Students' Engagement with the Reading of Prescribed Literature-In-English Texts in Selected Senior Secondary Schools in Ondo City

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Abstract

This research investigated the extent of students' engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary schools in Ondo City, Nigeria. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 public senior secondary schools. From each of the 10 public secondary schools the researchers randomly sampled 50 students making a total of 500 participants. The instrument used was Extent of Students' Engagement with the Reading of Prescribed Literature-in-English Texts Questionnaire (r=0.82). Data were analysed with descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that majority (61.5%) of the students had low engagement with the reading of prescribed texts. High cost of literature texts, lack of uniformity in texts prescribed by WAEC and NECO, students' poor reading habits, lack of interest, lack of encouragement by parents, peer group influence and non-availability of well-equipped library were ***factors that*** *limited student's engagement with the reading of prescribed Literature-in-English texts. The teacher, the school, and the parents should have strong collaboration to provide more opportunities for students to maximize their engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts.*

Keywords: Engagement, Prescribed texts, Libraries, Cost of texts

Introduction

Literature is an imaginative literary composition with artistic merits which expresses life and arouses certain emotions in the reader. The teaching of Literature places greater responsibility on both the teacher and students as active participants in the teaching-learning process. Literature is an inviting medium, both in content and structure, in which all students can productively develop, analyse, and defend interpretations. The processes involved in understanding literary texts are a natural and necessary part of a well-developed intellect. The study of literature encourages students to enter imagined worlds and explore, examine, and reflect on both current and timeless issues as well as their individuality and humanity. The critical thinking skills uniquely offered by the study of Literature include: cultivating a questioning mind, exploring personal and social issues, and interrogating and managing ambiguities and multiple perspectives.

Literature-in-English is one of the principal school subjects that can help students enhance their language skills. Graduates who can use language effectively in different domains are needed in today's society. The career paths open to Literature-in-English are numerous, including teaching, creative writing, mass media (broadcasting, journalism, newspaper), film, advertising, copyediting, review and report writing, secretarial works, digital and book publishing, public speaking, editorial assistant, and lexicography.

The aspects of the aims and objectives of reading Literature-in-English that have to do with developing in students the capacity for independent thought and judgment, and the ability to respond appropriately and independently to literary works can effectively be achieved if students are given the opportunity to critically engage works of literature not only by reading and analysing the text but also by having the opportunity to contribute to the interpretation of literary texts. The study of literary texts involves moving beyond literal, text-based responses (knowledge and comprehension) to responses initiated by purposeful and reflective thinking through analysing, synthesizing, interpreting, and evaluating issues and ideas encountered in text. In order to get the best out of the students in literature in class, the teaching/learning environment must be one that promotes students' participation. One way by which students' active learning can be promoted in the literature classroom is through the implementation of the reading prescribed text, as against the dominant traditional approach to instruction.

Describing what transpires in Literature classes in Nigeria, it is characterized by teachers focusing on key points, story narration, treating past examination questions, and engaging students in the vocal reading of the text. The teaching is geared toward getting students to learn the facts of the story and being able to recall them for examination purposes. This form of teaching rarely engages the students actively in the learning process and leaves no room for them to contribute their own meaning to the reading of the text. Students thereby rely solely on the key points, stories, teacher and/or the text for interpretation of meaning. They come to view the teacher as the sole interpreter of what is contained in the text and reproduce what the teacher has taught (for those who pay attention in class) in order to pass examinations. They might also find it unnecessary to read the actual texts, depending on book summaries or the teacher's notes for interpretation. This situation does not make for meaningful and critical reading as texts only become meaningful when they are able to engage the texts through the implementation of the

reading if the prescribed text.

Classroom observation and interaction with students showed that compared to other subjects, many students no longer offer Literature even when they need it for career purposes. There are many factors influencing the engagement in students in learning. A brief literature review indicates that key factors namely educational resources, social network, material relevance, learning styles, material selection, material usefulness, preparation by educators, lack of interest by students, language ability of the students, poverty and a dearth of books or high cost of books, ill equipped libraries or total absence of libraries in schools, were limiting factors.

Statement of the problem

Literature is one of the subject student senior secondary school to development moral, cognitive and linguistic ability of the students. However students are not doing well in all the three genre and one of the factors identify is their non-engagement in the reading of text as some of them rely on key points and summary notes instead of reading the actual texts. Previous students focus on various factors such as teacher teaching methods, language ability of the students with little attentions given to the extent of student engagement in reading of prescribed texts. Therefore, this study investigated extent of students' engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary schools.

Objective of the Study

This study is to examine the extent of students' engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary schools. The specific objectives are to:

1. investigate the extent of students' engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary schools
2. identify factors that limit students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to guide the study:

1. To what extent do senior secondary schools students' engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts?
2. What are the factors that limit students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary schools

Scope of the Study

This study examined the extent of students' engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary schools in Ondo city, this study therefore limited to 10 public secondary schools in Ondo city.

Methodology

The type of research design used is a descriptive research design. The research work attempts to investigate the extent of students' engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary schools in Ondo city.Out of all the thirty-two public secondary schools currently in Ondo city, Ondo State, the purposive random sampling technique is used to select ten (10) public secondary schools. From each of the 10 purposively selected schools, an intact class of senior secondary students where literature-in-English is taught was selected and the Literature-in English teachers. In all, one hundred (100) Literature-in English students were the sample for the study. The instrument that was used for this research is a structured questionnaire. titled ***"The Extent of Students' Engagement with the Reading of Prescribed Literature in English Texts in Selected Senior Secondary Schools Questionnaire"*** (r=0.90). Data collected were analysed using simple percentage, mean and standard deviation method of data analyses.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent do senior secondary schools students' engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts?

Table 1: Responses on the extent the senior secondary schools students' engage with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts

S/N	EXTENT AT WHICH STUDENTS' ENGAGE WITH THE READING OF PRESCRIBED LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TEXTS	VHE %	HE %	LE %	VLE %	Mean	S. Td
1.	I always asked questions in class and made contributions during literature in English class	25	15	40	20	2.45	0.613
2.	I usually answers questions in literature in English classes	8	11	56	25	2.02	0.505
3.	I also participates in group discussions on literature in English	5	10	50	35	1.85	0.463
4.	I make sure I do all the homework problems on literature in English	15	5	55	25	2.1	0.525
5.	I usually come to literature in English class every day	30	10	45	15	2.55	0.638
6.	Students take good notes in literature in English class	5	20	25	50	1.8	0.45
7.	I do stay up on the readings of literature in English texts	4	6	65	25	1.89	0.473
8.	I Make sure to study literature in English on a regular basis	10	5	25	60	1.65	0.413
9.	I am able to study prescribed literature in English text for a sustained period (at least forty-five minutes)	20	10	45	25	2.25	0.563
10.	Students are in the habit of getting right down to serious work at study of prescribed literature in English text	21	8	50	21	2.29	0.573
11.	I usually arrange my study time for prescribed literature n English text and area so that distractions and interruption are minimized	15	5	55	25	2.1	0.525
12.	I usually review prescribed literature in English text each regularly during the term	10	15	60	15	2.2	0.55

Table 4.2 shows the extent do senior secondary schools students' engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts. The result indicates a weighted mean of 2.260 which is lower than the

threshold set at 2.50. This implies that senior secondary schools students' engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts were of low extent.

Research Question Two: What are the factors that limit student's engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary schools?

Table 2: Responses on the factors that limit student's engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary school.

S/N	FACTORS LIMITING STUDENTS ENGAGEMENT WITH THE READING OF PRESCRIBED LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TEXTS	SA %	A %	D %	SD %	Mean	S. Td.
1.	High cost of texts limits students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English text	40	20	25	15	2.85	0.713
2.	Lack of uniformity of WAEC and NECO limits students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English text	46	25	8	21	2.96	0.740
3.	Students' poor reading habits can limits students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English text	50	35	5	10	3.25	0.813
4.	Inability of parents to buy prescribed texts because of poverty also limits students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English text	60	25	10	5	3.4	0.85
5.	Students' lack of interest will limits students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English text	45	15	10	30	2.75	0.688
6.	Lack of encouragement by parents can limits students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English text	20	50	10	20	2.7	0.675
7.	Peer group influence on student (not to study Literature) use to limits students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English text	55	25	9	6	3.19	0.798
8.	Lack of qualified literature in English teacher(s) can discourage students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English text	25	60	10	5	3.05	0.763
9.	Literature teacher poor methods of teaching can limits students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English text	45	25	20	10	3.05	0.763
10.	The competence of literature in English teacher can limits students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English text	50	21	21	8	3.13	0.783
11.	Lack of sufficient literature in English teacher can limits students engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English text	55	25	15	5	3.3	0.825

Table 2 shows the factors that limit student's engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary schools. The result indicates a weighted mean of 2.954 which is higher than the threshold set at 2.50. This implies that high cost of texts, lack of uniformity of WAEC and NECO, students' poor reading habits, inability of parents to buy prescribed texts because of poverty, students' lack of interest, lack of encouragement by parents, peer group influence on student (not to study Literature), lack of qualified literature in English teacher(s) and many more are factors that limit student's engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary school.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study showed that senior secondary schools students' engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts to a low extent among the senior secondary schools in Ondo city. This is contrary with *Armando (2019),* the study found out that the three dimensions of student engagement (behavioral, emotional and cognitive) were positively correlated to the academic performance of the students of Partido State University. These findings found support from the following studies: Urquijo and Extremera (2017), concluded that the more engaged students demonstrated higher academic achievement.

The findings of the study similarly revealed that high cost of texts, lack of uniformity of WAEC and NECO, students' poor reading habits, inability of parents to buy prescribed texts, students' lack of interest, lack of encouragement by parents, peer group influence and *no well-equipped library* **are the factors** limit student's engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary school in Ondo cit., This is supported by Creswell, Klassen, and Smith (2010), Also, Ichu (1989) also reported that the problem of teaching literature in Nigerian secondary schools include shortage of teachers, high cost of the literature texts, and lack of teaching–learning resources.

Conclusion

This research concluded that literature in English students in Ondo city engage in the reading of prescribed text to a low extent and very low extents and also factors limit student's engagement with the reading of prescribed literature in English texts in selected senior secondary school in Ondo city are among high cost of texts, students' poor reading habits, inability of parents to buy prescribed texts, students' lack of interest, peer group influence, lack of qualified literature in English teacher(s), Literature teacher poor methods of teaching, the competence of literature in English teacher, lack of sufficient literature in English teacher, poor learning environment, lack of infrastructures, *no well-equipped library and* lack of instructional materials for literature in English teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

There should be a library study hour on the school time table to enable the students to have a specific time to use the school library regularly. The amount of time used in studying must increase in order to devote more time to quality study both at school library and at home to prevent poor academic performance currently.

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