

Effective Approaches to the Teaching of Learning to Read and Reading to Learn: Nigeria Context

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Abstract. The paper examined effective approaches to the teaching of learning to read and reading to learn in Nigeria context. The article therefore defined the concept of reading in accordance to the stages involved, the belief, theories and those assumptions about issues in reading, methods of teaching learning to read, the content areas in reading was provided using sample modeling. It was concluded that for effectiveness of teaching learning to read and reading to learn in the school system, effective approaches relevant to the students' interest should be adopted. Relevant suggestions were also made to guide effective stages of approaches to teaching learning to read and reading to learn in the school system.

Keywords: Effective approaches, Teaching of learning to read, Reading to learn and Nigeria context.

1. Introduction

Reading begins as learning to read for every school-age child, but in order for the child to enjoy the benefits derivable from being able to read, the skill must evolve into reading to learn. According to Unoh (1969, p.1), learning to read becomes a progressive development of skills ranging from recognition of verbal symbols to the interpretation and evaluation of materials of great complexity. It's pertinent to stress at the beginning of this submission that any nation or a student or an individual that seeks relevance and

empowerment in today's society must take reading seriously. In the words of Oyetunde (2002), "No nation or an individual can rise or develop beyond the quality of his/her literacy level". In today's world of information communication technology, it is literacy that dictates what a nation, a student or an individual becomes.

The learner in today's world needs civic, global, financial and even health literacy. For example, the world is a global village now and it is only through literacy that the learner can be aware of that. However, one serious problem facing primary and even secondary education today is illiteracy. An alarming high percentage of primary and secondary school children are not learning to read, let alone reading to learn. Yet, one critical objective of primary education is to inculcate in children permanent literacy and the ability to communicate effectively. Children are failing to learn to read because they are not being taught reading in any meaningful way. Poor methodology is the main cause of children's reading failure. Many primary school teachers do not know how to teach reading. Some think that children develop reading skills immediately they enter school. This is not true. To be able to learn how to read and read to learn, teachers at the primary school especially need to make conscious effort to develop this all important skills in their learners.

According to Unoh as cited in Umolu (1999), reading is an indispensable tool of learning in the various hierarchies of modern education system. Even though it is possible at various rungs of educational ladder to get by without possessing advanced reading skills such as critical, creative, inferential and rapid reading skills, effective learning at schools and advanced educational institutes demand possession and application of at least the minimum skill required for specific reading task. The question is what then is reading? The answer to this question will go a long way in helping teachers to know how to teach reading of any kind.

2. The Concept Reading

Reading by definition is the ability to make sense of print, that is the ability to obtain information from printed or written page (Oyetunde, 2002). For Taiwo (2002, p. 36) reading involves word recognition, the decoding of marks on the page, comprehension and consideration of meaning from words and sentences. Here comes the duty of the teachers; teaching pupils and students, using effective and meaningful strategies to develop the ability to decode print. Meaning resides in print and it is only through proper teaching that the students or pupils could build the bridge between theirs and the writers.

Another question is what then does it mean to teach learning to read and reading to learn? It is important for the reading teaches at any educational level to ascertain the differences between these two concepts in order to help students read well. Learning to read means developing beginning reading skills from the scratch, that is, teaching children from letters of the alphabet, both in the upper and lower cases to two letter words and above. From here too, the teacher moves to teach phrase, clauses, sentences and bigger grammatical structures like paragraphs.

To teach beginning readers well, teachers need to do the following: Oral Language formation stage-oral language competence is the foundation of reading success. If we expects pupils to be able to read and write well in

English in a meaningful way, that is to express their experiences and feeling in the language orally. Activities such as story-telling and retelling, news on the board, debate etc. should be used to build their foundation. Print awareness stage: Teach pupils that the blank marks on the pages as of printed material are meaningful. Teach them that books communicate pieces of information which are enjoyable.

Another stage is word recognition stage, Here, help pupils to acquire what is called sight words. Sight words are individual words pupils can recognize instantly at sight. When a pupil recognizes a word, it means he can pronounce it and also knows its meaning for example names of human beings – Ojo, Ali, John etc, names of animals-goat, dog, horse, cat, rat etc. There is also the phono-phone mic stage. At this stage, pupils are helped to have understanding that letters represent sounds blended together. They are also taught to combine individual letter sounds and group sounds (syllable) to form words-phonics method that is being used today, mostly in the nursery and primary schools.

The last stage at this foundational level is the comprehension stage. All the previous activities are pointers to this stage. This is the stage where pupils are taught to use reading as a tool of learning. At the comprehension stage, they have passed the level of word recognition. Reading at this stage, emphasizes silent reading as against oral or loud reading. The ultimate goal of teaching reading and reading itself is comprehension if there is no comprehension during any reading exercise, then the reader is only “barking at print” which is also called “useless activity”.

3. Beliefs, Theories or Assumptions about Reading

Before delving into the issue of methods of teaching learning to read and reading to learn, it is important to discuss feelings of reading experts on what happens when a reader reads. These feelings or beliefs are what we call theories assumption, beliefs or models of reading, and there are three (3) major ones namely:

- Top down
- Bottom up
- Interactive.

These three beliefs formed the basis of the various methods of teaching of reading that exist in language teaching field. We shall examine them briefly one after the other.

Top down: The proponents of this theory believe that meaning resides in the reader's prior knowledge that the reader brings to bear on the passage. Their major argument is that the reader has experienced the world in various forms and his brain is not tabular rasa, so as he ploughs the reading material, he makes meaning based on his background experience which plays prominent role in the meaning making and meaning getting process.

Bottom up: The experts in this category asserted that the meaning a reader gets from any reading material depends on what is presented in the passage; adding that the reader's prior knowledge or background experience plays little or no role at all in the meaning making process. Their belief is that the reader has to process the material from the smallest linguistic unit to the biggest before making meaning.

Interactive model or theory: Experts who belong to this category argued that both the background experience and the text itself, that is what is presented in the text play important role in the meaning making and meaning getting process.

Implication of these theories in a nutshell is that the teacher of reading, either learning to read or reading to learn has to make use of methods or strategies that consider the learner's prior knowledge and what is presented in the text.

4. Methods of Teaching Learning to Read

As experts in education, there is the need to know that the crisis Nigeria is having in education generally and reading in particular is as a result of:

- Inadequate preparation of teachers.
- Poor methodology.

In the area of reading, reading experts such as Oyetunde (2017) believe that instructional practices for beginning readers are incoherent and confusing. This means if at the beginning of elementary education children are not well taught reading with appropriate methods, they are bound to become poor readers and poor readers will eventually become poor writers.

There is no one single best method of teaching reading but whatever method a teacher chooses to use must take into consideration the particular circumstance and the levels of the readiness of the children to be taught. However, there are two prominent basic methods of teaching learning to read (in order words beginning readers). These are the Phonics method and the whole language method.

The Phonics method: This general approach was advocated as early as the 1700s in French Jansenist and port Royal Schools. The idea behind the method grouped together as phonics method is to teach the individual letters by the sounds they make-not by their conventional names and then to induce children to blend these sounds together in new letter combinations. The phonics method is sometimes called "sound emphasis methods". It seeks to teach children right early that a written word is composed of letters or letter groups and a spoken word or speech is made up of a series of individual sounds. The method encourages children to begin reading through auditory training, that is training their ears to recognize the sounds of letters and associate these sounds with the shapes of the letters in written form. This is carried over to the association of the letters and the sound with specific words which they learn in the process.

The phonics method teaches children to "sound out" new words. Here, they first learn what a letter stands for, and then to associate the sound/letter to specific words. For example when they have been taught to recognize and pronounce the letters f, p, t, b, m, s, d, etc and then they are introduced to the short vowels a, e, I, o, u, they could be led to combine letters to form words, for example fat, fit, mat, met, bat, bet, bit, but etc. in this way they are led to creatively form words on their own and be able

to say which letters to combine to arrive at such words. Teachers here simply write consonant sounds and tell the children to fill them up to form words. This can be done in their exercise books after they have mastered the practice.

The process encourages the children to acquire an automatic recognition of the letters and their respective sounds. They merely need to see the letter flashed to them and they would be able to pronounce these, almost on an automatic basis. The advantage of this method is that children learn the sounds of the letters and then associate one with the other.

Whole Language method: This is another very effective method of teaching children how to read.

According to (Oyetunde, 2009), the term whole language as used in the reading method refers to any reading method that begins with such meaningful units of language as words, sentences or stories. That means it does not begin with sounds. There are two common forms of the whole language method- Look and say method and whole sentence method. Look and say method is the one by which children learn to recognize a word by sight after being exposed to it a number of times. In this way, children more or less memorize it without knowing the letters that make up the word. This method helps children to build a bank of sight words.

Whole sentence is like look and say except that children are exposed to an entire sentence and they tend to memorize the sentence after seeing it a number of times.

The sentence is usually accompanied by a picture, for example a picture of a cat running and a sentence is written below to show what the animal is doing. The advantages include-encouraging children to begin to write early, it gets them to be involved in connected printed material rather than to letters for long before connecting the letters to form words. The weakness of this method is that children never acquire full phonics foundation. They cannot decode unfamiliar words. However, the advantages far out-weigh the disadvantages.

Other methods of teaching and learning beginning reading skills include the following:

Language Experience Approach (LEA) – Language experience approach (LEA) is similar to NOB in many respects, the only difference is that the experiences or stories the children dictate follow a particular theme or order. In language experience approach, children are encouraged to talk about their interests and experiences. The goal of this literally activities in this approach is meaning making from personal perspective and instruction is designed to help children express themselves clearly.

Literacy Awareness Programme (LAP) – This is a language activity which involves having an adult read interesting stories aloud to children every day. This generates an interest in reading. It develops children’s listening skills and introduces them to book language. According to Oyetunde (2009), LAP as a beginning reading method helps pupils to demonstrate awareness that print is meaningful and they do that by stating what they like about the story and what it teaches them.

Not only that, it improves their attention span since they have to listen to story from the beginning to end. In addition, this approach improves pupils’ listening and speaking skills and their knowledge of left to right sequencing will be demonstrated.

News On The Board (NOB) - News on the board involves asking children to share their news or experiences in the class, and the teacher writes some of the news on the board to read with the children. This activity is an excellent way to let the children see that writing is speech written down. It is important to bear the following features of NOB in mind.

The news is a daily activity in which the current information and the day of the week is recorded. The current news items make up the second part of the news on the board. These news items are dictated by the pupils and do not follow any sequence or theme. The teacher simply asks pupils to share recent event happenings or experiences of special interest to them (Obot, Ntukidem, Oko & Ansa, 2001; Oyetunde, 2009& Adekwu, 2010).

Here is an example of a day’s News on the Board.

Mary said, “My mother travelled to Lagos”.

John said, “I saw a cow on my way to school”.

Ade said, “I saw a dead dog in the street”.

Obi said, “My father bought a new car”.

Having seen the various methods of teaching learning to read, we shall also discuss briefly how to teach reading to learn.

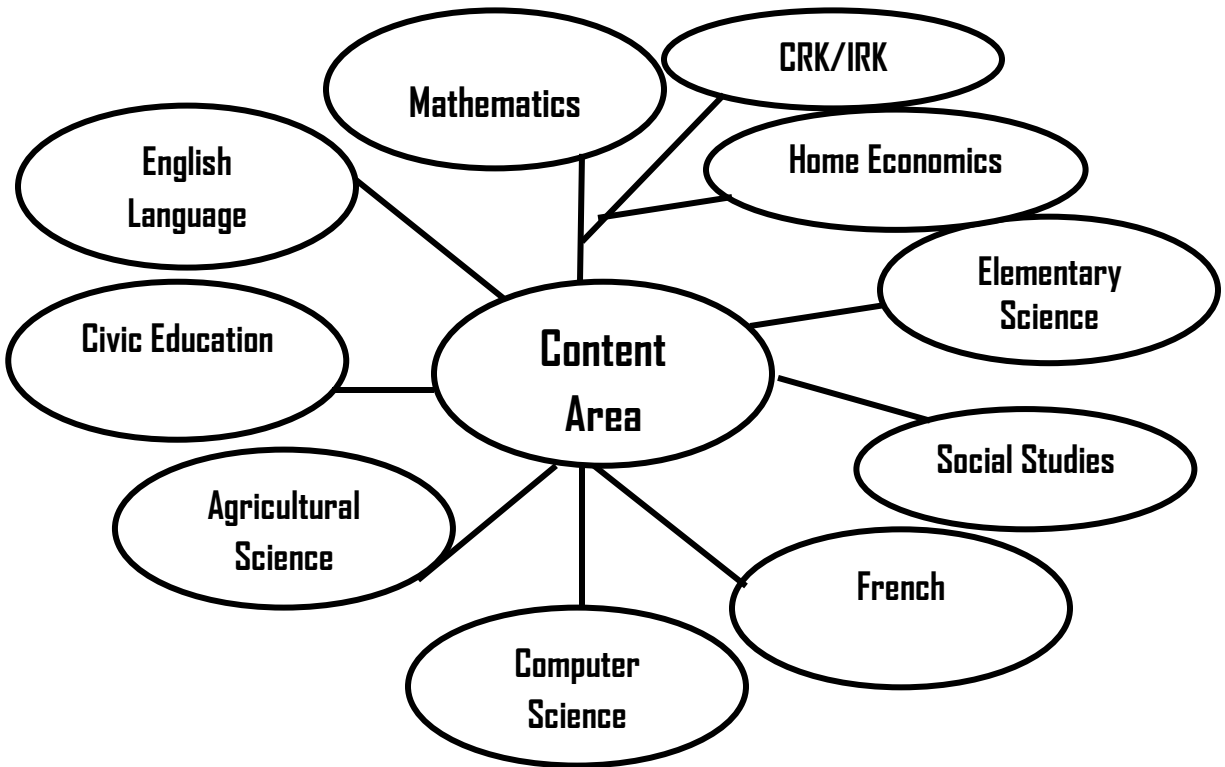
5. Teaching Reading to Learn

Teaching reading to learn or reading in the content area or subject areas refers to the same thing as teaching in the school subjects. There is no specific definition of content area reading instructional programme. Its purpose however, is to help students locate, comprehend

and retrieve information as expressed in different styles of writing (Isiugo-Abanihe in Andzayi & Omolu, 2004).

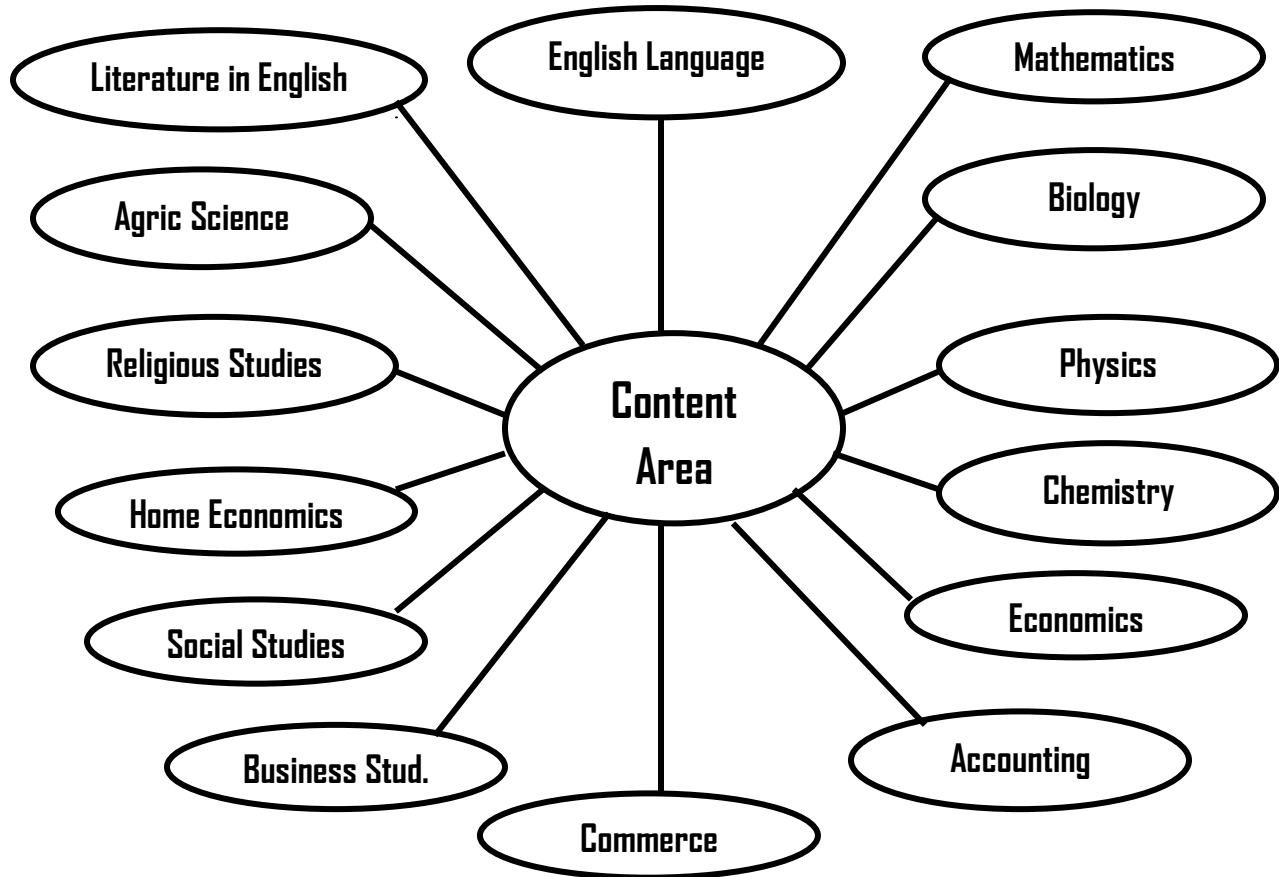
Content analysis or reading to learn are practices and philosophies of content analysis that varies between scholarly communities (Wikipedia, 2017). Reading to learn also involves activities educators and instructors of reading can use to help with reading strategies in specific content areas and disciplines. Study the following diagrams:

At the Primary School level, the content area reading includes reading in these subjects:



Source: Author made chart in line with Primary school curriculum

At the Secondary School level, the content area reading includes reading in these subjects:



Source: Adapted from Guidance and counseling career chart 2017

At the Tertiary/University level, content area reading includes all the professional courses. They include: Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, Education, Engineering, Accounting to mention but a few.

Since English is the medium of instruction in Nigeria, it is the duty of the reading teacher or English teacher to teach the students all these expository texts using appropriate methods. By grouping all the content area subjects can be classified into the following:

- Maths
- Social Sciences
- Sciences and
- Arts

One thing a content area reading teacher should know is to struggle to identify the text type of each reading material. Diverse content area reading texts could be narrative, descriptive,

argumentative, expository to mention but a few – (see Anyebe, 2011 Fundamentals of Literature for Schools and Colleges, A Complete Guide for details).

Also, adapt SQ3R OR SQ4R method and QAR strategy in teaching reading to learn. SQ3R means = Survey, Question, Read, Review and Recite or Survey, Question, Read, Review, Recite and Recall.

Another method is the QAR which is used to teach all levels of comprehension
 Q – Where is the answer?
 Right there
 Words are right there, in one place, in the text)
 (Literal level of comprehension)
 Q – Where is the answer?
 Think and search

Words are in the text, in more than one place)
literal level

Q – Where is the answer?

Author and you

Use what is in the text and what is in your head
– (infer interpretive level of comprehension)
(use your background knowledge)

Q – Where is the answer?

On your own

Answer is in your head – (critical or evaluative
level of comprehension)

More importantly, the teacher of reading to learn
should make use of pre-reading activities in all
his/her lessons. Learn to arouse the students’
interest by activating their background – what
you think they know about the passages to be
read.

6. Conclusion

There is the need to give priority attention to the
subject of teaching learning to read and reading
to learn in our schools. This is because the
importance of helping students to master these
all important skills cannot be over stressed. The
mastery of these skills influences greatly the
extent to which students make sense of school
and societal activities. From the submission in
this paper, no single method is sufficient.
Consequently, teachers are advised to employ all
available strategies such as the ones discussed
here to ensure students entrusted into their hands
acquire adequate reading skills that will make
them proficient in English Language. This will
make them participate competently in global
economy which in turn would boost their all-
round development.

7. Suggestions

Based on the issues raised in this paper, the
following suggestions are made:

- Teach children oral language skills
before literacy skills.
- Set goal and purpose for each reading
lesson.
- Teach reading readiness skills before
reading to learn skills.

- Teach them using appropriate strategies,
how to retrieve explicitly and implicitly
stated information from print.
- Teach vocabulary development skills.
- Use pre-reading activities to arouse
children’s interest before the actual
reading.

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