Fostering Children's Learning Through Effective Communicative Strategies in English Reading Comprehension: Insights from Primary Schools in Mubi North, Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Reading is the cornerstone of effective learning, forming the foundation for academic success in the classroom. However, achieving meaningful learning outcomes depends heavily on the communicative strategies employed by teachers during reading instruction. This study explored the communicative strategies utilized by teachers in English reading comprehension lessons across selected primary schools in Mubi North Local Government Area, Adamawa State. Through a convenient sampling method, the study engaged seven head teachers and twenty-one teachers, employing two research instruments: a twenty-item, four-point Likert scale questionnaire and a four-item open-ended questionnaire. The findings revealed that teachers predominantly employed constructive communicative strategies to enhance reading comprehension. However, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and external disruptions hinder optimal teaching and learning

processes. The study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to mitigate these barriers, ensuring a more conducive environment for effective reading instruction.

Keywords: *Reading, Communicative learning, comprehension, constructive.*

Abstrak: Membaca adalah dasar pembelajaran yang efektif dan merupakan fondasi keberhasilan akademik di dalam kelas. Namun, pencapaian hasil pembelajaran yang bermakna sangat bergantung pada strategi komunikasi yang digunakan oleh guru selama pengajaran membaca. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi strategi komunikasi yang diterapkan oleh guru dalam pelajaran pemahaman membaca bahasa Inggris di beberapa sekolah dasar terpilih di Wilayah Pemerintahan Lokal Mubi Utara, Negara Bagian Adamawa. Melalui metode sampling yang mudah, penelitian ini melibatkan tujuh kepala sekolah dan dua puluh satu guru, dengan menggunakan dua instrumen penelitian: kuesioner Likert skala empat poin yang terdiri dari dua puluh item dan kuesioner terbuka dengan empat item. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para guru secara dominan menggunakan strategi komunikasi yang konstruktif untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca. Namun, tantangan seperti ruang kelas yang terlalu padat dan gangguan eksternal menghambat proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang optimal. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya intervensi yang tepat untuk mengurangi hambatan ini, sehingga menciptakan lingkungan yang lebih kondusif bagi pengajaran membaca yang efektif.

Kata Kunci: *Membaca, pembelajaran komunikatif, pemahaman, konstruktif.*

INTRODUCTION

Classroom interaction between teachers and pupils is a vital form of communication aimed at imparting desirable values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge to pupils during the teaching and learning process. Effective classroom communication fosters understanding, motivation, and engagement, which are critical for achieving educational objectives as outlined in the curriculum (Khaldi, 2024). Among the various means of classroom

communication, reading stands out as the most important of the four language skills, which also include speaking, listening, and writing. Adepoju (2019) emphasizes that reading is essential for academic success, as it enables pupils to access and comprehend useful information that broadens their horizons, deepens their knowledge, and ultimately leads to behavioral changes and improved academic performance.

Teaching, as a dynamic form of communication, requires teachers to adopt effective and motivational strategies to facilitate functional lesson delivery. Through the process of teaching reading, pupils acquire new knowledge and information, which contributes to their intellectual and personal development as stated by Darling-Hammond (2006). When pupils achieve good grades across various subjects, they experience a sense of self-satisfaction and fulfillment. This underscores the importance of a teacher's functional communicative skills, which are central to orchestrating classroom activities, including teaching, organizing, evaluating, decision-making, and counseling (Koleoso, 2000; Fashiku, 2017). Teachers must, therefore, possess effective communicative skills to impart valuable and desirable knowledge in a reading-focused classroom setting.

The role of communication in teaching reading extends beyond mere instruction. Lanre-Atoyebi (2015) notes that a strong command of the English language is pivotal to academic success, as learning can only occur when pupils understand the language of instruction. Teachers, as facilitators of learning, should employ productive communicative strategies that ensure clarity, engagement, and comprehension in the reading classroom (Levy, 2009). For instance, interactive methods such as group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and collaborative reading exercises can enhance pupils' understanding and retention of knowledge. By fostering an interactive and inclusive learning environment, teachers enable pupils to actively participate in the learning process, thereby improving their reading skills and overall academic performance (McKenney & Reeves, 2018).

Reading at the primary school level holds particular significance because it serves as the foundation of formal education. At this stage, pupils are introduced to structured learning, and their success depends on the effective transmission of information through speaking and writing. These communication channels not only facilitate knowledge acquisition but also lay the groundwork for developing the other language skills of listening and

speaking. According to Adepoju (2019), reading is not merely a skill but a gateway to lifelong learning and intellectual growth. Teachers must therefore prioritize reading instruction, ensuring that it is comprehensive, engaging, and tailored to the diverse needs of pupils.

The development of reading skills in primary school pupils is further enhanced by integrating the other three language skills (Tijms et al., 2020). Speaking and listening activities, such as storytelling and oral recitations, help pupils connect spoken language to written text, thereby reinforcing their reading comprehension. Writing exercises, such as summarizing texts or composing original stories, allow pupils to apply their reading knowledge creatively and analytically. By incorporating these interconnected language skills into reading instruction, teachers create a holistic learning experience that fosters both linguistic and cognitive development in pupils (Rohman et al., 2024).

Moreover, effective classroom interaction is characterized by the teacher's ability to create a conducive learning environment. Based on Richards and Rodgers (2014) this involves employing diverse teaching methods and resources, such as visual aids, reading materials, and digital tools, to engage pupils and enhance their learning experience. For example, using storybooks with colorful illustrations can capture pupils' attention and make reading sessions more enjoyable. Similarly, incorporating digital resources, such as e-books and interactive reading apps, can cater to the preferences and needs of tech-savvy pupils, thereby boosting their interest and motivation to read.

The teacher's role as a facilitator also includes providing constructive feedback and encouragement to pupils. Regular assessments, such as reading quizzes and comprehension exercises, help teachers monitor pupils' progress and identify areas that require additional support. Positive reinforcement, such as praising pupils for their efforts and achievements, fosters a growth mindset and encourages pupils to persevere in their learning journey. Koleoso (2000) and Fashiku (2017) highlight that teachers' communicative skills play a crucial role in creating an atmosphere of trust and respect, where pupils feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and asking questions. Such an environment not only enhances pupils' reading abilities but also nurtures their confidence and enthusiasm for learning.

In addition to individual classroom efforts, collaboration among educators and stakeholders is essential for promoting reading literacy. Teachers can share best practices, resources, and strategies through professional development programs and peer learning networks. Schools can also partner with parents and community organizations to create a supportive ecosystem that encourages pupils to develop a love for reading. For instance, organizing reading competitions, book clubs, and literacy campaigns can inspire pupils to read beyond the classroom and explore diverse genres and topics. Lanre-Atoyebi (2015) underscores the importance of collective efforts in fostering a reading culture, which ultimately contributes to pupils' academic and personal growth.

Effective communication strategies are indispensable for teaching reading, as they ensure learners grasp the content and avoid confusion caused by overly complex or inappropriate instructional language. Research highlights that failures in reading classrooms often stem from unsuitable communicative methods, including complex sentences and unclear materials (Shan, Li, Shi, Wang & Cai, 2014; Fashiku, 2017). Simplifying language, employing suitable instructional tools, and addressing learners' needs are key to overcoming communication barriers. This underscores the importance of assessing and refining the communicative strategies used during reading lessons to foster better understanding and academic success.

Classroom interaction between teachers and pupils serves as the foundation for effective teaching and learning, with reading playing a central role in this process. Teachers, as facilitators of learning, must leverage their communicative skills to create engaging and inclusive reading instruction that meets the diverse needs of pupils. By integrating speaking, listening, and writing activities, employing diverse teaching methods, and fostering a supportive learning environment, teachers can help pupils develop strong reading skills that contribute to their academic success and lifelong learning. Furthermore, collaboration among educators, parents, and community stakeholders is essential for cultivating a culture of reading that benefits pupils both within and beyond the classroom. As Adepoju (2019) aptly observes, reading is the cornerstone of education, and its effective instruction is key to unlocking pupils' potential and enabling them to achieve their goals.

METHODS

This study employed a case study design to explore the classroom communicative strategies used in teaching reading lessons in Mubi North Local Government Area of Adamawa State. Case study research is particularly effective for in-depth analysis of complex phenomena in specific contexts (Creswell, 2014). Given the challenges posed by insurgency in the region, a convenient sampling technique was adopted to select seven primary schools from the sixty-eight available schools in the Local Government Area (Boyi, 2023). To ensure a comprehensive understanding, purposive sampling was used to select seven headteachers and twenty-one primary school teachers. A research assistant, who is both a primary school teacher and a native of the area, facilitated the data collection process to enhance access and rapport (Yin, 2018).

Two instruments were used to gather data. The first instrument was a structured questionnaire titled 'An Assessment of Classroom Communicative Strategies' developed by the researcher. The questionnaire comprised two sections: Section A captured the demographic information of the respondents, while Section B included twenty items designed to measure primary school teachers' communication strategies during reading lessons. Responses were recorded on a four-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1) for positive statements (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012).

The second instrument consisted of four open-ended questions designed to capture qualitative insights on the same topic, ensuring data triangulation (Denzin, 1978). The research assistant personally contacted the respondents, and completed responses were transmitted electronically to the researcher.

To establish validity, the instruments were reviewed by research experts, who provided feedback for improvement (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2011). Data triangulation and anonymity were employed to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reliability was assessed by piloting the questionnaire with twenty participants from a different local government area, yielding a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.78, indicating good internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics were applied to the quantitative data, with a

cutoff point of 2.50 set for decision-making (Field, 2013). Qualitative data from the open-ended responses were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and insights that complemented the quantitative findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This mixed-methods approach ensured a robust and comprehensive analysis of the communicative strategies employed by teachers in the selected primary schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Demographic Information

The demographic profile of the respondents in this study provides valuable insight into the teaching workforce involved in English reading comprehension lessons (Heckman & Kautz, 2013). The sample consisted of seven headteachers and twenty-one class teachers, most of whom had substantial teaching experience spanning 10 to 30 years. Despite this extensive experience, only 14.3% of the respondents held qualifications specifically tailored for teaching English reading comprehension, revealing a notable gap in specialized training. The data also highlight an imbalance in academic backgrounds, with a majority of teachers specializing in science (35.7%) and only a small fraction (14.3%) having a humanities or English specialization. This disparity points to the critical need for targeted professional development to equip teachers with the skills required for effective instruction in English reading comprehension.

Table 1
Demographic Information

SN	Post	Number	Qualifications	Specializations & %	Experience
1	Head Teacher	7	BSc/BTech, NCE	7=Sciences 25%	20-30 Years
2	Class Teacher	21	BSc/B.A., B.Ed, NCE	10=Sciences 35.7% 7=Humanities 25% 4=English Combinations 14.3%	10-25 Years

The demographic profile of the respondents highlights that the study included seven headteachers and twenty-one class teachers. Most of the teachers possessed significant teaching experience, ranging from 10 to 30 years. However, only 14.3% of the respondents held qualifications specifically

tailored for teaching English reading comprehension. This indicates a potential gap in specialized training among teachers, which could affect the efficacy of reading instruction. The specialization breakdown shows a dominance of science-trained teachers (35.7%) and a smaller proportion with humanities or English combinations (14.3%). This imbalance underscores the need for targeted professional development in English reading comprehension.

Communicative Strategies Used During English Reading Comprehension Lessons

Communicative strategies play a crucial role in enhancing students' understanding during English reading comprehension lessons (Schmidt, 1992). Table 2 highlights the variety of strategies employed by teachers, such as using gesticulations, audio-visual aids, attention-grabbing techniques, and synonyms to explain concepts, with means ranging from 2.96 to 3.48. Interestingly, while the use of vernacular for concept clarification is emphasized in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014), it is not frequently utilized in classrooms (mean = 3.16). This finding underscores the need to balance diverse communicative approaches to ensure inclusive learning, particularly for students who struggle with English proficiency.

Table 2
Communicative Strategies Used During English Reading Comprehension Lessons

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$
1	Teachers do not use vernacular to explain concepts when teaching English reading comprehension.	11	8	4	3	3.16
2	Teachers use gesticulations when teaching English reading comprehension.	7	11	5	3	2.96
3	Teachers use audio-visual aids when teaching English reading comprehension.	10	11	5	1	3.04
4	Teachers use encouraging attention-grabbing techniques to communicate during English reading comprehension.	13	10	3	-	3.44
5	Teachers use synonyms to explain concepts when teaching English reading comprehension.	9	16	1	-	3.48

Table 2 reveals that teachers employ a variety of communicative strategies in the classroom. These include using gesticulations (mean = 2.96),

audio-visual aids (mean = 3.04), attention-grabbing techniques (mean = 3.44), and synonyms to explain concepts (mean = 3.48). Teachers do not frequently use vernacular as a teaching aid (mean = 3.16), despite its recognized importance in concept clarification (NPE, 2014). The data suggest that while teachers adopt diverse techniques, the exclusion of vernacular might limit pupils' comprehension, particularly for those less proficient in English.

Reasons for Using Communicative Strategies during English Reading Comprehension Lessons

The use of communicative strategies in English reading comprehension lessons serves multiple essential purposes (Scarcella et al., 1990). As outlined in Table 2, these strategies are primarily employed to appeal to pupils' senses (mean = 3.60), clarify challenging concepts (mean = 3.64), elicit responses (mean = 3.68), correct errors (mean = 3.64), and develop reading skills (mean = 3.44). By fostering interactive and engaging lessons, these approaches encourage active pupil participation and help achieve lesson objectives. Thematic analysis of open-ended responses reinforces these quantitative findings, with participants emphasizing the importance of communicative strategies in correcting errors and elucidating difficult concepts.

Table 3

Reasons for Using Communicative Strategies During English Reading Comprehension Lessons

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$
1	Teachers use communicative strategies to appeal to pupils' senses.	13	12	1	-	3.60
2	Teachers use communicative strategies to clarify grey areas in the course of teaching English reading comprehension.	14	11	1	-	3.64
3	Teachers use communicative strategies, such as questions, to elicit responses from pupils.	16	8	2	-	3.68
4	Teachers use communicative strategies to correct errors in English reading comprehension.	15	9	2	-	3.64
5	Teachers use communicative strategies to develop pupils' reading skills.	10	14	2	-	3.44

As shown in Table 2, the primary reasons for employing communicative strategies include appealing to pupils' senses (mean = 3.60), clarifying grey areas (mean = 3.64), eliciting responses (mean = 3.68), correcting errors (mean = 3.64), and developing reading skills (mean = 3.44). These strategies are crucial for fostering interactive and engaging lessons that ensure pupils actively participate and achieve the lesson objectives. The thematic analysis of open-ended responses corroborates these findings, with participants highlighting the role of communicative strategies in correcting errors and explaining difficult concepts.

Methods of Employing Communicative Strategies

Effective implementation of communicative strategies is pivotal in fostering an interactive and engaging classroom environment (Scheg & Shaw, 2017). Table 4 highlights several methods teachers employ, including writing on the chalkboard (mean = 3.52), asking questions (mean = 3.56), drawing pictures (mean = 3.40), reinforcing pupils' responses (mean = 3.56), and explaining difficult words (mean = 3.68). These methods reflect interactive teaching practices that promote active pupil participation and comprehension. Thematic analysis corroborates these findings, revealing additional techniques such as using flashcards, dramatization, and picture reading, all of which contribute to creating a dynamic and stimulating learning atmosphere.

Table 4

How Teachers Use Communicative Strategies During English Reading Comprehension Lessons

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$
1	Teachers write on the chalkboard when teaching English reading comprehension.	11	14	1	-	3.52
2	Teachers ask pupils question when teaching reading.	13	11	2	-	3.56
3	Teachers draw pictures on the chalkboard in reading classroom.	9	15	2	-	3.40
4	Teachers reinforce pupils' responses in the course of teaching reading.	12	13	1	-	3.56
5	Teachers explain difficult words when teaching reading.	15	10	1	-	3.68

Table 4 outlines how teachers implement these strategies, with popular methods including writing on the chalkboard (mean = 3.52), asking questions (mean = 3.56), drawing pictures (mean = 3.40), reinforcing pupils' responses (mean = 3.56), and explaining difficult words (mean = 3.68). These approaches align with interactive teaching methodologies that encourage pupils' participation. The thematic analysis further supports this, with participants emphasizing techniques such as using flashcards, dramatization, and picture reading to create a stimulating learning environment.

Factors Hindering Effective Communicative Strategies

Effective communication in reading lessons is often hindered by various challenges, as revealed in Table 5. Key barriers include noise interference (mean = 3.64), language barriers (mean = 3.40), inappropriate teaching methods (mean = 3.80), lack of pupil concentration (mean = 3.44), and insufficient reading materials (mean = 3.76). Thematic analysis further identifies issues like overpopulation, absenteeism, and cultural barriers, which exacerbate these difficulties. Addressing these challenges requires targeted systemic interventions to foster a conducive learning environment and improve the effectiveness of communicative strategies in the classroom.

Table 5

How Teachers Use Communicative Strategies During English Reading Comprehension Lessons

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$
1	Noise interference affects communication during reading classroom.	17	7	2	-	3.64
2	Lack of understanding of the language of instruction constitutes communication barrier.	9	15	2	-	3.40
3	In appropriate teaching methods hinders effective communication in the classroom.	18	7	1	-	3.80
4	Lack of concentration by students constitutes communication barrier.	16	6	2	-	3.44
5	Lack of reading materials constitutes communication barrier.	19	5	1	1	3.76

As indicated in Table 5, several barriers to effective communication in reading lessons were identified. These include noise interference (mean = 3.64), language barriers (mean = 3.40), inappropriate teaching methods (mean = 3.80), lack of concentration among pupils (mean = 3.44), and insufficient reading materials (mean = 3.76). The thematic analysis highlighted additional

issues such as overpopulation, absenteeism, and cultural barriers. These challenges necessitate systemic interventions to create conducive learning environments and enhance communication effectiveness.

The findings from this study highlight key insights into the teaching workforce, the strategies employed during English reading comprehension lessons, and the challenges that hinder effective communication. The demographic analysis revealed a critical gap in specialized training, with only 14.3% of teachers holding qualifications specific to English reading instruction, while the majority had a background in sciences. This imbalance underscores the need for targeted professional development programs to equip teachers with the skills required for effective literacy instruction. Teachers employed various communicative strategies such as gesticulations, audio-visual aids, and synonyms, with the use of synonyms (mean = 3.48) and attention-grabbing techniques (mean = 3.44) being the most effective. However, the limited use of vernacular for concept clarification suggests an area for improvement, as it could enhance comprehension for pupils with low English proficiency, particularly in multilingual classrooms.

Despite the effective use of certain strategies, several barriers hinder their overall impact. Noise interference, language barriers, inappropriate teaching methods, and insufficient reading materials were identified as major obstacles. These challenges highlight systemic issues such as classroom overcrowding and resource shortages that need to be addressed. To overcome these barriers, professional development programs should focus on equipping teachers with innovative and inclusive teaching techniques. Additionally, providing adequate teaching materials and implementing policies that support the use of vernacular for concept clarification could foster a more conducive learning environment. By addressing these areas, the effectiveness of communicative strategies can be significantly improved, leading to better literacy outcomes for pupils.

CONCLUSION

The study finds that primary school teachers use constructive communicative strategies to teach English reading comprehension, fostering active engagement rather than passive learning. Techniques such as audio-visual aids, picture reading, error correction, and questioning create interactive and stimulating lessons that promote critical thinking. These practices align with pedagogical best practices, emphasizing participation and intellectual

engagement. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is hindered by challenges like overcrowded classrooms, insufficient materials, truancy, and limited teacher qualifications, with only 14.3% of sampled teachers adequately skilled in teaching reading comprehension.

Additionally, the study underscores the neglect of local language use, despite its recommendation by the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014) for lower primary levels. Many teachers rely exclusively on English, even for complex concepts better explained in native languages, disadvantaging pupils with low English proficiency. This approach not only hampers comprehension but also overlooks the cognitive and cultural benefits of bilingual instruction. Addressing these barriers is essential for improving the quality of English reading comprehension lessons in primary schools.

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