



## A Comparative Analysis of Reciprocal Peer Learning and Traditional Teaching Approaches on Learners' Retentive Ability in Literary Appreciation

<sup>1</sup>Augusta Chiedu Assimonye, <sup>2</sup>Ugochukwu Poly Ngozi Amadi

<sup>1</sup>Department of Curriculum Studies and Instruction, School of Education, Federal College of Education Technical Umunze Anambra State, Nigeria. <sup>2</sup>Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education, College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria.

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Corresponding Author</b> Augusta Chiedu Assimonye E-mail: <a href="mailto:augusta.assimonye@fctumunze.edu.ng">augusta.assimonye@fctumunze.edu.ng</a></p>	<p>The study examined the comparative effects of Reciprocal Peer Learning (RPL) and Traditional Teaching Approaches (TTA) on learners' retentive ability in literary appreciation among senior secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study employed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest non-equivalent control group design involving 65 SSII students. The experimental group was taught literary appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT), while the control group used the conventional method. The Literature-in-English Achievement and Retention Test (LART) served as the instrument, validated and found reliable (<math>r = 0.721</math>). Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and ANCOVA at a 0.05 significance level to determine differences in students' achievement and retention in literary appreciation. The results showed that students taught literary appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT) achieved higher retention than those taught with the conventional method. The RPT group had a posttest mean of 68.83 (SD = 10.02) and a retention mean of 72.68 (SD = 10.72), while the conventional group had a posttest mean of 35.61 (SD = 9.72) and a retention mean of 36.98 (SD = 9.61). The retention mean gain of 3.85 for RPT exceeded 1.37 for the conventional method. ANCOVA results (<math>F = 183.169</math>, <math>p = .000</math>) indicated a significant difference favoring RPT. The result indicated that peer collaboration and active engagement promoted deeper comprehension and better memory retention of literary concepts. The study concluded that Reciprocal Peer Learning enhances learners' retentive ability and should be integrated into Literature-in-English instruction to improve learning outcomes.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Reciprocal Peer Learning, Traditional Teaching Approach, Literary Appreciation, Retentive Ability, Student Achievement.</p>

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### INTRODUCTION

Literature-in-English is taught in schools for the various functions it is expected to play in language acquisition, opinion formation, value and moral development. Students develop the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing by the medium of

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literature. The purpose of teaching literature is not just to get an answer; it is to learn what is behind the words and encourage the student to think and give creative answers. The job of the teacher is not to teach the students; it is to lead the students. This calls for effective teaching as the purpose is not only for passing examinations.

Judging from students' writings it becomes evident that secondary school students' ability in appreciating literary works is quite poor. Even students of language and literature can hardly read a piece of literature recognizing its quality as a literary work. Literary appreciation is regarded as a difficult skill for students to master. Many believe that literature texts are boring and therefore not worth the effort. Moreso, studies carried out in Nigeria have revealed high failure rate and relatively small proportion of students' interest in subjects that require reading comprehension (Olatunde, 2010; Uroko, 2010). This could be caused by a number of factors ranging from lack of learner's interest, text background and teacher's strategy (Uroko 2010, Adejimiola and Ojuolape, 2013).

Any of the above could have led to the number of poor features identified in literature-in-English candidates' writings in Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) which included poor knowledge of texts, poor use of grammar and inappropriate use of language (West African Examination Council Chief Examiner's report, 2017). Among the suggested remedies were the study of extensive reading materials, study of the literary devices in the context of the selected texts and thorough reading of the selected texts by candidates in order to do proper appreciation. The implication of the above to the teaching of literature is for the utilization of a method that would enable learners to read and understand literary works as well as make them capable of giving their opinions on texts with instances from the read works (appreciation). The prevailing teacher questioning and answer, textual reading and explanation has proved inadequate to the literary skills demanded of today students.

The present situation calls for the need to examine the effectiveness of other teaching approaches that increase students' participation, motivation and achievement. Students could be more comfortable when they interact with peers than when they are threatened by the presence of a teacher or an adult. The use of peer tutoring over the years has prompted the emergence of different designs in the implementation of tutoring. Cohen and Sampson (2001) portray RPT as a kind of cooperative learning strategy with a two-way reciprocal learning activity. Reciprocal peer tutoring was developed and tested for children with academic needs by Pigott, Fantuzo and Clement (1986), taking into cognizance the benefits students derive from acting as tutors. Here, students alternate reciprocally the roles of tutor and tutee. This dual role, they emphasized, is beneficial because it enables students to gain from both the preparation and instruction in which tutors engage, and from the instructions that tutees receive. More benefits accrue to the tutor than the tutee and this made educationists doubtful about the efficacy of a method that is one-sided. This without doubt necessitated a system that will involve students equally in both activities and benefits.

These students take turns acting as the tutor and the tutee for instruction and review of academic material with teacher's supervision. This procedure is called reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT). RPT allows each student reap the benefits derived from preparing to teach another student. Development lists emphasize the facilitating effect of interactive processes such as exploring opposing ideas and mutual modeling between individuals at similar developmental levels in scaffolding the emergence of new understanding and cognitive growth (Damon in Nwosu, 2012). Greenwood, Carts and Maheady (1991) identified three

of the basic principles underlying RPT interventions as increasing academic engagement, increasing the opportunity to respond and increasing timely feedback regarding students' responses. Another important component of RPT is the incorporation of rewards contingent upon the achievement of each group member. RPT requires that the students set a goal to be reached for each session, and the students earn points for correctly responding to academic tasks. RPT requires each member of the group to contribute to the attainment of the goal, and ensures that no one person can be responsible for the group success. Palinscar (1986) compiled the four learning strategies of reciprocal peer tutoring as summarizing, questioning, clarifying and predicting.

Reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT) is a strategy designed to enhance learning by engaging students with the ideas in a text from multiple perspectives. The sequence of the four stages—predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing is flexible, allowing teachers to adapt the strategy to their teaching style and students' learning preferences. Careful selection of content is essential to ensure that the material aligns with all four stages of RPT. Successful implementation requires that students have prior experience and practice with each strategy individually. For instance, students should be comfortable with summarizing, questioning, predicting, and clarifying before applying these skills in a peer tutoring context. This preparatory phase helps learners actively participate and maximizes the benefits of RPT, fostering deeper comprehension and engagement with literary texts. Previous studies emphasize the importance of structured and innovative teaching strategies in promoting effective learning outcomes in secondary schools (Manafa, Ohamobi, and Osegbue, 2021). Furthermore, the adaptability and structured preparation inherent in RPT align with broader educational goals, including quality assurance, student performance improvement, and effective instructional management (Onuselogu, Ezeaku, and Ohamobi, 2017; Stella and Ifunanya, 2017). Proper implementation of RPT strengthens learners' academic skills, supports active participation, and enhances the overall classroom learning environment (Ohamobi, 2019; Manage, Ohamobi, and Osegbue, 2018).

### **Theoretical framework**

The study was anchored on Piagetian cognitive theory (1936). Jean Piaget was a Swiss psychologist famous for his four stages of cognitive development. The Piagetian theory of collaboration theory stems from the theories of equilibration. The theory states that the conflict between individuals who use different cognitive strategies to solve the same problem, followed by the resolution of conflict in terms of joint effort to determine a core effective strategy, can be a powerful mechanism of cognitive development. According to the theory, if two children have two fundamentally different methods of solving a problem (neither of which is necessarily the best) a more effective or cognitively advanced strategy may develop. According to him, the collaborators' interaction should involve the following:

- i) When two individuals attempt to solve a problem, a difference between their methods should be noticed by the individuals. Piaget also stated that a child at the formal operations stage of cognitive development should solve a problem involving the conservation of mass differently from a child at the concrete operations stage.
- ii) Their actions and point of view should be coordinated. In other words, they should be able to test the strength and weakness of each other's strategies.
- iii) Cognitive conflict should be resolved through collaborative social interactions with the task or problem as the focus of attention.

In this model, there has to be reconciliation between prior and newly experienced beliefs. The new belief needs to be close enough to the existing belief that the learner can relate it to previous learning. This leads to the existing structure being displaced and a new structure taking its place. Hypothesis developed within the operational system are tested with a peer learner. The event may lead to assimilation (the child allowing the event to enter the cognitive structure in order to infer meaning). In this study, reciprocal peer tutoring contexts will be used to provide the right balance between the disequilibrium caused through cognitive challenge and social exchanges between peers for effective learning to take place. The study is important because it addresses the persistent challenge of low retention and engagement in Literature-in-English among secondary school students. Literature plays a vital role not only in language development but also in fostering critical thinking, creativity, and analytical skills (Kharusi, 2016). However, conventional teacher-centered methods often limit students' participation, reduce active engagement, and fail to promote long-term retention (Mohammed, 2015).

Reciprocal Peer Learning emphasizes peer collaboration, discussion, and role-sharing, offering an opportunity to enhance students' retention and understanding of literary texts. Previous studies have focused mainly on achievement outcomes (Nmonwu et al, 2018), leaving a gap in understanding the impact of teaching methods on students' retentive ability specifically in literary appreciation. The study also fills the contextual gap in Anambra State, where commercial distractions have been reported to reduce students' interest in reading-intensive subjects (Rahmasari & Madiun, 2017). The findings are expected to inform teachers, curriculum planners, and educational policymakers about the adoption of learner-centered approaches such as RPL to improve comprehension, retention, and active participation, ultimately enhancing the teaching and learning of literature in secondary schools.

### **Objective**

The mean retention scores of students in literary appreciation when taught using reciprocal peer tutoring strategy and conventional method.

### **Research question**

What are the mean retention scores of students in literary appreciation when taught using reciprocal peer tutoring and conventional method?

### **Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference between the mean retention scores of students in literary appreciation when taught with reciprocal peer tutoring strategy and conventional method.

## **METHOD**

The study adopted a quasi-experimental design using a pretest-posttest non-equivalent control group format. In this design, intact classes were used without randomization, with one class assigned to the experimental group and the other to the control group. The experimental group was taught literary appreciation using the Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT) strategy, while the control group was taught using the conventional teaching method. The design included pretest (O1), treatment (X), posttest (O2), and retention test (O3). The study was conducted in Anambra State, Nigeria, which has six education zones and 21 local government areas, with 254 public secondary schools. The state, predominantly inhabited by the Igbo ethnic group, was chosen due to students' high

patronage of external examination centers and declining interest in literature-based subjects. The target population comprised 11,640 Senior Secondary II (SSII) students, consisting of 5,135 males and 6,505 females offering Literature-in-English. SSII students were selected because they were non-examination class students with sufficient background in literary appreciation.

A sample of 65 students (43 females and 22 males) was drawn through multi-stage sampling. Simple random sampling selected one education zone and two local government areas, while purposive sampling ensured gender balance and teacher qualification. One school per LGA was selected and randomly assigned to the experimental or control group. The instrument used for data collection was the Literature-in-English Achievement and Retention Test (LART), consisting of 20 items derived from the 2016–2020 WAEC literature syllabus. It served as pretest, posttest, and retention test, with restructured items for each phase. The instrument was validated by five experts and trial-tested on 12 SSII students in Enugu State, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.721 using Kuder-Richardson Formula 21.

During data collection, trained Literature-in-English teachers administered the pretest, treatment, and posttest. The experimental group engaged in RPT activities in small groups, rotating roles of predictor, clarifier, questioner, and summarizer, while the control group received teacher-centered instruction. The study controlled extraneous variables such as teacher bias, environmental factors, and the Hawthorne effect through training, consistent lesson plans, and standardized testing conditions. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at a 0.05 significance level for hypotheses testing. This ensured that any differences in performance were attributed to the teaching method rather than pre-existing disparities among students.

## RESULTS

Research Question: What are the mean retention scores of students in literary appreciation when taught with reciprocal peer tutoring strategy and conventional method? The data for answering research question 4 were analyzed with mean and standard deviation and results presented in the Table 1.

**Table 1:** Posttest and Retention mean scores of Students taught literacy Appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring

Groups	N	Posttest		Retention		Retention Mean gain
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
RPT	31	68.83	10.02	72.68	10.72	3.85
Conventional	34	35.61	9.72	36.98	9.61	1.37

Table 1 shows that students taught literary appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring has posttest mean score of 68.83 with standard deviation of 10.02 while those taught with the conventional method had a posttest mean score of 35.61 with standard deviation of 9.72. The Table further showed that those taught with Reciprocal Peer Tutoring had a mean retention of 72.68 with standard deviation of 10.72 while those taught with conventional method had mean retention of 36.98 with standard deviation of 9.61. The retention mean gain of 3.85 for students taught using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring is greater than 1.37 for conventional method. Therefore, students taught with Reciprocal Peer Tutoring had a higher retention than those taught with the conventional method.

### Testing of Corresponding Hypothesis

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the mean retention scores of students in literary appreciation when taught with reciprocal peer tutoring strategy and conventional method.

The data for testing hypothesis 4 were analyzed with ANCOVA and the results presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of Retention scores of Students taught literary Appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	16611.483 <sup>a</sup>	2	23152.324	177.169	.000
Intercept	173999.309	1	173999.309	1809.284	.000
Post test	19624.664	1	19624.664	173.113	.000
Group	17611.483	1	17611.483	183.169	.000
Error	6807.763	63	101.608		
Total	203768.000	65			
Corrected Total	25419.246	64			

The data in Table 2 show a probability-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis stated was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the mean retention scores of students in literary appreciation when taught with reciprocal peer tutoring strategy and conventional method.

### Discussion

The result from the analysis of hypothesis four indicated that Reciprocal Peer Tutoring has significant effect on students' retention in literary appreciation. It specifically showed that students taught literary appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring strategy had higher mean retention than their counterparts under the conventional method. In other words, reciprocal peer tutoring was very effective in enhancing students' retention. The results corroborated with Ali, Anwar and Jaffar (2015) who outlined that one of the benefits of the use of reciprocal peer tutoring is that it allows students to have immediate feedback and corrections for every response which are the effective ingredients for retention of instructions. The above result agreed with those of Nwosu (2012), Rehman, Khan and Kafiyat (2017) who in their separate studies discovered that students taught English language and Mathematics respectively using peer tutoring strategy had higher mean retention than others taught using the conventional method. The result equally agreed with Cohen and Sampson (2001) who concluded that reciprocal peer tutoring do not only enable students to learn better but also be able to retain what has been learnt. The effectiveness of reciprocal peer tutoring strategy on students' retention could be as a result of the fact that it involves among others logical presentation of materials, revisions and feedback which according to Ali, Anwar and Jaffar (2015) are the attributes of teaching strategies that foster retention. Since the learner is actively involved in the instruction, he has the higher chances of retaining what was learnt than when he is not directly involved as it is the case in the conventional method.

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the Reciprocal Peer Learning (RPL) approach significantly enhanced learners' retentive ability in literary appreciation compared to the traditional teaching method. Findings revealed that students exposed to RPL demonstrated higher posttest and retention mean scores, indicating that collaborative learning promotes deeper understanding, long-term memory, and active engagement with literary texts. In contrast, the traditional teacher-centered method offered limited opportunities for learners to internalize and retain concepts. This suggests that peer interaction, discussion, and shared responsibility inherent in RPL create a more stimulating and participatory learning environment that supports sustained comprehension and recall. The study therefore recommended that Literature-in-English teachers adopt Reciprocal Peer Learning strategies to strengthen students' retention and critical analysis skills. Teacher training programs should also emphasize learner-centered instructional methods that promote cooperation and independent reasoning. Furthermore, curriculum planners should integrate peer learning structures into classroom activities to enhance the effectiveness of literature teaching and learning. Overall, Reciprocal Peer Learning provides a pedagogically sound and evidence-based approach that improves learners' retention, fosters critical thinking, and enriches literary appreciation among secondary school students.

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