



ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique (PLTT) on inferential reading comprehension of Almajiri learners of English language in north west Zone, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 35,652 Almajiri pupils studying in modern Almajiri schools in north west zone, Nigeria. The

IMPACT OF PRAGMATIC LANGUAGE TEACHING TECHNIQUE ON INFERENTIAL READING COMPREHENSION OF PRIMARY 5 ALMAJIRI LEARNERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NORTH- WEST ZONE, NIGERIA

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Introduction

Shehu Dan Fodio strengthened the Almajiri education system, and transformed it into a free, well-funded and adequately staffed universal Muslim primary education in the Sokoto Empire, of which present day Northern Nigeria was a political, religious, educational and commercial nerve center. Thus, the Almajiri system is not exclusively Nigerian, but exists (under different names) in all regions of West Africa formerly under the political authority of the Sokoto Caliphate. Shehu also oversaw the creation of an inspectorate of Qur'anic and Arabic studies, which invariably served as a regulative mechanism thereby representing an



target population were all the primary five (5) Almajiri pupils in the north west, Nigeria, while the sample size was made up of 97 Almajiri pupils that were selected from Mal. Kwaire Qur'anic School, Dakingari, Kebbi state and Tsangaya Integrated Model Boarding Primary School, Tambuwal, Sokoto state. Two intact classes were selected from the sampled schools. In order to answer and test the research questions and hypotheses, a pre-test achievement test was administered to both the experimental and control groups followed by eight (8) weeks exposure to treatment, then finally the post-test. The instruments used were thirty (30) questions from two (2) comprehension passages. Descriptive and Inferential statistics were used to compare the results of the pre-test and post-test. The result showed that there is a significant difference in the inferential reading comprehension of Almajiri pupils that were exposed to Pragmatic Language Teaching Techniques and those that were treated with the conventional teaching activities. In the light of the findings, the researcher recommended among others the training and retraining of English language teachers in Almajiri schools on the use of PLTT to teach reading comprehension. More so, textbook writers/publishers and curriculum planners should create an avenue for Pragmatic Language Teaching Techniques in reading comprehension in order to make the lessons more meaningful, purposeful, rewarding and exciting.

important milestone in the annals of Qur'anic education in Nigeria (Aliyu, 2016). Indeed, the Almajiri system, and the predominantly Muslim population of the northern regions of West African nations situated between modern day Cameroon and Burkina Faso are a legacy of the Islamic expansionism of the Sokoto Caliphate, whose headquarters was in Sokoto, present day Northern Nigeria (Aw'ofeso, Ritche & Degeling 2013). During the lifetime of Shehu, and indeed until colonial conquest, Mallams were well-regarded members of the Hausa-Fulani society, and they played an important role in maintaining the social structure of this emerging feudal empire, in part by serving as judicial officers in Sharia courts (Abdurrahman & Canham, 2019).



In the contemporary time, effort is being made to integrate the Almajiri system of education into the mainstream of western education. Hence, several far-reaching fundamental restructurings have taken place and is still taking place in the practices of the modern Almajiri system of Education in order to meet up with the objectives of the Universal Basic Education and National Policy on Education. For example, English language which is central to western education in Nigeria is integral to the curriculum of the current Almajiri system of education. Therefore, the need to adopt effective teaching techniques in order to enhance the English language skills of this category of pupils has become urgent more than ever. This is because the Almajiris unlike their counterparts who have relatively been exposed to English language before their primary education require special treatment and attention. This was made known to the researcher in his encounter with one of the teachers of these pupils, the teacher lamented bitterly about the pupils' pathetic situation in the four English language skills. Consequently, this research on Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique is a round peg in a round hole in ameliorating the problems associated with the four language skills among Almajiri pupils in northwest, Nigeria. Nunn (2016) describes Pragmatic in Language Teaching as "learning by doing". It is the usage of language in a practical sense. In other words, Pragmatic Language Teaching Techniques involve academic drilling of the pupils through class exercises. Pragmatic is needed in teaching English language skills to the Almajiri pupils because of their special English language needs.

According to Nunn (2016), Pragmatic in Language Teaching is a technique that makes the learners to be actively involved in teaching/learning process. Hence, it facilitates participation, co-operation, interaction and group spirit in learning among the learners. Pragmatic is important in teaching because it enhances a set of skills which allow us to know what to communicate, to whom and how to communicate one message effectively in a specific context. Pragmatic in language teaching will facilitates pragmatic competence among learners. Pragmatics competence refers to the ability to comprehend, construct utterances which are accurate and appropriate to the social and cultural circumstance where the communication (either written or spoken) occurs.



Ekpe (2016) reiterates that the pragmatic approach to language teaching has some overriding advantages. One of which is that it emphasizes the teaching of fluent English. While other methods promote the teaching of accuracy, that is the ability to produce correct sentences, the pragmatic approach ensures that the learner is able to speak, write and read with ease and is also able to engage in continuous speech that is intelligible rich in grammar, vocabulary and shows a good command of intonation.

Features of Pragmatic Language Teaching Classroom

1. Learner centred: here the focus is on the students rather than the teacher. This means the students are urged to be actively involved in their own process of learning. They are allowed to come up with their own ideas, questions, definitions and make-ups.
2. Collaborative in nature: here emphasis is placed on learning through social interaction. This is done by making students to work in groups to solve problems, investigate and explore topics/situations in order to arrive at conclusions. By so doing they discover or construct knowledge by themselves
3. Teacher guided: in pragmatic classrooms, collaborative learning is a process of peer interaction that is mediated and structured by the teacher. Discussion can be prompted by the presentation of specific concepts, problems or scenarios, and is guided by means of effectively directed questions, the introduction and clarification of concepts and information, and references to previously learned material.

Based on these, the teacher is expected to:

- i. Provide a pragmatic classroom environment that will boost group interaction.
- ii. Discourage competition while encouraging collaboration and sharing of experience among students.
- iii. Consider the students opinion or contribution as important whether right or wrong.
- iv. Providing the necessary resources and guidance needed to prompt the students into knowledge construction in the desired direction.



- v. Ensure that students feel secured to ask/answer questions, interact and contribute to group discussions freely.
- vi. Ensure that more and less brilliant student learn from each other.
- vii. Provide scaffolding support where necessary, at the right time and the right level.

Implications on Students' Learning

The implications of pragmatic language teaching on pupil's learning are that:

1. They no longer sit down to be informed or loaded by the teacher but discover lesson contents by themselves as they respond to the teacher's prompting in the form of questions, assignments, project works and such like.
2. Students now learn to work in groups as organized by the teacher for effective collaboration or cooperative learning.
3. They become co-custodian of knowledge as they share and build on their previous experiences to create new knowledge.
4. They take responsibility to learn by actively participating and collaborating in the process.
5. Student should learn to consider the opinion of others by appreciating and investigating new ideas and lessons learnt from their colleagues.
6. They should value every experience, learn from them and be ready to share with their groups in order to improve their cognitive ability continuously.

Importance of Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique in Classroom Teaching

Pragmatic Language Teaching lends credence to teaching/learning process in the following ways:

1. Encourages active participation of students.
2. Encourages active participation and interaction among learners, the teacher and other components of the teaching learning process.
3. Encourages the development of skill.
4. Encourages students to develop and use their own initiatives.
5. Discourages rote learning and passivity on the part of students.



6. Stimulates interest and aids retentions.
7. Develops critical thinking and problem-solving capacity.
8. Promotes individual and cooperative learning in the classroom.
9. Promotes team spirit among students as they work in group.
10. Triggers curiosity on the part of learners through the use of activity-based teaching methods employed by the teacher.
11. Promotes high self-esteem on the part of students based on their trust in self-approach to learning. The teacher guides the students to trust, believe in themselves and demonstrate that they can accomplish given task.
12. Facilitates active construction of knowledge where students are encouraged to explore and interact with the resources available.
13. Concretizes learning and knowledge in the sense that students are more likely to retain the facts that they discover and construct by themselves that those they are told or given by the teacher.
14. Helps in developing episodic memory. This refers to the ability to reminisce or recall past event based on particular episodes or encounter that facilitate retention and recall which are necessary for effective learning (Kanno, 2018).

Teaching Activities During the Study, Using Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique to Enhance Inferential Reading Comprehension:

A passage titled 'courage' was selected from Macmillan Brilliant Primary English Book 3. English language was code mixed/switched during the lesson, and the objectives of the study are stated below:

At the end of the lesson pupils should be able to:

1. Establish the act of courage as demonstrated by Audu.
2. Mention and explain the characteristics of courage as displayed by Audu.
3. Complete the anticipation guide before and after reading.
4. Discuss misconceptions or answers on the anticipation guide.
5. Explain reasons why questions were answered the way they were.

According to Kujawa and Huske (2015), the following steps were followed in using Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique (PLTT) to enhance inferential reading comprehension of Almajiri pupils during the research:



Lesson Presentation: Teacher presents the lesson in the following steps:

- i. He asks pupils to mention the characteristics of 'courage' based on their personal experiences.
- ii. He divides the pupils into groups and makes the copy of the reading passage available to each member of the group, he appoints a head for each group and also peers pupils with special learning needs with stronger readers.
- iii. The teacher distributes the anticipation guide prepared by him and guides pupils to read the statements. He also reminds them that they have opinions and that having an opinion does not mean it is truth or false.
- iv. Then he guides them to use their opinions and answer true or false to statements in the "pre-reading" column.
- v. He engages pupils in a conversation to share their answers and the opinions that support them, then reiterates that everyone is entitled to an opinion.
- vi. He asks pupils to answer true or false in the "post-reading" column based on facts from the story and also reminds them that their opinions are not to interfere with the facts in the reading.
- vii. He asks pupils to return to the text and guides them to highlight where they found answers to the questions (evidence). He discusses answers and guides pupils to share locations of the answers in the text.

Inferential Reading Comprehension

Inferential comprehension requires the reader/viewer to draw on their prior knowledge of a topic and identify relevant text clues to make an inference. Inferential comprehension is often referred to as 'between the lines' or 'think and search' comprehension. This level of comprehension requires more skill but can be achieved by young children (Donna 2016). More so, inferential reading comprehension involves determining what the text means. The reader will start with the stated information, this information is then used to determine deeper meaning that is not explicitly stated. Determining inferential meaning requires a reader to think about the text and draw a conclusion. Examples of the type of information that could be identified as inferential



meanings include: Generalisation, Cause and Effect Relationships, Future Predictions and Unstated Main Ideas.

Researches on the use of Pragmatic Language Teaching Techniques

Ortalib (2013) conducted an action research on the use of pragmatic language teaching technique with third grade struggling readers across multiple subject areas in United States of America. The target population for the study was grade 3 students. The findings of the study showed that explicit instruction of comprehension strategies such as anticipatory reading achievement.

More so, Antoni (2017) conducted a research to find out the effect of Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique (PLTT) on students' reading comprehension of procedure text, and writing interest. The researcher used quasi-experimental research where the entire classrooms were assigned to treatments. The population consists of 6 classes with 4 different programmes. The results of the study showed that students who were taught by using Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique (PLTT) performed better in reading and writing exercises compare to their counterparts who were not.

Moreover, Aaron (2015) also conducted a research using Pragmatic Language Teaching Techniques to improve the reading and writing of Bella, a 5th grade students who was reading at a 3rd grade level and displayed moderate writing difficulties, pragmatic language teaching technique became much more than a way for her to document and demonstrate her learning about concepts related to magnetism. Pragmatic language teaching technique became a critical tool which assisted her in the development of her writing skills and served as a motivator to write about her experiences.

This study on the impact of Pragmatics Language Teaching Techniques on the performance of Almajiri Learners of English in North-west zone, Nigeria is similar to what Ortalib (2013), Antoni (2017) and Aaron (2015) did. However, the reported researches were conducted outside the shores of Nigeria, hence, the need for the current study.

Methodology

The researcher made use of quasi experimental pre-test post-test design. There were experimental and control groups. The experimental group was



treated using Pragmatic Language Teaching techniques, while the control group was only exposed to the Traditional Method (TM) of teaching.

The population of this study comprised all the 35,652 pupils studying in modern Almajiri schools in North-West zone, Nigeria. The North-Western states are made up of Kano. Kebbi. Kaduna. Katsina. Jigawa. Sokoto and Zamfara. According to UBEC (2021), there are 35,652 pupils studying in modern Almajiri schools in North -West, Nigeria, this figure was also confirmed by media survey (2021). The target population of this study were 97 primary 5 Almajiri pupils in Mal. Kwaire Qur'anic School, Dakingari, Kebbi State and Tsangaya Model Integrated Boarding Primary School Tambuwal, Sokoto State. The primary five (5) Almajiri pupils are considered appropriate for the study because they are considered to be learners who have acquired a few grasps of the English words due to the fact that they have been in the primary school continuously for the period of five (5) years. More so, learners at this level are considered to be matured enough to co-operate with the researchers.

In order to investigate the Impact of Pragmatic Language Teaching techniques on inferential reading comprehension of Almajiri pupils, the research instruments for this study were divided into two, each of the section was made up of 15 questions, with the total questions of 30, and each of the questions carried 2 marks.

Discussion and Analysis

Descriptive statistics was used in this study. The data from the study was analyzed using frequency count, mean, standard deviation and t-test statistical method. This method is considered appropriate because the study is to show the difference between post-test achievement of the experimental and control groups; and the difference between performance and scores in using pragmatic language teaching technique to enhance the inferential reading comprehension performance of the Almajiri pupils.

Research Question:

What is the impact of Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique (PLTT) on inferential reading comprehension of Almajiri pupils?



Table 1 Pre-Test Performance Scores of the Experimental Group in inferential Comprehension

| Level | Score | No. of Students | % |
|--------|---------|-----------------|------|
| Zero | 0 | 20 | 38.5 |
| Low | 1 – 9 | 22 | 42.3 |
| Middle | 10 – 15 | 5 | 9.62 |
| High | 16 – 20 | 5 | 9.62 |
| Total | 20% | 52 | 100 |

The result clearly indicated that the inferential reading comprehension of the pupils was poor. They were simply lost and had a lot of problems comprehending the passage. While about 20% of the pupils performed within the middle range, and the high range respectively, almost 80% of the pupils fell within the low and zero range.

Furthermore, Table 2 shows the overall scores and performance of the experimental group in the pre-test from zero to high performance in Inferential reading comprehension.

Table 2 Pre-Test Performance Scores of the Control Group in Inferential Reading Comprehension

| Level | Score | No. of Students | % |
|--------|---------|-----------------|-------|
| Zero | 0 | 38 | 84.4 |
| Low | 1 – 9 | 7 | 15.55 |
| Middle | 10 – 15 | 0 | 0 |
| High | 16 – 20 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 20% | 45 | 100 |

The performance of the pupils in inferential reading comprehension was exceptionally poor. Most of the pupils scored zero with 7 of them scoring between 1-9 marks.

Mean and Standard Deviation of the Pre-Test Scores

This section presents the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups in means and standard deviation. The result revealed that the mean



inferential reading comprehension of the experimental group ($M = 15.23$, $SD = 4.501$) was slightly different from that of the control group ($M=15.45$, $SD 4.821$). The mean difference is 3.440 in favour of the control group. To confirm the difference, an independent sample t-test was conducted. The result of the computation is presented in Table 3 which also shows pre-test scores for experimental and control groups.

Table 3 Pre-Test Scores for Experimental and Control Group

| Group | N | \bar{X} | SD | Std. Error Mean | Mean Difference |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Experimental | 52 | 15.23 | 4.501 | 1.466 | |
| Control | 45 | 15.45 | 4.821 | 1.695 | 3.440 |
| Total | 97 | | | | |

Table 4 shows the pre-test scores for the experimental and control groups in Inferential reading comprehension. On the other hand, Table 4.16 shows Independent Samples T-Test on Pre-Test Scores.

Table 4 Independent Samples T-Test on Pre-Test Scores

| Group | N | \bar{X} | SD | Mean Difference | T | Df | P | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|-----------------|------|-----|------|---|--------|
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Experimental | 52 | 15.23 | 4.501 | 3.440 | 7.41 | 278 | .421 | 8.892 | -3.988 |
| Control | 45 | 15.45 | 4.821 | | | | | | |
| Total | 97 | | | | | | | | |

Table 4 presents the summary of independent samples t-test on pre-test scores for the experimental and control groups. The result revealed that the mean inferential reading comprehension scores of the experimental group ($M=15.23$, $SD = 4.501$) was slightly different from that of the control group ($M=15.45$, $SD = 4.821$). The mean difference is 3.440 in favour of the control group. The 95% confidence interval of the difference is -8.892 to -3.988. Since the means of the two groups were not homogenous, the results in the column for the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances must be used. The column provides two rows;



the first is for the hypothesis that assumed equal variances while the second row provides the results when equal variances are not assumed. According to the Welch's (1968) procedure, when the variances of two groups are not equal, the t-test values in the second row of the output must be used.

NULL HYPOTHESIS: There is no significant difference in the inferential reading comprehension of Almajiri pupils after exposing them to Pragmatic Language Teaching Techniques (PLTT).

Table 5: Post-Reading Comprehension Performance of Experimental and Control Groups

| Group | N | \bar{X} | SD | Std. Mean | Error | Mean Difference |
|--------------|----|-----------|--------|-----------|-------|-----------------|
| Experimental | 52 | 46.08 | 15.405 | 2.611 | | 10.449 |
| Control | 45 | 35.58 | 10.890 | 2.038 | | |
| Total | 97 | | | | | |

Table 4 presents the results of the inferential reading comprehension performance of pupils engaged in Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique and those engaged in traditional reading comprehension activities. The mean reading comprehension for the experimental group ($M = 46.08$, $SD = 16.405$) was higher than that of the control group ($M = 35.58$, $SD = 10.890$). The mean difference between the experimental and control group was 10.449 in favour of the experimental group. This shows that the experimental group performed better than the control group in reading comprehension. Thus, there is a difference between the inferential reading comprehension performance of pupils engaged in Pragmatic Language Teaching Techniques and those engaged in traditional reading comprehension activities.

Table 6 Independent Samples T-Test on Inferential Reading Comprehension Performance of Experimental and Control Groups

| Group | N | \bar{X} | SD | T | Df | P | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
|--------------|----|-----------|-------|------|----|------|---|-------|
| | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Experimental | 52 | 26.98 | 4.064 | 5.45 | 95 | .000 | 2.860 | 6.138 |
| Control | 45 | 21.58 | 3.609 | | | | | |
| Total | 97 | | | | | | | |



Table 6 presents the results of the inferential reading comprehension performance of pupils engaged in PLTT and those engaged in conventional reading comprehension activities. The mean inferential reading comprehension for the experimental group ($M = 26.98$, $SD = 4.074$) was higher than that of the control group ($M = 21.58$, $SD = 3.609$). The mean difference between the experimental and control group was 4.491 in favour of the experimental group. The 95% confidence interval of the difference was 2.869 to 6.138. The result for $t(95) = 5.45$, $p = .000$ shows a significant difference between the two means. This shows that the performance of experimental and the control group in inferential reading comprehension was significantly different. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated no significant difference was rejected. In other words, there was a significant difference between the inferential reading comprehension performance of pupils engaged in Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique and those engaged in conventional reading comprehension activities.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this research clearly indicate that there was a significant difference in the inferential reading comprehension performance of Almajiri pupils that were exposed to PLTT and their counterparts that were engaged with the conventional teaching activities. The findings established that pragmatic language teaching technique has remarkable impact on inferential reading performance of the pupils. This reaffirms the views of Readance, Bean and Baldwin (2018), Cowelty (2014), Donna (2016) and Tetty and Au (2015) that Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique (PLTT) essentially challenges students' preconception or misconception about a topic or concept, help them set a purpose for reading and access prior knowledge about a particular topic, and aid them in reading strategically.

The results of the study also confirm Duffelmeyer (2014) and Kujawa & Haske (2015) that Pragmatic Language Teaching Techniques are designed to increase content knowledge and reading comprehension concurrently while activating prior knowledge.

The use of PLTT had major impact on the outcome of the study. Before reading, Pragmatic Language Teaching Techniques helped activating prior



knowledge, setting a purpose for reading, predicting, positioning, asking questions on what they know, making connections were diligently treated. Anticipation guide prepares the pupils for text by asking them to answer a series of essential questions or statements related to the content material to help foster discussion and comprehension before reading. Anticipation Guide consists of statements related to the text the pupils were made to read. Some of the statements were true, some were false, some provoked deep discussion, controversy and disagreement. The outcome of using pragmatic language teaching technique to enhance the reading comprehension performance of the pupils was successful because it developed their critical thinking ability and also promoted cross-cultural understanding among them.

Conclusion

The outcome of this study has established that there is a significant difference between the performance of Almajiri pupils that were exposed to Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique (PLTT) in teaching inferential reading comprehension and those that were treated with the conventional method of teaching. The inferential reading comprehension of the pupils placed under the treatment of PLTT improved drastically compared to their counterparts that were only confined to the traditional method of teaching. The conclusion of this study is that using Pragmatic Language Teaching Technique (PLTT) to enhance inferential reading comprehension of Almajiri pupils impact positively on their academic achievement.

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