



INNOVATIVE TEACHING OF READING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

Amina Gogo Tafida

General Studies Unit,
School of Science and Technology Education,
Federal University of Technology,
Minna, Niger State
Email: tafidagogo@mail.com

Halima Shehu

General Studies Unit,
School of Science and Technology Education,
Federal University of Technology,
Minna, Niger State

Titus Terver Udu

Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education,
Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria

Abstract

Basic or primary education is the foundation level of education which a child undergoes before progressing to other educational levels. It is a stepping stone for the child's educational journey beginning from 6 to 14 years of age. For this level, the Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education has spelt out the aims to include, among others, the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively. This emphasizes the importance of language. Reading is one of the important language skills which allows an interaction between the writer and the reader. This paper takes a look at the present situation of reading instruction in primary schools. It identifies some of the challenges facing reading instruction in schools to include lack of access to reading materials, use of ineffective teaching methods, preponderance of untrained teachers, social distractions among others. The paper also proffers innovative strategies emphasizing the need to shift from the traditional method of teaching reading to a cognitive one, by encouraging professional development of teachers and providing the needed motivation for students' sustained attention and interest in reading and teachers' love for teaching reading in particular and the language in general.

Key Words: *Primary school, Reading, language skills, cognitive method, traditional method*

Introduction

Primary education is the basic education which aims at preparing children to attain the competence needed to advance further in making a useful contribution to the society, which is constantly undergoing changes. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013), "Primary education is the education given in institutions for children ages 6 to 11 plus." All over the globe, primary education is seen as the fulcrum of other levels of education. It is a qualifying stage for secondary education just as secondary education is a qualifying stage for tertiary education (Udu & Nwaokike, 2023). The skill of reading is very important in the educational system as all the subjects of the curriculum utilize the reading as one of the most important skill. Reading success forms the central part of the teaching - learning process since it forms the basis for all other areas of learning, it is necessary to ensure that children of the primary grades attain proficiency in reading. Children are able to apply reading competencies independently as they try to obtain and utilize information from a variety of sources (Alufohai, 2020).

Aliyu (2006) defines reading as a way of building up from what has been put down in the written form. The written symbols are used to form words and sentences, which are in turn expected to represent certain information or intention. Reading is thus a form of communication during which the contents, challenges and claims made by a writer are gone over by the reader who tries to capture the substance of the written material. Udu (2021) argues that reading involves interpreting and demonstrating a good understanding of texts in addition to extracting information appropriate to the context of what is being read. Reading is a multi-faceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation. Ogungbe (2014) defines it as a psycholinguistic problem-solving exercise which actively involves the reader in the process of decoding and assigning meaning. Its success, therefore, depends on the use of appropriate strategies. Leipzig (2001) observes that reading is making meaning from print that requires the reader to:

- identify the words in print (word

recognition);

- construct an understanding from them (comprehension); and
- coordinate the identified words and make meaning so that reading becomes automatic and accurate (fluency).

The reading process requires continuous practice, development, and retirement. Blau (2016) opines that repeated readings is a way to help students recognize high-frequency words more easily, thereby strengthening their ease of reading. Having students practice reading by re-reading short passages aloud is one of the best ways to promote reading fluency. Kemba (2005) states that reading is an essential part of language instruction at every level because it supports learning in multiple ways, as in:

1. Reading to learn the language: reading material is language input. By giving students a variety of materials to read, instructors provide multiple opportunities for students to absorb vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and discourse structure as they occur in authentic contexts. Students thus gain a more complete picture of the ways in which the elements of the language work together to convey meaning.
3. Reading for content information: students' purpose for reading in their native language is often to obtain information about a subject they are studying, and this purpose can be useful in the language learning classroom as well. Reading for content information in the language classroom gives students both authentic reading material and an authentic purpose for reading.
4. Reading for cultural knowledge and awareness: reading everyday materials that are designed for native speakers can give students insight into the lifestyles and worldviews of the people whose language they are studying. When students have access to newspapers, magazines, and Web sites, they are exposed to culture in all its variety, and monolithic cultural stereotypes begin to break down.

Reading according to Mikulecky (2008) is a conscious and unconscious thinking process. The reader applies many strategies to reconstruct the

meaning that the author is assumed to have intended. The reader does this by comparing information in the text to his or her background knowledge and prior experience. A reader approaches a text with a huge store of prior knowledge and experience, including preconceptions about the uses of spoken and written language.

Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning. It is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and language community which is culturally and socially situated. It is a means of [language acquisition](#), communication, and of sharing [information](#) and ideas. It is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and culturally and socially situated language community. Reading forms the basis for all other areas of learning, and it is expected that people succeed in the process. Unfortunately, this expectation has not been a reality for many as the high rate of illiteracy continues to have adverse effect on many nations. Experience, observation, and researches (Andzayi, 2004 cited in Tafida, 2008) have shown that reading in Nigeria is bedeviled by a lot of problems, its importance to teaching-learning notwithstanding.

This phenomenon has produced the following types of readers: Those who:

- recite book without recognition or comprehension of printed word;
- call words from book with correct pronunciation but without comprehension;
- read easy books but not all the levels of books used in the class;
- are in the upper class but as not learnt how to read at all; and
- fall asleep immediately reading begins.

All these kinds of readers are produced due largely to poor methodology, inadequate number of English periods on the school timetable as well as lack of separate allocation of time for reading, lack of qualified English language teachers to teach reading, and parental background, among others. Thus, Alufohai (2020) asserts that effective reading instruction requires the teacher

to be able to manipulate the cognitive, affective, psychomotor and social domains in order to develop appropriate reading experiences. The changing concept of reading, which emphasizes the interactive model, has encouraged a shift from traditional approaches in teaching reading to a greater emphasis on methodologies reflecting cognitive principles. This emphasizes children as active learners capable of integrating information with existing knowledge and engaging in self-monitoring procedures, thereby making the process child-centred. The language teacher therefore needs to help adjust the learners' reading behaviour to deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and reading purposes. They also need to help students develop a set of reading strategies to match each reading situation.

Innovation in education can lead to better overall outcomes in the school environment, innovative classrooms are filled with students who are developing stronger communication skills and building engagement capacity among the peers and innovation teaching of reading will consist of methodologies, exercises and activities that will imbibe interactive strategies that are in tune with the demands of the present day dispensation

Burns and Roe (2005) in (Alufohai, 2020) give factors that a teacher of reading must consider concerning the nature and development of the reading skill. The knowledge of these factors will go a long way in guiding the teacher to effectively teach reading. The factors are as follow:

- Reading and readiness must be considered at all levels of instruction; 2. Reading is a complex act with many factors that must be considered e.g. parents, family environment, child attitudes, values and teachers; the relationship between reading and thinking, the relationship of reading to learning, reading as an associational process and the effective aspects of the reading process; 3. There is no particular way of teaching reading; 4. Learning to read is a continuous process; 5. The teacher should diagnose each student's reading problems and use the diagnosis as a basis for planning instruction; 6. Pupils should be taught word recognition skills that will help them get the

pronunciations and meanings of unfamiliar words on their own; 7. Teaching should be done in such a way that every child experiences success; 8. Enjoyment of reading should be considered very important; and 9. Reading is the interpretation of the meaning of printed symbols (words). These reading skills include several sub-skills that contribute to effective and efficient reading. According to Alufohai (2020), some of these fundamental/basic reading skills are:

- **Print awareness and phonics:** this skill is usually developed even before the child starts primary school. Usually, babies start to develop pre-reading at home with the help of the parents and child care providers. At this stage, children understand print by looking at the books and playing with them. A child acquires the phonics skill by learning to recognize word parts, syllables and sounds. These skills (print awareness and phonics) are some of the most foundational abilities in an effective reader.
- **Vocabulary skills:** This skill is acquired or formed at the early age of a learner. Infants and preschoolers often develop vocabulary rapidly. Research has shown that the more vocabulary/language experiences a child is exposed to as adults speak, the more advanced their reading abilities become. Primary school teachers can enhance pupils reading abilities by exposing children to new words.
- **Reading comprehension:** This skill is actually needed at the secondary level of education; however, it is important that a child cultivates good reading comprehension skills at the primary school. This skill actually helps a reader not just to be able to interpret the meaning of words and sentences but to be able to interpret the meaning of passages and stories.

Interactive model of the reading process: the three basic models of the reading process, namely: bottom-up, top down, and the interactive are summarized below. The bottom-up model emphasizes the recognition of words, and considers comprehension as information obtained

solely from the text. The top-down model relates to an extension of the language acquisition process, and views the process of reading as predictions confirmed by inspecting the text, and comprehension is obtained by reorganizing the meaning given to the reading. The interactive model views reading as involving both the bottom-up and top-down models, and the process of reading comprehension as the interaction of the reader and the text, depending on the particular situation. Despite the context in which reading takes place, the nature of the reading process changes as children mature. Specific processes may vary among individuals and according to purpose.

Reading at the lower primary school level:

According to National Teachers' Institute (NTI) (2006) during the early stages of reading, the identification of words demands greater concentration, emphasizing on the skills such as letter identification, word identification and sentence reading. These basic reading skills are commonly used in primaries 1-3. They are discussed as follow.

Phonic Method/Letter identification:

Phonics is often defined as dealing with units of pronunciation (individual letters, digraphs, consonant clusters and syllables). The teacher should first read each letter of the alphabets correctly and later read slowly while pupils read after. All the alphabets should not be taught at once may be first five for a start. The pupils are taught to blend the sounds phonetically to form words. In other words, it is a method based on the alphabetical principles of letter-sound association and spelling-sound association. Thus, pupils are to learn to read words according to the way they are pronounced orally. Letter identification involves reading the letters of the alphabet, both the lower and the upper cases with the aim of enabling the pupils to associate the letters with the sounds and also to know at this early stage that not all the sounds of the alphabets correspond to the form of the alphabets. The knowledge of phonics which is the smallest unit of sound enables learners to interpret the meaning of text/passages (National Open University of Nigeria, 2012). According to (NOUN 2012) there are some important tips the teacher must bear in mind in using the phonics method and they are: the

teacher must ensure that the pupils are able to recognize and read the letters of the alphabet; expose pupils to a wide range of vocabulary and phrases through oral activities; the teacher should use graded reading materials with pictures, and vocabulary at the learner's level. Teaching should be such that it moves from simple to complex; teachers can start teaching any form of the letters of the alphabet (capital or lowercase). However, since lower case is often used in writing words, the teacher can start with lowercase; teachers should try to teach pupils to break the word up sounding each of the sounds the letter makes within a word. For example, teach the learners to sound each letter, c-a-t and then say the word, cat; children love fun. Therefore, the teacher should turn learning into a game and make it fun. Children hardly forget learning of this nature; teacher should teach effectively the teacher must move from the known to the unknown; Therefore, use words and names of objects and places that children are familiar with; and Teaching reading requires a lot of patience on the part of the teacher; thus, the teacher must be very patient when teaching reading. The following steps should be followed when teaching phonics 1. Single consonant sounds. 2. Consonant clusters (bl, gr and sp) 3. Consonant digraphs (sh, ch and th) 4. Short before Long vowels, and vowel or vowel-consonant pairs (oo, ew, oi, and oy). This method though not without some disadvantages has many advantages if well implemented.

Word identification: According to NTL, (2006), this is another example of elementary reading, known as word reading where the pupils are introduced to the initial reading of tree words. Examples include: cat cup car/ bag, boy, bat/ dam, dog, day. The pupils are expected to identify the words in isolation, and use them in sentences. They should also be able to read the words correctly and clearly with the help of the teacher. The teacher can then undertake the following activities with them: 1. identify the words in isolation and when used in sentences, write the words on the board or flashcards, use a chalkboard ruler to point to the words one after the other, pronounce the words or allow the pupils to pronounce after him; and drill the pupils individually or in rows and in groups. Research (Kemba,2005; Alufohai, 2020) in word

recognition emphasizes the difficulty of helping children to become skilled in identifying words. Although book reading, listening to stories at an early age, and learning to read simplified stories, appear to encourage and accelerate reading development, the children must develop phonemic awareness, i.e. an awareness of the sounds that make up spoken words by being able to segment *some* of the sounds of words in initial medial and final positions, understand spelling - to sound correspondence, and progress to apply knowledge of letter patterns and syllables. Literacy requires awareness that words in books, on signs, and elsewhere are intended to convey a message. Children first become aware that language can be observed, and broken into words and letters, by seeing its written form in familiar contexts in the home or the community. Children's learning of word identification involves marked developmental stages. They usually change from identifying words, one by one, to identifying words using different approaches based on knowledge of context, letter sounds and syllable patterns. Phonics knowledge enables children to understand the alphabet principle, that the order of letters in a written word represents the order of sounds in a spoken word. As children observe others read, and try to read by themselves, they realize that printed words can be differentiated on a page. They might remember words by the initial letter, which are often words with the same letter as their names. In the initial stage of writing they might overuse letter names, example - spelling "see" as C. Hearing nursery rhymes, stories, interesting words, engaging in inventing spelling and writing, tend to relate to early reading performance. Context cues, provided by pictures and sentences, make it easier for beginners to identify words. Another activity, that could prove helpful in word identification, is the introduction of initial sounds of words through the use of alphabet books for young children, highlighting the first letter in a word, and the ending sounds of words through rhymes. Breaking spoken words into syllables by clapping or drumming could be useful for beginners, and individual phonemes could be introduced.

Steps in Teaching Initial Consonant Sounds

The teacher should select or write a poem or story,

emphasizing a specific sound, repeated at the beginning of most of the words, display the poem or story on chalkboard or chart, read the text to the class, emphasizing the target words, ask individual pupil to identify words with the same sound at the beginning and ask the pupils to stand, or raise the right hand each time they hear a word with the same sound at the beginning of a word.

Structural Analysis Method

Structural analysis is the process of breaking words down into their basic parts to determine their meaning. The primary aim of structural analysis is to provide the learners with ability to know both the pronunciation and the meaning of the unknown word. Words are usually broken into three parts, the prefix, root and the suffix. The structural analysis method is used to facilitate decoding as students become more proficient readers. The advanced decoding strategies help students learn parts of words so that they can more easily decode unknown multi-syllabic words. By recognizing the syllables in a word, the child is able to read easily. For this method to be effective, the teacher must teach the pupils to recognize that words may have more than one syllable. The best way to teach beginning readers how to use structural analysis is to explain what prefixes, suffixes and root words are and then build on the words they already know so that they can break down unknown words into smaller, more familiar parts. At this level, he should begin with two or three syllable words, such as donkey, prayer, market, today, teacher, correct (two syllables) rest-un/rest; faith- faithful, faithfully, unfaithful, danger-dangerous, pray-prayerful. Alufohai (2020) opines that making pupils recognize that words are pronounced by syllables when they are learning to speak and listen, will facilitate teaching this principle when they begin to read (NOUN, 2012). Nagy, Osborn, Winfor and O'Flahavan (1992) in Alufohai (2020) also recommended five guiding principles for the effective utilization of the structural method. The teacher should:

- provide explicit explanation on the particular activity they are presenting to the students in the form of reading experiences;
- help the students to recognize the diversity of

English word structure;

- make the limitations of structural analysis clear, reminding them that structural analysis may sometimes give incomplete or misleading information, and explain how to recognize such cases and what to do when they arise;
- use extended text in opportunities for application; and
- rely on examples more than abstract rules, principles or definitions.

The structural analysis method also has some disadvantages if not properly utilized.

3. Look and Say Method

This method is often used to teach vocabulary. So, when pupils learn to say a new word, they learn to read it. According to NOUN (2012) a child will read with ease if e/se is able to identify a word through its features by looking at the written form. With the look and say method, pupils learn to recognize whole sentences, phrase, words rather than individual sounds. The method allows the pupils to look at the word pronounced by the teacher and repeat after him. Flashcards with individual words written on them are used for the method often accompanied with a related picture. At stage could be regarded as an advanced stage of basic reading skills where pupils are exposed to reading short sentences NTI (2006) this kind of reading are common in picture reading, reading simple passages based on questions and statements, reading based on asking questions for identifying and classifying individual objects, reading from flash cards as well as nursery rhymes illustrating correct pronunciation.

The following activities can be performed while teaching sentence reading at the primary school level. The teacher:

- writes the sentences clearly on the board or flash card, charts;
- reads the sentences one after the other from the aids mentioned above;
- reads again while pupils listen carefully; and
- drills the pupils individually or in groups.

Other activities under this method include, picture reading through picture walk whereby the teacher holds the book in such a way that the

pupils can see the passage to read. He then walks round to read the pictures first, without the words, then with the pictures and the words

Examples:

This is a book. It is a book

This is a boy. He is a boy

This is a bag. It is a bag

This is a pen. It is a pen

The teacher reads first, pupils read after him, and then the pupils read in pairs and later one after the other.

4. Language Experience Method

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) was developed by Russel Stauffer in 1980. The method focuses on construction of meaning in reading (Holdaway, 1979 in Ward, 2005). Learners have some experiences on what matters to them, they have stories to tell and the method allows them to voice out what is in their minds. According to Ward (2005), it also emphasizes literacy development through building language experiences. The language experience approach/method is a method of teaching a learner to read his/her own spoken words. This shows the interrelatedness of the language skills while teaching any of the skills. The Language Experience Approach (*LEA*) is a comprehensive beginning reading method which integrates children's language and background knowledge. It provides a more natural way in which children understand the features and functions of the written language. This is an excellent procedure for teaching varying aspects of reading. In the beginning, children's experiences are recorded by the teacher who reads while writing, and this forms part of the reading material. These may include labels, stories, directions on "how to do" activities. As the reading progresses, each child will relate individual experiences. Later, they illustrate and write their experiences, read to the class, and display it in the classroom. The method allows the pupils to benefit from rich tasks that provide them with adequate opportunities to hear, see, use and manipulate language in contextualized, purposeful ways. In the method/approach, the teacher uses a shared experience – often involving photographic images of that experience – as a prompt to collectively write a text with the learners. The text

becomes a text that the group reads, re-reads, revises and extends. In this process, the teacher can draw learners' attention to phonetic and semantic patterns in the co-constructed text. The teacher can also use the pupils' unedited utterances/speeches. As they tell stories based on their personal experiences, the teacher writes the stories on charts or boards (chalkboards or whiteboards). With the aid of the teacher, the pupils' read the stories repeatedly until they can associate the written utterances with the spoken (NOUN, 2012). For this approach to be effective, the teacher must be actively involved in the sense that individual attention is required by the students. The learners benefit immensely from this method because they are reading what they have talked about. This assertion was made in the findings of Ward (2005), who declared that language experiences help students to develop the understanding of reading and writing and should therefore, be a bigger part of early literacy programmes.

Kemba (2005) provides the following as steps of Language Experience Approach for early learners:

1. Provide a stimulus. For example: *A fish in a big jar. Caution children not to touch, but they can talk about the fish.*
2. Children engage in five minutes discussion.
3. Tell children that you will write what they say about the experience.
4. *Ask* the children to give a title.
5. Write the title at the top of the page, and pronounce each word.
6. Invite the children to say something about the topic.
7. Starting at the left margin, write the student's name and exactly what was said, pronouncing each word naturally as you write.
8. Invite other contributions, treating each in the same manner.
9. Teacher reads the text aloud, pointing to each word.
10. Teacher and children choral read the text twice.
11. Individual children will read lines.
12. Display the text, and repeat the reading activity next day, with the whole group, small group, and individuals.
13. The following activities are also

recommended by Kemba (2005)

14. Children will illustrate the experience. The title will be added.
15. Children will point to words as they say them.
16. Locate specific words within a line of print.
17. Teacher displays word card with specific word from the text. Children
18. Using a language experience story to teach phonics.
19. Name the word card, and find a match in the text.

Steps for Using a Language Experience Story for Teaching Phonics

1. Teacher writes and speaks each word, dictated for Language Experience.
2. Children read the story with the teacher.
3. They read the story by themselves.
4. They engage in creative writing, experimenting with sound symbol. The children are encouraged to listen to sounds they hear in the word. They develop generalizations about sound symbol relationships. The teacher analyzes invented spellings to determine each student's skills. The analysis provides an indication of proficiency in initial, medial, and final positions. The teacher plans appropriate strategies to help with problem area, emphasizing initial, medial, and final sounds while writing relationship as they use invented spelling to write words, associate letters to make the sounds.

5. The Basal Reader Method

The word basal means 'basic' or 'fundamental'. This method teaches the pupils to read through a series of texts by focusing on basic linguistic concepts, reading skills, and vocabulary. The texts used for basal reading are created with the purpose of teaching children how to read. The basal reading programme is structured to introduce the basics of reading, like letters of the alphabet, parts of speech and suffixes, before moving into more complex things such as sentence and paragraph structure, it therefore teaches reading using graded basal readers series consisting of materials specifically designed to teach reading usually containing work books and manuals. The workbook helps to

reinforce skills taught in the class while the manual guide guides the teacher in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, basal series incorporate all aspects of the reading programme such as word recognition, oral reading, and silent reading, comprehension, reading for pleasure or for information (NOUN, 2012; Adam, 2017).

6. The Literature Based Method

This method or approach is defined as "teaching children to read using pieces of literature, both fiction and non-fiction, which were written for purposes other than to be used as text for reading instruction (Allison, 2016). The beauty of this approach according to Johnson (2005) is that the teacher can use any book that is interesting to children and at the same time learn skills that cut across how to answer comprehension questions, ability to express opinion and even to evaluate texts. The books which are usually selected by the teacher are graded to meet different levels of difficulty. According to NOUN (2012) children are free to choose from picture telling text and the more difficult ones. In this method/approach the teacher's roles include: giving individual attention to pupils in order to listen to their individual readings so as to identify areas of difficulty; encourage sustained reading by ensuring availability of text and monitoring learners' progress; and ensure guided reading by giving comprehension questions on some literary texts etc.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is an interactive process of reading, involving the whole class. Children participate in the process by reading key words and phrases they know, while the teacher reads aloud. Steps of shared reading lesson follows the same format as reading aloud in that only the teacher reads the text with the pupils. The reading includes pupils identifying key words, either by circling or underlining the words and phrases that they know. This practice is continued on numerous occasions, until the learner can read more and more of the text independently individually or with the pupil using a tape recorder and the story being read by the teacher on the cassette. This can also be classified as an

independent reading activity (Kemba, 2005).

Alufohai, (2020) provides the following activities for shared reading by primary school learners.

The teacher should: show the front of the book, discuss the title, identify the author and discuss the cover picture; model directionality - left to right, top to bottom; model concept of word in print; name the parts of the book, cover, page, and back; discuss illustrations; read the book all the way through; pause before a word which is heavily cued by the picture and text; repeat reading the book, using a pointer to each word as it is read; show a letter or syllable of a word to aid identification of the word; encourage questions and comments; model confirming answer or prediction using pictures and or the text; discuss word patterns, punctuation plot structure characterization; let the children point and read along with the others; and allow the children to read the book with you again.

Kemba(2005) also extended the activities for this level of learners to include, cutting a sentence into words and asking individual student to rearrange it while other children watch the process before their turn.

- The children construct a sentence about a story, and try to write and read it with the assistance of the teacher.
- They engage in collaborative writing of experience charts, such as composing invitations and thank you notes.
- Dictate, illustrate and compile a book.
- Write a response.
- Retell a story.
- Engage in identification of key words selected in sentences.
- Identify other given words with similar initial sound.
- Place new key words on A B C word wall to study letter- sound correspondences.
- They write their own sentences about the text while the teacher form groups to work on specific areas of writing development. For example: writing conversation, using more interesting words.
- Assign a group to discuss developing, beginning, middle and end of a story.

The Use of the Mother Tongue

There is increasing support for the use of the mother tongue in the language teaching classroom in Nigeria. In fact, the National Policy of Education stresses the use of mother tongue or the language of the immediate community as the language of instruction in the first three years of a child education. As a result, Kemba (2006) opines that the teachers need to engage children in activities that support this. Such activities/strategies should include the following:

- using print in the mother tongue in the classroom;
- encouraging reading and writing with older children, and parents who will assist younger children in the use of the mother tongue.
- using tapes produced by the children, or commercially, in the familiar language of the children, and in the official language.
- engaging in play acting in response to life and literature.

While teachers facilitate learning through the use of the mother tongue, appropriate activities are also often needed to support learning in the official language. The following activities are recommended for this purpose to all the children:

- provide opportunities for children to engage in dialogue;
- designate a period for reading stories to the children;
- make children aware of the routine for specified periods;
- plan activities in reading and writing, examples: diary writing; and
- dialogue journals, response to literature, and storytelling.

Applying the cognitive aspects in the reading process

In applying the cognitive aspects, reading is a process that proceeds through the following pre-reading, during and after reading stages.

The pre-reading stage

The first stage of development is the pre-reading stage. It is the responsibility of the teacher is to encourage reading interest with enjoyable experiences and activities, with an emphasis on oral expression. The principal goal at this stage is to ensure that the learner is socially, mentally,

emotionally and physically ready to learn to read. Spatial development is important at this stage. The pupils are taught to recognize spaces between words and the descending order of the lines in a text. They also learn to read from left to right usually, or from right to left for instance in Arabic (Carter, 2000). Oral expression is the focus of instruction, and the development of sight vocabulary which is taught using sentences, signs, labels, etc. Simple ideas are expressed and organized in order to create sentences. The formations of words, starting with consonants, and the recognition of rhymes by word endings, are also all taught. Some of the pupils' activities at this stage include telling stories, reading stories with lots of expression, in order to capture the attention of the children. The teacher asks questions about what is going on in the story as the reading goes along, to make sure that they understand the meaning of the story.

Other pre-reading activities the teacher should consider according to Muchana (2022) are the following: The teacher should:

- survey the reading material the cover page, title, colour of the book, authors name, etc.;
- elicit background information from children to help them tie the book to personal experiences;
- set goals for reading;
- examine the vocabulary, sentence structure, sub-sections, sequence of information and graphic aids; and
- make initial predictions. example, activate appropriate background knowledge by thinking about what is known about the topic, set goals for what is to be learned and then make initial predictions about the meaning of the text.

Preparing Children to Read

Children preparing to read should be made to draw pictures and afterwards share the meaning/content of the picture with the class: the pupils may draw a picture of something of their choice and then explain to the class what is going on in the picture. The picture may be a simple scene (such as a family praying session) or it may be a full story, this depends on the pupil; looking at a painting, a

photograph or a drawing; analysing the image and choosing a title: this may be done collectively, as a class, or in smaller groups if the class size is very large. Pupils should be able to explain why they chose a specific title; using pictures and songs to arrive at a list of words: poems and jingles may be used to recognize rhyme endings. Jingles may be also be used to introduce the alphabet. Poem can also be used to arrive at a list of words. Before learning the poem, pupils are asked to repeat sounds of three words in the poem. Then, the teacher teaches them the poem or jingle (without looking at the words). After the pupils have learned the jingle, they will study the written text of the poem to see the words' relationship between what they say and what is written. The three words that are used are the three words used at the beginning.

Beginning Reading

Kemba (2005) opines that at this stage of development, the learner must acquire an ability to recognize the letters of the alphabet, but not to memorize them. This is accomplished by varying the types of techniques used to teach the alphabet. The modern approach is that children learn the alphabet in a literature context i.e. a card with a picture of an apple on it and the letter 'a' helps to give meaning to the sound 'a'. Although traditional methods of teaching the alphabet do not involve teaching the alphabet in a literary context, they do involve the participation of children in creating ways to help them learn the alphabet. Methods such as children create their own jingles, or the teacher creating a jingle (or using a traditional jingle of the community) are ways of teaching the alphabet, and may be helpful in introducing and practising the alphabet. Children generally enjoy creating various rhythms and melodies to help them memorize the alphabet. However, to ensure that they have not just memorized but have actually learned the alphabet, the teacher will want to also teach the alphabet in a literary context. A child must have a natural ease with the alphabet in order to learn letter sounds and word spellings comfortably, and exercises that are fun as well as instructive can facilitate learning it

During Reading stage

The teacher reads the short poem on the first page once, then, reads a second time, pausing to prompt completion of line by the children. Teacher reads the next page, and shows the picture opposite, and continues reading succeeding pages, showing the pictures and asking the children to tell what the pictures depict. The teacher thinks aloud about aspects of the story, making predictions, drawing conclusions to enable the children to develop an understanding of the reading process as thinking with text. He pauses at predictable parts in the text, and allows the children to fill in words. Occasionally, he asks the children, who or what they think might be greeted next. Because the reading is in poetic form with predictable rhymes, the teacher will read a second time pointing to words while the children read along.

Moreover, the teacher should make sure all children can see the illustrations in what they are reading, read with expression and joy, encourage children to make predictions and listen to confirm them, invite them to complete sentences that are repetitive; and, utilize during-reading strategies to conduct an interpretation of the author's message. Example: utilize monitoring strategies to ascertain accuracy of predictions, and to note new information. When there is a match between author's message and initial predictions, the meaning-getting process is continuous. When the author's message does not match the text information; the meaning-getting process slows down. Self-questioning is done to connect prior knowledge with the new information. The prediction is now modified or changed to facilitate the process of obtaining meaning. During reading, unknown words or difficult segment of a sentence may affect the process of obtaining the author's message. The reader must be able to apply any or all of the strategies described below:

Context Clue Strategy

The teacher should guide the pupils to figure out inter-relationships between clues in the text, sentence structure clues, definitions, experience clues, and concepts described in the text, using what is known about the topic.

Structural Analysis: prefixes, root word, suffixes, and inflectional endings. Other after

reading strategies include, summarizing, restructuring the author's message, or make judgment about the use of facts in relation to what is already known about the topic and engaging in research on the topic.

After reading stage: both the teacher and children should discuss key ideas in the text to reflect on reading, to apply and to relate events in their lives. Example: Greeting members of the family on waking time, greeting friends and teachers on arrival at school. They should:

- discuss predictions;
- link the information in books to real life experiences;
- make connections between other familiar books;
- re-read favourite books at children's request;
- allow children to respond through activities;
- focus children's attention on patterns in the text. Example: repeated words and letters, punctuation marks, and describing favourite books;
- dramatise the major activities in the story;
- engage in language experience;
- retell the story, using personal experiences.
- discuss predictions; and
- link the information in books to real life experiences.

Moreover, after the reading, questions related to information presented in the pre-reading activity may be asked. The first set of questions relates to listening skills with answers found directly in the text. The second set of questions requires processing information and deducting meaning from that information. Eventually, the teacher may want the students to participate in reading aloud, using a story that the children selected or wrote themselves or a story selected by the teacher.

Conclusion

Teaching reading is an activity that converges all the language skills of listening, speaking, writing as well as grammar; it is an all-embracing exercise requiring the expertise of an experienced language teacher. A well planned teaching of reading can be used to teach other language forms thereby solving

the problem of insufficient allocation of English language on timetables, the over-reliance on course books as well as make the teaching -learning situation friendly and child-centred. Teaching reading also requires innovation as there is no single, definite or standard method for teaching it. The teacher therefore needs to be innovative and be ready to adopt the strategies/ methods that are appropriate for the pupils. The paper has discussed various and vital activities, tasks and strategies through which reading can be taught. The way and manner in which the teacher fashions the teaching of reading at the primary school will go a long way in determining the types of readers he produces in the subsequent levels and later at their professional levels. It is therefore recommended that, the traditional methods of handling the teaching of reading in primary schools should be re-examined to make it more child-centred, practice-oriented, child-friendly, innovative, an all-embracing, interesting and communicative exercise.

Recommendations

The article has offered the following innovative strategies as contributions to improving the teaching of reading in primary school.

1. The teaching of reading should be done in stages- pre- reading, reading and after reading.
2. The reading teacher should always ensure that each stage of reading tasks contains numerous activities from which a teacher can select to teach reading in an interesting manner.
3. Reading is better taught along with other language skills, not in isolation
4. Teaching reading at the primary school level should promote learner-centered and practice-oriented learning.
5. The use of the mother tongue is very vital in teaching reading at the primary school level and should be encouraged to build

oral language foundation and to achieve fluency.

References

- Adam, J. (2017). What is the basal reading approach? Retrieved on 21 May, 2022, from, classroom.synonym.com.
- Allison, T. (2016). Literature-based approach to reading instruction on prezi. Retrieved from <https://prezi.com/Literature-based-a...>
- Aliyu, J.S. (2006). *Upgrading English language achievement: Zaria*. Tamaza Publishing Company Limited.
- Alufohai, P. J.(2020).Teaching of reading in primary schools: implications for the Nigerian primary school teacher. *British Journal of Education, Learning and Development Psychology* ISSN: 2682-6704 Volume 3, Issue 2, 2020 (pp. 49-59). Retrieved on 27th March, from, www.abjournals.org.
- Blau. L. (2016). *5 Surefire Strategies for Developing Reading Fluency*. Retrieved from, eric.ed.gov/?=Ej627303.
- Carter, V. E.(2000). *New approaches to literacy learning, a guide for teacher educators*, UNESCO, France, 2000.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National Policy on Education*. Yaba, Lagos-Nigeria: NERDC Press.
- Johnson, A. (2005). *Approach to reading instruction: Literature based approach*. In B.Harp & J.A. Brewer (eds.), *the informed reading teacher, Research- based practice*. Upper saddle/River NJ : Pearson/Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Kemba, A.N. (2005). *Guide to teaching reading at the primary school level*. France: UNESCO.
- Leipzig, D.H (2001). *What is reading?* Retrieved from www.readingrockets.Org.

- Mikulecky, B.S. (2008). *Teaching reading in a second language*. Retrieved from, www.longmanhomeusa.com/content/FINAL-LO-RES-mikulecky-Reading_monograph.pdf.
- Muhcana, Z.(2022). Importance of reading in primary school. Retrieved, on 17th March from, <https://www.bisphuket.ac.th>.
- National Teachers' Institute (NTI) (2006). *Manual for retraining of primary school teachers, English language: A millennium Development Goals Project*, April, 2006.
- National Open University of Nigeria (2012). Method of teaching reading in the primary school. Retrieved from <http://www.noun.edu.ng/NOUNOCL/Pdf/EDUS/PED.Pdf>
- Obanya, P. (2002). *Curriculum overload in the language education programme for basic Education*, in Adebayo,L., Isiugo-Abanihe, I., and Ohi, I.N, (Eds). Perspectives on applied linguistics in language and literature: Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nigeria) Ltd.
- Ogungbe, E.O. (2014). *A critical –pragmatic approach to reading news photos in Nigerian Newspapers*.
- Tafida, A. G . (2008). Impact of poverty on learning English language in Nigeria. *Journal of General Studies (JOGS)* 1(1)pp.21-32.
- Udu, T. T. (2021). Teachers' and students' attitudes towards reading and writing: Do they correlate to students' achievement in English? *Studies in English Language and Education*, 8(1), 143-156. *DOI* <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v8i1.17524>
- Udu, T.T. & Nwaokike, J.I. (2023). *Primary and secondary schools management in Nigeria*. Makurdi: Gold Ink Company.
- Ward, H.C. (2005). The use of language experiences in teaching reading to students with severe learning disabilities. *The Reading Matrix*, 15(1) Retrieved from <https://www.readingmatrix.com>art.....pdf>.