

## The effect of extensive reading on students' performance in reading comprehension and summary writing

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### Abstract

The paper investigated the effect of extensive reading on students' performance in reading comprehension and summary writing in two selected senior secondary schools in Azare, Bauchi State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were used for the research. A sample of 120 students was grouped into two, control and experimental groups in order to find out if there is any significant difference between the performances of the students at the pre-test and post-test levels. Treatment was given to the experimental group in form of reading some selected articles from newspapers and magazines while the control group involved in normal classroom reading comprehension passages. The findings show that there was a significant difference in the performance of students in reading comprehension test but there was no significant difference in the performance of students in summary writing test. Recommendations were given based on the findings of the study such as encouraging students to read articles in newspapers and teachers should involve students in reading competitions in order to improve their reading comprehension.

**Keywords:** extensive reading, reading comprehension, summary writing, students' performance

### Introduction

In Nigeria, English is the official language and as such, it continues to be widely used as a medium of instruction at all levels of education. That is, primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions. It is a compulsory core subject that must be offered and passed at all levels of education in the country's educational system. Because of the importance attached to it as the basic language of formal education in the country, the teaching and learning of the language is given prominence in terms of daily period allocation at the primary and secondary school levels. Despite this fact, many educationalists have lamented over the students' poor performance in English in Nigerian schools, especially at the secondary school level. Tunde-Awe (2014) [12] reveals that the persuasive and consistent failure in internal or public examination could be traced, largely to the absence of reading culture. Similarly, Ojo (2003) [9] and Ape (2013) [11] found out that one of the major causes of students' poor performance in English and other school subjects is their inability to read effectively, which in turn, is largely due to attitudes of learners toward reading. Ihejirika (2011, p. 212-213) has this to say on the attitudes of students towards reading:

*A good number of contemporary Nigerian students give much time to frivolities at the expense of more rewarding activities such as extensive reading. For instance, many of them are in the habit of watching home video films most of the time to the extent that they have little or no time for other useful academic activities. For others, even their handsets are source of distraction as they prefer fondling them all the day long at the expense of more rewarding activities.*

Most students in the secondary schools today have found themselves in this ugly situation as a result of which they hardly pay attention to reading books outside the classroom. One of the aims of language teaching in Nigerian schools as contained in

the English language syllabus by Federal Ministry of Education FME (1985) [3] for junior and senior secondary English Language is to stimulate love for reading as a pleasurable activity. This therefore calls for the development of extensive reading in the schools. Olaofe (2013) [11] suggest that to develop extensive reading ability, teachers should use reading to facilitate speaking, listening, writing, grammatical skills and vocabulary development.

Extensive reading programme requires students to read a wide variety of text materials from different fields in the target language. Bell (2001) [2] asserts that extensive reading is an effective reading activity that help learners to increase their reading speed and comprehension skills. Grabe and Stoller (2002) [4] consider this type of reading as the one that exposes learners to large quantities of materials within their linguistic competence. Students' exposure to such reading materials will provide them the opportunity to develop their communicative competence in English and also make them educationally sound in other subjects (Obanya, 2002) [8]. Similarly, Nuttal (1996) [7] pointed out two reasons for learners to be involved in extensive reading. The first reason is that extensive reading is the easiest and most effective way of improving the reading skills of students. The second reason is that being an educational tool, extensive reading not only serves a favourable climate for the students, but also provides them with enjoyment. As a result, students will acquire a desired progress in developing other language skills. Research evidences have also shown that extensive reading and achievement in English are closely related. Students who read independently, become better readers, score higher on achievement test in all subject areas, and have greater content knowledge than those who do not (Krashen, 1989) [6].

### Statement of the Problem

The performance of students in English, especially in reading

comprehension and summary writing has been very poor in recent years. Most students find it difficult to comprehend a reading passage. The West African Examination Council (WAEC), chief examiner’s reports (2007) indicate that students find it difficult to read and understand comprehension passages and that usually affect their performance negatively. Similarly, in summary writing, students end up copying both relevant and irrelevant points in attempt to answer summary questions. These reports generally reveal that most of the candidates who wrote the examination show evidence of lack of understanding of the content of the set reading comprehension and summary passages.

It is expected that at the secondary school level, students should be able to read effectively and comprehend passages given to them as well as engage in summarizing what they have read. Umolu (1997) [13] asserts that students at the senior secondary school level are expected to comprehend a variety of expository text types, to develop study and information gathering skills, as well as higher level of comprehension skills for better performance in their public examinations. However these skills are largely not acquired because most students have poor reading habits to tackle the texts. Thus, the need arises for determining the effect of extensive reading on students’ performance in reading comprehension and summary writing.

**Objective**

The main objective of this study is to find out the effect of extensive reading on students’ performance in reading comprehension and summary writing at the senior secondary school in Azare, Bauchi state, Nigeria. The study was specifically aimed at finding out whether reading of different articles selected from newspapers and magazines could improve the performance of students in reading comprehension and summary writing at the senior secondary school level.

**Research Questions**

1. What is the difference between the mean performance of students involved in extensive reading and those that participated in normal reading comprehension at the pre-test and post-test levels?
2. What is the difference between the mean performance in summary writing of students involved in extensive reading and those that participated in normal reading comprehension?

**Hypothesis**

1. There is no significant difference between the mean performance in reading comprehension of students involved in extensive reading and those that participated in normal reading comprehension.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean performance in summary writing of students involved in extensive reading and those that participated in normal reading comprehension.

**Methodology**

This study was an experimental research in which pre-test, post-test experimental, control group design was adopted. The population of the study comprises of all the senior secondary schools in Azare metropolis of Bauchi state, Nigeria. Out of it, a sample of one hundred and twenty senior secondary school students was selected using a simple random sampling. The

sample comprised of both males and females students from the selected schools. The participants were randomly assigned to two equal groups (N=60): experimental and control group. Treatment was given to the experimental group in terms of extensive reading on articles selected from newspapers and magazines while the control group participated only in normal reading comprehension passages based on traditional structural grammatical approach for six weeks before the post test. The instrument of data collection comprises of two passages with questions on reading comprehension and summary writing adopted from senior secondary school certificate examinations past questions in English language. The data was analysed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistical technique.

**Results**

The results of the findings were presented in tables with their mean (x) and standard deviation according to each research question and hypothesis.

**Research Questions 1:** What is the significant difference between the mean performance of students involved in extensive reading and those that participated in normal reading comprehension at the pre-test and post-test level?

**Table 1:** Mean scores performance of students in pre-test and post-test levels.

Group		No	Mean	Sd
Experimental	pre- test	60	4.43	2.58
	Post-test	60	6.94	1.85
Control	pre-test	60	4.53	2.68
	Post-test	60	6.72	2.33

Table 1 above shows the performance mean scores and standard deviation of experimental group and control group at the pre-test and post-test levels in the reading comprehension test. The performance mean and standard deviation scores for experimental group at the pre-test were 4.43 and 2.58, while that of control group were 4.5 and 2.68 respectively. This indicated that the control group performed better than the experimental group at the pre-test level.

After the treatment, the mean scores and standard deviation of the experimental group were 6.94 and 1.85, while that of control group were 6.72 and 2.33 respectively. This revealed that the mean scores of the experimental group were higher than that of control group at the post-test level.

**Hypothesis 1 (HO<sub>1</sub>):** There is no significant difference between the mean performance in reading comprehension of students involved in extensive reading and those that participated in normal reading comprehension.

**Table 2:** t-test analysis of post-test means scores performance of experimental and control group of students in a test of reading comprehension.

Group	No	Mean X	SD	P	t-cal	t-tab
Experimental group	60	6.94	1.85	<0.5	2.49	1.96
Control group	60	6.72	2.33			

The table 2 shows that an independent t-test analysis was conducted to compare post-test mean scores performance of students that were exposed to extensive reading (Experimental group) and those involved in normal reading comprehension

passages in the test of reading comprehension. The difference in post-test scores for experimental group were (mean=6.94, SD=1.85) and control group (mean= 6.72, SD =2.33) were subjected to t-test analysis. The t-calculated value of 2.49 was greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.96 and therefore, null hypothesis one (HO<sub>1</sub>) which stated that there is no significant difference between the mean performance in reading comprehension of students involved in extensive reading and those that participated in normal reading comprehension was rejected. Hence, it was concluded that there is a significant difference in the performance of the experimental group and the control group in a test of reading comprehension after the post-test.

**Research question 2:** What is the difference between the mean performance in summary writing of students involved in extensive reading and those that participated in normal reading comprehension?

**Table 3:** Mean scores □ performance of students in pre-test and post-test.

Group		No	Mean	SD
Experimental	pre- test	60	4.67	2.56
	Post-test	60	6.96	2.04
Control	pre-test	60	5.43	2.91
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Table 3 shows the performance mean scores and standard deviation of experimental group and control group at the pre-test and post-test levels in summary writing test. The performance mean and standard deviation scores for experimental group at the pre-test were 4.67 and 2.56, while that of control group were 5.43 and 2.91 respectively. This indicated that the control group performance was better than the experimental group at the pre-test level.

After the treatment in form of extensive reading, the mean scores and standard deviation of the experimental were 6.96 and 2.04, while that of control group were 6.79 and 2.05 respectively. This indicated that the control group performed better than the experimental at the post-test level.

**Hypothesis 2 (HO<sub>2</sub>):** There is no significant difference between the mean performance in summary writing of students involved in extensive reading and those that participated in normal reading comprehension.

**Table 4**

Group	No	Mean X	SD	P	t-cal	t-tab
Experimental group	60	6.96	2.04	< 0.5	1.76	1.76
Control group	60	6.97	2.05			

The table 4 shows that an independent t-test analysis was conducted to compare post-test mean scores performance of students of those exposed to extensive reading (experimental group) and those involved in normal reading comprehension (control group) in summary writing test. The differences in post-test scores experimental group were (mean=6.96 and SD =2.04) and control group (mean = 6.97 SD 2.05) were subjected to t-test analysis. The t-calculated value of 1.76 was less than the t-calculated value of 1.76 and therefore, null hypothesis two

(HO<sub>2</sub>) which stated that there is no significant difference between the mean performance in summary writing of students involved in extensive reading and those that participated in normal reading comprehension was retained. Hence, it was concluded that there is no significant difference in the performance of the experimental group and control group in a test of summary writing after the post-test

**Discussion of Findings**

Analysis of results indicated the following results. There was a significant difference in the post test achievement of experimental and control group of students’ performance in a test of reading comprehension. This implies that exposure of students to extensive reading of different reading materials have effect on their reading comprehension skills. The study agrees with the study conducted by Bell (2001) [2] which indicates that extensive reading is effective in increasing learners’ reading speed and comprehension skills. The findings is also in line with the study of Krashen (1989) [6] which indicates that students who read independently, become better readers, score high on achievement test and have greater content knowledge than those who do not participate in such type of reading. The second result on the other hand indicated that there was no significant difference in the achievement of control and experiment group of students’ performance in a test of summary writing. This indicates that the exposure of students to extensive reading of different reading materials did not have impact on their summary writing skills.

**Conclusion**

The aim of the study was to investigate the effect of extensive reading on the performance of secondary school students in reading comprehension and summary writing. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the achievement of students in reading comprehension could be determine by students’ involvement in extensive reading of articles from newspapers and magazines. However, results from the second hypothesis indicated that extensive reading of articles from newspapers and magazines could not make any impact on students’ performance in summary writing.

**Recommendations**

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

1. Students should be encouraged to read articles in newspapers and magazines for improvement in English language performance.
2. Teachers of English should organize reading competitions in order to develop students’ reading culture.
3. Government should build conducive libraries in schools where students can go and read during their leisure time.
4. Literature in English as a subject should be made compulsory at the secondary school level in order to improve students’ performance in English language.
5. Reading clubs such as “Young Readers’ Club” should be formed right from the junior secondary school level in order to develop the interest of reading among students outside the classroom.

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