

ATTITUDE AND VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE AS PREDICTORS OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN FRENCH READING COMPREHENSION IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the relationship between reading attitudes and vocabulary knowledge of some senior secondary school students in Ibadan and their achievement in French reading comprehension. This study was a correlational type. The sample selected comprised 95 Senior Secondary School Students. Three instruments were used for the study. These are French Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (FRCAT), Questionnaire on Students Attitude to French Reading Comprehension (QSAFRC) and Test of Students Knowledge of Vocabularies (TSKV). (FRCAT), (QSAFRC) and (TSKV) had reliability indices of 0.82, 0.81 and 0.82 respectively. Data collected for the study were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Multiple Regression. Four research questions were raised and answered. Findings revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between the dependent variable (achievement in reading comprehension) and independent variables (Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge). Attitude to reading comprehension ($r = .471, N = 95, p < .05$) and vocabulary knowledge ($r = .356, N = 95, p < .05$). Findings revealed that there was a joint contribution of Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension. This means that 20.7% (Adj. $R^2 = 0.207$) of the variance in the students' achievement in reading comprehension is accounted for by the independent variables, when taken together. Findings reveal that there is a significant relative contribution of Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension, expressed as beta weights. Attitude to reading comprehension ($\beta = 0.538, t = 3.390, p < 0.05$) indicates most potent contributor to the prediction, followed by Vocabulary knowledge ($\beta = 0.183, t = 2.522, p < 0.05$). It was however recommended that teachers of French language as a foreign language in Nigeria should pay adequate attention to the variables of attitude to reading and vocabulary knowledge as these could hamper the adequate learning outcomes in French reading comprehension among learners

Keywords: Attitudes to Reading, Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary Knowledge, French Language.

Introduction

The French language is recognized as the second official language in Nigeria. Nigeria was colonized by Great Britain and obtained her political independence in 1960. English language was adopted as the official language to foster unity among diverse ethnic nationalities and ethnic groups English, according to National Policy on Education is described as language of administration, commerce, international relation and diplomacy. French language which is the second official language in Nigeria is a language of international communication with the francophone neighboring countries in West Africa who are former colonies of France and also use French language as their official language of communication. Competence in the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in a foreign language such as French language is expedient in order to foster bilateral relation with these French speaking countries and Metropolitan France who is one of the prominent trading partners with Nigeria. Reading skill in French language is very important because it enables someone to be able to read and comprehend vital and sensitive documents written in French language.

Reading is one of the four basic language skills. It is required for academic achievement and success. It could be categorized as literacy skill which is essential for individual survival in life. Reading cannot only be confined to academic circle but also useful in acquisition of knowledge, ideas, information for healthy living and survival. The significance of reading for the attainment of academic achievement of students at levels of education cannot be over – emphasized. The primary aim of reading is comprehension. This is confirmed by Fakeye, (2017) who states that the good proof of reading is the extent to which the reader is able to comprehend what the reader has read, which is measured as the ability to make meaning out of a written text. Reading comprehension implies that readers are able to construct meaning from a written text. Carnine and Carnine (2010) clarifies the meaning of constructing meaning from the text which implies that the readers go beyond the meaning explicitly contained in the text, building up based on their own experience and ability to infer additional or deeper meaning.

Vocabulary knowledge on the other hand has significant effect on the reading comprehension in any language. This has been the focus of researchers in the field of foreign language and second language. Vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension are interrelated and interdependent. Comprehension of written text depends heavily on the knowledge of vocabulary items and reading can also help enhance vocabulary growth (Maher Salah, 2008, Nation, 2001). Vocabulary knowledge plays critical role as the linguistic framework of the language among many other domains

of language such as grammar and phonology. Knowledge of vocabulary helps both in the acquisition of productive and receptive skills of language. Knowledge of words is a determining factor in language proficiency and success in academic pursuit because of its close affinity with comprehension of text (Bernhardt, 2005, Wang, 2009). Snow (2002) found the strength of relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension and concluded that this strength of relationship increases as children advance in grade level. In the study conducted by Gelderen (2004) on the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension among students from Grade 8 to Grade 10, It was found that there is a significant relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. The findings of Tannenbaum, Torgesen and Wagner (2006) and Shiotsu and Weir (2007) attested to the fact there is relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Mehrpour et al (2011) conducted a study on the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension on EFL learner, the result of the analysis revealed that both depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge play an important role in EFL learners' reading comprehension performance, depth of vocabulary knowledge makes a more important contribution. The study further confirmed a positive correlation between the depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge signifying that the learners with large vocabulary size understand the words better.

Attitude to reading is another variable of consideration in this study. Lawal (2008) affirmed that students at the secondary schools are not only deficient in reading skills but have also not cultivated the habits of reading widely. This could be termed to mean that there is absence of reading culture among the secondary school students who are the target population of this study. The failure rate recorded in external examination such Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) conducted by West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) especially in language related subjects such Literature-in-English, French and English language is allusion to the fact that attitude to reading among the secondary students is negative.

Research questions

The study provided answers to the following research questions

1. What is the relationship between Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge and students achievement in reading comprehension
2. What is the joint contribution of Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension?

3. What is the relative contribution of Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension in French language
4. Which of the two factors would predict students' achievement in reading comprehension in French language?

Statement of the Problem

Reading is very important to language learning especially foreign language learning. The adoption of French as a second official language in Nigeria has made it imperative for learners to acquire appropriate skill in reading comprehension so as to be able to attain literacy in the language. Various research findings such as Tannenbaum, Torgenson and Wagner, (2006) and Shiotu and Weir (2007) and Lawal (2008) have reported consistent decline in the performance of learners of French language in reading comprehension. Major research efforts geared towards resolving this problem of poor performance in reading comprehension focused attention on strategies and methods of teaching reading and student and teacher related factors as determinants of their achievement in reading comprehension in French language but little attention was focused on attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge as determinants of students achievement in reading comprehension. Therefore, this study investigated attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge as determinants of students' achievement in reading comprehension.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for the study were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Multiple Regression.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design of correlational type. The design is appropriate since the researcher has no direct control on the independent variables as their manifestation already exists. Three instruments were used in the collection of data for the study. These are French Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (FRCAT), Questionnaire on Students Attitude to French Reading Comprehension (QSAFRC) and Test of Students Knowledge of Vocabularies. French Reading Comprehension Achievement Test (FRCAT) was adopted from *Nouvel Horizon* a comprehensive integrated course for Senior Secondary French by Tunde Ajiboye, Bounty Press, 1999.

The instrument contains a reading comprehension passage followed by ten multiple choice questions to test the understanding of students in French comprehension passage. This instrument was given to experts in the field of French Language to ascertain the face and content validity. It was also trial tested on a sample of Senior Secondary School Students that are not part of the main study. The reliability of the instrument was established through test – re-test method and a value of 0.82 was obtained Questionnaire on Students Attitude to French Reading Comprehension (QSAFRC).

The questionnaire was adapted from Osikomoya (2012). It consists of two sections. Section A sought demographic data of the students (name of school, age, class, sex etc.) While section B contained 20 items which sought information on students attitude to reading comprehension in French language. The questionnaire is of the modified likert type with four scales of: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire will be scored as follows: For positively framed statements: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1.

The questionnaire was given to given to experts in language experts to determine its suitability for the study. The corrections from them helped to determine face and content validity. The reliability of QSAFRC was ascertained by administering it on the SSII students in a school that would not be part of the schools to be used for this study. Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability and value of 0.81 was obtained.

Test of Students Knowledge of Vocabularies.(TSKV) was self -designed instrument to test the vocabulary knowledge of the students in French language. The instrument contains twenty French vocabularies extracted from the passage appeared to be difficult based on the initiation of the researcher. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, it was administered on the another group of SSII students that did not form part of the sampled population. Test- retest reliability formula was used to test the reliability of the instrument and reliability index of 0.82 was obtained.

Results

This section presents the result of the research carried out on attitude and vocabulary knowledge as predictors of senior secondary school students' achievement in French reading comprehension in selected secondary schools in Ibadan Metropolis. Three research questions were raised and answered. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, PPMC and Regression Analysis. The summary of data analysis shall be discussed under the sub-headings; i. Social demographic characteristic data ii. Analysis of research questions.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total number of 95 Senior Secondary School Students randomly selected from seven Schools in Ibadan Metropolis participated in the study. Seven Senior Secondary Schools that offer French Language as a subject were purposively selected while the researcher used simple random sampling technique to select 95 Senior Secondary School Students who participated in the study. The researcher sought the consent of the French Teachers in the participating Schools who assisted in administering the instruments on the learners.

Table 1. Distribution of School

| Name of School | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Baptist High School Saki | 11 | 11.6 |
| Baptist Medical Center Secondary School | 11 | 11.6 |
| Livingstone College of Arts and Sciences | 10 | 10.5 |
| Oritamefa Baptist Model School | 19 | 20.0 |
| Faith School and College | 10 | 10.5 |
| Christ The King Catholics College | 20 | 21.1 |
| Sharon Rose School and College | 14 | 14.7 |
| Total Number of Respondents | 95 | 100.0 |

Table 1.1 implies that majority of the respondents were from Christ the King Catholics College.

Analysis of Research Questions

RQ₁: What relationship exists between the dependent variable (achievement in reading comprehension) and independent variables (Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge)?

Table 2. Inter-correlation Matrix of independents and dependent variable

| Variable | Achievement in reading comprehension | Attitude to reading comprehension | Vocabulary knowledge |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Achievement in reading comprehension | 1 | | |
| Attitude to reading comprehension (P value) | .471** .000 | 1 | |
| vocabulary knowledge (p value) | .356** .000 | .816** .000 | 1 |
| Mean | 27.72 | 26.57 | 27.52 |
| Std. Deviation | 4.15 | 4.99 | 4.94 |

Table 2 showed that: there was a significant positive relationship between the dependent variable (achievement in reading comprehension) and independent variables (Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge). That is, Attitude to reading comprehension ($r = .471, N = 95, p < .05$) and vocabulary knowledge ($r = .356, N = 95, p < .05$), and Biogenetics factors ($r = .344, N = 250, p < .05$). It implies that, there was a significant positive relationship between the dependent variable (achievement in reading comprehension) and independent variables (Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge).

RQ₂: What is the joint contribution of Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension?

Table 3. Summary of Regression Analysis of the combined prediction of Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension

| .R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------|-------|---------------|
| 0.473 | 0.224 | 0.207 | 3.69819 | | | |
| SUMMARY REGRESSION ANOVA | | | | | | |
| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | P | Remark |
| Regression | 362.639 | 2 | 181.320 | 13.258 | 0.000 | P < 0.05 Sig. |
| Residual | 1258.245 | 92 | 13.677 | | | |
| Total | 1620.884 | 94 | | | | |

Table 3 showed that there was a joint contribution of Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension. That is achievement in reading comprehension correlated positively with the independent variables (Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge). The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlations (R) of 0.473 and a multiple R square of 0.224. This means that 20.7% (Adj. $R^2 = 0.207$) of the variance in the students' achievement in reading comprehension is accounted for by the independent variables, when taken together. The significance of the joint contribution was tested at $p < 0.05$ using the F- ratio at the degree of freedom (df- 2/92). The table also showed that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded a F-ratio of 13.258. This is tested at significant at 0.05 level.

RQ₃: What is the relative contribution of Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension?

Table 4. Relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variables (Test of significance of the regression coefficients)

| Variable | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. | Remark |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|----------------|
| | (B) | Std. Error | Beta | | | |
| Model | (B) | Std. Error | Beta | T | Sig. | Remark |
| Constant | 17.744 | 2.217 | – | 8.004 | .000 | – |
| Attitude to reading comprehension | .448 | .132 | .538 | 3.390 | .001 | P < 0.05(Sig.) |
| Vocabulary knowledge | .070 | .133 | .183 | 2.522 | .033 | P < 0.05(Sig.) |

Table 4 reveals there is a significant relative contribution of Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension, expressed as beta weights. There is correlation coefficient of Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge on the dependent variable (students' achievement in reading comprehension). Using the standardized regression coefficient to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables, attitude to reading comprehension ($\beta = 0.538$, $t = 3.390$, $p < 0.05$) indicates most potent contributor to the prediction, follow by Vocabulary knowledge ($\beta = 0.183$, $t = 2.522$, $p < 0.05$) which has relative contribution to the achievement in reading. reveals there is a significant relative contribution of Attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension, expressed as beta weights. comprehension. It implies that there is a significant relative contribution of attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension.

RQ₄: Which of the two factors would predict students' achievement in reading comprehension in French language?

Table 5. The most predictors of the two factors attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students

| Model | (B) | Std. Error | Beta | T | Sig. |
|-----------------------------------|------|------------|------|-------|------|
| Attitude to reading comprehension | .448 | .132 | .538 | 3.390 | .001 |
| Vocabulary knowledge | .070 | .133 | .183 | 2.522 | .033 |

Using the standardized regression coefficient to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables, attitude to reading comprehension ($\beta = 0.538$, $t = 3.390$, $p < 0.05$) indicates most potent contributor to

the prediction, follow by Vocabulary knowledge ($\beta = 0.183$, $t = 2.522$, $p < 0.05$) which has relative contribution to achievement in reading comprehension. It implies that Attitude to reading comprehension predict students' achievement in reading comprehension in French language

Discussion

The findings revealed that there was significant positive relationship between the dependent variable (achievement in reading comprehension) and independent variables (attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge). The findings corroborate the submission of Bernhardt (2005) and Wang (2009) that says that knowledge of words is a determining factor in language proficiency and success in affinity with comprehension of text.

The findings of Tannenbaum, Torgenson and Wagner, (2006) and Shiotu and Weir (2007) also attested to the fact that there is relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. The strength and viability of the knowledge of vocabulary and attitude to reading comprehension cannot be under-estimated since various findings have established the link between these variables of interest in this study. Adequate attention should be focused on them by practicing foreign language teachers in the course of teaching-learning process.

The findings of this study also revealed the joint contribution of attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension. This confirms the findings of Lawal 2008 that states that deficiency in reading comprehension is not discernible in students but they have negative habits of reading widely which otherwise translates to the fact that reading culture is lacking in the students . Bernhardt (2005) and Wang, (2009) also affirmed that knowledge of words is a determining factor in language proficiency and success in academic pursuit because of its close affinity with comprehension of text.

The findings of this study also affirmed that there is a significant relative contribution of attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge to students' achievement in reading comprehension. These findings corroborate the submission of Snow (2002) that found that there is strength of relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. This submission also correlates with the findings of Gelderen (2004) which concluded that there is significant relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. The findings of this study also revealed that attitude indicates more potent contribution to the prediction. The findings of Lawal (2008) affirmed that students cultivate negative attitude to reading even though they might not be deficient in

reading. This submission portends a change in attitude towards reading comprehension because reading is strong determinant of academic success.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between the attitude of students to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge and their achievement in reading comprehension with particular emphasis on French Language as a foreign language in Nigeria. There was a significant positive relationship between the students' attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge and their achievement in reading comprehension. Attitude to reading comprehension present more potent contribution to reading comprehension than vocabulary knowledge.

Recommendations

1. French language teachers should pay maximum attention to the variables of attitude to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge because they have significant positive relationship with the achievement of students in reading comprehension.
2. French language teachers should help ameliorate the attitudinal disposition of the learners of French to reading comprehension in French language. The teachers of French language could adopt appropriate instructional strategies or motivational techniques that could impart positive attitude into the learners.
3. French language teachers need to work assiduously to improve on the vocabulary knowledge of learners as this could constitute constraints or impediments to attaining competence in reading comprehension.
4. Stakeholders in foreign language education should organize workshops, seminars and conferences that would enlighten the in-service teachers on the influence of attitude of learners to reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge on their achievement in foreign language reading comprehension.

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