



Effects of Cloze Instructional Approach on Junior Secondary School Students' Achievement in English Reading Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to find out what effect cloze instructional approach as a technique for teaching reading comprehension has on students' reading comprehension achievement in English language using Owerri Educational Zone. The result of the study would be significant as it would provide basis for incorporating the cloze approach as a method of teaching reading comprehension. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to achieve the stated goal. A purposive sampling technique was used to sample 240 students in the area of study. Data for the study were collected using standardized achievement tests to be administered to two groups of students; the treatment and the conventional groups, Research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The result of the analysis showed that the cloze approach is more effective than the conventional method in enhancing students' achievement in English reading comprehension. Cloze approach has no differential effect on urban and rural students and so effective for both locations. Based on the result some recommendations were made.

INTRODUCTION

English language is a world or international language. It is spoken in many parts of the world. English is especially the language of science, technology and commerce. Thus English is as important to the scientist, economist, or technologist as it is to the administrator of government affairs. To be eligible and considered for white-collar job in Nigeria, you need English. The need for English then becomes unquestionable. The effect of this, according to Ene (2002) was a mass of people wanting to learn English not just for the pleasure or prestige of knowing it but because English is the key to international economics, technology, and commerce.

Therefore, the knowledge of English language is meant to enable all to understand and appreciate the world around us. One cardinal role of

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English is to help people to understand the social, political technological environment of others. In this regards, it creates a new group of learners who know especially why they are learning the language. Hence, Hutchinson and Waters (1987:6) stated that:

Businessmen and women who wanted to sell their products; mechanics who need to read manuals; doctors who needed to keep up with developments in their fields and a whole range of students whose courses of study included textbooks and journals only available in English...needed English, most importantly they know why they need it.

Thus, the researcher is of the view that, it is high achievement in reading comprehension through effective language teaching skills and methodology that can enhance the attainment of these desired roles. Comprehension allows the reader to use information. It is the key attribute to literacy. (National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003). This implies that reading is the key to education, from elementary stage to the most advanced stages. However, reading comprehension at the junior secondary school level in Nigeria is in a deplorable state (Egenege, 2002). An evidence of this is the high rate of decline in reading comprehension teaching as characterized by students' poor performance and candidates' failure to properly understand many positions of the set paragraph (Ayodele, 1989). This position reinforces the need for grammatical competence in the teaching of reading comprehension (Otagburuagu and Igbokwe, 2001). Research and evidence have shown that the conventional method of teaching reading comprehension is inadequate. These indications according to Otagburuagu and Igbokwe (2001) mandate a re-orientation in the methodology for teaching the reading skill.

Also, Bradshaw and Nichols (2004:11) comment: *'the higher the education level, the higher the reading rate, but over the years, reading among every group has declined.'* Admittedly, McFarland and Hamilton (2005:26) averred that: *'the decline in reading skills probably negatively impacts reading comprehension.'* All these go to a large extent to reveal that reading comprehension is a major problem that should be addressed without further delay (Ene, 2002:4). To this end, Taylor (1953) and Taylor (1956), as cited in Ene (2002), advocate that the 'cloze approach' could be useful in evaluation and in teaching of reading comprehension. Cloze procedure is a branch of Gestalt theory of closure in psychology founded by Max Wertheimer et al. in 1910(Encarta, 2008). Within this theory, the law of closure is very important. It shows the natural tendencies of human beings to perceive unfinished or incomplete figures as complete. This means that they fill in the gaps in broken patterns. In language, patterns are linguistic in nature. The man credited with being the first to design the new classic test called 'a cloze test' is Wilson Taylor in 1953 (Ene, 2002:6). According to her, he presented a cloze unit as any single occurrence of successful attempt to

reproduce accurately a part deleted from a passage by deciding from the context that remains what the missing part should be. Two types of the cloze exist- the fixed ratio type which involves the deletion of every nth word in a passage; (that is every 5th, 6th or 10th word). The deletion of every 5th word is the standard deletion. The other one is- the variable ratio type that involves the deletion of content words that are rich in or with meaning.

The above definition and explanations of the cloze is comprehensive as it alludes to the mode of application, ranging from assessing the readability of prose to the construction of institutional exercises for teaching remedial reading. Schoefeld (1980) and Borthnick and Leopardo (1976), contended that since the advance of cloze, emphasis on the cloze technique has exclusively been restricted to the estimation of the readability of the materials used for classroom instructions to measure reading comprehension. Evidence abounds that the cloze procedure has been recognized as a useful teaching technique and a tool used to encourage the use of contextual clues, strengthen vocabulary and encourage divergent production and to improve reading comprehension. Otagburuagu and Igbokwe (2001) equally recognize its importance as it helps student to draw information from a text while appreciating the grammatical structures. This suggests, therefore, that the cloze procedure is the fulcrum of effective reading comprehension. However, in spite of the sound commendations of the cloze procedure as a strategy to enhance reading comprehension, attempts to adopt and inculcate it into instructional processes were neglected (Schoefeild, 1980). This is so because, reading comprehension is largely being taught by inexperienced teachers.

Thus, the researcher argues that despite the fact that the recent renewed call for the introduction of the cloze procedure in teaching reading comprehension has been quite pronounced, its efficacy especially with junior secondary school students needs to be verified empirically.

Statement of the Problem

Reading comprehension at the junior secondary level is meant to facilitate the systematic development of two types of comprehension- listening and reading comprehension. It equally enhances and broadens the development of students' proficiency in English language generally. But reading comprehension teaching in Nigeria is beset with ineffectiveness due to lack of enriched techniques for teaching it. Hence, the problem of this study is, can the use of cloze approach enhance students' achievement in English reading comprehension? This is to say that the study is aimed at exploring the effect of the cloze procedure on junior secondary students' achievement in English reading comprehension, especially when location is considered as variables.

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Purpose of the Study

This study is aimed at:

- i. investigating the effect of the cloze procedure on students' achievement in reading comprehension as against the conventional method.
- ii. determining the reading comprehension abilities of urban and rural students taught reading comprehension using the cloze procedure.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study: -

- (i) What are the effects of cloze instructional approach and the conventional method to teaching reading comprehension on students' mean achievement in reading comprehension?
- (ii) Is there any difference in the mean achievement scores of urban and rural based students taught reading comprehension using the cloze procedure?

Hypotheses

- (i) There is no significant difference in the mean reading comprehension scores of students taught reading using the cloze procedure and those taught using the conventional method,
- (ii) There is no significant difference in the mean scores of urban and rural students taught reading comprehension using the cloze procedure.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The study used the quasi-experimental design, which involved one treatment group and one control group. It was deemed suitable for the study because it used standardized achievement tests of students to determine the effect of cloze instructional approach on junior secondary students' achievement in English reading comprehension in Owerri education zone.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Imo-State. Owerri education zone was used and this zone is made up of 9 local government areas;

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all junior secondary school students in the State Secondary Schools.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Two sampling techniques were used; stratified and simple random sampling. First the population was stratified into urban and rural schools. Out of the nine local government areas that make up the zone; six schools for the rural groups. Similarly, two schools for the urban groups, making a total of six schools.

Instrument for Data Collection

The data collection instrument was standardized achievement tests: one cloze test and one ordinary comprehension test. These two tests were administered to two sets of students; the treatment group who were given the cloze test and the conventional group who were given the ordinary comprehension test.

Data Analysis

All the two research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. An acceptance criterion mean of 2.50 was used for the research questions. The T-test statistics was used to test the two hypotheses at an alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS

Research Question 1:

Table 1: Mean Scores of Students' Achievement in English Reading Comprehension using cloze approach and conventional method.

S/N	Cloze Approach = 120				Conventional = 20			
	Score Total	Mean	SD	Remark	Score Total	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	457	3.81	0.45	Effective	309	2.57	1.07	Effective
2.	437	3.64	0.71	Effective	345	2.88	0.84	Effective
3.	430	3.58	0.74	Effective	286	2.38	1.08	N/Effective
4.	419	3.49	0.81	Effective	268	2.23	1.42	N/Effective
5.	435	3.63	0.60	Effective	293	2.44	1.07	N/Effective
Total		18.1	3.3			12.5	5.4	

The data displayed on table 1 above indicate that the mean scores of students taught reading comprehension using the cloze approach are: 3.81, 3.64, 3.58, 3.49, and 3.63 while those taught with the conventional method are: 2.57, 2.88, 2.38, 2.23, and 2.44 respectively. This indicates that the cloze approach which has a grand mean of 18.15 and standard deviation of 3.31 as against the conventional method with a grand mean of 12.55 and a standard deviation of

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5.49 is more effective in enhancing students' achievement in English reading comprehension.

This is inferred from the fact that all the individual means of the scores in the cloze approach met the acceptance criteria mean of 2.50 used the research questions.

Research Question 2

Table 2: Mean Scores of Students' Achievement on the Effect of Cloze Approach due to School Location.

S/N	Cloze Approach=120				Conventional = 20			
	Score Total	Mean	SD	Remark	Score Total	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	428	3.57	0.79	Effective	353	2.94	1.41	Effective
2.	427	3.56	0.87	Effective	369	3.08	1.01	Effective
3.	423	3.53	0.85	Effective	362	3.02	1.07	Effective
4.	428	3.57	0.84	Effective	375	3.13	1.10	Effective
5.	407	3.39	0.98	Effective	362	3.02	1.17	Effective
Total		17.62	6.08			15.19	5.49	

The summary of the data in table 3 shows that there is no difference in the mean reading comprehension scores of urban and rural students taught reading comprehension using the cloze approach, owing to the fact that their mean scores are all greater than the acceptance mean of 2.50 used in the analysis.

Analysis Based on Hypotheses

In this section, the three hypotheses were tested at an alpha level of 0.05 using the T-test statistics. Within this analysis, the decision rule for accepting or rejecting the null hypotheses is: Reject H_0 if t -calculated is greater than t -tabulated and accepts the alternative if t -calculated is less than or equal to t -tabulated.

Hypothesis 1

Table 3: Difference in the mean reading comprehension scores of students on the effect of cloze approach and conventional method

Group	N	Df	Mean	SD	T_{cal}	T_{tab}	Alpha Level
Cloze	120	238	18.15	3.31	3.81	2.09	0.05
Conventional	120		12.55	5.49			

From table 3 above, the calculated T value is 3.81 while the tabulated T value is 2.09 tested at an alpha level of 0.05. Owing to the decision rule, since t -calculated is greater than t -tabulated, the null hypothesis (H_0) is therefore rejected and the alternative accepted. Thus, there is a significant

difference in the mean reading comprehension scores of students taught reading comprehension using the cloze approach and those taught using the conventional method.

Hypothesis 2

Table 4: Difference in the mean reading comprehension scores of urban and rural students taught using the cloze approach.

Group	N	Df	Mean	SD	T _{cal}	T _{tab}	Alpha Level
Urban	120	238	17.62	6.08	1.29	2.09	0.05
Rural	120		15.19	5.49			

From table 4 above, t-calculated is 1.29 while t-tabulated is 2.09 at an alpha level of 0.05. Since t-calculated is less than t-tabulated and owing to the decision rule stated above, the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, the achievement of student in English reading comprehension is not affected by the location of their schools.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study have shown the effect of cloze approach and conventional method on students' achievement in reading comprehension, as presented on table i, the result indicated that cloze approach is more effective in enhancing their achievement than the conventional method. This is indicative of the fact that each of the individual mean scores met in the cloze approach met the acceptance criterion mean of 2.50 used in the analysis of the research question. On the test of hypothesis presented on table iii, there was significant difference in the mean reading comprehension scores of students taught with cloze approach and those taught with conventional method. And owing to the fact that the calculated t- value is greater than the tabulated t- value, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted that there is a significant difference in their mean reading scores of those taught with cloze and those taught with conventional method. In another view, the result revealed that language behaviour for which reading comprehension belongs is better perceived as wholes rather than as parts.

This result is not surprising because it is consistent with Ene (2002) earlier argument in favour of cloze approach. Her argument came from Gestalt theoretical consideration which emphasized that learning takes place faster when the whole situation in question is perceived. This theoretical consideration of the Gestaltists is also in consonance with Ruth (2004) view that cloze exercises enable students to relate parts of the passage to whole and come to value how context clues help to determine the best word choice that facilitates understanding.

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By this finding, it is clear that though achievement of students taught reading comprehension using the conventional method is not all that poor; the obvious is that cloze approach seemed to be superior. This is because the ability to close the gaps in a passage invariably depends on the ability to make genuine analysis of the basic concepts in the passage so as to form a conceptual whole that determines the general clarity of the passage (Ene, 2002),

The influence of school location on the mean achievement scores of students taught reading comprehension using the cloze approach. Summary of the result showed that school location did not affect the performance of students taught with cloze approach. This is drawn from the fact that each of the individual mean scores met the acceptance criterion mean of 2.50 used in the analysis. Table iv . For the test of hypothesis also revealed no significant difference in the achievement of urban and rural students taught with cloze approach.

This finding is hinged on the premise that though urban students may be more exposed than their rural counterparts, perceptions are still environmentally independent on school location. This finding has therefore contradicted Onyehalu (1991) insistence that environment exerts differential effects on students' achievement. This is because according to him, students in the urban settings are more exposed to modern day life and as such acquire more knowledge and experience than their rural counterparts.

Also, the findings of this study have failed to agree with Ene (2002) argument in favour of cloze having differential influence on urban and rural students. The implication of her argument is that urban students are better disposed to a wide range of perceptions and so stand a better chance to perform better than rural students. But the result of this study has shown that cloze approach is effective for use in both locations, be it urban or rural, contrary to the arguments of the above mentioned researchers.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the effects of cloze approach on junior secondary school students' achievement in English reading comprehension. It focused on the influence of variable such as school location on the achievement of students taught using the cloze approach. The result indicated that cloze approach is more effective than the conventional method in enhancing students' achievement in English reading comprehension; and that the location of the schools does not influence the reading comprehension achievement of urban and rural students taught using the cloze approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) There should therefore be a review in the current instructional procedure to accommodate the cloze into junior secondary teaching

syllabus, so as to reduce the recurrent mass failure in English which is a result of poor foundation laid at the junior secondary level.

- (ii) Construction of cloze items is different from that of ordinary comprehension. As result of this, English language teachers should be trained and versed on how best to develop and use the cloze approach so as to achieve its aim of enhancing performance.
- (iii) Teachers should not teach in isolation, rather, methods such as the cloze approach should be adopted each time reading comprehension is to be taught.
- (iv) Relevant educational and non- governmental agencies should sponsor competitions amongst male and female students; urban and rural students in our secondary schools so as to further enhance competitive tendencies in them

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