IMPROVING STUDENTS' SELF CONCEPT IN COMPREHENSION AND SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE THROUGH TEACHING STRATEGIES AND COMIC PACKAGES

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Abstract

This paper looks into improving students'' self-concept through teaching strategies and comic packages in comprehension and sentence construction in English language. As an experimental study, the study adopted a three-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design. The population consisted of 16,477 Junior Secondary School students in Ekiti State during the 2016/2017 academic session. The sample consisted of 243 Junior Secondary class II students from six Junior Secondary Schools in Ekiti State. Four research instruments were used for data collection which were all validated and tested for reliability through the Crombach Alpha method of reliability. Data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics of ANCOVA to test the hypothesis formulated. Multiple Classification Analysis was used to determine the effect of treatment on adjusted post-test mean scores of respondents tested at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that self-concept is a very important factor which determines students' success in every area of their lives, hence students should be helped to develop positive self-concept of themselves so that they see themselves as being able. It was recommended that teachers should collaborate with school administrators to plan various activities to support positive self-perception for enhancing academic achievement and fix the kind of activities that will support both nonacademic and academic self-concept of students; ESL class settings should be arranged to allow students to increase their motivation and interests in such a way to help each other in order to foster the spirit of cooperation

and team work, communication and interaction with colleagues and teachers in class as these could build their self-confidence and improve their self-image.

Keywords: Self Concept, Comprehension, Sentence Construction, Comics.
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Introduction

The needs of the present age demands that all people, men and women, are culturally sensitive and internationally focused so as to have a better orientation towards the future. In a multilingual state like Nigeria where the indigenous languages have refused to grow towards national and international statuses, English language becomes more relevant in communicating feelings and ideas. It is English language for now that the child needs to solve all his problems. He has to read textbooks, browse the internet and receive instruction in school through this language. Indeed, education for the development of the total man emphasized by the National Policy on Education (NPE) is achievable through English language. It becomes imperative that its curriculum should be adequately developed. Multiculturalism emphasizes that every individual irrespective of the race, ethnic groups/class and gender should be treated with equal value. This mentality encourages the expression of the diverse cultures by the various groups in the society (Njemanze, 2014).

. In Nigeria, English language is used as a second language. It is believed that English language learning can take place both at home and at school. The teacher and the students are different, and therefore, there might be different motivations for learning as well. At school, the problems may appear when the class consists of a big number of students. The noisy class does not only disturb the students who really want to study, but also influences the students' concentration in the class. The condition like this can make the students feel bored and do not like to study. At home, the problems may appear when they recall the subjects from school and they still do not understand the lesson and none of the people at home can help them. If this condition continues they will feel very bored and not interested in studying English or any other subject that requires reading and comprehension (Royanti, 2007).

Effective comprehension for students in the context areas is important. Oyinloye and Ofodu (2008) citing Marleke, opine that reading is essential to full participation in modern society; adds quality to life, provides access to culture and cultural heritage, empowers and emancipates and unites people together. However, it was found that parents and students see inability to read as a result of spending much time with television and video sets, lack of reading centres, financial constraints and poor reading skills and techniques.

Akinwamide (2013) observes that the real constraints in writing is not the message or the intended audience but the intricacies of expressing the message to produce satisfaction in the writer, comprehension in the audience and achieving conformity and acceptability as an art. Nik, Hamzah, & Rafidee (2010) intone therefore, that, there is indication that students are incapable of using language appropriately and effectively in their writing performance. It is assumed that mastering a language is not an easy task especially English language, that is a second language (L2) to the students. Moreover, the skills in writing, particularly writing in L2 is difficult because non-native students needed more than just creativity to form ideas in English.

Students' self-concept is an important variable which affects students' performance in English language. When a student has a high concept of him/herself, he tends to perform better and vice versa. Researchers have found that there is a high relationship between self-concept and students' academic achievement. It has been a general notion over the years that level of academic performance has been very low among Junior High Schools students. This trend, according to Laryea; Abdul-Jaleel and Dawson-Brew (2014), has been attributed to certain factors including social, economic, religion and psychological, under which self-concept finds expression. According to Boutler (2002), if students are expected to perform well in their examinations, positive self-concept is sine qua non. WAEC (2012) observed that students' low academic performance could be linked to poor self-concept. Self-concept may be understood as a perception every human has of himself or herself. It is a component of personality development and indicates who we are and how we fit into the world (Laryea et al (2014). Nowadays, the affective side of learners receives a noticeable attention in the learning process, mainly affective factors. Naouel's (2015) study reveals that there is a positive relationship between students' self-esteem and their foreign language speaking performance, and that this relationship affects directly their level of academic achievement in general. It was also confirmed that a learner's real judge in learning a foreign spoken language is himself. Weber, Martin, & Cayanus (2005, Mazer, et al., (2013) found that when students consider their classroom work to be meaningful, have the opportunity to demonstrate their competence, and believe their input is vital to the course, they are motivated to communicate with their instructors for relational, functional, and participatory reasons. Interested and involved students learn better. "Students with high interest perceive a content area to be important, are active and involved in the subject, and feel knowledgeable in the subject matter".

Studies have been conducted in language teaching methods and approaches that could help improve English as a second language learning and results have shown that communicative use of language in real situations is the objective of language learning. Soares & Luz (2015) opined that it is time to change to a method

of teaching English language that guarantees communication and interaction between teacher and students and promote a supportive relationship between them. Accordingly, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is based on the idea that learners need to be involved in real communication, using natural strategies for language acquisition, and this will allow them to learn to use the language in different contexts. Also, Collaborative Teaching (CT) strategy enables students to learn from each other and explain and share their ideas with others in small groups. It also promotes good relationships and communication among students.

It is believed that the use of CLT CT strategies are effective when combined with authentic materials and will bring about the goals of language teaching.

However, students have not been performing well in this subject as their achievement has been dwindling in the recent past at the secondary school level. Joseph and Joshua (2010) observe that as a result, students cannot function effectively in the academic use of English which has made it increasingly difficult for students to fill their admission quota in the different colleges and universities in Nigeria. Further observation shows that the Nigeria students' use of the English language in schools has numerous learning problems; many students come from homes and environments in which English is not used, hence students have a lot of difficulties mastering the language.

In view of the downward trend in students' performance in English language, there is the need to do the inevitable to boost students' use of the target language and hence academic performance in examinations. There is the need to motivate students to learn the subject in a way that will interest them. The teacher needs to bring something extraordinary and enjoyable to the English language classroom in order to motivate them to learn. Researches have shown that students enjoy reading comics, so it makes perfect sense to use such a resource to motivate and enhance students learning. Graham (2011), citing Ujiieand Krashen explains that using comics is good for students because it does not inhibit other types of reading and that it in fact facilitates heavier reading, which in time could lead to students becoming better readers. Comics have a "permanent, visual component" and by mixing comics with "dialogue, which is permanent, but not visual" , it is possible to create an exciting new set of English language teaching materials suitable for use by students. The tasks they perform are designed to motivate students to use language for specific aims (Van den Branden, 2009) where vocabulary is predominantly learned by focusing on form for better retention (Laufer, 2005).

Mazer (2012) also notes that "students who experience heightened emotional interest are pulled toward a content area because they are energized, excited, and emotionally engaged by the material". It is crucial to be inserted in a safe environment where students can feel engaged and motivated to learn, share their experiences, and demonstrate their competence. Koplow (2002) proposed that

effective student-teacher relationships encourage greater confidence and classroom engagement in much the same manner as sensitive parenting encourages a greater sense of security and confidence. Students need the confidence and motivation to learn, which can be stimulated by the relationship they hold with their teachers. Students also perform well when they feel that the teacher is passionate about what they are teaching and pass security and confidence to the students. When teachers believe in students' ability to succeed, it motivates them because students don't want to let them down but it also makes students believe that they are more capable than they even imagined.

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Using authentic material such as comic strip can motivate students to build their confidence. Hence, the material presented should match with the level of the students so that they enjoy it and it does not frustrate them. Students will be more interested and more active in learning, feel something new and different from what they usually get in their class; they will be active as participants and have more a chance to express their minds, emotions, feelings and attitudes.

Purpose of the Study

The study tried to find out whether there will be any difference in the performance of students in comprehension and sentence construction based on their self-concept before and after the experiment.

Research Question

Will there be any difference in the performance of students in comprehension and sentence construction based on their self-concept before and after the experiment?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the performance of students in comprehension and sentence construction based on their self-concept before and after the experiment.

Method

The study adopted a three-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design. The population for the study consisted of all Junior Secondary School students in Ekiti State, totaling 16,477 during 2016/2017 academic session. The sample consisted of 243 Junior Secondary class II students from six Junior Secondary Schools in Ekiti State, selected through the multistage sampling. Four schools were used for the experimental groups while two schools were used for the control group. Four research instruments were used for data collection and were all validated. The

materials used for the study were 12 relevant comic packages that could help to enhance students' comprehension and sentence construction skills.   Two experimental and one control groups were involved. Research assistants were used for the research. A pre-test was administered on the students who also filled the questionnaire before the research commenced. Intact classes were used for the research.   The experiment lasted for six weeks after which a post-test was administered and the second set of questionnaire administered.   Scores were allocated accordingly for analysis using appropriate statistical tools.

Data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics of ANCOVA to test the hypothesis formulated.   Multiple Classification Analysis was used to determine the effect of treatment on adjusted post-test mean scores of respondents tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

In order to test the hypothesis, scores relating to self-concept before and after the experiment were computed and compared for statistical significance among the treatment using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: ANCOVA of Students' Performance in Comprehension and Sentence Construction based on their Self-Concept before and after the Treatment

Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F_{cal}*	*F_{table}*
Corrected Model	5620.522	3	1873.507	25.385	2.65
Covariate (Pretest)	2106.850	1	2106.850	28.547	3.89
Group	3614.877	2	1807.439	24.490*	3.04
Error	17638.894	239	73.803		
Corrected Total	23259.416	242			
Total	1624069.000	243			

p<0.05(Significant Result)

Table 1 shows that there is significant difference in the performance of students based on their self-concept before and after the experiment ($F_{2,239}$=24.490; p<0.05). The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant difference in the students' self-concept before and after the experiment.

Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) was carried out to determine effectiveness of the treatment (CLT and CT strategies with comic packages) at enhancing students' self-concept. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) of Students' Performance, Exposed to CLT and CT Strategies with Comic Packages and Control Groups based on their Self-Concept

Grand Mean=81.16					
Variable + Category	**N**	**Unadjusted Devn'**	**Eta ^{2}**	**Adjusted For Independent + Covariate**	**Beta**
CLT	87	3.48	**.24**	3.50	**.29**
CT	79	1.49		1.55	
Control	77	-5.45		-5.37	
Multiple R = 0.294 **Multiple R^2 =** 0.086					

The result in Table 2 shows that students exposed to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with comic packages, had the highest adjusted mean score of 84.66 (81.16+3.50), followed by those taught with Collaborative Teaching (CT) strategies with comic packages; 82.71 (81.16+1.55) while those in the control group (CG) had the least adjusted mean score of 75.79 (81.16+(-5.37). It implies that the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Collaborative Teaching (CT) strategies with comic packages are effective teaching strategies for enhancing students' self-concept. The treatment accounted for about 24% (Eta^2=0.24) of the observed variance in students' self-concept.

Discussion

Findings from research hypothesis three reveal that there is significant difference in the performance of students in comprehension and sentence construction based on their self-concept before and after the experiment. Self-concept is a necessary factor in students' successful performance in language study. The way a student sees himself determines the level of performance. Engaging in interactive activities such as role play and group work through CLT and CT strategies must have given the students eye opener to see that they are also important in the class. This must have changed their self-perception positively and

consequently, their performance. Presentation of the comic material with enhanced self-concept also has given a boost to the students' performance. Hence, the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Collaborative Teaching (CT) strategies with comic packages are effective teaching strategies for enhancing students' self-concept. This is in line with Naouel's (2015) findings which reports that there is a positive relationship between students' self-esteem and their foreign language speaking performance, and that this relationship affects directly their level of academic achievement in general. Also, Boutler (2002) affirms that, if students are expected to perform well in their examinations, positive self-concept is sine qua non. The result is also in line with Weber, Martin, & Cayanus (2005, Mazer, et al., (2013) who found that when students consider their classroom work to be meaningful, have the opportunity to demonstrate their competence, and believe their input is vital to the course, they are motivated to communicate with their instructors for relational, functional, and participatory reasons. Interested and involved students learn better. "Students with high interest perceive a content area to be important, are active and involved in the subject, and feel knowledgeable in the subject matter".

Conclusion and Recommendations

Without any doubt, self-concept is a very important factor which determines students' success in every area of their lives. It is therefore important that the student is helped to develop positive self-concept of himself/herself so that he sees himself/herself as being able.

Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommended:

xiii. Teachers should help students to realize the goal of language teaching so that students will understand this at the beginning of the lesson and could work towards it.

xiv. Teachers should build positive self concept into students at the beginning of their lessons so that students will see themselves as capable and not frustrated.

xv. Teachers should collaborate with school administrators to plan various activities to support positive self-perception for enhancing academic achievement and fix the kind of activities that will support both nonacademic and academic self-concept of students.

xvi. ESL class settings should be arranged to allow students to increase their motivation and interests in such a way to help each other in order to foster the spirit of cooperation and team work, communication and interaction with colleagues and teachers in class as these could build their self-confidence and improve their self-image.

xvii. Activities that relate to positive self-concept could be integrated into class work where students are given assignment to design their own comics in

form of stories and come to tell the story in class in order to build their self-confidence.

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