

Effect of Visual Imaging Technique on Literacy Skills Acquisition of Junior Secondary One Students with Reading Disabilities in Pankshin, Plateau State

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of visual imaging technique on the acquisition of junior secondary one students with reading disabilities in Pankshin, plateau state. Of all the empirical studies reviewed, there was no study known to the researchers that used visual imaging technique with JS1 students with reading disabilities in Pankshin local government area of plateau state. The study adopted the quasi-experimental design, specifically the non-equivalent group pre-test – post-test design was used. All JS1 students with reading disabilities in government secondary schools in Pankshin was form the population of the study. The sample size was 58 JS1 students with reading disabilities, 26 students from GSS Daika form the experimental group and 32 students from GSS Pankshin form the control group. Some research questions were formulated to guide the study. Four instruments were used for data collection. These were a 100 high frequency words adapted from Umolu , a comprehension test (CT), matching of words with pictures and a cloze test. In order to ascertain the consistency and reliability of the instrument, test-retest reliability method was used to obtain the reliability index for each instrument. The Study made major findings and recommendations were proffered based on the findings

Journal of Policy and Development Studies (JPDS)

Vol. 17 Issue 1 (2024)

ISSN(p) 1597-9385

ISSN (e) 2814-1091

Home page:

<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jsda>

ARTICLE INFO:

Keyword

Disability, visual, reading, technique.

Article History

Received:

25th October 2024

Accepted:

9th December 2024

DOI:

<https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jpds.v17i1.10>

1. Introduction

In recent years, reading has become a topic of interest to educators throughout the world. Many successes in school and outside school environment are based on the ability to read. For several reasons, ranging from personnel to environmental factors, many students fail to learn how to read (Umolu & Oyetunde, 1991). The authors further explained that, this is in spite of the usage of conventional reading methods by the regular teachers.

The basic reasons for the inability to read could be as a result of poor methods used to teach reading or even the issue of learning to read in a second language. The issue of learning to read in a second language is another problem that could slow down the students ability to learn to read. Learning to read in the Nigerian context has been identified and described as the problems of bilingualism and multilingualism (Unoh, 1983). Reading is best taught in a language that the child has already learned how to speak orally.

Students in Junior Secondary Schools, who are unable to speak simple English orally or read simple sight vocabulary, are said to be readers with disabilities. A student with reading disability is one whose reading is significantly below expectancy for both the students reading potential and grade level. One of the basic skills that should be developed in students with reading disabilities is the literacy skill. It is important to give priority attention to literacy skill development because literacy knowledge is critical to reading comprehension process of a skilled reader in the development of oral and written language. The skill this study is concerned with is the literacy skill development while reading disabilities is the inability of the JSS1 students to read and comprehend what is read. Reading disabilities (dyslexia) is a learning disability that manifests itself as a difficulty with word decoding and or reading fluency.

Literacy has been recognized as essential to the efficient functioning of every student. It is also essential for scientific and technological growth of a nation. Students then need to acquire literacy in order to succeed in any field of endeavour. Most of the time students who do not do well in any field are said to be the readers with disabilities. Literacy skills are all the skills needed for reading. They include such things as awareness of the sounds of language, awareness of print and the relationship between letters and sound (Bainbridge, 2013). Literacy is the quality or state of being 'literate'. "Literate", according to this same source is derived from middle Latin terms meaning "marked with letters literature". It is being able to read and write or versed in literature or creative writing, having knowledge or competence for example, computer literate, politically literate, and so on. Others emphasize the importance of oral language development more than written language by highlighting the definition of literacy. An example of this came from (Foley, 1994), who states that the term "literacy" was be used broadly to refer to the mastery of language in both spoken (or augmented) and written forms which enables a student to use language fluently for a variety of purposes. Scherba (2012) and Lere(2009) also cautioned that there is general agreement today that spoken language abilities are closely related to development of literacy skills in students with reading disabilities.

Writing is one of the important modes of communication which is written expression. Writing demands eye-hand coordination, motor coordination, sense of

direction and recognition of symbols (picture, letters, numbers, words, punctuation and so on). Some writing tasks demand horizontal writing left to right as in writing words and some demand vertical writing as in writing arithmetic (addition and subtraction) and some demand a combination of both. In sentence making skills, the students should be able to use few words from sight to make simple sentences (Andzayi & Umolu, 2002). The teacher should use few words from sight words to make simple sentences as an example for the students. For example, “Ladi is standing up; my name is Audu” and so on. These words should be arranged in such a way that the students can see them. Similarly, oral language refers to the act of speaking and listening. The main components of the oral language skills include: word knowledge, vocabulary, sentence structure-grammar, language understanding-semantic and comprehension ability, and structure thinking- elaborate, organize and sequence thoughts (Learning Resources, 2022). Oral language is the child’s first most important and most frequently used structured medium of communication. It is the primary means through which each student is able to structure, evaluate, describe and control his/her experiences. In addition, oral language is the primary mediator of culture, the way in which students locate themselves in the world, and define themselves with it and within it (Archer, Cregan, McGough & Shiel, 2013). At its most basic level, oral language is about communicating with other people.

Predicting is a strategy that helps readers with disabilities set expectations for reading, connect early with the text for meaning, and decide what they think was happen. Strategic readers make predictions before reading and while reading, based on a number of skills and state strategies like previewing, activating background knowledge and asking questions (Block, Rodgers & Johnson, 2021; Fishers, 2009). When readers make prediction about what they have learnt, they activate their schema about the topic and what they know about the type of text they are about to read (Miller, 2002).

Comprehension is the essence of reading. Comprehension guides students to become aware of how well they have read as they attempt to put into writing or recall what they have read (Pearson & Duke, 2002). Comprehension enables students to bring in higher thinking skills which bring meaning to the text read, thus enabling them to comprehend what has been read. Brassel and Ransiki (2008) concluded that comprehension occurs when a reader is able to act, respond to, as well as transform the information that is presented in written text in ways that demonstrate understanding. Brassel and Ransiki further added that comprehension does not only enable students to make connections and move beyond literal recall but is an essential element in life transformation of students with reading disabilities.

Sight vocabulary, as one of the skills in literacy development, is sometimes referred to as words which students can identify automatically. Examples of these words are; and, if, but, the, they, them, who, what and so on . Sight words are the glue that hold stories, ideas and content together. For example, “the apple is good”. In this sentence, there is only one experience word, ‘apple’ the other three, are sight words, yet without them one would be unable to experience the feeling about the apple. This is exactly what is meant by helping students with reading disabilities learn these words. This type of sentence analysis helps the students to see the usefulness of the word.

Visual imaging strategy is the practice of mentally visualizing objects, events or situations. It is a powerful process that assists students to construct meaning as they listen and read. As students read and listen to others, they incorporate their knowledge and previous experiences to form images of situations, settings, characters’ and events (Silver, Strong & Perini, 2021). Visualizing sight vocabulary enables students who are

stronger in spatial rather than in verbal intelligence to find or draw pictures that illustrate the definitions of words. Visual imaging is also referred to as mind, mental or concept imagery. The students create an image that represents the definition of the word and calls up this image whenever the child encounters the word. The strategy of visualization provides opportunities for students to use their imagination to facilitate literacy skills development and comprehension across the curriculum (Tate, 2003). Images extend comprehension, enrich their personal interpretations and stimulate unique ideas for writing. Images provide the opportunity for students to experience vicariously what they hear, read and write.

The main purpose of images is to provide opportunities for students to share personal interpretation. This strategy assists students in accessing understanding of literacy knowledge. Comprehension may be decoding, it is not a primary feature of reading disabilities (Stanovich, 2019). It is because of these reading problems students face in Pankshin, especially those of them with reading disabilities that the researcher wants to embark on this research, to improve the literacy skills of the students.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

High percentage of students in Junior Secondary Schools cannot read. As the situation in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State, is that most of the students can recite from the class text without understanding or recognizing the printed words. Some of them can call out words from the book with correct pronunciation but without understanding or comprehending what is read.

The students can read simple books but not the level of books used in their class. For example, JSS1 students can read nursery one or primary one textbook, but cannot read JSS1 textbook. These students cannot comprehend, make simple sentence, predict, have oral language, and cannot identify sight words, while some of them cannot read at all. This could be due to problems such as poor methodology, untrained teachers, prolonged absence from school, poor visions, poor auditory perception, low intelligence quotient, constant changing from one school to another, frequent transferring of teachers from one school to another and lack of reading materials (Kalu, 2014).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the effects of visual imaging technique on literacy skills acquisition among junior secondary one students with reading disabilities in Pankshin, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the extent to which spoken (oral) language skills required for literacy acquisition of JSS1 students with reading disabilities was be acquired using imaging technique.
2. Find out the ability of JSS1 students with reading disabilities to make simple sentences using sight words after exposure to visual imaging technique.
3. Predict the meaning of a word as the image is presented to JSS1 students with reading disabilities through the use of visual imaging technique.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the mean scores of the spoken (oral) language skills of JSS1 students with reading disabilities before and after intervention?
2. What are the mean scores of visual imaging technique in sentence making of JSS1 students with reading disabilities before and after intervention?
3. What are the mean scores of JSS1 students with reading disabilities in predicting the meaning of words before and after intervention?
4. What are the reading stories mean scores of JSS1 students with reading disabilities before and after intervention?
5. To what extent would visual imaging technique enhance the comprehension skills of JSS1 students with reading disabilities?

2. Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Framework

Concept and nature of reading, concept of writing, reading disabilities, oral language skills, concept of literacy skills, literal comprehension, predicting skills, sentence making, sight word recognition skills, concept of visual imaging technique and a review of empirical studies. Reading is generally defined as a process of getting meanings from a book. In other words, it is the process of constructing meaning from print. According to Kirimkan (2020), reading is a process of understanding and reconstructing the meaning contained in a reading material. Reading involves making sense of what is read as well as understanding and interpreting of the printed page (Andzayi, 2004).

Handwriting is the most concrete of the communication skills. The students' handwriting can be directly observed, evaluated, and preserved. It differs from the receptive skills of reading in that the measurement of the reading comprehension skills must necessarily be indirect, through asking of questions, students must verbalize in some way to let you know what they have read. Lerer (2019) also states that writing offers an important means of interpersonal communication and self-expression together with effective listening, oral expression and reading. This fourth area makes possible communication and the seeking and sharing of knowledge. It is this skill that may be considered the capstone of competence in language.

Reading disabilities refers to a condition where JSS1 students are unable to read or they read with great difficulty. The term reading disabilities (dyslexia) is used to identify students who have severe difficulty in learning to read. A review of literature reveals that the word reading disabilities or dyslexia is currently being used in a variety of ways by different authors. Its diverse definitions cover a wide range and include: evidence of an etiology of brain damage, observation of behavioural manifestations of central nervous system dysfunction, inherited cause of the reading problem, it is also used to describe a student who is unable to learn to read through the regular classroom methods (Lerner, 1981).

Oral language is the child's first and most frequently used structured medium of communication. It is the primary means through which each individual child was enabled to structure, evaluate, describe and to control his/her experience. For students whose primary language is other than English, studies have shown that a strong basis in a first language promotes school achievement in a second language.

Therefore, the students with reading disabilities here in Pankshin who are learning English as a second language are more likely to become readers and writers of English when visual imaging technique is used with them. In addition, and most significantly, oral language is the primary mediator of culture, the way in which children locate themselves in the world, with it and within it (Arher, Cregan, McGough & Shiel, 2012; Lain & Oakhill, 2007; Hart & Risley, 1995 Snipes, Horwitz, Soga & Cassely, 2008; Snow & Harris, 2007). In the same vein, oral language is often associated with vocabulary as the main component. It consists of phonology, grammar morphology, vocabulary, discourse and pragmatics. The acquisition of these skills often begins at a young age, before students begin focusing on print-based concepts such as sound-symbol correspondence and decoding. Because these skills are often developed early in life, children with limited oral language ability at the time they enter kindergarten are typically at a distinct disadvantage (Fielding, Kerr & Rosier, 2020). The authors further stated that oral language skills consist of six main areas; phonology, vocabulary (semantics) grammar (syntax), morphology, pragmatics, and discourse.

Literacy means being able to read and write. Defining literacy in changing world is not easy. Several years ago, being literate meant being able to read and write a little. Now, being literate means being able to read and write at a level to be successful in today's world and also being proficient in math, knowing how to use technology and knowing how to solve problems and make decisions. According to Bainbridge, (2013):

This definition is important as it looks at literacy, at least to some extent, from a more contextualized perspective. The definition of "literate" then, depends on the skills needed within a particular environment.

The Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland and Labrador define literacy as not only involving competency in reading and writing, but goes beyond this to include the critical and effective use of these in peoples' lives, and the use of language (oral and written) for all purposes. This definition involves critical thinking about what one reads, as well as expanding the term to encompass oral forms of literacy.

Comprehension is the essence of reading; it occurs when a reader is able to act on, respond to or transform the information that is presented in written text in ways that demonstrates understanding (Brassell & Rasinski, 2021). Comprehension as a strategic process enables readers to make connections and move beyond literal recall. Readers with disabilities have problem comprehending what is read while, some have problem recognizing the words.

Literal comprehension is the first level of comprehension. It is the simplest/lowest form of comprehending information from texts because the information is stated directly in the text. (Cunningham, & Allington, 2019).

Prediction is a strategy that helps readers set expectations for reading, connect early with the text for meaning, and decides what they think was happen. Strategic readers make prediction before reading and while reading based on the number of skills and state strategies like previewing activating background knowledge, and asking questions (Black, Rodgers & Johnson 2021; & Fisher, 2009).

A sentence is a complete meaningful group of words which starts with a capital letter and ends with full stop (.), question mark (?) or exclamation mark (!) (Bluest,

2022) A sentence contains a subject and predicate. For example, "The boy climbed a tree". The subject in a sentence is generally the person or thing carrying out an action but does not carry it out. The object comes in the predicate after the verb. As stated in the example above. When students with reading disabilities see the picture of a boy climbing the tree it helped them and make it easier for them to make a sentence.

Visual imagery or imaging is a vivid descriptive language that appeals to one or more of the senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste). Sometimes, imaging is also used to refer to figurative language in particular metaphors and similes. According to Kern (2013), good readers construct mental images as they read a text. By using prior knowledge and background experiences, readers connect the authors' writing with a personal picture. Through guided visualization, students learn how to create mental pictures as they read. Students with reading disabilities have problem comprehending words or recognizing words, but when the word is presented to these students alongside the picture of word, it was help them to hear and see at the same time. For example, when you mention "spoon" for a student, and the student has never seen it before, the student may find it difficult to comprehend or understand the meaning of "spoon" but when they see the picture, they was be able to understand. Though some researchers opposed that the use of pictures can only be effective if the students were aware of the relationship between word and picture.

In reviewing empirical studies, Meaden, Stoner, and Parette (2008), investigated teaching sight words with picture supported techniques verses word only methods in a Midwestern city. The age of the participants ranged between four and five years old from seven different preschool classrooms for children at-risk.

Rivera, Koorland, and Fueyo (2002) conducted another study that focused on Dolch sight words and pictures. The focus of the study was teaching Dolch sight words with a fading procedure by using pupil made prompts.

Likewise, there have been studies that have shown that pictorial prompts have blocked the learning of Dolch sight words. Didden, Prinsen, and Sgafoos (2000) completed a study with six moderate mental handicapped participants between the ages of seven and nine years old. Participants were presented with twenty words consisting of five letters each. Four words were presented randomly to participants in each condition. The conditions of the study were word only, word/enhanced picture condition, a picture presented alone and followed by the presentation of the word and picture, and then word only and enhanced word conditions.

One study by Falk, Band, and McLaughlin (2003) compared the acquisition of Dolch sight words through reading racetracks and direct instruction using flash cards with three male, third-grade participants with learning disabilities.

A replication study using racetracks was conducted by Kaufman, McLaughlin, Derby, and Waco (2011) with three special education students in a resource room. Participant one was a seven year old male with ADHD and specific learning disabilities receiving services in reading and writing.

Mesmer, Duhon, Hogan, Newry, Hommema, Fletcher, and Boso (2010) questioned if the learning of words by sight would be improved if there is a common stimulus (color) procedure applied to accurately reading unknown words that were orthographically similar to a set of taught words. This research compared the effect of

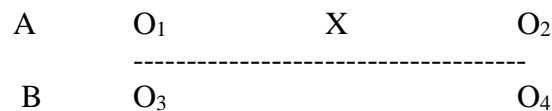
words printed in regular black font to the use of word family rimes being color coded. There were four participants between the ages of seven years and eight months to eight years and six months.

The theoretical approach to this study is informed by the Social Learning Theory propounded by Vygotsky, (1978). This theory state that people learn behaviour rapidly and efficiently by observing other people's behaviour. Vygotsky (1978) also believes strongly that the community plays a central role in the process of making meaning. This theory explains human behaviour in terms of theory continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental influences.

Vygotsky places more emphasis on social contributions to the process of development.. To him, much important learning by the students occurs through social interaction with a skillful tutor. The tutor may model behaviours and or provide verbal instructions for the students. Vygotsky refers to this as cooperative or collaborative dialogue. The child seeks to understand the actions or instructions provided by the tutor (often the parents or teacher) than internalizes the information, using it to guide or regulate their own performance.

3. Methodology

The study was adopted the quasi-experimental design. Specifically, the non-equivalent group pre-test-post-test design was used. The design is illustrated below



The design has the experimental group as A and the control group as B. Pre test was administered to the experimental and control groups as O₁ and O₃ respectively. The groups were tested for equivalence. The experimental group was exposed to treatment X after which post test was given O₂ and O₄ to experimental and control groups respectively. The dotted line in the diagram shows the absence of randomization. That is, the two groups were not equated by random assignment (Nworgu, 2015). The choice of this design, is that the two groups experimental and control were not composed of using randomization, but rather intact groups found in the classes were used. One school was used as experimental group and another, as control. The design is appropriate for the study in the sense that the school authority may not permit the re-organization of the already existing Junior Secondary School one use either of two class as randomization, hence the use of intact groups. Nevertheless, this design, like all other designs, may be vulnerable to sources of invalidity such as history, maturation and testing, initial differences, instrumentation, regression, selection bias and experimental mortality. The experimental group was taught reading using visual imaging technique while control group was taught the same topics using conventional method.

4. Result

1. The result revealed that visual imaging technique (VIT) is seen as an effective technique for teaching literacy skills acquisition to JSS1 students with reading disabilities.
2. The result also revealed that teaching reading to JSS one students with reading disabilities with corresponding pictures and words is highly effective.

3. The intervention did help the students to identify, comprehend and learn new words in a relatively short period of time.

Impact

1. The adaptation of visual imaging technique has exposed the students to oral spoken language skills, sentence making, prediction, reading of stories and comprehension of the text.
2. Teaching of words with corresponding pictures has really improved the literacy acquisition of students with reading disabilities.

Conclusion

This study investigated the Effect of Visual Imaging Techniques on Literacy Skills Acquisition among junior secondary one students with reading disabilities in Pankshin. Many students cannot read, this could be as a result of poor methods used to teach reading or even the issue of learning to read in a second language. The issue of learning to read in a second language is another problem that could slow down the students ability to learn to read. For several reasons ranging from personnel to environmental factors, many students fail to learn how to read. As the situation in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State, most of the students can recite from the class text without understanding or recognizing the printed words, some of them can call out words from the book with correct pronunciation but without understanding or comprehending what is read. The students can read simple books but not the books used in their class.

From the analysis of the results there is sufficient evidence which indicated that JSS 1 students with reading disabilities made significant high mean difference in sentence making skills, predicting skills, reading skills, and comprehension skills. These were revealed when all the related research questions were analyzed. This makes the researcher concludes with degree of confidence that visual imaging technique is effective in teaching literacy skills to students with reading disabilities.

Recommendations

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

1. Teachers in junior secondary schools should identify and select sight vocabulary from a reading comprehension passage and explain their meanings to students with reading disabilities pairing the words with pictures. This will help to familiarize the students with meaning of the words as they are read from the passage.
2. Teachers should expose their students with reading disabilities to concrete learning experiences. This will help them to connect background knowledge during reading activities.
3. Parent of students with reading disabilities should learn to expose their children to varieties of reading materials this will expose the children to early experiences and better preparation for reading.
4. Teachers and parents should adopt the use of visual imaging technique (VIT) described in this study to teach students with reading disabilities. This will help to improve literacy skills acquisition of the students.
5. Finally, a specific period for teaching reading should be created on the school time table. Teachers should be committed to their work, provide concrete learning materials, watch out for poor readers or readers with disabilities and assist them where necessary.

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