

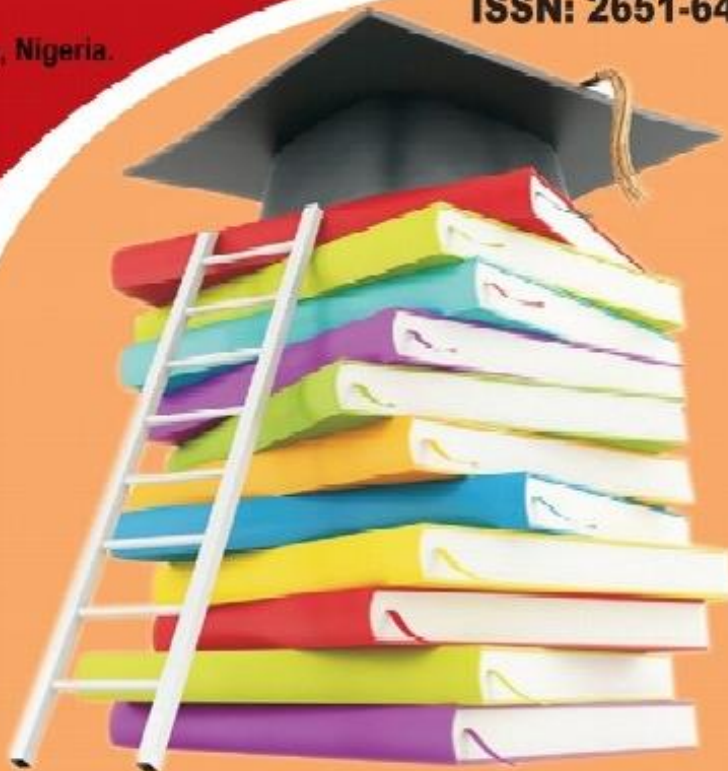
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Teachers' Knowledge and use of Dialogic Book Reading Strategy for Teaching Literacy in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State

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Abstract

The study examined teacher's knowledge and use of dialogic book reading strategy in Ilorin metropolis. The survey research design was adopted. The participants were 200 teachers selected using the multistage sampling procedure. The instruments used was Teachers' Knowledge and Use of Dialogic Book Reading Strategy Questionnaire ($r = 0.85$). The descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean and percentage was used to test the formulated hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that teachers had knowledge of, but did not utilise dialogue reading skills. It was then recommended that teachers should be exposed to regular training, while supportive environments, and curriculum integration are also essential. Furthermore, access should be equal, and implementation should not depend on teachers' gender, qualifications, experience, or school type.

Keywords: Literacy skills, Dialogic book reading, Language skills, Reading ability

Introduction

The development of a child's literacy skills is crucial for the entire educational journey, as early years lay the foundation for later learning and social interaction and literacy as the soul of other subject achievement to read and understand those subjects' concepts. A child's entire educational path depends heavily on the development of their literacy skills because a child's early years are also crucial for the acquisition of language and the development of literacy skills, which lay the groundwork for later learning and social interaction where dialogic book reading strategy is one for the help of literacy.

Literacy skills are fundamental to personal and academic development, enabling individuals to effectively engage with, comprehend, and utilize written text. These skills encompass a variety of competencies, including decoding, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing. Decoding is the ability to translate written symbols into sounds, a foundational skill that involves recognizing letter-sound relationships and understanding how letters form words (Castles et al., 2018). Fluency is the capacity to read text smoothly,

accurately, and with appropriate speed and expression, which facilitates better comprehension (Hudson et al., 2020). Vocabulary refers to the breadth of words an individual understands and can use, which is crucial for reading comprehension and effective communication (National Reading Panel, 2000). Comprehension is the ability to understand, interpret, and derive meaning from written text, including recognizing main ideas, and details, and making inferences (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). Writing encompasses the ability to express thoughts, ideas, and information clearly and effectively through written language, supporting cognitive development and communication skills (Graham et al., 2020).

Teaching and learning of literacy have been so prominent that many scholars have found different strategies to improve literacy skills at different levels one effective approach is the use of explicit phonics instruction, which helps learners understand the relationship between letters and sounds, significantly improving their reading fluency and comprehension (Ehri, 2020). Additionally, integrating literacy across various content areas, such as using reading and writing activities in

subjects like science and social studies, has been shown to foster deeper learning and critical thinking skills (Fang & Coatoam, 2019) while opportunities for students to engage in collaborative learning, such as peer reading and group discussions, enhance their literacy skills by promoting social interaction and peer feedback (Vaughn et al., 2021). More so, incorporating digital literacy tools, including educational apps and interactive e-books, has been associated with improved reading engagement and literacy outcomes among young learners (Schmid et al., 2020) and dialogic book reading strategy is among them.

Developing strong literacy skills is essential for academic achievement and lifelong learning. These skills enable individuals to access information, engage with diverse ideas, and participate fully in society (Shanahan et al., 2010). Literacy is not only a cornerstone of education but also a critical tool for personal and professional growth. With strong literacy skills, individuals can better navigate the complexities of daily life, understand and critically evaluate information, and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Studies such as Mol et al. (2008), Nyhout and O'Neill (2013), Dowdall et al. (2020) have reinforced the effectiveness of dialogic reading in promoting literacy skills.

Dialogue book reading strategy was done by teachers to ask targeted questions to urge pupils to speak up during the book reading session. The goal is to maximize the development of children's oral language. Dialogic reading has been shown to enhance children's expressive vocabulary, writing abilities, morphological understanding, and vocal language skills. With the dialogic reading technique, the companion uses organized instructions (scaffolding) to get pupils talking throughout tale reading exercises. When practicing dialogic reading, the teachers will employ prompts known as CROWD, which stands for completion, recall, open question,

wh-question, and distance (making connections between book illustrations and stories and children's prior experiences) (Towson & Gallagher, 2014).

While reading, pause frequently to ask open-ended questions that encourage children to think and respond in more than one word. Questions like, "What do you think will happen next?" or "Why do you think the character did that?" promote critical thinking and verbal expression (Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003). When children respond to questions, expand on their answers to model more complex language and thinking. For example, if a child says, "The dog is happy," you might respond, "Yes, the dog looks very happy because he found his favourite toy!".

Teachers encourage children to participate actively by letting them turn the pages, point to pictures, and even read parts of the text if they can. This physical involvement helps maintain their interest and reinforces their connection to the story. Repetitive reading of the same book can help deepen comprehension and retention. Each subsequent reading can focus on different story aspects, characters, and vocabulary. This repetition reinforces learning, allows children to become more familiar with the language and concepts and helps children make connections between the story and their own experiences. Ask questions like, "Have you ever felt like the character?" or "What would you do in that situation?" Making personal connections enhances comprehension and empathy (Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000).

McLeod and McDade (2022) in their study revealed that many primary school teachers are not sufficiently knowledgeable and trained in this method, resulting in underutilization of its potential benefits even though Wasik and Hindman, (2021) stated that teachers who are well-versed in dialogic reading techniques, such as asking open-ended questions, encouraging predictions, and expanding on children's responses tend to

implement more effective literacy interventions and a better understanding of dialogic reading, supported by continuous professional development, can significantly enhance literacy outcomes, particularly for early learners as dialogic book reading enhances children's vocabulary and language skills through open-ended conversations, introducing new words and concepts in a meaningful context. It improves comprehension and critical thinking skills by encouraging children to think about the story, predict outcomes, and make connections to their own experiences. Teachers help children develop inferential and analytical skills through active engagement with the text.

Dialogic reading is recognized for its effectiveness in enhancing children's vocabulary, comprehension, and narrative skills (Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2021), but many teachers are not systematically incorporating it into their daily literacy routines. The usage level of dialogic book reading among primary school teachers for literacy development tends to be inconsistent, often varying depending on the teacher's knowledge, experience, and access to resources. This made Wasik & Hindman, (2020) suggest that when teachers do engage in dialogic reading, they frequently underutilize key strategies, such as prompting students to predict outcomes or encouraging them to actively participate in discussions. Moreover, the consistent application of dialogic reading techniques in classrooms is often hindered by time and instructional materials, despite its proven benefits and this called for a need for targeted teacher training and support to fully utilize dialogic reading's potential (McLeod & McDade, 2022).

Teachers knowing of dialogical book reading will improve the adoption and consistently use this dialogic book reading strategy to facilitate the teaching and learning of literacy in the classroom. Hence, the situation underscores the need for targeted research to

examine teachers' knowledge and use of dialogic book reading strategies Ilorin metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of early literacy development in shaping children's academic and social success. Dialogic book reading, an interactive shared reading practice, has emerged as a highly effective strategy for enhancing young children's language and literacy skills. Despite its proven benefits, the extent to which teachers are knowledgeable about and utilize this strategy remains unclear, particularly in the primary school level which is the foundation to blend, shape and adjust the children's fundamental reading skills. Widen teachers' knowledge and the assurance use of dialogic book reading is very essential to improve literacy skills in primary schools. Hence, the research investigated teachers' knowledge and use of dialogic book reading strategies for literacy development in primary schools within Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised and answered in the study

1. What is the teacher's level of knowledge regarding the dialogic book reading strategy in Ilorin Metropolis?
2. To what extent do teachers in Ilorin Metropolis use dialogic book reading strategies in literacy classrooms?

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted in this study. The participants were 200 English/Literacy teachers purposively selected from 10 schools in Ilorin, Nigeria. Teachers' Knowledge and Use of Dialogic Book Reading Strategy in Ilorin Metropolis Questionnaire ($r=0.85$) was used for data collection. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics of

frequency counts, mean and percentage.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the teachers' level of knowledge regarding the dialogic book reading strategy for teaching literacy in Ilorin Metropolis?

In order to ascertain the extent to which teachers have the knowledge regarding the dialogic book reading strategy in Ilorin Metropolis, the responses of the teachers (respondents) were analysed using descriptive statistics and the result of the analysis is presented in table 2.

Table 1: Analysis on the Level of Knowledge of Teachers on Dialogic Book Reading

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1.	Dialogic book reading allows interaction.	71	99	20	10	3.12	0.67
2.	Dialogic book enhance s children's language and literacy skills.	62	95	30	13	3.09	0.78
3.	Dialogic book reading does not involve prompt, evaluate, expand, and repeat.	40	70	70	20	2.57	1.35
4.	Dialogic book reading does not recognize the importance of transforming reading from a passive activity to an interactive dialogue.	40	85	57	18	2.48	1.47
5.	Dialogic book reading allows asking of questions to engage children.	28	84	77	11	2.73	1.16
6.	You cannot add information to children's responses in dialogic book reading	27	74	69	30	2.52	1.32
7.	Encouraging children to repeat the expanded information occurs in dialogic book reading.	29	97	46	28	2.84	1.25
8.	I cannot develop narrative and critical thinking skills of children through dialogic book reading.	21	90	77	12	2.79	1.17
9.	Teacher is a facilitator who encourages children to interact with the story in dialogic book reading.	25	92	62	21	2.71	1.15
10.	Dialogic Book Reading involves the use of questions that start with who, what, when, where, why, or how.	33	97	65	5	2.69	1.31
11.	Crowd role in dialogic book reading provide structure for teacher-led questioning.	28	106	49	17	3.41	0.45
12.	Dialogic Book Reading allows distancing prompt to connect the story to the child's own experiences.	30	79	73	18	2.51	1.43
13.	You can explain new words and use them in different contexts in dialogic book reading.	32	91	57	20	2.64	1.37
14.	Children learn how to structure stories and convey their thoughts coherently in Dialogic Book Reading	34	119	36	11	3.65	0.41
15.	Recognizing and valuing the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of children is involved in dialogic book reading	46	98	44	12	3.17	0.71
Weighted Mean						2.86	

Decision Rule: Very Low: 0.00 – 1.00 Low: 1.01 – 2.00 High: 2.01 – 3.00 Very High: 3.01 – 4.00

Table 1 shows the level of knowledge of Teachers on Dialogic Book Reading in primary schools in Ilorin. The respondents agreed that children learn how to structure stories and

convey their thoughts coherently in dialogic book reading (Mean = 3.65), crowd role in dialogic book reading provide structure for teacher-led questioning (Mean = 3.41),

recognizing and valuing the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of children is involved in dialogic book reading (Mean = 3.17), while teachers cannot add information to children's responses in dialogic book reading (Mean = 2.52), dialogic book reading allows distancing prompt to connect the story to the child's own experiences (Mean = 2.51) and dialogic book reading does not recognize the importance of transforming reading from a passive activity to an interactive dialogue (Mean = 2.48) were the items with the lowest mean. The weighted mean is 2.86 which is higher than the threshold of 2.50. This means that teachers' knowledge of dialogic

book reading was high.

Research Question 2: To what extent do teachers in Ilorin Metropolis use dialogic book reading strategies in their classrooms?

In order to ascertain the extent to which the teachers utilize dialogic book reading strategy in their classroom within Ilorin Metropolis. The responses of the teachers (respondents) were analysed using descriptive statistics and the result of the analysis is presented in table 3.

Table 2: Analysis on the extent of Teachers Usage of Dialogic Book Reading strategy in classroom

S/N	ITEMS	A	AA	S	NT	Mean	SD
1	I do not choose books with rich illustrations, engaging storylines	95	64	31	10	1.95	0.87
2	I prefer books that offer opportunities for discussion, with clear sequences and relatable themes.	15	79	61	45	1.91	0.91
3	I do not pre-read the book to identify key points for discussion	89	73	36	2	1.79	0.96
4	I do not ask open-ended questions to initiate conversation before reading.	100	56	25	18	2.37	0.43
5	I do not need to listen to the child's response attentively when reading.	125	65	8	2	2.14	0.58
6	I make predictions about the story based on the cover and illustrations.	79	78	35	8	1.71	1.11
7	I plan questions and prompts based on the sequence and strategy.	13	75	78	34	1.68	1.25
8	I allow Children to remember details from the story.	29	44	86	41	1.49	1.37
9	I do not need to encourage children to describe and explain parts of the story.	99	85	10	6	1.53	1.27
10	I use who, what, when, where, why, and how questions in reading exercise	17	77	96	10	1.44	1.41
11	I use different voices for characters and emphasize key points.	24	48	86	42	1.51	1.32
12	I need to validate the children's contributions and build on their ideas.	16	54	79	51	1.48	1.44
13	I talk about the main events, characters, and settings after reading.	21	41	75	63	1.46	1.42
14	I do not connect themes and lessons from the story to real life experiences.	89	73	26	12	1.75	1.13
15	I do not discuss how the characters' experiences relate to the children's own lives.	88	83	21	8	1.72	1.21
Weighted Mean:		1.73					

Decision Rule: Very Low: 0.00 – 1.00 Low: 1.01 – 2.00 High: 2.01 – 3.00 Very High: 3.01 – 4.00

Table 2 shows the level of Teachers usage of Dialogic Book Reading in primary schools in Ilorin. The respondents agreed that they do not ask open-ended questions to initiate conversation before reading (Mean = 2.37), they do not need to listen to the child's response attentively when reading (Mean = 2.14), they do not choose books with rich illustrations, engaging storylines, and age-appropriate content. (Mean = 1.95), while teachers use who, what, when, where, why, and how questions in reading exercise (Mean = 1.44), need to validate the children's contributions and build on their ideas (Mean = 1.48) and allowing children to remember details from the story (Mean = 1.49) were the items with the lowest mean. The weighted mean is 1.73 which is lower than the benchmark of 2.50, indicating that the level of teachers' usage of dialogic book reading is low.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that teachers' knowledge of dialogic book reading strategy was high. This is supported by the study by Hailemariam and McLeod (2023) which revealed the medium level of knowledge of teacher on dialogic book reading strategy being used by the teachers. On the other hand, Smith and Brown, (2022) related the disparity in the knowledge of the teachers on dialogic book reading strategy and suggests a need for more comprehensive professional development programs to enhance teachers' knowledge in dialogic reading techniques and professional development and pre-service teacher training programs to equip educators with the dialogue reading strategy and later found that teachers who had participated in targeted professional development sessions demonstrated a higher level of competency in dialogic reading compared to those who had not, meanwhile, the study underscores the importance of professional development in enhancing instructional practices (Smith and Brown, 2022).

Also, this study revealed that teachers' usage of dialogue book reading strategy in Ilorin

Metropolis was low. This is as the result of the fact that practical application of dialogic reading strategies in classrooms was seldom. To a survey by Roberts et al. (2022), 60% of teachers reported using dialogic reading at least once a week, while 20% used it daily. However, the depth of implementation often depends on the knowledge, resources available and the support from school administration.

Conclusion

It was concluded that teachers' knowledge of dialogic book reading strategy for literacy development was high, but their use of the strategy for literacy development in Ilorin metropolis was low. However, the strategy was more widely understood and implemented in private primary schools than in public ones. This disparity may be due to limited understanding of the strategy's application among public school teachers, indicating a need for targeted seminars or workshops.

Recommendations

To enhance both the knowledge and effective use of dialogic book reading strategies among teachers, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Regular and comprehensive training sessions on dialogic reading strategies should be organized for both pre-service and in-service teachers to strengthen their understanding and practical application of the method.
2. Teachers should be adequately equipped through professional development programs, integration of the strategy into the curriculum, and the creation of supportive school environments that foster the use of dialogic book reading.
3. The training of pre-service and in-service teachers on dialogic book reading strategies should not be influenced by personal characteristics such as gender, academic qualifications, years of experience, or type of school.

4. Similarly, access to resources and opportunities for using dialogic book reading strategies should be equitable and not based on demographic or institutional differences among teachers.
5. Additionally, the lack of resources in public schools highlights the need for government support to enhance the effective use of dialogic book reading in improving pupils' literacy skills.

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