



Effect of Concentrated Language Encounter Method in Developing Sight Word Recognition Skills in Primary School Pupils in Cross River State

Emmanuel Uminya Ikwen

*Department of Special Education, Faculty of Education, University of
Calabar, Cross Rivers State, Nigeria*

ABSTRACT

The paper examined the effect of concentrated language encounter method in developing sight word recognition skill in primary school pupils in cross river state. The purpose of the study was to find out the effect of Primary One pupils' reading level, English sight word recognition skill. It also examine the extent to which the CLE method of teaching reading will help to develop English sight words skill of Primary One pupils. One research question and one hypothesis were posed for investigation. The study utilized pretest, posttest quasi experimental designs (expost factor). Thirty (70) primary one pupils participated in the study. The instrument used included 100 high frequency words, which was assessed during pretest and posttest. Result indicated that the general reading ability of the pupils with reading problem needs was poor and at frustration level but the experimental group gained more sight words after intervention using concentrated language encounter method. Based on this finding, the researchers made some recommendations for the improvement of reading ability of primary school pupils with reading problem in public school settings.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Vocabulary development is fundamental to verbal expression as well as to reading and writing. In many ways vocabulary is vital in building analytical and critical thinking (Davis, 2000). Also, to be successful readers, pupils need to be familiar with the letters of the alphabet. Pupils whose knowledge of letters is not well-developed when they begin school require organized

Effect of Concentrated Language Encounter on Word Recognition Skills

instruction and practice that will help them learn to identify, name, and write letters (Rosenberg, 2006).

These are 100 high frequency words that frequently occur in speech or in written texts. These words have been identified through research to be used frequently by Nigerian pupils within a specified environment. These are words that the pupils can recognize automatically or instantly at a glance. They can identify their meaning as well as pronounce them with ease. According to Umolu's (1985) guidelines for identification of reading problems among Nigerian children, any pupil who reads less than 10 of the first 25 words during assessment is considered to be a non-reader.

Building vocabulary words is key to reading, to writing, to verbal expression, and, in many ways, vocabulary is key to building analytical and critical thinking (Time 4 Learning, 2006). A pupil's vocabulary skills can be measured in terms of both their receptive vocabulary words and expressive vocabulary words. Building vocabulary skills improve reading comprehension and reading fluency. Without building a large vocabulary, pupils cannot read successfully.

Sight vocabularies are words recognized immediately in the course of reading. The logic behind building automatic word-recognition skills as a foundation for reading is based on the fact that words that are recognized by thinking about them make reading a laborious process. Building word recognition skills is increasing the number of words that a pupil can recognize effortlessly and without thought (that is, words that a pupil can recognize automatically). Investigations by Messina and Messina (2007) reveals that instant word recognition by sight greatly increases reading fluency and reading comprehension.

According to Dahl (1981), pupils begin to learn information receptively from the environments much earlier than they start to express and demonstrate it through their words and actions. The following seven ways to develop early sight word skills have been suggested.

- a) Read, re-read, and read some more: This involves the teacher reading to the pupils every day. For beginning readers, like Primary One pupils in Nigerian public schools, picture books that pair words with depictions of those words as well as books with short sentences and colourful illustrations should be used. There should be many appropriate books to use that teach colours, numbers, sizes, animals, flowers, plants, objects, language and sounds, and many other concepts.
- b) Increase the pupils' visual and language recognition skills: Teachers need to provide opportunities to point out objects in pictures, and say the name of the object to the pupils. Use pictures of familiar objects, magazine photos, and so on. This activity helps the pupils develop vocabulary, verbal reasoning skills, visual processing, image recognition and memory.
- c) Label objects in the environment for the pupils: print names of objects, including household objects, the pupils can touch on index

cards. Attach the index cards to the objects they represent. As the pupils use these objects, the teacher cuts them out, and glues them to the index cards for more reinforcement. If he/she needs help, show him/her the label and say, "This is a..." The teacher has to be positive and smile. Making it fun for both the teacher and pupils is an important way to help the pupils enjoy learning.

- d) Make sensory labels for environmental objects: The teacher can use the index card above. This time, the words are decorated. Allow the pupils to choose decorations to glue over the lines of the letters. Once dry, the cards with raised ridges of glue will form the letters. The pupils can trace over the letters with fingers as they learn them if they choose to do so. The cards are placed on the matching objects.
- e) Play the "name" game: This game also uses labels. Have the pupils choose which label matches which object. At first, pick two cards, one that matches an object and one that does not match. Ask a pupil to choose which card matches the object. Help the pupil if needed. The teacher stays positive, even if the pupil chooses the wrong answer and cheerfully gives the pupil the correct card to place on the object. As the pupils develop their skills, they could be allowed to choose from three, four, or more cards to identify the object.
- f) Reading the labels and matching: Once the pupils recognize words on the labels and can say the words aloud, they can begin to read them aloud. Prompt them to read the cards. Wait for about five seconds to allow thinking time. If a word is missed, the answer should be given and set the missed card aside. Create a pile of the missed cards, and go over them again with the pupils, having them say the name with you. Practice the missed cards by matching, them to the objects as saying the names. Make the activity "game-like", and praise the pupils' efforts.
- g) Make new cards without pictures: Once the pupils have mastered the cards with pictures a new set of cards without pictures is created. They games listed above can be played with the new cards. If the pupils have difficulty with the new cards, simply place them on objects beside the cards with pictures. Go through the games listed above while pairing the cards with the cards already mastered. Gradually remove the cards with pictures, as pupils gain familiarity with the new cards without pictures.

According to Oyetunde (2002), pupils acquire some sight words by selecting words from their language-experience stories and from story books read to them to practice as sight words. The words are written on flashcards and are exposed to the pupils repeatedly. They are also given word cards to take home to practice. Similarly, exposing pupils to activities that encourage them to identify words in isolation and in context, using a word window card, can help to enhance the development of sight word vocabularies of beginning readers (Davis, 2000; Dahl, 1981).

Effect of Concentrated Language Encounter on Word Recognition Skills

CLE techniques are based on the development of a reading programme that is effective with the full range of pupils, including those from homes where there is little or no literate activity and/or where the first language or dialect is different from the language of instruction (Weaver, 2006). These have been proven to be very effective in large scale Rotary CLE literacy projects undertaken in Thailand, Australia, Bangladesh, South Africa, Brazil, and Turkey. (See Rotary International, 1984; Walker, Rattanavich & Oller, 1992; Rattanavich, 2003). In another study conducted by Rattanavich (2003); Andzayi, Nengel, Deshe & Pyelshak (2003) the findings revealed that beginning readers were able to read after being exposed to CLE instructional activities.

CLE programmes are essentially “immersion” programmes in which pupils do new and increasingly more difficult things with spoken and written language in the course of a group activity. Another strong feature of the methodology is called “scaffolding”, whereby the teachers model what pupils are expected to do, and then provide less and less guidance as pupils become more and more able to work without support. An additional prominent feature is that CLE learning is experiential, whether it relates to the reading of a storybook or the creation of a structured activity aimed at developing the sight word recognition skill of pupils

Statement of the Problem

Most Nigerian public primary school pupils are not learning to read. The public primary school system has more or less collapsed in the sense that only a small percentage of pupils who go through it succeed in learning to read. Researches conducted in Nigeria in the area of reading have focused mainly on urban schools and on the remediation of reading failure among older learners who have failed to read after spending some years in school.

The problem of pupils’ lack of reading skill, letter recognition skills, and comprehension skill, is compounded with limited vocabulary acquisition which affects both their receptive and expressive language skills.

Purpose of the Study

1. The purpose of this study was to find out Primary One pupils’ reading level, English sight word recognition skill.
2. Examine the extent to which the CLE method of teaching reading will help to develop English sight words skills of Primary One pupils.

Research Question

This research question guided the study:

What will be primary one pupils’ reading level in English sight word recognition skill ?

Hypothesis

This hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant mean difference in English sight word recognition skills achievement scores of pupils exposed to CLE and those not exposed to it.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study was the quasi experimental design. Specifically, the study used the pre-test-post-test design in which intact groups were assigned to the experimental and control groups. The choice of this design was informed by the fact that intact groups were involved, in order to avoid disrupting the school system. The two intact groups were Class One, comprising Classes 1A and 1B, representing two arms. Treatment was applied to Class 1A which was the experimental group, while no treatment was applied to Class 1B which was the control group.

The pre-test scores were used to assess their competence in the skills before treatment, while the post-test scores were used to compare the effects of treatment.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was Bette-speaking Primary One Pupils who were beginning readers in public primary schools in Obudu Local Government Area. Most of the pupils were not only from impoverished print environments, but also had neither nursery education background nor formal education of any kind and were just being admitted into Primary One. All of the pupils in the study sample were six years old.

Cluster sampling technique was used for this study. Cluster sampling is a sampling technique which is used when "natural" but relatively homogeneous groupings are evident in a statistical population. In this study, the total population was divided into two groups (or clusters) and a simple sample of the groups was selected.

Instruments for Data Collection

The Umolu Sight Word Recognition Test (SWRT) was adopted for use in order to determine the pupils' ability to read the common words that pupils need to know how to read instantly in order to read print meaningfully. The purpose of this test was to ascertain the number of words the pupils could

Effect of Concentrated Language Encounter on Word Recognition Skills

recognize which were written on the flash cards. The 100 high frequency words tested the pupils' ability to identify the words in isolation individually with meaning. These were used to assess word recognition, with the pupils who were beginning to learn to read. These 100 high frequency words (100 HFW) were developed by Umolu in 1985.

The Sight Word Recognition Test (SWRT) was scored over 100. Correct answers were scored "1" mark each while incorrect answers were scored "0" each. A range of 0-30 points was considered 'low', 31-70 was considered 'moderate' and 71-100 was considered as 'high'. The content validity of the instrument was determined and was subjected to five experts' judgment. to confirm the suitability of the test items for the target population

The instruments were tested for internal consistency using the Cronbach alpha method after they had been tried out during the pilot study. This measured the homogeneity of all the test items, ensuring that each of them measured the same common characteristics as the others (Kaplan & Saccuzo, 2005). The Cronbach Alpha method was also used to ensure the reliability of the instruments. The coefficient of stability obtained for the instrument was established for Sight word recognition skills (SWRS) .703.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher presented a letter of introduction signed by the researcher's supervisor to the head teacher of the primary school used for the study for permission and cooperation to carry out the study. After the consent, the researcher administered the test to the pupils. In addition, they kept a weekly record of the progress of the performance for both the experimental and control groups. Post-experimental tests was also conducted for both groups, after the application of the CLE method.

The researcher prepared the 100 HFWs on flash cards serially and the number of each card was written at the back of each card for identification. The researcher flashed each card starting with the first cards which were the simplest words on one-to-one basis. The pupil was asked to sit beside the researcher and was expected to read each card within 5 seconds. If the pupil said the word wrongly, the researcher put it on the table at the left hand side while those words that the pupil were able to read were put on the right hand side. The words were adopted because the pupils needed to know how to read these words before they begin to read effectively with meaning.

Data Analysis

The data from Research Question One was answered using percentages presented in bar graphs. The hypothesis was tested using independent-samples t-test and column graphs.

RESULTS

Research Question One

What will be the Primary One pupils' reading level in English sight words?
For sight vocabulary, the mean score was 0.08 points (0.08%) for the experimental group and 0.05 points (0.05%) for the control group out of the maximum obtainable 100 points representing (100%).

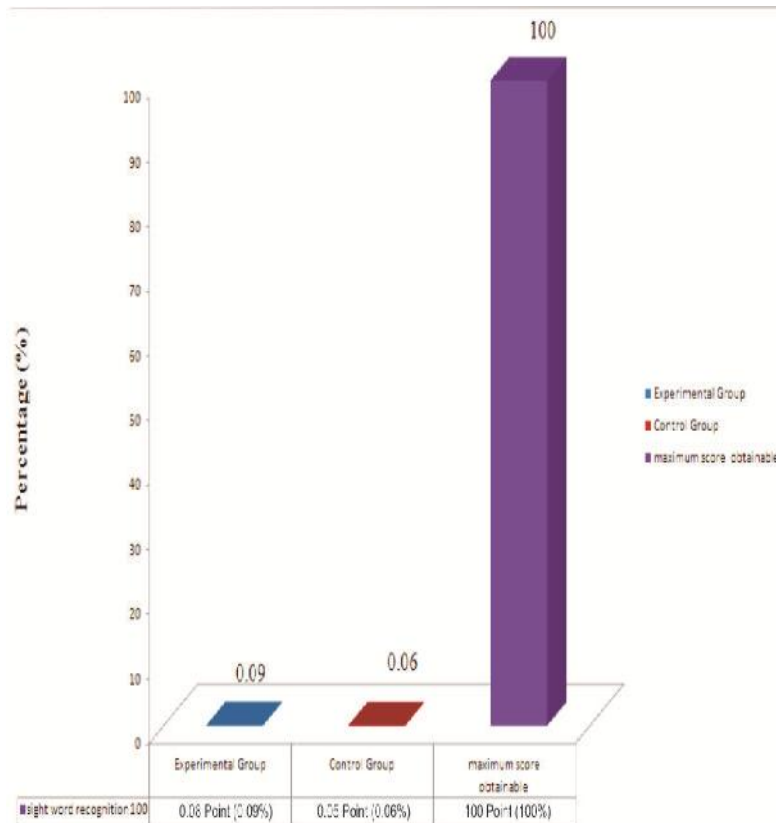


Figure 1: Pretest experimental group and pretest control group in sight word recognition skill.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant mean difference in English Sight Word Recognition skills achievement scores of pupils exposed to CLE and those not exposed to it.

Effect of Concentrated Language Encounter on Word Recognition Skills

To test this hypothesis, the post-test scores on the test of English Sight Word skills for the experimental and control groups were compared and subjected to a t-test to determine if the differences were significant. These results are shown below.

Table 1: Results of the independent sample of t--test analysis for sight vocabulary skills for experimental and control groups.

Group	N	X	Sd	df	t-cal	P-value
Experimental Group	35	68.80	12.53	68	28.50	0.000
Control Group	35	5.54	3.89			

The result revealed that for degree of freedom of 68 and level of significance at .05, with P. value of 0.000, the calculated t-test statistics is given at 28.50 which is greater than the P value of 0.05 level. Therefore the null Hypothesis Two was rejected. The result shows that Primary One pupils who received CLE treatment in the experimental group in literacy have significantly higher mean scores in the acquisition of sight vocabulary skills than the Primary One pupils in the control group who were not exposed to any treatment at all.

DISCUSSION

The results collected in respect of this study are discussed based on the one research question and hypothesis postulated for this study. Specifically the research question sought to determine the level of Primary One pupils from public Primary schools on sight word recognition skills, The hypothesis sought to determine the effect of using Concentrated Language Encounter (CLE) method in public Primary schools Sight Word Recognition skill of the pupils.

In answering the research question on reading levels of Primary One pupils before treatment using CLE, the pupils in the experimental and control groups were tested on their ability to read sight words from a list of 100 high frequency words, Generally their performance before intervention showed that they were non- readers. For example, on this test of 100 high frequency words, the group mean score of the pupils in the experimental group was 0.2 points (2%) while the group mean for the control group was 0.2 points (2%). Thus they were all non readers because according to Umolu's (1985) guidelines for identification of reading problems among Nigerian children, any pupil who reads less than 10 of the first 25 words during assessment is considered to be a non-reader.

The ability of a pupil to read the high frequency words shows the level of preparedness of the pupil which is crucial in beginning to learn to read meaningfully.

The study showed that the CLE method of teaching reading was effective in promoting the acquisition of English sight words among Primary One pupils. A look at Table 1 confirmed that the experimental group performed much better than the control group when post-tested on the assessment items. This appears to have been due to the fact that the pupils were exposed to different Phases of CLE that involved a series of print activities and story books. In addition, the beginning reading training programme involved activities and strategies that exposed the pupils to print and sight word recognition.

The findings of this study were in accordance with those of Rattanavich (2003) and Andzayi, Nengel, Deshe and Pyelshak (2003) where beginning readers were able to read after being exposed to CLE instructional activities. By selecting words from pupils' language experience stories and story books read to them to practice as sight words, pupils acquire some sight words. Similarly, exposing pupils to activities that expose them to identify words in isolation and in context using word-window cards serve to enhance the development of the sight word vocabulary of beginning readers (Davis, 2000; Oyetunde, 2002).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to develop beginning reading skills among Primary One pupils, using the Concentrated Language Encounter method and to evaluate its effectiveness in a rural primary school setting. The general findings from the pre-tests results showed that the Primary One pupils had not developed the beginning reading skills that would prepare them to begin to read. The mean score for word recognition for both the experimental and control groups, was 0.9% and 0.6 respectively. The results from the hypothesis also revealed that the CLE method is suitable for the development of sight word recognition skill among beginning readers in particular and the teaching of reading in general. This is because the primary one pupils showed significant gains in the development of sight word vocabulary (SWRT) after treatment.

The study yielded positive outcomes or results. The effectiveness of CLE method during treatment was confirmed by post-test performance of the group on the tested skill. The pupils responded positively to the treatment in classroom reading instructional activities.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. The use of Concentrated Language Encounter method of teaching reading was found to be effective in development of beginning reading skills in Primary One pupils in rural public schools in Cross

Effect of Concentrated Language Encounter on Word Recognition Skills

Rivers State. There was significant progress in the extent to which the Primary One pupils in the rural Primary schools who had not been exposed to any form of formal education acquired sight word vocabulary skill.

2. Concentrated Language Encounter method should be considered by the curriculum department in the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) in Cross River State as a strategy for early intervention in primary schools in order to enhance and prevent reading failure in the State. Concentrated Language Encounter method could be used in Primary One, with activities that will develop oracy, sight word vocabulary, print awareness, letter recognition, phono-phonemic awareness and comprehension skills, for meaningful literacy, for prevention of reading failure and even remediation of reading problems in the higher classes.

The contribution of this work to knowledge include the fact that Nigerian Primary school pupils in the rural areas are more disadvantaged in terms of preparatory instruction before the commencement of Primary One, either due to the economic status of the parents or to the prevalent poverty level of rural communities. The acquisition of beginning reading skills, can be adequately supported by Government policies through the Federal and State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) with the aggressive provision of requisite physical infrastructures in Nigerian primary schools. Such improvements in infrastructure, especially in the rural areas, would enhance the attainment of some of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Andzayi, C.A., P. Deshe, S.J. Nengel and D. Pyelshak (2003). Lesson learned from a Concentrated Language Encounter pilot project in Nigeria. In A. Arua, J. Umolu, T.O. Oyetunde, and C.E. Onukaogu (eds.), *Reading for all in Africa: Building Communities where literacy thrives*. (pp. 149-157). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Dahl, S. (1981). Oral language and its relationship to success in reading. In V. Frose & S.B. Straw (Eds.). *Research in the language arts: Language and schooling*. Baltimore, MA: University Park Press.
- Davis, C. (2000). Critically comments on his explanation as to why some schools in Britain perform better than others. Whyalla, S. A: Education and Teaching.
- Davis, M.J. (2000). *Reading and Literacy in New Mexico State*. Demarest: High
- Messina, A.M. (2007). *Reading Instructing that works: the case for balanced teaching* New York: the Guilford Press.

Emmanuel Uminya Ikwen

- Oyetunde, T. O. (2002). Second language reading: Insight from Nigerian primary school. *The Reading* 55 (8): 748-755.
- Rattavich, S. (1992). Concentrated Language Encounter teaching techniques in R. Walker, S. Rattavich, & J. W. Oker (Eds.). *Teaching all the pupils to read* (pp. 12-32). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Rattavich, S. (2003). Concentrated language encounter: A revolutionary approach to teaching literacy In A. Arua, J. Umolu, T. Oyetunde & C.E. Onukaogu (Eds), *Reading for all in Africa: Building communities where literacy thrives* (pp. 144-157). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Rosenberg, M. (2006). *Sound and letter time: Building phonemic awareness and alphabet recognition through purposeful play*. Haifa: The Gordon Teachers College.
- Time4Learning (2006). Learning reading comprehension skill. Retrieved July 26, 2007 from <http://www.time4learning.com/readingpyramid/comprehension.htm>
- Weaver, C. (2006). *Creating support for effective literacy education*. Michigan: Heinemann.