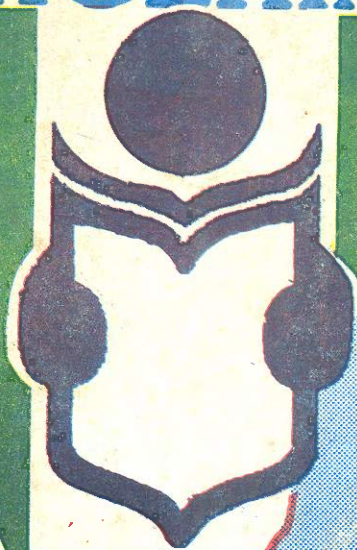


# LITERACY AND READING

In

NIGERIA



VOLUME 7

EDITED BY:

BAYO ABE

BAYO LAWAL

EMENA ONUKAOGU

TOYIN JEGEDE

ISBN 978 2343013



*Copyright*

**Published by The Reading Association of Nigeria**

**1997 Copyright Reserved: RAN**

**Computer Typesetting by:  
The Ile-Ife TAWL Centre of Excellence for Literacy  
and Literacy Education.**

**P.M. B. 003**

**Obafemi Awolowo University Post Office Ile-Ife,  
Nigeria**

**ISBN 978 2343013**

**Printed by:**

**Gbadeksol Nigeria Enterprises.  
70, More Street,  
Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria**





The Need for Musical Literacy in Nigeria - T. S. Adeola	- 233-240
Developing Creative Thinking through Selected Language Materials for Comprehension - E. O. Lambo	- 241-253
Literacy for Creativity: The Creative artist and his Audience - Apegba Ker	- 255-263.
Directed Reading Approach (DRA) : A Guide to the Realization of the Creative Impulse in Primary School Children - S.N.I. Oden	- 265-274.
<b>SUB THEME SIX: Literacy for Lifelong Learning</b>	- 275-
The Role of Translation in Literacy for Education - J. K. Okeke	- 277-285.
Promoting Independent Reading Habits in Primary Schools through a Literacy Rich Classroom Environment - J. O. Omojuwa	- 287-292
Nigerian Education and Functional Literacy by the Year 2000: How Feasible? - C. I. Ikegbunam	- 293-301.
Approaches to the Teaching of Literacy - D. Jolayemi	- 303-313.
The place of Reading in the Students' Efforts to Learn English as a Second Language -A.O. Folaran	- 315-324.
<b>SUB THEME SEVEN: Textbook, Library and Material Factors in Literacy</b>	- 325
Producing Teaching Materials for Reading in the EAP (English For Academic Purposes) Classroom - M.O. Tinuoye	- 327-336
Libraries and the Promotion of Literacy for Better Life among Rural Dwellers-M. E. Etuk	- 337-345.
Cultivating Effective Library Reading - Skills for Specific Purposes - J. O. Omoniyi	- 347-352.
Literacy for Education at the Primary Level	
A Content Analysis of the Reading Comprehension Passages in the Primary English Readers - S. J. Umoh	- 353-358
Reading Problems and Lexical Knowledge - C. S. Olorode	- 359-364.
<b>SUB THEME EIGHT: Instructional Strategies for Comprehension and Read Development</b>	- 365.
✓Cultivating Critical Reading Skills Through Group Activity - J.S.Aliyu	- 367-376.
Mathemagenic Behaviour In The Nigeria Reading Comprehension Class - Dr. A. Lawal	- 377-387.
✓Changes in Reading Styles between Primary and JSS.Classes: What Hope for Effective Teaching Methods?- S.O. Medahunsi	- 389-400.
Parents Role in Enhancing Reading Ability in Educable Mentally Retarded Children - E. P. Ntukidem	- 401-410
Influence of University Students' Reading Attitudes and Fields of Specialization on their Comprehension Performance in English - S.B. Olajide	- 411-424.
Effects of Two Instructional Methods on Pupils' Reading Comprehension - H. O. Yusuf	- 425-435.
<b>SUB THEME NINE: Factor In The Teacher Emancipation</b>	- 437.
Towards High Teacher Morale in The Use of English Curriculum C.E. Onukaogu	- 439-456.
Develpoing Effective Literacy for Effective Education A.F.Obi-Okoye	- 457-469.
Literacy For Academic Purposes: An Analysis of Microbiology Abstracts N. N. Osakwe	- 471-485.
✓A Comparative Assessment of the Reading Skills Component of Two Text-books for the Nigerian Junior Secondary School Y.Y. Muslimi - B. Lawal	-487-497.

# **Enhancing Reading And Writing Skills In The J. S. S. Through The Newspaper**

**Taiwo .O. Omojuwa (Mrs)**





### **Abstract**

The paper focuses on how to assist students in improving their reading and writing skills by using the newspaper as a text. The aim is to (i) improve the reading ability level of students who read newspapers (ii) enhance their writing skills based on the newspaper experience of these students, and (iii) forge a link between their newspaper experience and the world outside.

It starts by looking at the reading habit of Nigerians, with particular reference to the newspaper. It explains and gives guidelines to teachers and students on what to focus on when reading and how to read for specific purposes.

It then expatiates on the above techniques as well as materials which are now used in giving the students guidelines on writing strategies.

The paper concludes by making suggestions that would be of benefit to teachers, students as well as the average newspaper reader.

### **Introduction**

This paper is concerned with how to enhance and promote reading and writing skills, using the newspaper as a text in order to derive maximum understanding and enjoyment from the ability to use these skills effectively. The aim is to improve as well as sharpen the reading and writing skills of students who read newspapers.

Reading and writing have, for some time, been treated as separate skills that are not related in any way. This led to the distinction made between receptive skills (listening and reading) and expressive skills (writing and speaking). However, with the integrative approach to teaching and language learning, it was found that these two skills are actually closely related and could, most often, be regarded as one unified skill, with reading acting as a stimulant for writing and vice-versa. Cheyney (1992:19) actually argues that "writing is not an activity to be pursued in isolation from any other skill area".

People read in order to obtain information, develop vocabulary, make inferences, classify, observe, analyse, criticize, identify relationships, differentiate styles, draw conclusions and make generalizations. These should be the goal of a good reader. As the reader approaches the material to be read, he is expected to perform certain tasks either before, during or after he has finished reading.

Reading and writing skills are very essential to the student since he has to understand what he has to read in order that he can put it in writing. These two skills serve several purposes and functions which include personal, social, academic and political. In addition, these skills increase students' awareness and understanding of social problems, enable them to forge a moral code for themselves, encourage them to try to transform other people's lives and consider possibilities they would never have thought of. But how well do our students perform in these two skills? Perhaps, a look at the reading habits of Nigerians generally might help.

### Reading Habits of Nigerians

It has been observed that reading is not part of our culture. Olaofe (1988:15-16) in a study on the reading tradition in Nigeria, noted that:

*Nigeria's educational system is still largely examination-oriented ... The approach to the teaching of reading across the various educational levels is faulty... The Nigerian environment itself does not promote reading for pleasure.*

According to him, only 16.43% of the literate adults were reading.

Omojuwa (1991:5) later observed, among other things, that:

Teachers at post-primary education levels did not read, although they could. Adult outside the school system hardly ever read effectively: Books to read were not available in the homes of over 50% of Nigerian nuclear families: More seriously, books to read were not available to pupils within the formal school system... and Nigerian adults do not read for pleasure.

Several scholars also share the views of these authors (see for example Emenyonu, 1982; Lawal 1989).

The reading habits of Nigerians, from the fore-going, is slightly different when comes to the newspapers. The aim of the newspaper is to entertain, inform and educate its readers. It does this by providing up-to-date information on almost every subject that is taught in schools, in a simple and clear way. When newspapers were sold at affordable prices, people bought them just to scan headlines, browse through, obtain results of pools and even for later use.



...pping paper. People find it easier to read newspapers perhaps because it is  
...dy, can be read anywhere and at any time, can be easily rushed through  
...out fear of missing out on anything really significant etc. In the present times,  
...people buy newspapers largely because of the topical issues that are prevalent at a  
...rticular point in time - especially Nigeria's political and economic problems.

...he might be tempted to ask - Why deviate from the use of textbooks?: Why use  
...newspapers? Textbooks are voluminous, boring, stereotyped and frightening; they  
...actually put off some students. Whereas the newspaper has the following  
...advantages:

**It is authentic**

The currency of ideas, information, innovation, etc. is high. This means that  
...students can obtain up-to-date information from a fresh perspective on Law,  
...Education, Health, Technology, Politics, etc.

Newspapers are "user friendly" as students can always find interesting topics here.  
...like, sports, music, politics, health, international developments, environment,  
...education etc. The design is such that makes information readily accessible to the  
...reader through the headlines, editorials, opinion columns, etc. It challenges and  
...excites students by acting as a bridge between life in the classroom and the world  
...outside. Even with their present prohibitive prices, newspapers still remain the  
...most accessible text that covers a variety of subject areas in one edition capable of  
...being used in coping with the realities of day-to-day living.

It encourages students to think critically, interpret correctly, reason logically,  
...retain information and transfer it to the world of reality.

Research studies have indicated that students who study the newspaper in school  
...have greater knowledge of current events, are more politically aware, know more  
...about the world at large, have positive attitude towards school, improve their  
...reading skill and attitudes (as measured by standardized tests), and improve in  
...behaviour, motivation and verbal interaction (Cheyney, op. cit: ix).

The teacher who intends to use the newspaper as a text for his students should  
...always have some goals in mind before starting the process. Zakaluk and Samuels  
...(1988) observe that the writer always assumes that the reader has the necessary  
...requirements/resources for adequate understanding of what he is going to read.



This implies that the reader has a duty to perform - he has to bring in his own world experiences so that he can meet the writer on a common (middle) ground. He cannot, however, do this if the necessary resources - vocabulary, decoding skills, making inferences, etc. have not been cultivated to an appreciable level.

The teacher should give instruction that focuses on the process of ideas rather than the output. This is the process versus product approach. Process being the ideas as they flow out from the writer's pen, and product being what the reader makes of the outflow of ideas. Both process and product could also be in relation to the reader only.

Get copies of the paper you intend to use. You may choose to use a different one for each group. Then start by either classifying the paper yourself or by asking the students to do this. Typical classification can be Name of Newspaper, Date, Opinion, Education, Sports, Politics, State news, World news, Advertising, Legal matters, Letters to the Editor, etc.

However, doing it yourself gives you the advantage of promptly correcting errors made by the students. Determine which aspects of language use you want to teach. After you have done this, design activities that would help the students in improving their reading and writing skills. By this time, you should have selected the article you wish to present to your students as the activities they engage in will be based on the article.

Then consider the following:

- a. What is the desired outcome of the reading and writing lesson(s)
- b. The time available.
- c. Characteristics of the learners viz.:
  - i. Interest and relevance of the article to the students
  - ii. Proficiency level of these students
  - iii. Language needs of these students
  - iv. Topicality of the material, etc.

It is important that the teacher should read and fully understand the article before it is given to the students. As it is with the teacher, so it is with the students. Make sure they read and understand before they are asked to write. Students can only write what they understand and can correctly interpret. For instance, take a newspaper cartoon and ask them to read it. After about 5 minutes, ask them to interpret this cartoon. Listen as each student interprets. There is always a lot for the class to learn when you allow them to talk. Then you can ask each student to write down his own interpretation of the cartoon.

## Techniques

Techniques abound in the process of teaching reading and writing. The teacher can use the traditional technique which starts by the teacher telling the student what they will find in the article. Then, he teaches words that are new to the students. The teacher then asks questions after the article has been read. Finally, students will answer questions on what they have read.

A much more innovative approach would be to design pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading activities (Stoller, 1994). Take the article (Appendix 1) for instance. "Our children's future". One can design activities based on this article in this order:

### **Pre-reading activities**

- i. Have a general discussion on *what* the students observe about the present education system.
- ii. *Who* are the people involved?
- iii. *Why* are they behaving that way?
- iv. *How* can we help?
- v. *When* do you think things will change?

Then. Let students scan for details, skim for main ideas, consider new vocabulary such as socialization, increment, bounced, motivated, etc. These "why" questions help students to learn to draw conclusions.

### **During Reading activities**

Ask specific questions that will enable you to cover several aspects of language use as well as cover what they are reading e.g.

- i. What is the problem in this article?
- ii. Can you describe it?
- iii. Is there any comparison between this problem and any other you are familiar with?
- iv. When you think about the problem in this article, what first comes to your mind?
- v. In your own opinion, what role has the government played so far? etc.

Let students make notes as they read. The questions above should be on the chalkboard so that students are made to read for specific purposes. They are free to make generalizations, inferences, etc. in addition to the comparison, analysis, and description mentioned above.



**c. *Post-reading activities***

Have another discussion with the students. Ask them how they can apply what they have learned to their own life. You could also bring an argumentative dimension to the article by asking them to take sides with either the government or the teachers. Ask them to write short summaries, use the new vocabulary in new contexts, etc. Then, for correct sequencing, they should be asked to cut the article into bits, making sure they do this in paragraphs. Mix these up and ask them to arrange these paragraphs in a sequence. Of course, you have the original copy. As a matter of fact, some articles have been improved by students in this way.

Connotations and Denotations can be taught by picking words such as "baked" "raw deal" etc. Explain how newspapers often use the different nuances a word, to make a point. To determine the cause and effect relationship in an article, ask them to find out why school children are roaming the streets and what is responsible for this.

The students should pay particular attention to the punctuation marks in an article. They should be able to point out similes, metaphors, change of tense, person, etc. Synonyms, antonyms, definitions and idioms can be taught by using crossword puzzles. Most newspapers have crossword puzzles with the answers appearing in the next issue.

In writing, writing a good paragraph is very important. Let the student answer "wh" questions in the pre-reading activities. The answers should be written. When they can write good paragraphs, involve them in activities based on the newspaper, e.g. writing obituaries, personality profile, biographies, advertisements, for columns, advice columns, cartoons, etc. The *Daily Times* is quite noted for obituaries. These could be on the death of a favourite pet, a favourite 'T' shirt, plate, pair of shoes, etc.

After any writing exercise, encourage students to rearrange their paragraphs, proof read and edit for mistakes, etc. The fact is that teachers can do much more with only one article. When it is becoming boring, especially if students have read it twice, discard it and give them a new one. There is no gainsaying the fact that a newspaper can encourage and lead to change and development. Teachers and students particularly have an important influence on public opinion. "This course, makes newspapers themselves influential ..." (Sheal and Omojuwa, 1993: 303).

can give students assignment such as:

Write reports/comments on your favourite newspaper

If it is possible, make a trip to the nearest library or newspaper agent.

What sections interest you most in the newspaper?

What do you think you can gain by reading the newspapers?

#### As conclusion

The main thrust of this paper was to highlight the potential inter-link between the newspaper and writing development at the school level. The suggestions and illustrations have dwelt on how the teacher and students can utilise newspaper articles for a systematic build-up of the writing skill. The writer, though not oblivious of the frightening upsurge in newspaper cost, recommends a close contact between the classroom, the library and, where possible, the newspaper agent. The triangular relation can provide the basis for a practical actualisation of many of the potentials buried in the printed material available on a daily basis. Despite the prohibitive cost, it is this presenter's view that parents' too can become involved in developing the reading-writing culture. This will be possible where the parents encourage their wards to read available newspapers and learn to compose their own stories based on their reading.

As earlier acknowledged, much rests on the teacher regarding the specific steps to be taken to build on the potential advantages of the newspaper as a text for generating writing practices. What this paper has concentrated on is to spell out some of the systematic procedures that can be followed to translate the suggestions into reality.

#### References

Aboderin, Y. (1985) *Reading and Writing Tie-up: Strategy for Effective Integration*. In S. Unoh et. al. (eds.) *Literacy and Reading in Nigeria*. Vol. 2. Pp 300-314. Ahmadu Bello University Zaria in collaboration with the Reading Association of Nigeria.

Cheyney, A. B. (1992). *Teaching Reading Skills through the Newspaper*. Newark, Delaware. 19714: International Reading Association.

Olaofe, I.A. (1988). *Reading Tradition: Can it be developed in Nigeria?* *READ*, Vol 23, No.1 April. Pp13-20.



Omojuwa, R.A. (1991). "RAN and Literacy Promotion in Nigeria" Presidential Address. In T. O. Oyetunde *et. al*; (eds.) **Literacy and Reading in Nigeria**. Pp3-8. NERDC in collaboration with the Reading Association of Nigeria

Stoller, F.L. (1994). *Making the Most of a Newsmagazine Passage for Reading Skills Development*. In **English Teaching Forum**, Vol 32, No.1 January. Pp.2-

Zakaluk, B.L. & Samuels, S.J. (eds) 1988. **Readability: Its Past, Present and Future**. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.

Sheal, P. and Omojuwa, R. (1985). **Advanced English Course for Colleges and Universities in Africa**. England: Longman.

Emenyonu, P. T. (1983). Promoting the Reading Habit in Nigeria. In S. O. Udo *et al* (Eds). **LITERACY AND READING IN NIGERIA**. Vol. 1. Ahmadu Bello University Zaria in collaboration with the Reading Association of Nigeria.

Lawal, B. (1989). *An Analytical Study of the Reading Habits of Some Secondary School students in Oyo Town*. In R. A. Omojuwa *et al* (Eds.). **Literacy and Reading in Nigeria**. Vol. 4. Ahmadu Bello University in collaboration with the Reading Association of Nigeria.

## **Appendix 1**

### *Our Children's Future*

*By Mary Kanu*

Those in authority, I hope, realise what they are doing to the future of our country. Education, we all agree, is a means to achieve information, socialization and foundation for the future. But the school system through which education is imparted is being assaulted every day by the inefficiency of government and frustration of teachers.

School children all over the country are having a raw deal. In Lagos State for instance, teachers at the primary school level are on strike because the local councils are owing them March and April salaries. Those at the secondary school level are contending with grumbling teachers. A few weeks ago, the government paid their March salary including the arrears of the 45% increase.

Later, some of the secondary school teachers were informed that they had actually been paid with a bounced government cheque and as such would have to pay interests on the money they have received. So, they go to classes when and if they want to, and insist they are not motivated to teach.

The result of course, is that children are roaming the streets when they should be in their classrooms. All manner of mischief has been attributed to their various wanderings.

Now, the university teachers have resumed their strike. In a few days, student would have to go home to join their siblings in roaming the streets. This latest crisis is coming at a time when four months of primary and secondary school calendars have already been lost during the nation-wide industrial action embarked by the teachers to press for the 45% increase in their salaries. The universities on their part cannot claim to have at any given time in the past five years, stayed on campus for half of any nine-month session.

So, what do we have. Children who are not motivated to learn and a generation of confused and angry youth. Yet it is imperative that every being is well informed and tutored to have a place in the highly competitive world.

As a Third World country, we are hoping for such a time when we can, to some extent provide our basic needs without all the frustrations associated with under-development. But we are not seen to be laying a sound foundation for such a future, and do not deserve to be taken seriously. Yet we are full of plans for all manner of accomplishments by the year 2000 and beyond. Those we expect to implement them and carry the banner are the present generation of ill-motivated and half-baked children and youth.

We must give this a serious thought. Do we consider education important to the future of our country? Are we expecting the present day youth to handle that future for us? Do we think that with the frustrations they are contending with, they would be able to do it for us?

Surely, history will judge us. That is why it is important that we examine our decrees and edicts. Education, like defence, agriculture and foreign affairs should be the responsibility of the Federal Government. It does not make sense to hand over primary and secondary education to the local councils and state governments



when more than 90 per cent of the school age population are at those levels. It does not make sense all the same to insist that the government should monopolise education when it apparently lacks the commitment to do so.

There is why voluntary organisations and missions should be given back the schools taken from them by the government. There are parents in Nigeria who are prepared to pay school for their children in mission and private school. Such parents should be given the opportunity to do so. The rest of us who cannot pay can be taken care of by the state.

As for tertiary education, the government should be serious about funding at the level. It is not enough to say university teachers are striking for more pay when other issues such as the provision of facilities and autonomy are not highlighted. Meanwhile, something should be done fast to keep the children off the street during school hours.

**The Guardian, Tuesday, May 11, 1993. P23.**