D., Ugwuanyi, B. E & Ogbuehu, S. N (2020a). Effectiveness of Two-Dimensional Animation Technique in Enhancing Students' Motivation in Quantitative Economics Concepts. *International Journal of Future Generation Communication and Networking (IJFGCN)*, 13(1):27-38.
4. Ejimonye, J.C., Ugwuanyi, C.S., Okeke, C.I.O., & Nwoye, M.N. (2020b). Two-Dimensional Animation and Students' Achievement in Mathematical Economics: Implications for Science Teaching. *International Journal of Engineering Research and Technology*, 13(6), 1220-1230
5. Eshiet, O. I. (2014). *Synthetic phonics as a tool for improving the reading skills of Nigerian pupils*. Newcastle University Faculty of Humanities And Social Sciences School Of Education, Communication And Language Sciences
6. Hidi, W. (2006). Interest and its contribution as a mental resource for learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 60, 5517 – 540.
7. Ifeacho, J. N. (2017). Effect of 5Es constructivist instructional method on students achievement and interest in essay writing. Unpublished MED project Department of Arts Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
8. Krapp, A. (2000). *Interest and human development during adolescent. An educational psychological method*. New York: McGraw-Hill
9. Njoku, M.I.A., Nwagbo, C.R., & Ugwuanyi, C.S. (2020). *Effect of Peer Tutoring and Peer-Led*
10. *Team Learning on Students' Achievement in Biology*. *International Journal of Database*
11. *Theory and Application (IJDTA)*, 13(1),1-10. <https://doi.org/10.33832/ijdt.2020.13.1.01>.
12. Omile, J.C. & Akabogu, J.U. (2021). Improving Achievement of Primary School Pupils in Reading using Phonics Instructional Approach. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 8(2), 253-261. ISSN- 2394-5125. <http://www.jcreview.com/fulltext/197-1617634273.pdf?1617634686>
13. Onah, E.N., Ugwuanyi, C.S., Okeke, C.I.O., Nworgu, B.G., Agwagah, U.V.N., Ugwuanyi, C.C., Obe, P.I., Nwoye, M. N., & Okeke, A.O. (2020). Evaluation of the Impact of Computer-Assisted Instruction on Mathematics and Physics Students' Achievement: Implication for Industrial Technical Education. *International Journal of Engineering Research and Technology*, 13(7): 1786-1794. http://irphouse.com/ijert20/ijertv13n7_35.pdf
14. Schmitt, N. (2012). *Vocabulary in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
15. Terty, O. U. (2010). *Effect of collaborative learning method on secondary students' achievement and interest in English language tenses*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of Arts Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
16. Terty, O.U & Offorma, G.C. (2013). *Effect of collaborative Learning method on secondary school students' interest in English Language tenses*. *International Journal of Educational Research* 12 (2), 128-135.
17. Ugwuanyi, C.S., Nduji, C.C., Gana, C.S., Nwajiuba, C.A., Ene, C.U., Okeke, A.O., Eseadi, C., & Okeke, C.F. (2019). Effectiveness of flipped classroom instructional technology model in enhancing students' achievement in physics. *International Journal of u- and e- Service, Science and Technology*, 12(4): 37-46.
18. Ugwuanyi, C.S., Nduji, C.C., Elejere, U.C., & Omeke, N.E. (2020). Effect of Flipped Classroom and Think Pair Share Strategy on Achievement and Retention Among Senior Secondary School Physics Students. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)*, 52(2), 136-148. <https://www.gssrr.org/index.php/JournalOfBasicAndApplied>
19. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

20. Zosia, B., J. C., Raymond, R. J. & Hadi, D. (2013). Evaluating user experience in green buildings in relation to workplace culture and context. *Journal of Environment and Insight*, 28(3/4), 225-238.