EFFECTIVENESS OF USING STOP, THINK AND TALK ACTIVITIES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN READING COMPREHENSION IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY (FCT) ABUJA, NIGERIA[i]

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Abstract:

The study was carried out to determine the effect of stop, think and talk activities on the performance of students in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. The study was carried out using a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest research design. The target population of the study comprised of 16,925 JSII students. A sample size of 100 JSII students from two secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, were purposely sampled in the study. Sixty five (65) students from Government Junior Secondary School, Apo and thirty five (35) from Government Junior Secondary School, Garki were used for the study. Both groups of students were taught for six (6) weeks. Government Junior Secondary School, Apo was assigned as the experimental group while Government Junior Secondary School, Garki was assigned as the control school. Students were pre-tested to establish their homogeneity before the commencement of the treatment. They were taught for six (6) weeks and were tested using retelling test as an instrument. Data collected from students' test scores was analysed using mean and standard deviation, while t-test was used to test the formulated null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that "stop, think and talk" activities had significant effect on students' performance in reading comprehension. In fact, the experimental group which was exposed to stop, think and talk activities had better understanding of the reading comprehension passages given to them. The result further revealed that students in experimental group were more active, responsive and paid

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more attention to details concerning the main ideas in the passages read. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers should be encouraged to use "stop, think and talk" activities in reading comprehension lessons. Such activities should be provided before, during and after every reading comprehension passage to enhance and facilitate students' reading abilities. Curriculum planners should provide activities that would encourage students to "stop, think and talk" to make reading comprehension lesson more purposeful and meaningful.

Keywords: reading, comprehension, performance, activities, effectiveness

1. Introduction

Comprehension is intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between texts and readers. It is a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience (Pardo, 2004). Comprehending a text involves two phases, that is, construction and integration. In phase one of this process, the reader constructs meaning from text and in the second phase integrates this newly constructed knowledge into the existing prior knowledge network. Reading is a crucial form of communication through which the information required in teaching and learning situations and in everyday life can be acquired (Adeniji, & Omale, 2010). The teaching of reading needs to include a range of comprehension strategies. Although learning to translate letters into words is extremely important. Comprehension strategies involve the mental processes that good readers use to understand text (Yusuf, 2009).

There are various factors militating against the effective teaching and learning of reading comprehension in schools. Researchers (Yusuf 2016, 2013, Oyetunde 2009) have shown in their researches conducted in Nigeria, that poor methodology is one of the main causes of children's reading failure. According to them, children are failing to learn to read because they are not being taught reading in any meaningful way. Oyetunde and Unoh cited in Adeniji and Omale (2010) highlighted some impediments to positive reading habits and attitude. These include lack of materials, poor preparation of teachers, lack of interest, poor libraries or none at all, home background, poor method of teaching and lack of adult readers as models. Hence, teachers are always in search of enhanced methods of reading comprehension. Many children in Nigeria do not have the foundational skills such as word recognition, vocabulary development, and prior experiences that are considered necessary to connect text with meaning (Yusuf 2013, 2016). All of the foregoing have necessitated the need to

constantly carry out researches to find possible solutions to the perennial reading problems of children in Nigeria. It is against this background that this study was undertaken.

2. Background to the Study

Stop, think and talk activities are time-tested. These teaching strategies have been used for years to help students learn how to monitor their own thinking (Wilhelm, 2001). The stop, think and talk strategy helps students monitor their thinking and understanding of the text. This helps to improve students' comprehension. As they think aloud, they internalize what they are saying, which helps them learn. To begin, the teacher must model this strategy by orally communicating what they are thinking as they read. As teacher reads the text, she/he stops at certain points that may be confusing or challenging for students. Allow time for students to practice asking questions to themselves as they read the text. This can be done individually, with a partner, or in a small group.

Stop, think and talk activities are practical and relatively easy for teachers to use within the classroom. Teachers are able to model the stop, think and talk activities and discuss how good readers often re-read a sentence, read ahead to clarify, and/or look for context clues to make sense of what they read. Stop, think and talk activities slow down the reading process and allow students to monitor their understanding of a text (Wilhelm, 2008). Stop, think and talk activities help students learn to monitor their thinking as they read an assigned passage (Ann & Friedman, 2017). Students are directed by a series of questions which they think about and answer aloud while reading. This process reveals how much they understand a text. As students become more adept at this technique they learn to generate their own questions to guide comprehension.

Teaching reading comprehension using the stop, think and talk activities start with the listening, following directions, asking for help, ignoring distractions, and dealing with teasing skills and then move to other skills that students need to master (Wilhelm, 2001). As students continue to learn and use the skills in the stop and think activities, they will be able to make more good choices, more easily and more independently. Over time, they will become more effective self-managers, which can promote their comprehension reading skill. Although the use of stop, think and talk activities is widespread, existing quantitative research evidence for its effectiveness is limited. In view of this, further investigation is needed to determine its effectiveness in

teaching reading comprehension. Therefore, this study was carried out to determine the effect of stop, think and talk activities on students' performance in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja.

3. Review of Related Literature

Teaching strategies are important only if they assist readers to comprehend and respond to text. In other words, stop, think and talk activities are a useful strategy when they help a reader through their zone of proximal development, assisting students to develop a particular strategy or set of strategies that student can yet use independently, and when these strategies help student to engage with a text important to their current purposes. Reading is more than just decoding, or sounding out words (Clum, 2005). Reading is also thinking about the words so as to understand them. A good reader for instance, thinks to understand what they are reading.

Comprehension is the understanding and interpretation of what is read. To be able to accurately understand written material, children need to be able to (1) decode what they read; (2) make connections between what they read and what they already know; and (3) think deeply about what they have read (Readingrockets.com, 2016). Reading comprehension according to Reading Study Group (2002) involves four components: (1) the reader, (2) the text, (3) the activity, and (4) the situational context. The first three essential components that is, the reader, the text, and the task occur within the fourth component of reading comprehension—the situational context. The reader is the one doing the comprehending, and the text is the reading material (such as, stories, nonfiction selections, and so forth). The activity refers to what kind of comprehension task, skill, strategy, or concept the reader is attempting to perform (such as, discovering the author's main idea, understanding a sequence of events, thinking about a character's intent in a story, and so forth).

The situational context of reading comprehension can be thought of in at least two ways. First, the actual setting where reading occurs at home, in a school classroom, the library, under a blanket at bedtime and so forth, affects how well one comprehends while reading. There is little doubt that children's reading comprehension is influenced by the setting in which they read (for instance, reading alone at home than if called on to read during a class activity could make children feel more focused and relaxed). Second, there is a social context associated with reading comprehension. In some cases, reading comprehension occurs individually. In other cases, however, reading comprehension can be part of a vibrant social activity in which people, teachers,

parents, and children, read a text together and jointly construct meaning through discussion. Lively interaction about a text in the company of others seems to be the optimal situational context to enhance students' reading comprehension (Beck, & McKeown, 2006).

The stop, think and talk process is simple as the teacher verbalizes what she/he is thinking then reads or figures out a problem. In turn, students get a glimpse into the mind of a skilled reader or problem solver. A classic study by Bereiter and Bird cited in Nell and Pearson (2000) showed that students who were asked to stop and think while reading had better comprehension than students who were not taught to stop and think according to a question and answer comprehension test. Effective teachers have been using this method for decades, as they model what they are thinking, so students can understand the process of how skilled readers can construct meaning from the text.

Initially, the teacher reads the selected passage as the students read the same text silently. At certain points the teacher stops and "thinks aloud" answers to some of the pre-selected questions (Howard, 2001; Ortlied & Norrris, 2012). Teachers should demonstrate how good readers monitor their understanding by re-reading a sentence, reading ahead to clarify, and/or looking for context clues. Students then learn to offer answers to the questions as the teacher leads the stop, think and talk activities, students become familiar with the stop, think and talk process, they may work individually or in small groups. Teachers may choose to have students write down responses to the stop, think and talk activities which provide a record of learning.

4. Objective of the Study

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the effect of stop, think and talk activities on students' performance in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Nigeria

4.1 Research Question
What is the effect of stop, think and talk activities on students' performance in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja?

4.2 Research Hypothesis
There is no significant difference in the effect of stop, think and talk activities on students' performance in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja.

5. Methodology

The study was carried out using a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest research design. The target population of the study is sixteen thousand nine hundred and twenty five (16,925) JSII students. A sample size of one hundred (100) JSII students from two secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, were purposely sampled in the study. Sixty five (65) students from Government Junior Secondary School, Apo and thirty five (35) from Government Junior Secondary School, Garki were used for the study. Government Junior Secondary School, Apo was assigned as the experimental group while Government Junior Secondary School, Garki was assigned as the control school. Students were pre-tested to establish their homogeneity before the commencement of the treatment. The experiment lasted for six (6) weeks before students were tested using retelling test as an instrument. Data collected from students' test scores were analysed using mean and standard deviation, while t-test was used to test the formulated null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

5.1 Treatment
- Teacher encourages students to set a purpose for reading.
- Teacher motivates students to activate their background knowledge by asking relevant previous knowledge questions.
- Teacher guides students to stop, think and talk to their brains as they read the first paragraph of the reading comprehension passage.
- Teacher guides students by asking series of questions which they think about and answer aloud while reading.
- Teacher guide students to stop, think and talk to their brains as they read second, third and fourth paragraphs of the reading comprehension passage.
- Teacher encourages students to make themselves part of the story by visualizing and creating their own images in their brains as they engage in stop, think and talk activities.
- Teacher takes students back into the text to synthesize a coherent view of the text as a whole as they read through the passage from beginning to the end.
- Teacher guide students to make generalisations that goes beyond the text using stop, think and talk activities.
- Teacher encourages students to stop, think and talk to their brains as they read the passage all over again.

5.2 Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used to analyse the research question raised in the study. The analyses are presented as follows:

Research Question: What is the effect of stop, think and talk activities on students' performance in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja?

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on the effect of stop, think and talk activities on students' performance in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja

Method	N	Pre-test Scores		Post-test Scores	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Experimental Group	65	31.47	9.02	51.33	10.35
Control Group	35	30.48	9.88	31.50	6.94

Table 1 shows the effect of stop, think and talk activities on students' performance in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. The mean scores as displayed shows that students taught reading comprehension using stop, think and talk activities had a better performance mean scores in their pre-test and post-test. For instance, the mean score of students taught reading comprehension using stop, think and talk activities increased from 31.47 to 51.33 with corresponding standard deviation of 9.02 and 10.35, while the mean score of students in control group increased from 30.48 to 31.50 with standard deviation of 9.88 and 6.94 respectively. This shows the pre-test mean scores difference of 0.99 and post-test mean scores difference of 19.83. It also shows the mean gain of 19.86 for students in experimental group and mean gain of 1.02 for students in control group. The standard deviation at each level indicates that students' performance varied widely from each other.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the effect of stop, think and talk activities on students' performance in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja.

The post-test administered on students was marked, scored and tested using independent sample t-test. The summary of the analysis is presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Summary of Independent sample t-test on the effect of stop, think and talk activities on students' performance in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja

Method	N	Mean	SD	Df	α	t-cal	t-crit	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Experimental	65	51.33	10.35	98	0.05	5.96	1.96	.001	Rejected
Control	35	31.50	6.94						

Table 2 shows that the students taught reading comprehension using stop, think and talk activities performed far better than their counterparts in control group in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. The table show that the t-calculated value of 5.96 is greater than the t-critical 1.96, while the p-value is .001 (P<0.005). The null-hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the effect of stop, think and talk activities on students' performance in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja was rejected. The implication of this result is that the students exposed to stop, think and talk activities had better understanding of the reading comprehension passages given to them. In fact, students in the experimental group were more active, responsive and paid more attention to details concerning the main ideas in the passages read.

6. Discussion of Findings

This section briefly discussed the findings from the hypothesis tested in the study. Findings of the study revealed that the students taught reading comprehension using stop, think and talk activities performed far better than their counterparts in control group in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. Therefore, the null-hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the effect of stop, think and talk activities on students' performance in reading comprehension in junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja was rejected. This finding corroborates the findings of Ortlied and Norrris (2012) that the use of think-aloud helps to enhance students' abilities of the thinking process thereby facilitating their comprehension of reading task. It also allows readers to connect meaning and understanding with written texts.

7. Conclusion

Comprehension is a consuming, continuous, and complex activity, but one that, for good readers, is both satisfying and productive. Teaching reading comprehension using

stop, think and talk activities has been proven to be effective in this study. The use of stop, think and talk activities stimulates students thinking process, thereby, facilitating and enhancing their comprehension and thinking process. Based on the findings of this study, one can conclude that students exposed to stop, think and talk activities had better understanding of the reading comprehension passages given to them. Therefore, teachers can promote students' reading comprehension by engaging students in stop, think and talk activities.

8. Recommendations

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

1. Teachers should be encouraged to use "stop, think and talk" activities in reading comprehension lessons. Such activities should be provided before, during and after every reading task to enhance and facilitate students' comprehension.
2. Curriculum planners should provide activities that would encourage students to "stop, think and talk" to make reading comprehension lessons more purposeful and meaningful.

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