

## INFLUENCE OF EXTENSIVE READING STRATEGY ON STUDENTS' INTEREST IN READING COMPREHENSION

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**Abstract:** *This study was designed to investigate the influence of extensive reading strategy on learners' interest in reading comprehension. Design of the research was pretest posttest non-equivalent control group design of quasi-experimental research design. All the Junior Secondary school (JSS) two English Studies students in Kwali Area Council of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja participated in the study. Study sample was 210. Two research questions and three null hypotheses, tested at .05 level of significance. The instrument used to gather data for analyses was Reading Comprehension Interest Inventory Test (RCII). Data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics. The result show that extensive reading strategy is more effective in arousing learners' interest in reading comprehension and female students show more interest in reading comprehension than boys. There was no interaction influence of extensive reading strategy and gender on interest of (JSSII) students in reading comprehension. The study recommended among others that English language educators should use extensive reading strategy to stimulate learners' interest and more time allocated in the school for extensive reading. This will stimulate their students' interest and also improve their performance in reading comprehension.*

**Keywords:** *Extensive reading strategy, comprehension, gender, interest*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely acknowledged as the bedrock of development throughout the world. It inculcates to individual skills, attitudes and behavior which are beneficial to the individual and the society. Education is therefore needed by every child to develop latent skills that will help him/her function adequately within the environment.

In Nigeria, there is a strong belief that education is a tool of excellence for national development (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). Indeed is generally accepted that education is the most effective means a society uses to face the challenges of the future. People acquire education in various stages starting from the home through the school. The height that a nation will attain in education and development depends solely on that country's foundational investment in its basic education. This implies that children, youths and adults have the right of meeting their basic learning needs in various settings by various agencies through various means and throughout the life. Thus the basic level of education should emphasize the inculcation and consolidation of functional literacy, fundamental numeracy, essential life skills and learning to learn skills.

However, issues of gender equality in education at both basic and post basic levels have been the concern of many people in all countries for the past decades. In Nigeria, there are large differences between the training of females and males at basic and post basic levels. Many female students have no access to education beyond primary or secondary schools and there is wide gap in the achievement and interest of male and female (Ross and Fletcher, 1989; Diamond and Onwuegbuzie, 2001; Cloer and Datron, 2001; Kush, Watkins and Marley, 1995).

The Examination Council of Nigeria (1994) reported that other factors affecting female education in Nigeria include high rate of girl child withdrawing from schools, low performance, low enrollment of girls in science-based courses, low classroom participation and lack of interest in academic activities (en.wikipedia.org; Adeniran, 2007).

Interest is show of concern with and curiosity about something, for example, learners showing interest in English studies (Works, 1999). It is important in human's choice of preference. It involves affection for real issues (Owodunni, 2011). One basic feature of interest is shown by a different preference toward what is happening or taking place. A learner's interest in academic activities or in a particular subject will inspire him/her to react positively or negatively towards his /her studies. Reading interest is how excited someone is to engage in reading written materials Ojo (1993) found that the major cause of student's poor performance is their inability to read effectively and lack of interest in reading. Miranda et al. (2011) pointed out that there are many methods that teachers can use to improve reading ability and interest of the learners. The Authors stressed that to eliminate reading disinterest in learners, teachers should identify peculiar problems affecting learners' lack of interest, whether these are connected with lack of time, skill or appropriate instructional strategy. Upon such identification, teachers can then provide reading strategy that offer solutions to those special problems. Therefore, use of Extensive reading strategy can offer good opportunities and techniques that can arouse learners' interest in English studies. English teachers should make their lesson objective palatable and interesting; interests are not innate but learned (Nworgu, 1992 and Ale, 2002). This can be achieved through the educator's activities, his methodology and the activities of learners.

Studies on gender difference in interest of students in reading comprehension revealed that girls possess more positive interest and attitude towards reading than boys (Ross and Fletcher, 1989; Diamond and Onwuegbuzie, 2001; Cloer and Datron, 2001; Kush, Watkins and Marley, 1995). In foreign languages, researches have also shown that individual differences affects reading comprehension (www.readingmatrix.com). The outcome of some of these researches is an evidence that interest by gender has a stimulating effect on the reading process ((www.readingmatrix.com). Furthermore, studies also reveal that boys and girls also show differences in reading interest, attitude, behaviors and preferences (Canadian Council of Learning, 2008). So in view of these contrasting results, there is need for a new study to contribute in resolving the issue concerning gender influence on reading interest. Hence the need to find out if difference exist in the interest of learners by gender in reading comprehension when exposed to extensive reading strategy.

### **1.1 Objectives**

The study determined:

1. Influence of extensive reading strategy on students' interest in reading comprehension.
2. Influence of gender on student's interest reading comprehension when exposed to it using extensive reading strategy.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. Does extensive reading strategy has influence on students' mean interest in reading comprehension?
2. Does gender has influence on students' interest in reading comprehension when exposed to it with extensive reading strategy?

### 1.3 Hypotheses

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean interest scores of learners exposed to reading comprehension using extensive reading strategy and those exposed to traditional method.

HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant mean difference between mean interest scores of boys and girls in reading comprehension.

HO<sub>3</sub>: There is no interaction influence of instructional strategy and gender on learners' interest in reading comprehension.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive reading is a teaching/learning procedure for reading voluminous materials. Nunan (1996) and Palmer (cited in Bamford and Day, 1997) feel that English as second language, students need to see words several times and hence need new word processing mechanism. They argued that the current reading instruction in schools that centers on skill training is not sufficient and suggest that explicit instruction on reading and activities that encourage the prompt use of comprehension skill be integrated into daily training. To Robb and Sussex (1990), the extensive reading procedure will improve pupils' exposure to the target language more than the intensive based reading. Extensive reading is known by various names such as "wide reading", "pleasure reading", "sustained silent reading", "free reading", "guided extensive reading (GER)", "Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)", "Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR)". In whatever name it is described, the aim of the extensive reading programme is to encourage learners to read in English and like it, increase their reading fluency and make reading a pleasurable activity that is promoted as much as possible by the teacher. In a study on gender and literacy research, Smith and Wilhem (2002), and Topping (2008) observed that:

- males take longer to get to read than boys do
- males do not involve much reading as females does
- boys do not develop much interest in pleasure reading and more dispose to utilitarian reading and less enthusiastic for reading than girls do

Reasons for this gender differences are not easy to define. The Canadian Council on Learning, Assessment Program reveals that male and female show differences in reading attitude, behaviors and preferences. It explains that girls outperform boys in reading assessment because girls are more likely to use reading strategies like scanning, rereading and discussion of texts, do non-assigned reading, read for enjoyment or general interest than boys, read more and see themselves as confident readers, carry out more of out of class reading, share and discuss their reading than boys.

Merisuo-Storm (2006) explored girls and boys attitude towards reading. The result revealed that female enjoy reading more than males, that males like comics and humorous books while adventure books were females' favorite. She also discovered that poetry does not appeal to pupils, especially the boys and that most boys do not enjoy typical school texts or to read aloud. The result suggest that students' interest should be the major consideration when selecting reading materials else the pupils will develop low interest in reading and may develop lifelong aversion to it. Furthermore, Kush, Watkins and Marley (1996) studied stability of children's attitude in reading, result indicates that children's attitude in reading is declining and that girls express more positive attitude towards recreational reading and have greater stability. They also discovered that social factors and expectations shape pupils attitude over time.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Design

The design of the study was pretest posttest non-equivalent control group design of quasi-experimental research design.

Symbolic representation of the design is shown below:

$$E_G = O_1 \times O_2$$

$$C_G = O_1 - O_2$$

Where  $E_G$  stands for experimental group

$C_G$  stands for control group

$O_1$  stands for pre-test observation

$\times$  stands for the treatments using Extensive Reading Strategy

$-$  stands for the use of the Conventional method (no treatment)

$O_2$  stands for post-test observation

#### 3.2 Population

This study was carried out in public JSS (Upper Basic) in Kwali Area Council of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Majority of inhabitants are farmers. Many of these farmers have low educational background and most especially, poor reading culture. They therefore show little interest in reading progress of their children and rarely provide books for them to practice reading at home. The implication of their poor reading culture is enormous on the literacy development of children living in Kwali Area Council. Many of them have problems with automatic recognition of words on sight which is essential in reading. Choice of Kwali Area Council for this study is therefore necessary as the study will help children living in the area to develop love for reading as well as achieve better in other school subjects. The target population for this study will be all the JSS II students that enrolled in the 72 JSS in Kwali Area Council numbering 5845 for the 2014/2015 session (FCT Education Resource Centre). JSS II (Upper Basic II) is selected because English becomes the language of instruction as well as a subject studied at this level. Independent reading is also taking place at this level of education. The sample size was 210 students (115 boys and 95 girls) from four schools in Kwali Area Council. These four schools were selected through purposive and random sampling techniques from the 72 public JSS in the Council.

#### 3.3 Instrumentation

Reading comprehension interest inventory (RCII) was the instrument used for gathering data. The RCII was developed by the researcher. The RCII items were faced validated by two lecturers from Arts Education Department and one lecturer from Educational Psychology section. The validators-

- Checked the suitability and clarity of items
- Added any other item(s) which is/are relevant but had not been included in the instrument
- Removed ambiguous or irrelevant statement in order to improve the structure of the items. Based on the comments and suggestions of these experts, some of the items were modified.

In addition to face validation, the RCII was also subjected to construct validation. The RCII was administered on equivalent sample of JSS II of Government Secondary School, Gwagwalada, Area Council, Abuja. RCII reliability coefficient was determined to be 0.88 using Cronbach Alpha. The RCII was rated based on a 4-point scale.

Two sets of lesson plans developed by the researcher were used for the teaching of the module set out for the study which lasted for five weeks. One set of the lesson plan was prepared based

on extensive reading strategy, and the second set was written based on traditional ways of teaching reading comprehension. Extensive reading lesson plans were used to teach the experimental groups while the conventional lesson plans were used to teach the control groups.

### **3.4 Experimental Procedure**

Experimental and control group teachers were exposed to one day training. Detailed explanation on how to use of extensive reading instructional strategy and the other research expectation were explained to the teachers. The training exercise was based on the objective of the study, topic to be taught, the use of the lesson plans, the use of RCII instrument and other issues related to the study. After training teachers, pre-test was given to the students before teaching began.

The teaching was carried out using the schools time table. Teachers teaching the students were used. Extensive reading strategy was adopted in teaching experimental group, while the conventional lesson plan was used in teaching the students in the control group. RCII was administered as pretest to both the experimental and control groups before the lesson commenced. Extensive reading lesson plans incorporated extensive reading instructional strategies. The activities of the teacher were monitor by the researcher during lesson delivery and instruction. The duration of each less is 90 minutes duration and lesson delivery periods was 5 weeks. Posttest was administered on both groups with the RCII at the end of treatment. The scores collected from both groups were kept by the researcher and later used for the analysis.

In pretest, RCII was administered on both the control groups and experimental groups respectively. The students checked (√) to express the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the items in the RCII. The interest inventory was scored by the researcher to determine each student's interest before the treatment. The exercise provided pretreatment data on each of the groups before the treatment.

In posttest, RCII was administered on both the experimental and control groups. The students were asked to check (√) to express their opinion on the items in the RCII. The RCII was scored by the researcher to determine each student's interest after treatment. The exercise provided post treatment data for each groups after treatment.

Mean was used to answer the research questions while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. ANCOVA assumptions are:

- i. Linearity between the dependent and co-variants variable.
- ii. The homogeneity of regression or parallelism will be tested.

## **4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Research Question 1**

Does extensive reading strategy has influence on students' mean interest in reading comprehension? Table 1 reveals that the mean score of Extensive reading strategy group in the pretest is 105.62, posttest is 142.78 and pretest, posttest mean gain in the group is 37.16. The mean score of Conventional method group in pretest is 104.38, posttest is 133.62 and pretest, posttest mean gain is 29.24. This result shows that Extensive reading strategy group interest is higher than the interest of the students in the Conventional method group. An indication that extensive reading strategy is more effective than conventional teaching method in arousing interest of learners in reading comprehension

**Table-1:** Mean of Pretest and Posttest Scores of Extensive Reading Strategy and Convention Method Groups in RCII

Group	N	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Gain
		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$		
<b>Ext Reading Strag. Grp</b>	108	105.62		142.78		37.16
<b>Conventional method Grp</b>	102	104.38		133.62		29.24

#### 4.2 Research Question 2

Does gender has influence on students’ interest in comprehension when exposed to it with extensive reading strategy?

**Table-2:** Mean of Pretest and Posttest of Male and Female Students in the RCII

Sex	Extensive Reading Strategy				Conventional Method			
	N	Pretest	Posttest	Mean Gain $\bar{X}$	N	Pretest	Posttest	Mean Gain $\bar{X}$
<b>Male</b>	57	105.35	143.48	38.13	58	104.21	133.27	29.06
<b>Female</b>	51	105.92	146.56	40.64	44	104.48	132.98	28.50

In Table 2 male students taught reading comprehension using extensive reading strategy had a mean score of 105.35 in the pretest, mean score of 143.48 in the posttest and pretest-posttest mean gain score of 38.13. Meanwhile, female students taught reading comprehension using extensive reading strategy had a mean score of 105.92 in the pretest, mean score of 146.56 in the posttest and pretest-posttest mean gain score of 40.64. Male students taught using conventional method had a mean score of 104.21 in the pretest, mean score of 133.27 in the posttest and pretest-posttest mean gain score of 29.06. Meanwhile, female students taught reading comprehension using conventional method had a mean score of 104.48 in the pretest, mean score of 132.98 in the pretest and pretest-posttest mean gain score of 28.50. These results shows that female students taught reading comprehension had higher mean gain scores than male students in the interest inventory, an indication that gender has influence the interest of learners that were exposed to extensive reading strategy in favour of girls.

#### 4.3 Hypotheses

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean interest scores of learners exposed to reading comprehension using extensive reading strategy and those exposed to conventional method.

HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant mean difference between mean interest scores of boys and girls in reading comprehension.

HO<sub>3</sub>: There is no interaction influence of instructional strategy and gender on learners’ interest in reading comprehension.

Table 3 reveal F-calculated for mean scores of extensive reading strategy and Conventional method groups in the RCII, sex and interaction of instructional strategy and sex on learners’ interest in reading comprehension. The F-calculated value for group is 68.291 with a significance of F at .001. Since F is less than .05, the null-hypothesis of no significance is rejected. The F-calculated for sex is .634 with a significance of F at .578 which is greater than .05 and since F is greater than 0.05, the null-hypothesis of no significance is therefore accepted

at .05 level of significance. This is an indication that there is no significant difference between the influence of sex (male and female) on learners' interest in reading comprehension. The interaction influence of instructional strategy and sex has F-calculated value of .205 with significance of F of .839 which is greater than .05. It means that there is no significant interaction influence of instructional strategy used and their sex with respect to their mean scores on RCII.

**Table-3:** Summary of ANCOVA for Test of Significance between the Mean Scores of Extensive Reading Strategy and Convention method groups in RCII, Influence of sex and Interaction influence of Instructional strategy and their sex with respect to their mean scores in RCII

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	823.986 <sup>a</sup>	4	204.175	20.673	.000
Intercept	191.34	1	191.34	6.569	.002
Pretest	105.53	1	105.53	2.243	.195
Group	635.76	1	635.76	68.291*	.001
Sex	.572	1	.572	.634	.578
Group * Gender	3.673	1	3.673	.205	.839
Error	2093.823	205	8.696		
Total	2612483.000	210			
Corrected Total	2047.843	209			

\*Significant at sig of  $F < .05$

#### 4.4 Discussion of Findings

Table 1 answered research question one. Result showed that mean scores of extensive reading strategy on learners' interest in reading comprehension is more than the mean scores of conventional method. The ANCOVA in Table 3 affirmed that the difference between the main influence of (extensive reading strategy and conventional method) on learners' interest inventory was significant, which is ascribed to the extensive reading strategy used in teaching the experimental group. This finding indicates that extensive reading strategy is more effective in arousing learners' interest in reading comprehension than the traditional method. Belloni and Jongsma's (1978) pointed out that students study and assimilate more when they are interested in what they are reading. Onyekwerre (2001) stressed that the level of interest by learners has a relationship with many factors such as instructional materials, school environment and instructional strategies. The researcher then suggested that educator should always employed teaching strategies that are capable of learners' interest. Miranda et al. (2011) argued that students' interest in reading can be elevated by adopting several ways among which is the use of reading strategy. It is vital to increase the interests of students in reading more.

Table 2 answered research question 2. Findings showed that the scores of female learners is more than that of male learners in RCII. The ANCOVA used in testing hypothesis 3 in Table 3, at F- value of .634, significance of F (.578) and .05 confidence level showed that there was a significant difference between the main influence of sex on learners' interest in reading comprehension which confirmed that the difference between the mean scores of male and female learners in the RCII was significant favouring girls. This implies that there was an influence ascribed to sex on learners' interest in studying reading comprehension. This is in line with the findings of Bahman and Mehdi (2013) who carried out a study on effects of gender and passage content on multiple-choice reading comprehension test in Iranian students and discovered female students show more interest in reading than their male counterpart. The

study of Mohr (2006) revealed that female read more and achieve more on reading tests than their male counterparts. The study also discovered that females possessed wider interest in reading and also possessed more abilities when it comes to comprehension. In general, females developed more interest in reading better than male. Lastly, the ANCOVA used to test hypothesis six, Table 3, at the calculated F-value (.205), significance of F (.839) and confidence level of .05, revealed that there was no significant interaction influence of instructional strategy and gender.

## 5. CONCLUSION

It is essential to find the best method of teaching Reading Comprehension in order to arouse students' interest for achievement in reading comprehension and English language. This study determined the influence of extensive reading strategy on interest of learners in reading comprehension. This discovered that extensive reading strategy is more effective in enhancing learners' interest in reading comprehension than traditional method. The study also showed that there was an effect ascribed to sex on learners' interest in reading comprehension, but no interaction influence of extensive reading strategy and sex on interest of junior Secondary School learners in reading comprehension. This implies that the efficacy of extensive reading strategy on learners' interest in reading comprehension does not depend on the levels of sex. Hence, irrespective of nature of sex, learners' interest would be increased in reading comprehension when extensive reading strategy is employed for teaching reading comprehension. This result therefore showed that extensive reading strategy is a viable instructional strategy for reading comprehension.

### 5.1. Recommendations

1. English language educator should be encouraged to use the extensive reading strategy, since it is superior to traditional approach.
2. Learners should be allowed to read extensively in school by given enough time and provide stimulating environment;
3. Libraries should be stocked with books in schools and major cities and qualified librarians employed to guide the students in the libraries;
4. English Language teachers should provide materials that can help their learners to read more.

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