

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STORY-BOOKS READING TO BY PARENTS TO THEIR PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN PORT-HARCOURT METROPOLIS OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

BY

¹AUGUSTINA I. ANAKWE; ²COMFORT K. OLAMIDE

*¹⁻² Department of Educational Foundation,
Faculty of Education, University of Jos, Nigeria.*

Abstract

The research was conducted to find the influence of reading story-books on pre-primary school pupils' language development in Port-Harcourt metropolis of Rivers State. Causal comparative research design was employed for the study. Government pri-primary school in Port-Harcourt metropolis was used, the school, thirty pupils were drawn through random sampling, consisting of 200 boys and 200 females given equal number. The three language development skills are as follows: phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension of narratives. The data was collected through interviews. The study found out that there is a significant different between pupils whose parents read story-books to them and those who parents do not read storybooks to them on their phonics. The study also found out that there was significance difference between pupils whose family read story books to them and those who parents do not read story books to them on their phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension of narratives. It is therefore recommended among others that teachers and parents should read more story books to the children.

Key words: *Phonemic Awareness Vocabulary, Comprehension of Narratives.*

Introduction

Early literacy is very important to children, before and in the early grade of school. Early literacy are skills developed from home by parents before formal education or formal reading kills. As the children grow to pre-primary, they already have the foundation of oral language skill right from home when parents read stories to their children and also talk to them regularly and respond to their attempts to produce language. By the time these children with such experienced get to school they may not have much problem with formal reading skills.

Story-book reading plays an important role in early literacy. Story reading helps to foster curiosity in children and increases their attention span in school. It also helps to create the children's creative thinking and to be aware of what is happening in their environment. In the past, storytelling in Africa was only oral and told by ground parents or older people in the community, in our own language or dialect. This is because many African children were kept in a closed door system, from domestic chores *and* farm works, and have the rest of the evenings for telling or hearing stories, before retiring for the night. Now, the advert of western education brought radical changes coupled with industrialization and technological advancement, stories no longer told or passed-down orally, it is no written to be read. Story telling has turned to be a thing of the past. Story- telling is no longer regarded as an important part of the culture, an enjoyable moment where children used to look forward to. It is forgotten and drastically wiping away.

Here in Nigeria there is poor literacy development. Perhaps the habit of reading story-books to children could be the solution to low levels of literacy. This brings us to language development. Language development is the process by which children came to understand and communicate language during early childhood. Ramscar, and Yartette (2007) Language development is a process starting early in human life, when a person begins to acquire language by learning it as it is spoken and by mimicry. As the child grows up the children development moves from simple to complex because words begin to acquire meaning, with connections between words being formed. As the child gets older new meanings and new association are created and vocabulary increases are more words are learned.

This means that oral communication is also a vital means of developing pupil's language. Stories, therefore, can also be told but in a more developed form suitable to the Nigerian Culture

and Schools. Parents and teachers, therefore, have a great deal of work to do in order to foster language development through story reading and telling.

Language Development

Language development is the understanding of spoken or written words in a more advance manner. It is a process starting early in human life, when a person begins to acquire language by learning it as it is spoken. Children's language development moves from simple to complex. Usually, language starts off as recall of simple words without associated meaning, but as children grow, words acquire meaning, with connections between words being formed. As a person gets older, new meaning and new associations are created and vocabulary increases as more words are learned. (Ramscar, and Yarleth, (2007). Therefore, children need to be exposed to a variety of experiences to foster language development, for example talking about the plan

This encourages discussion amongst the family members, or taking a walk to the market place and talk about the things to buy and what you see at the market place. Sometimes, after meals in the evening the children can be encouraged to talk about their experiences during the day. These and many other ways are means of providing broad experiential background for young children. The method also shows that parents who communicate and discusses with their children expose them to a lot of oral language and the development takes effect faster. Another means is children cartoons and television programs designed for young children foster oral or spoken language in children.

Phonemic Awareness: Children learn to notice and manipulate the sounds of oral language. The children understand that spoken words are made up of sounds, and they can segment and blend sounds in spoken words. Tompkins, (2011). Rhymes help children when they play with sounds they become aware of the words as unit of sound especially at the beginning or at the end of poems. Therefore, phonemic awareness is children's basic understanding that speech is composed of a series of individual sounds, and it provides the foundation for phonics and spelling. (Tompkins, 2011).

Phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about and work with the individual sounds in spoken words. Most children usually demonstrate their understanding of phonemic awareness informally and in playful situations (Enz & Morrow, 2009) Example is in the rhyme, rain, rain go away, little children want to play, come again another day.

Phonics is the set of relationship between the sounds in speech and the writing system (Tompkins, 2011). As the children use the alphabets sound and relate them to the sounds in words especially written words, it makes it easier for the pupils to learn better, thereby, helping the children to become fluent readers. Enz & Morrow (2009) suggests the following recommendations for teaching phonics: First keep a sense of playfulness and fun; avoid drill and rote memorization. Second, use group setting that encourage interaction among children. Lastly, encourage children's curiosity about language and their experimentation with it.

The knowledge of print is the ability to understand that writing is organized in a special way. Knowledge of print includes various skills such as reading from left to right, top to bottom etc. Successful beginning readers develop concepts about print at an early age, even before formal schooling Enz & Morrow, (2009). This is because the children have been exposed to books at their early age by parents and their older ones at home. For example my baby of 1 ½ years can pick a book and pretend to be reading aloud and can even pick a pencil pretend to be writing, and all I do is to encourage her by telling her, she can write her name. This point is supported by Enz & Morrow (2009), children begin to learn to read and write by observing adults engaged in reading and writing activities with their family and peers. They also observed that, this alone is not enough to bring out the best of the children. Children with such experience should be provided with many opportunities. (Enz & Morrow, 2009).

The comprehension of Narratives is the ability to comprehend or understand or even give meaning to what is being read or written down. Tompkins, (2011) Clay notices that through

experiences in homes and communities, young children learn that print carries meaning and that reading and writing are used for a variety of purposes. Story telling helps children to learn better, an interesting story that the children like most should be read again and again until they are very familiar with the story. Stories should be based on what the pupils will comprehend easily. As observed Musa (2016) Pre-primary in a repeated reading study gave more interpretive responses; they predict outcomes and made associations, judgments, and elaborative comments. Children also select books that have been read to them because they like and enjoy the story. Children may pretend to read the story on their own or talk to the pictures, as demonstrated pictures in stories also help children to comprehend text or content.

Vocabulary is the ability to understand new words. New words help children to develop both oral and written language and can speak fluently with confidence (Roskos, Tabors & Lenhart, 2009). In their research work tell us that shared book reading provides an opportunity to teach children new words. Therefore, reading story books to children help to enhance their vocabulary. However, before reading any storybook to the pupils, teachers or parents must present the pupils with the pictures of the story and accompany each picture with a new word, but similar to their environment. It was noticed Musa (2016) that even the single reading of a storybook can have an impact on children's vocabulary learning. Reading at least one story book each day provides the children with new words especially when the story is being repeated and time is taken in talking about the key words in the story.

Reading story-books to children is a time for enjoyment, a time to broaden pupil horizons, stimulate pupils imaginations and expand their vocabularies. There is a New Zealand research support for the benefits of story reading aloud (Elley 1989) and this has been reinforced by similar studies in (Morrow, 1991), argued that shared reading gives pupils valuable practice at listening to the sounds and rhythms of language and create positive feelings about books. Shared reading greatly increases. Comprehensible input in the language. Shared reading is a time for sharing a story and reading together, it is also a way to encourage early reading, enjoyment and success with a high level of teachers support. Musa, (2016) agrees that shared reading is an interactive reading experience that occurs when pupils join in or share the reading of a big book or other enlarged text while guided and supported by a teacher or other experienced reader. Share reading is one of the strategies of teaching comprehension of narratives, this strategy makes children feel they are really sharing the book without being tested and found wanting. Children

enjoy being read to and they gradually learn the language of the book. Adegoke (2017) observed that in shared reading an interesting story of a big book is selected with a text and illustrations enlarged so that pupils can see it clearly. The cover of the book will be discussed by the teacher and the pupils. The title and the illustrations will tell what will come. The story is re-read several times over the next few days. After this activity, they will listen to the story and all these will help to vocabulary and comprehension of narratives.

Statement of the Problem

In the view of the above, the problem to be investigated is the effect of reading story-books on pre-primary pupil's language development in Jos-metropolis. In our nation, Nigeria proficiency and in spoken or oral language (English) is alarmingly low among our youth and even most of the adults. This has been due to lack of early literacy foundation. As children grow up without early literacy foundation they have difficulty developing advanced language skills.

However, reading story-books to pre-primary school pupils should help, because the role of reading story-book is to help the pupils to communicate well in English Language. There is low level of literacy in Nigeria especially when you look at the rate of failures in our S.S.C.E and NECO. The researchers wonder whether parents or teachers read story-books to their children while in pre-primary or at home. Since story-telling is an integral to the a Nigeria culture it should be related to early language skills. To have a very good language development will not work without a very good beginning which is the foundation. The language development of pre-primary school pupils must start somewhere. This beginning must definitely be the home. Story-telling and reading of story can start at home and continue in school. Reading story books to children will help the children to communicate well because through questions and answers from the stories will help in developing new things, children who are read to on a regular basis before they start school are most likely to success in school. Perhaps: story-telling will prove literacy levels In Nigeria as we go back revisit the old way of telling stories but in a more advance way.

Purpose of the Study

This study is designed; to examine the effect of reading story-books to pre-primary pupils on language development

1. To determine whether reading story books to pre-primary pupils has influence on their phonemic awareness
2. To examine whether reading story-books to pre-primary pupils has influence on the pupils' vocabulary
3. To examine the extent to which reading story-primary pupils influence, comprehension of narratives

Research Hypotheses

The researcher formulated the following research hypotheses as a guide in the research work.

1. There is no significant difference between children whose family read story-books to them and those who parent do not read story-books to them on their knowledge of phonemic awareness.
2. There is no significant difference between children whose family read story-books to them and those who do read story-books to them on their vocabulary.
3. There is no significant differences between pupils whose family read story-books and those who do not read story-book on their comprehensions of narratives.

Research Design

The research design for the study was causal comparative design. The target population of the study comprised all the pri-primary school children in Port-Harcourt metropolis (public school) in river state. The sample however was drawn from preprimary II numbering 800, simple random sampling was used participants in the study. The participant were 800 in number and equally divided between boys and girls through stratified random sampling.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection will be from oral interview. The oral interview will be after reading the story-book to the pupils. The key variables which are

1. Reading story books and

2. Language development will be measured through oral interview in the three aspects in the areas suspected to have influence on the pre-primary language development. Phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension of narratives.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity of the instruments was determined using professional psychologist in the university and test and measurement unit for expert scrutiny, which they did perfectly.

The reliability of the instruments was also established using Pearson co-efficient, value of 0.87, 0.86, 0.89 were obtained respectively which should that the instrument were rightly reliable.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher used an interview method for the data collection that is by meeting one-on-one with the pupils. 40 research assistances were used because of the number of sample.

Results

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between children whose parents read story-books to them and those whose parents do not read story-books to them on their knowledge of phonemic awareness.

Table 1: Summary table showing the difference between those whose parents read story books them and those who do not read to their children.

VARIABLE	N	MEAN	SD	R	DF	P
Children who they read to on their knowledge of phonemic	800	45.17	7.28			
				.663	198	Sig .000
Children who they do not read to	800	28.19	5.41			

Table 1 shows that there is a significant difference between the children whose parents read to them on their knowledge of phonemic awareness and those whose parents do not.

H0₂: There is no significant difference between children whose family read story-books to them and those who do not read story-books to them on their vocabulary. $R = (798) = .663$, $P < .05$ with this result the H0 is this rejected.

Table 2: Summary table showing the difference between children who parents read story-books to them and those who do not read story books to them on their vocabulary.

VARIABLE	N	MEAN	SD	R	DF	P
Children whose parent read story books to them on their vocabulary	800	45.17	7.28			
				.426	198	Sig .000
Children whose parents do not read story books to on their vocabulary	800	23.82	4.98			

Table shows that there is a significant different children who parents read-short books to on their vocabulary and those who their parents do not, $r(798) = .426$, $p = .05$, with this result the hypothesis is this rejected.

H0₃: There is no significant difference between pupils whose family read story-books and those who do not read story-books them on their comprehension at narratives.

Table 3: Summary table showing the difference between children who parents read story books to them on their comprehension of narratives and those who do not.

VARIABLE	N	MEAN	SD	R	DF	P
Children who their parents read story-books to them on their comprehension of narratives	800	45.17	7.28			
				.415	198	Sig .000
Those children who parents do not	800	23.46	4.65			

Table 3 show that there is significant different between those children whose their parents red story-books to them on their parents reads story-books to them on their comprehension of narratives and those whose parents do not $r(798) = .415, p > .05$ with this result the hypothesis is thus rejected.

Discussion

Looking at the results it is obvious that story-reading is very important for the pupils phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension of narratives. This is in line with the findings of Ramscar and Yarleth (2007), Morrow (2009) Tompkins (2011), Musa (2016) and Adegoke (2017).

The study also revealed that parents have a lot to do in the development of their children work in school.

Teach should be at the fore-front in the crusade on the change of attitude. If children are not encouraged to read books at this early stage, especially reading to them how will the form the habit of reading. Perhaps that is why we still have a big problem with our SSCE results in English language in particular because a lot of the children cannot read, the vocabulary is how and they cannot comprehend narratives. It must start from the scratch children must be introduced to story reading in order to help build them in their levies and structure, comprehension and phonemic awareness for “tomorrow”. From the interviews it was very clear that a good number nothing to contribute in the development of their children’s readings culture.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made: this is for parents, teachers and stakeholders in education in Port-Harcourt Rivers State.

1. Since it has been discovered that reading story books affect phonics both parents and teachers should read more storybooks to their children. From the findings it was discovered that parents pay little attention to reading of storybooks at home
2. The government and other stakeholders should endeavour to build libraries, little book enclaves in schools and reading places in towns and villages.
3. Read a book club must be introduced in all schools and homes.

Conclusion

The language development of pre-primary school pupils motivated the researcher to carry out the investigation into the effect of reading storybooks to pre-primary school pupils on their language development in Jos Metropolis.

The major results and findings in this study concludes, that there are significant differences between children whose family read storybooks to them and those whose family do not read storybooks to them on the phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension of narratives. The study also found that pre-primary school pupils enjoyed listening to stories as part of their school work.

However it is obvious that children need to read storybooks at home. Therefore, further research is needed to determine the effects of reading storybooks on language development amongst a sample where more children are exposed to reading storybooks.

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