

## **APPLICATION OF READER-RESPONSE THEORY IN EFL TEACHING AND LEARNING IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research article focuses on the interventions to enhance English language teaching and learning through literature in Nigeria's senior secondary school educational system. The research looks at the application of reader-response theory to the teaching of literature to realize its ability to improve students' quantity and consistency of talk in the English language classroom. The underlying ideas were whether the reader-response approach would broaden the reach of communicative language instruction beyond literature-based classrooms and provide the ability to build learner independence outside of the classroom. However, the study would also emphasize the advantages of this technique, such as increasing language competence and abilities and offering more suitable cognitive difficulties to Nigerian senior secondary school students enrolled in an English language course. The results suggest that the basis of knowledge-base, in this case, the high school curriculum, did not lay a strong knowledge base framework.

Keywords: Curriculum, English Language Teaching, Literature, Reader-Response Theory

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Nigeria, English is one of the required subjects in senior high school. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing is the four skills that makeup English. Reading is one of the skills that contribute significantly to the progress of language learning. We gain knowledge in life primarily by reading, which is why reading is so critical. According to Westwood (2016), readers who comprehend what they are reading can better predict, infer, and relate the text or details on the website. The majority of curriculum revisions have aimed to re-examine the purposes, priorities, strategies, processes, and resources used in the successful execution of the English curriculum over the years. In reality, one school of curriculum theory claims that the implemented curriculum is the most successful. However, there are two other viewpoints from which curriculum should be examined before this feat in the curriculum is accomplished: prescription; intended curriculum, and practice; a curriculum that has been implemented According to Hendrix & Griffin (2016), in ideal conditions, what is recommended, what is practised, and, as a result, what is accomplished, as a result, will be a perfect match. In the Nigerian context, one would expect English as a Second Language (ESL) learners to be educationally, grammatically, and cognitively competent in social

contexts outside the education system after good ages of knowledge in English and using it for teaching at the prime and secondary stages, which is the end objective.

On the other hand, the sociolinguistic facts are distinct in that English in Nigeria is essentially a restricted code language. As a result, the challenge raised by this situation has become one of the most pressing concerns in our educational system in recent years, especially in elementary and secondary schools, which have seen a significant decline in English learners' expressive and linguistic competence (McCullough, 2017). The condition at the high school level is one in which the aim is to transfer rather than master English. The situation at the high school level is one in which the objective is to communicate rather than master English. However, in a real-life communicative context, the ability to comprehend a language and generate it in clear communication isn't just about following a descriptive requirement, which is emphasized in examination-oriented English programs. This is because actual language use necessitates a wide range of information that has never been attempted to be crammed into manuals or grammar.

The acceptance of English as a means of intra-national and inter-national contact is due to the multilingual and multicultural existence of the Nigerian polity on the one hand and the lack of a national unity indigenous language on another. More specifically, English has become the pivot around which Nigeria's educational wheel revolves. In addition to being a mandatory school subject that must be adopted at all educational levels in Nigeria, the language serves as the medium of instruction for all academic subjects from elementary schools to universities. In recent years, a significant cause of the decrease in educational development and personal standards in Nigeria has been attributed to students' mixed attitudes in English language national exams (Garzon & Castaneda-Pena, 2015). One of the most profound issues that EFL students face in their specific course of study appears to be having difficulty completely understanding the contents and concepts of the different subjects of the curriculum taught in the target language. This is the same issue that Nigerian ESL students face in public exams, where they perform poorly in different school subjects. This could be attributable to their shortcomings in the English language, the medium of instruction, which could damage their overall academic performance. When students lack proficiency in learning, they will inevitably struggle in the target language's school subjects. As a result, the overall success of Nigerian ESL students is heavily reliant on their English language skills. Due to the conflicting attitude among students and teachers, this paper examines the views these two categories have on the use of Reader-Response, particularly in Nigeria.

### **The Construction of Meaning in Reader Response Theory**

The reader-response theory is founded on the idea that a literary work occurs in a reciprocal partnership between the reader and the text. The reader deconstructs literature and connects it to their personal experience (Gibbs et al., 2016). Emotional reactions that arise from this mutual bond may help to cement classroom learning. Rosenblatt's transactional perspective affirms that readers build their own experiences. The text activates a stimulus that acts as a guide, a regulator, a blueprint, and a means of understanding.

To put it another way, the text stimulates the reader's early encounters with literature and life; it controls the collection, dismissal, and order of what is presented; and it governs what should be brought to the reader's attention. According to reader-response theory, the reader creates meaning from the text using either an aesthetic or efferent stance. Aesthetic reactions provide readers with a range of options for paying attention to the reading experience. The readers are expected to consider a variety of potential interpretations.

Efferent responses, on the other hand, provide a continuum for readers to create context. The readers are supposed to have a straightforward answer to the text's context. Efferent stance is concerned with what readers rely upon in reading, while aesthetic attitude is associated with what readers have encountered. The term efferent refers to a type of reading in which the focus is primarily on the information to be retrieved and maintained after the assignment is completed. The ideas, facts, instructions, or conclusions to be kept, used or acted on after the reading are abstracted out and analytically structured (Pope & Round, 2016).

Learners improve their thought skills, gain exposure to other cultures, speculate on concepts and expand their understanding of them, enhance their interpretive skills, and sharpen their creative writing abilities through the process of meaning building. Teachers and curriculum, on the other hand, have a significant impact on response. Teachers have a substantial effect on whether or not readers react positively to literature in discussions. The level of learner response is influenced by the instructional methods used by teachers and the literature they choose. Several factors governed by the instructor in classroom environments, according to Hickman (2016), affect learner responses.

- Emphasizing the quality and relevance of titles for classroom use
- Choosing literature-related resources based on students' ability to ensure that they access the text
- To recapitulate the stress of discussions and events, offer a gist of literary texts.
- To accommodate learners and literature research, provide recommendations, encourage high expectations, claim the importance of literature, acknowledge flexibility in time and space, and cater for materials.
- Allowing students to ponder literary texts in detail and become sense creators invigorates learning.

According to reader-response theory, the reader is an active agent who gives the work "true life" and completes its meaning through interpretation. According to reader-response criticism, literature must be regarded as a performing art in which each reader produces their own, probably exceptional, text-related output. It is opposed to classicism and the Based On new theories. The reader-response approach is based on an attempt to illuminate the reader-text relationship. "Literary texts often include social dilemmas and conflicts," the underlying concept goes. Readers must react personally to such reading." (Gibbs et al., 2016). The theory concentrates on various roles readers can adopt while engaging in reading for

readers to make sense of these written works. Reader response theory is based on the idea that readers and the text play a role in interpreting an overall experience.

### **The attitude of students and teachers on the nature of the English Curriculum in Nigerian Schools**

In today's learner-centred approaches to teaching in particular and language teaching, learners' needs are potentially fundamental. The preparation of a successful language education program begins with a needs review. Although the ESL curriculum is chosen and presented for hypothetical and unrestrained purposes, a slight focus is put on communicative aids in social settings both in and outside the classroom. Although the verbal and straightforward material in the syllabus is expected to encourage communicative abilities, it is firmly found that students still have low abilities in everyday life communication situations.

Curriculum concerns resulting from the National Policy on Education (NPE) involve, among several other things, escalating vernacular as a way of fostering communal justice. Conversations, formal harmony, and cultural safeguarding. As a result, the English syllabus not only provides material but besides allows ESL teachers to apply required linguistic insights and create necessary activities for their students. It is intended to encourage the students to learn the fundamentals of the language and supposed that the linguistic perspectives can assist ESL teachers in interpreting and characterizing language learning in terms of efficient and responsive language learning. Equally these skills remain required for communicative language capability.

When considering the basis of the English curriculum including the aims, priorities, strategies, and resources, it is fair to assume that an over-reliance on textbooks that do not adequately treat lesson contents should be discouraged. As a result, in the classroom teaching and learning phase, communicative engagement can take the form of multiple interactions, including both vocal and non-vocal communication (Blentyne & Varga, 2016)

The communicative methodology aims to provide students of English as an additional language with a normal situation to engage in unrestrained happenings. Such will allow students to seek from the outset to comprehend, and there appear to be flaws in the teacher's approach compared to learner-centred approaches. Overcrowding in classes, for example, is one of the causes of these shortcomings. Lack of teaching materials, pressure to cover the course content in a short amount of time, and a lack of motivation for teachers to do their best; thus, English professors instruct students in the language. Mechanically, students learn as well, with little involvement in the creation of their knowledge. As a result, rather than appropriate teaching and linguistic professionalism, teaching and learning activities become teacher-centred, focusing on cognitive, and educational outcomes.

Most language teachers are wary of communicative methods because they are afraid of incorrect and ill-formed sentences, which communicative practices, whether spontaneous or directed learning, can encourage a desire to learn communicative skills. Their fear of the target language being fossilized or pidginized should not be a justification to avoid it (Pope & Round, 2016). It is critical to encourage students to use the English language for accurate communication rather than with the intent of imposition of grammatical constructs and

meanings abstracted from their social contexts or circumstances. This means that English teachers must devise activities that will enable students to participate fully in the educational activities taking place in school. In light of this, a group of language educators argues that task-based learning should not believe that language must be homogenized and exercised in small chunks, but rather that language is learned when learners are forced to use some or all of their linguistic resources to communicate meaningfully. Several secondary school teachers are more associated with distributing facts, knowledge, and concepts about how to do this except that in the classroom setting than with teaching communication skills or helping children to do and learn, practice, and participate in language activities aimed at developing communications competence or expertise.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Reader Response Theory

Westwood (2016) has eloquently stated that reading literature is an exploration in which readers use feelings and histories to create meaning. Context, according to her, is built by a transaction between the reader and the author. In the trade, learners bridge the differences in the text using their prior experience and disposition and their comprehension of the text (Thomas,2020). The transactional view of reaction, which stems from Rosenblatt's work, holds that the reader is "not treated as a separate agent acting upon the world, nor the environment acting on the organism, but all parts acting like a complete occurrence" (Garzon & Castaneda-Pena, 2015). After all, the reader's perceptions or definitions "are a product of the reader as well as the text"(Ghandehari,2017). This complex reading method would enable the reader to elicit a reaction to a text's events and characters by involving his or her emotions and thoughts. It is essential to keep in mind that active reading, emotional and analytical interest in the text, sense construction, and response elicitation are imperative aspects of literature debates (Mart, 2019).

According to Westwood (2016 ), RRT improves students' reasoning abilities. Furthermore, as quoted by Garzon & Castaneda-Pena (2015), contends that the instructor should consider "various definitions" of a text rather than just the "literal understanding" because it allows for innovative and analytical thought in the classroom. In other words, using Reader-Response theories helps students to understand diverse points of view, encourages them to speak up and participate in discussions, and trains them to be innovative and imaginative thinkers.

There are three additional languages during formal education time in Nigeria: Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo (Park, 2016). These languages are taught in the junior grades. Nigeria stated that the initial three years of essential learning should be taught in the child's native language (Kelly et al., 2016). English is the language of contact after the first three years of formal education before completing formal education. This strategy element is not as strictly enforced in private learning institutions. The program's immediate focus on English as a language of teaching and learning was its prominent presence in the world's national languages and as a means of instruction in the Nigerian education system (Blentyne & Varga, 2016). The English language has helped Nigeria gain access to foreign communities.

This demonstrates to ESL teachers that what is most important is not the text's referential concepts but what students can make of them. Language teachers seem to be particularly interested in teaching both efferent and aesthetic literacy "(Ghandehari,2017). This could help to balance language instruction of form and meaning-making.

### **Literature: An Earlier Onset on the Use of Literature in Language Teaching**

The use of literature in ESL classes may be a powerful method for working with writing. Nonetheless, specific literature experts argue that the use of literature in writing courses is inappropriate because literature "is only suited for the study of literature" (Hendrix & Griffin,2016). Despite these historical ramifications, it is remarkable to contend that literature has a presence in all modes of ESL teaching today. There are several advantages of using literary works in ESL instruction. Literature texts are inspiring sources for language learning because they involve learners in the lessons suggested in the classroom and enable them to study the language they are learning in a more formal setting.

According to Raditsebe (2016), ESL students may be strengthened in a demanding proposal to meet their learning targets by using everything from reader-response e-journals to literature. Literary text critics contend that the vocabulary used in academic texts is complex, artificial, and even grammatically incorrect. Students can, however, encounter difficult words and unnatural ways in their everyday lives and use of English.

### **Promotion of critical thinking through literature**

Raditsebe (2016) provides a six-level perception hierarchy. In this model, a person starts with the fundamental level, known as the information level, and then progresses to the comprehension level. Students must characterize, illustrate, say, classify, mention, call, clarify, discuss, distinguish, and restate these lower-order thought skills (Hendrix & Griffin,2016). The thinker advances through the intellect ladder until he or she hits the most complex stage, which is assessment. Individuals at this stage appraise, judge, or criticize based on clear expectations and requirements. It may be argued that attention is turned toward what is immediately lived through in the transaction with the paper, toward what is being formed as the plot or the poem concerning RRT (Thomas,2020). Individuals advance in small measures. This means that one must learn one step before moving on to the next. This does not mean that each move operates independently or that thought is made up of fragments. As a result, human learning is a cyclical phenomenon in which we actively link our convictions and personal ideals to our skills to develop more complex thought processes "(Ghandehari,2017)

Proponents of the communicative approach to language instruction have agreed that using natural resources is a practical initiative for developing language learners' communicative skills. Based on the claim that conventional grammar teaching is fragmented and artificial in terms of negotiating significance, the use of literature confirms substantive communication success as a result of contact with genuine content. Literature can help language learners develop their speech repertoires. According to Mart (2019), the function of literature is not to include details about specific pieces of literature in the syllabus but to get learners to understand how these particular pieces exemplify more general concepts of

communication. The presentation of literature to students will help them become more aware of how vocabulary is used to communicate. Adapting literature broadens not only communicative skills but also empowers imaginative abilities.

### **Theory-Literature Reading Connections**

What is important to note is how the relation between literature reading and RRT was made. According to (Gibbs et al., 2016), reader-response critique focuses on understanding how the reader can collaborate with the author of a text to create context and how Nigerian students can benefit from their experiences reading literature and discussing interpretations others. Educating student-teachers and developing English curricula must take into account who they are and where they are going. As a result, the approach to reading literature is a way to improve English students' and teachers' comprehension of the language as a whole and directly links with their lives and the environment. According to Yilmaz (2018), the teacher's power should value the authentic essence of literature itself. However, it should be noted that RRT was not initially developed as a language learning technique, but it has been modified and accepted by scholars in the applied linguistics domain.

### **Assessment**

Although no large-scale comprehensive studies in adult learning have been conducted to establish those ties, the Improving Formative Evaluation initiative is demonstrating the significance of identifying the links between legislation, teachers' and students' attitudes about learning, and the results of assessment practices in adult literacy and numeracy programs (Blentyne & Varga, 2016); as a result, the analysis is analytical primarily, with only tentative generalizations regarding appropriate practice. Nonetheless, it emphasizes preliminary messages on good practice and proposes prospective study issues.

Texts of various types may be used, including narration, descriptive, description, recount, facts, essay, exposition, and argumentation. According to observations made by the researcher during the teaching practice program, the narrative is the students' preferred text genre. The three facets of substantive, engaging, and inspiring can be compared to each other in the learning process by a narrative (Hendrix & Griffin, 2016). A narrative has many different styles, including passion, humour, science fiction, suspense, and many others. According to Blentyne & Varga (2016), the narrative has the aim of presenting a story in which it offers either the readers or the viewers a way out of difficulties and also brings the story alive by expressing the three values of social, spiritual, and moral from the story to real life.

### **METHODS**

A review of the teachers and students of the English language on the teaching and knowledge of grammar word difficulties in Nigerian institutes, especially at the children's level, was investigated in this study. Teachers' and students' English ability, schoolroom methods for teaching word difficulties, and scholars' methods of resolving word difficulties were all evaluated in this way. The impact of the treatment on learners' ability to solve algebraic word problems was then studied.

The methodology for pulling information for the subject is presented in this chapter. Secondary data analysis was used to select papers and comprehensive research on the topic for this analysis, and the findings were then examined and the results provided. The information presented in this study was collected from secondary sources of data; Secondary research, also known as desk research, is a form of research that uses data that has already been collected.

### **Data Sources and analysis criteria**

The information in this article was collected from books, published sources, journals, government records, and websites. Secondary data analysis is the method of evaluating data that another researcher has obtained for a different reason. Scholars use secondary data to save time and money that would otherwise be spent collecting primary data. The criteria for making the analysis involved:

- Locating data from different sources; involved how the information was accessible and where it was located
- They evaluate the relevance and validity of the information, considering essential points such as when the data was collected and if it relates to the topic under study.
- Determining the credibility of the data; Constructing the initial researchers' credentials, looking for a complete explanation of methodology, including any issues found, determining how compatible the data is now with data from various sources, and evaluating if the information has been used in any reliable published research.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Before they can enjoy literary texts, students must first learn to speak and understand English. Since the teaching of literature is rooted in the broader purpose of improving language proficiency, it is vital to consider the Communicative Approach spaces. In the context of this report, I interpreted PCK in teaching literature to ESL students in Nigerian secondary schools to refer to the various ways in-service trainees turn subject matter for teaching. As they read comprehension passages and multiple genres of literature with the students, they will likely use techniques such as discussion of the different aspects of literature, such as symbolic vocabulary, characterization, storylines, stories, and environments. On the one hand, teacher trainees must consider the varied language experiences of their pupils and their various levels of preparation while teaching at the secondary school level. Teachers must develop students' prior learning; an example of PCK will be guiding students to differentiate between various genres such as fiction, novel, drama, play, and poetry; and teacher trainees with deep content expertise would be able to organize and reflect such subject matter by responding to their students' varied interests and abilities.

### **Recommendations**

The research showed the importance of teachers improving their students' post-reading practices. These events mainly consisted of book reviews and narrations of previously read stories. Teachers must delegate more complex assignments to their students to teach them to read thoroughly and to foster a literacy community in their classrooms. A



school with a better reading community would need to bring systems in place, such as libraries, to provide vigorous and comprehensive reading. The long-term viability of these tools is critical to the survival of the reading world. This will result in students becoming passionate readers. With the help of their teachers, they will also be encouraged to engage in fun and meaningful post-reading experiences such as discussing what they read or dramatizing the material of the books. The post-reading exercises would likely increase students' proficiency as well.

## Conclusion

Reader response theory is a reader-centered approach to teaching successful literacy. The reader-response approach to improving literacy education engages all learners by emphasizing the value of the transaction between a reader and a book. Teachers can use this element of the philosophy to motivate students to become habitual, ardent readers. Reader answer provides teachers with the ability to meet the needs of all students and engage them at levels relevant to their progress. Teachers can entice more students to explore the field of reading and stay for a lifetime by encouraging them to intersect their previous expertise and diverse, personal encounters with their lessons of literature. The present research investigated the reading perceptions, behaviors, and activities of in-service teacher trainees in Nigerian secondary schools to determine the degree to which literature is embedded and valued in the classrooms of their ESL students. The theoretical starting point was the idea of Pedagogical Content Awareness, which argues that teachers need pedagogical skills, deep academic rigor, and knowledge of curriculum design objectives and accessible resources.

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