

Multidisciplinary Assessment of Reading Skills among New-Intakes in Nigeria University (South-East) - A 21st Century Issues

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Abstract

The accelerating communication tempo and the ability to decode segments of an enormous and expanding symbology quickly and accurately becomes of paramount importance not only for the highly trained technician or scholar in this 21st Century, but for the average man as well. Twenty first century involves application of skills, knowledge and attitudes for success and development in the 21st century workplace. Inadequate reading ability remains the principal reason for the children being kept back in the elementary schools and continues to plague the secondary schools and higher institutions. This study aims to investigate formal procedures in assessing reading capacity or expectancy level among new- intakes in Nigerian universities. A sample size of 538 respondents was randomly selected among fresher's (new-intakes) in five (5) Nigerian Universities in (South- East) using corrective and remedial teaching techniques and analysis. Based on the findings, a standardized reading measurement /innovative teaching were recommended to boost reading culture among students, in our Nigerian Universities.

Key words: Reading skills, tests, teaching, 21st century, multidisciplinary.

Introduction

As society changes, the skills needed to negotiate the complexities of life also change. Brabner (2009) categorically stated that unless an individual is living in a geographically isolated area, the inability to read, and to read well, will handicap such a person more in numerous life situations that will many physically or mental limitations. Unquestionably, sensory handicaps, neurological impairments, low intelligence, metabolic disorders and cultural-psychological influences will continue to be contributory factors in reading retardation for some time to come; but it is my conviction that the largest portion of fresher (new intakes) who are retarded are so because of poor instruction. Where instruction is inadequate, and students still learn to read adequately, their reading ability is developed in spite of that instruction, not because of it. Too often we look for the reading problem in a youngster, and thereby slip into the habit of identifying the problem as the child's and not as the teachers'. It would be more accurate to say that the affliction is the child's but the problem of cure, or amelioration, is the teacher's, we prefer to talk about the learning disabilities of

children.

The pertinent question is: where does the focus properly belong? We must examine both the child's behavior and our own as teachers. There are numerous strategies and skills we can apply in assessing reading skills; which may be suitable to certain topics, courses and different class levels. Variety and creativity in literacy instruction starts from the learning environment, this is very important at all levels of education (Obiajulu 2013). The teacher facilitates change in the students, brings about reading/learning outcomes and builds characters. There is an adage that says 'readers are leaders'. The modern and competent 21st century teacher must be able to manage his class by planning and directing reading activities that match the aptitudes and multidisciplinary areas of the students. (Ezenwa 2007).

The teacher becomes the school's primary initiator for inculcating reading skill discipline among new intakes, because the management of a class which gives enjoyment of work, affection and security to the students regardless of their ability is the basis of school discipline which we need today. The teacher's role, therefore, makes the authority legally



delegated to him for the guidance of the students acceptable and desirable. A modern 21st century competent teacher may be viewed as a well-adjusted and genuinely responsive individual who is supposed to be a model, creative, intuitive, a dispenser of knowledge, who encourages talents and abilities and who possesses intuition. He is seen as generous motivator to others (Ukong 2015). Students could be motivated on reading skills especially when their minds are still on the greener side, about to be catapulted rightly or wrongly. The effective teacher in this 21st century modern setting is therefore seen as an all-round person.

Statement of the problem

Our society today emphasizes qualitative education in the school system; broadly speaking an instructional problem can be reasonably defined as any obstacle to learning created by, or persisting because of the failure of the teacher to make the modifications of her behavior and/or materials necessary to eliminate the obstacle. This research is designed to identify the psychological correlates of the disability in a student's behavior; how to correct or remediate effectively multidisciplinary reading skills among fresher's (New Intakes) through manipulating the physical aspects of the learning environment, and how to modify our behavior as teachers, which is a vital part of that environment. This is the gap the researcher hoped to fill through this study.

Aims and objectives

Rightly pointed out above, we must examine both the students' behavior and our own as teachers; with the following objectives:

1. Identify techniques for estimating reading capacity
2. Discover techniques for reading achievements
3. Identify techniques for Observing and analyzing Reading performance
4. Identify Perceptual and Conceptual Levels in School Programme.

Scope of the study

The study focuses on instructional competences of University teachers for the

implementation of reading skills in Nigeria universities (South East) specifically, teacher's innovative and creative approach for effective pedagogy and multidisciplinary assessment were examined.

Research method

The design of this study is descriptive survey research design. The design was appropriate in this study because the research tends to describe, explain, document and report the multidisciplinary literacy required in this 21st century. This study was conducted in Umudike (South East of Nigeria) the technique for research was administered to respondent with the help of two research assistants using corrective/remedial teaching technique. Moreover, the instrument used was face validated by three experts from renowned universities. These experts vetted the instruments in terms of relevance, clarity, usability and suitability.

Literature review on reading skills

The first of this research was designed to discover psychological correlates of reading disability (dyslexia). DYSLEXIA was defined by Kass as 'retardation in reading skills which is not due to mental retardation or to sensory defects (blindness or deafness) (Kass 2003). She believes that a deficiency in the process of integration, possibly neurological in origin, may underlie the reading difficulties and that training should be directed toward these processes, rather than toward the conceptual or more meaningful processes.

Graubard(2006) attempted to identify some psycholinguistic correlates of reading disability in emotionally disturbed students. Graubard's results showed shift from communication processes, most of ' their deficits appeared at the integrational level, he called attention, however to the need for developing new training methods which can be used to remedy integrational deficits particularly of the visual-motor type. Simpson (2006) includes a perceptual training program designed to include reading readiness. Emejulu (2013) proposes phased reading which he clearly defined in three phases:



before or “pre”, during and after or “post”-this he said is very helpful in achieving full understanding of ideas presented in books. The pre-reading stage is the place that

- (a) Focuses attention of the reader
- (b) Activates background knowledge of the learners so that you can build on a solid foundation
- (c) Motivates them to discover more

Research questions

Four research questions were developed to guide the study, while three hypotheses were formulated using corrective and remedial teaching techniques. Survey research design was used for the study. The population for the study was 3,527 of which a sample size of 538 respondents was randomly selected among fresher’s (new intakes) in five (5) Nigerian Universities.

Research Question 1

What are the techniques for estimating multidisciplinary reading capacity?

A variety of standardized tests are available for the formal evaluation of both oral and silent reading achievement. Teachers become most familiar with the latter tests when they are routinely administered in a school system. (Dolch 2006) suggested a quick way to survey a class of poor readers by obtaining a sample of their reading performance following an oral procedure: the teachers can test for comprehension by having the students read silently four or five paged selection. As each student finishes the selection; he closes the book and looks up at the teacher; in this way, slow readers, can be detected. When every student has finish reading, the teacher reads a prepared list of short-answer questions and the students write their answers. The book under consideration will prove too difficult for students scoring below 70% in comprehension. This technique will reveal those children who are achieving at a level too low to use the basal reader that the majority of the class will be using. Itam’s

(2000) recommends that multidisciplinary texts books in various content areas, as well as basal readers be used. For this purpose allow the student to read aloud from a graded series of readers until the student attains that level (the instructional level) at which he can read adequately with minimal assistance; yet still be sufficiently challenged.

Research Question 2

How do we analyze multidisciplinary reading performance?

Formal techniques for observing and analyzing specific reading skills and processes of the type described in this section are found in individual diagnostic reading examinations, in check lists of reading difficulties often included in such examinations, and in Variety of specialized tests which have evolved out of clinical practice. Skills are required to analyze reading performance in high specific way, so that deficits can be pin-pointed, errors identified and analyzed.

Three visual ability areas related to reading which the teacher should be interested in assessing informally are:

1. Visual memory
2. Visual discrimination
3. Visual sequencing

Time and space may limit our explanations of these points but we will dwell on one.

Visual sequencing is the ability to organize visual stimuli in correct spatial order. The response may be one of recognition, recall or reproduction; but frequently more than one of these elements is involved. For instance, in visual-motor sequencing as measured by the Illinois tests of psycholinguistic abilities (McCarthy and Kirk 2006), both reproduction and recall play a part, as they do in written spelling. Visual-motor sequencing is defined here as the ability to reproduce a sequence of visual stimuli from memory. A teacher may employ a modified version of the visual motor sequencing sub-test using letters. The student’s errors can be recorded and compared to the performance of his classmates. The technique required that an individual be able to

discriminate visually among letter series as well as to sequence the visually order.

Research Question 3

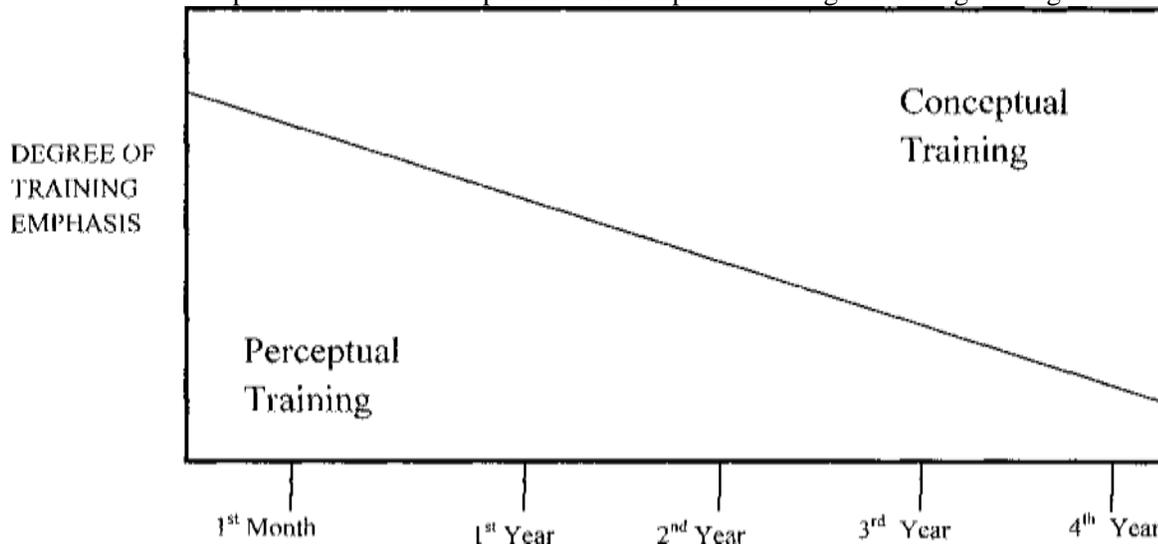
How do we identify perceptual and conceptual levels in school program?

Naturally, it is rightly observed that some youngsters are distinctly more advanced than others in perceptual and memory abilities long before they enter school. Cognitive training practices intentional and unintentional vary widely from one student to another. Systematic exercises emphasizing perceptual-memory integrational training may come to occupy a prominent position in the educational program. This kind of instruction could continue first year, second year gradually decreasing in amount while accompanied by a corresponding increase in more conceptual meaningful instruction. There are however, indications that proficiency in reading may be more dependent upon perceptual and memory abilities than upon conceptual abilities. At present, we are contending with many perceptual problems in the classroom which could be eliminated, or greatly minimized through an early intensive diagnosis; the establishment of a solid foundation of perceptual memory skills and

gradually increasing attention to conceptual development could result in an excellent reading readiness program.

Using an experimental group of 27 first year intakes of 529 control students, the researcher directed the teacher of experimental group in implementing a perceptual training program which was added to the regular first year curriculum activities. At the conclusion of the study, a comparison of the reading achievement of the perceptual training group with that of the control group showed the average reading achievement of the training group to be significantly greater (3.33 months) from the findings, perceptual development of new intakes in our Nigerian Universities can be increased through appropriate perceptual, with a resulting increase in reading achievements. Simpson (2009) states that there is a statistical justification for increased emphasis on the teaching of reading as if it were a PERCEPTUAL ART as well as a LANGUAGE ART. Serious consideration must be given to the balance between perceptual and conceptual aspects of the reading readiness program and, later to the specific nature of the training provided.

Recommended Emphasis between Perceptual and Conceptual Training According to Program Level



Reading skills in 21st century

21st Century skills represent the fresh, serious, new perspective required in light of historical events, globalization and the idiosyncrasies of the 21st century. Reading skills when considered within the context of rigorous academic standards are intended to provide the public and educators with a common understanding of what is needed by students in this digital age. Reading skills are the synthesis of the essential abilities students must apply in our rapidly changing world. In the 1900s, a person who had acquired simple reading, writing and calculating skills was considered literate. Only in recent years has the public education system expected all students to build on those basics, developing a broader range of literacy (International ICT literacy Panel, 2002). To achieve success in the 21st century, students also need to attain proficiency in science, technology and culture, as well as gain a thorough understanding of information in all its forms.

21stCENTURY LITERACY: includes the following:

Basic Literacy: Reading to acquire language proficiency and numeracy at levels necessary to function on the job and in society to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potentials in this 21st century.

Scientific Literacy: knowledge and understanding via reading of the scientific concepts and processes required for personal decision making, participation in civic and cultural affairs and economic productivity.

Economic Literacy:The ability to read and identify economic problems, alternatives, costs and benefits, analyze the incentives at work in economic situations, examine the consequences of changes in economic conditions and public policies, collect and organize economic evidence, and weigh costs against benefits.

Technological literacy: Reading to acquire knowledge on what technology is, how it works, what purposes it can serve, and how it can be used efficiently and effectively to achieve specific goals.

Visual literacy: The ability to read, interpret ,use, appreciate and create images and video using

both conventional and 21st century media in ways that advance thinking, decision making, communication and learning.

Information Literacy: The ability to read and evaluate information across a range of media, recognize when information is needed, locate, synthesize, and use information effectively and accomplish these functions using technology, communication networks and electronic resources.

Multicultural Literacy: The ability to read, understand and appreciate the similarities and differences in the customs, values and beliefs of one's own culture and the cultures of others.

Global Awareness: The recognition and understanding via reading of interrelationships among international organizations, nation-states, public and private economic entities, socio-cultural groups, and individuals across the globe.

Let's return back to the fundamentals of this study which have been highlighted already; **BASIC LITERACY**-this is the ability to read, write, listen and speak. An adage says, 'You are what You read' this comes out of the abundance of what you have taken in (contents reservoir) you speak. The definition of basic literacy has changed over time to reflect that increasing importance. In the early 1900s, basic literacy meant the ability to write one's name. That definition was later **expanded to** mean the decoding of text, and by the 1930's, it had come to include **reading and** expressing oneself through writing (Bransford et al, 2009). The national **Literacy Act** of 2001 defined Literacy as 'an individual's ability to read, write and speak in English as well able to compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society in order to achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential'(National Literacy Act of 1991 sec.3) The National Assessment of Adult Literacy measures basic adult literacy along three scales-prose, document and quantitative-composed of literacy tasks that simulate the types of demands that adults encounter in everyday life. Prose literacy tasks include reading, understanding and using information from texts such as editorials,



newspaper articles, poems and stories. Document literacy tasks include locating and using information found in common artifacts such as job applications, bus schedules maps, payroll forms, indexes and tables. Quantitative literacy tasks include reading to understand how to perform arithmetic operations required as prose and documents encountered in everyday life (e.g. bank deposit slips, checkbooks, order forms, loan applications) National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).

Summary of findings

Teachers can engage students in discussions, multidisciplinary enquiries, assigning students to come up with 'feedback' on relevant books and documents read that could build them up. The research indicates that students can excel when immersed in such meaningful challenging literacy tasks.

(Newmann et al 2000)

However, the findings of this study reveal that teachers' competency multidisciplinary skills are average.

Conclusion

Although reading, writing, listening and speaking are paramount, today's students must be able to decipher meaning while reading and express ideas through a range of media. Educators must stay current with practices that optimize student learning. The 21st century reading skills should form a major part of the foundation of improvement processes in schools. Stakeholders in education such as the government, curriculum developers and teachers need to provide good instructional climate-well equipped for all inclusive learning.

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