



Comparison of Students' Achievement in Literary Appreciation Using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring and Conventional Teaching Methods

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ABSTRACT

Students' poor achievement in Literature-in-English, particularly in the area of literary appreciation, has continued to be a major concern among educators and stakeholders in Nigeria. The conventional teacher-centered approach often limits students' engagement, critical thinking, and interpretive skills, which are essential for understanding literary texts. To address this challenge, the study investigated the effect of Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT) on students' achievement in literary appreciation compared to the Conventional Teaching Method in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study adopted a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest non-equivalent control group design to examine the effect of reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT) on students' achievement and retention in Literature-in-English in Anambra State. Intact SSII classes were used, with 65 students randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Data were collected using a validated and reliable Literature Achievement and Retention Test (LART). Trained teachers administered pretests, treatments, posttests, and retention tests over six weeks. ANCOVA was used to analyze data, controlling extraneous variables. The study ensured methodological rigor through standardized procedures, uniform lesson plans, and careful monitoring to achieve credible findings. The results showed that students taught literary appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT) had higher achievement scores than those taught with the conventional method. The RPT group (N=31) had a pretest mean of (41.24) and posttest mean of (68.83), with a mean gain of (27.59), while the conventional group (N=34) had a pretest mean of (32.70) and posttest mean of (35.61), with a mean gain of (2.91). ANCOVA results revealed a significant difference between the groups ($F=211.397$, $P=0.00<0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Thus, RPT significantly enhanced students' achievement in literary appreciation. It was concluded that Reciprocal Peer Tutoring significantly enhanced students' achievement in literary appreciation. The study recommended that Literature-in-English teachers should adopt RPT to promote active learning, deeper comprehension, and improved performance among students.

Keywords:

Reciprocal Peer Tutoring, Literary Appreciation, Student Achievement, Conventional Teaching, Anambra State.

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Comparison of Students' Achievement in Literary Appreciation Using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring and Conventional Teaching Methods—Augusta Chiedu Assimonye, et.al

INTRODUCTION

Literature is the artistic expression of ideas either to be recited, read or acted. In a loose sense it refers to all writings on any subject or field of study while in a specific sense it refers to the written and unwritten works of art. In this latter sense, the word literature refers especially to writings having excellence of form or expression and which presents ideas of value. Nwachukwu-Agbada, Kwami and Ogunsiji (2010) define literature as a subject of study of a creative or imaginative work of art provided by a novelist, poet or playwright. Literature is the art of writing something that can be read twice (Nwosu in Okoye, 2010). It includes folklores, proverbs, tongue twisters, chants, dirges, lullabies dramatic renditions, stories, songs, music and prayers, proverbs, riddles, poetic insults, drum language, panegyrics and tongue twisters, which when written down are classified as oral literature (Nwachukwu-Agbada, 2008). Literature are in three forms.

In the three forms of literature-prose, poetry and drama, it gives pleasure, entertainment as well as instruction. Okoye (2010) opines that value complements the afore-mentioned functions of literature because pleasure, entertainment and instruction literature offers must be valuable in relation to and culminate to what she considers the most important of literature-refinement. Uwaifo in (Eze, 2011) maintains that literature offers a vast reservoir of human experience and a judgment of experience, a development of imagination and entry into human situations which otherwise might well fall outside our ken. Literature can also promote a good liberal education, entertainment, relaxation and the sharing of vicarious experiences of positive value, development of desired and desirable morals or other attributes. All these result to a stable and mature personality (Eziechine, 2010).

Literature-in- English language is a discipline and a subject of study - in secondary schools. It refers to works of various cultures written in English language. The main objectives of studying literature among others are to aid the understanding of the language in which the literary work is written and to develop the creative and thinking ability of learners (WAEC Literature-in English- Syllabus 2016 – 2020). Ogbé in Eze (2011) asserts that language provides the rules while literature expands them to produce the best expressions in language community. Emphasizing on the relationship between language and literature, Azikiwe (2007) holds that since language is the medium of literature, then literature by its very nature gives the evidence on the operation of language. She further asserts that to learn a language is to develop skills but to learn literature is to understand it. In literature, one sees the language in use. Literature uses language to communicate and also demonstrates the most effective application of language in different situations of life. English language as a second language has different skills and different cultural habits. It is only in literature-in-English that learners of English come in meaningful contact with the language in its real form. Stressing the relevance of literature in language learning, Akwanya in Eze (2011) states thus:

It is through literary work that we see dialogue or even the language of conversation as well as the one governed by rhythm, rhyme and measure, we see transparent and anonymous language that distinguishes narration by contrast to the ones governed by the norms of thematic prose as in speech (p.19). Every language has four basic skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing. For English language learners to be termed competent in the language, these skills have to be well developed in them. Literature, in addition to playing other roles, helps to develop all these skills in the students through prose, poetry and drama

texts. Prose teaching and learning exposes students to varied language drills such as reading, learning of pronunciation, questioning and summary writing. Uwaifo in Eze (2011) believes that the study of prose narrative is a very good way of developing the reading skill in the students and a sure way of increasing students' vocabulary. As students read varied prose text, they learn new words used in different contexts. In the process of teaching and learning a prose text, many teachers teach meaning of new words and explanation of grammatical elements.

Drama encompasses a vast range of opportunities at various levels of language competencies. Drama develops aural-oral skills in second or foreign language learning. It offers opportunities for practice in speaking dialogue. As the students participate in reading and acting drama texts in classroom they become fully involved in the learning process. These equally make students more responsible by tasking them to use the correct sentences that have been written out for them to practice. Poetry, on the other hand, also helps in developing oral skill. William further says that poetry is basically oral literature since it is meant to be read aloud. He goes on to say that the rhyme and rhythm of verse can readily aid in the teaching of oral language. Through choral recitation, students could practice the vowel and consonant sounds in the end-rhymes. Poets make use of figures of speech such as simile and metaphor *etcetera*. The use of figurative languages, images and symbols help the students to have a good ground in the English language usage and acquaint them with symbols (words) outside their own environment.

In addition to these benefits, poetry appreciation equips the students with a skill very much needed in reading comprehension. In line with this view, Haynes in Ozioko (2008) asserts that when students are asked to write a clear, full accurate paraphrase which covers the ambiguities and implications of a passage of poetry, they are being drilled in the mastery of the English language, more than when essay/summary writings are used. In other words, when a student is asked to paraphrase a poem, the student is being asked to express in many words what the poet has expressed figuratively. The student is then free to use the simple English words, which he/she is conversant with, to indicate the mastery of the figurative language used by the poet.

Literature plays a vital role not only in aiding language learning but also in developing students' creative and critical thinking abilities. As a school subject, literature opens the mind and encourages deeper reflection. At the foundational level, such as in primary education, literary appreciation begins with the simple but essential question "what is the lesson from the story?" This question initiates the learner's journey into moral reasoning and analytical thought. As students progress to higher levels, particularly in senior secondary schools, literary appreciation becomes more complex, involving critical engagement with themes, language, techniques, and structure. This process helps learners develop sound judgment, evaluative skills, and the capacity for discrimination between good and poor artistic expressions (Ohamobi & Manafa, 2018; Okafor, Ohamobi & Manafa, 2021).

Essentially, literary appreciation entails the effort to evaluate, interpret, and enjoy a work of art. It requires identifying what makes a piece of literature enjoyable and understanding the artistic methods that sustain such enjoyment. According to Nwachukwu-Agbada et al. (2010), literary appreciation encompasses analysis, criticism, and understanding of literature. Hence, when a student interprets a poem, writes an essay about it, or examines its meaning, such actions constitute literary appreciation. Each literary genre such as poetry, prose, or drama has unique characteristics, and it is through the effective

manipulation of these features that a writer captivates readers' interest (Ezeaku & Ohamobi, 2018).

Moreover, true appreciation begins with reading and comprehension. A student must first understand the literal and contextual meaning of a text before engaging in personal interpretation. The ultimate goal is for learners to achieve originality of thought by linking their experiences with the characters, ideas, and events portrayed in literary works (Osegbue, Manafa & Ohamobi, 2018). This interpretive process fosters creativity and enhances cognitive development. In this way, literature becomes a tool for self-discovery, value formation, and intellectual growth, aligning with the broader educational goal of producing reflective and culturally grounded individuals (Mannafa & Ohamobi, 2021; Ezugoh, Onuorah & Ohamobi, 2021).

Teaching literature in senior secondary can be challenging. This is because the teacher is confronted with the task of teaching for proper understanding and meeting the demands of external examinations on several recommended texts, which get changed every five academic sessions. The teaching of the subject is also associated with numerous problems. Researchers have identified some of them which include students' poor attitude, ineffective teaching methods, non-functional Literature policy, teachers' attitude and incompetence and textual difficulties (Nwodo; 2011, Fakeye; 2011, Fatimayin, 2015). The practice in the teaching of Literature in secondary schools is to go for the shortest way out thereby giving students notes in order to cover the texts without actually helping them to enjoy the works of art. According to Uroko (2010) some teachers do the reading and at most would ask few questions and give notes to students to copy. Fatimayin (2015) reported that take-your-book-and-read method was 50% more in use than read-aloud-and-discuss or contextualized method. These teaching approaches have resulted in the inability of students to evaluate literary works, as there is absence of the required learner interaction, which will result to improved Achievement.

Achievement refers to the instructional outcome normally in the form of tests/examination scores. Academic achievement shows students' performance on a standard of measurement such as skill test, performance test *etcetera*. Olajide (2010) defines achievement as a change in behaviour exhibited at the end of a given period of time or within a given time range. Academic achievement of students is normally obtained at the end of terminal or external examinations. Students need to have the ability to retain knowledge or skills acquired over time. Retention of the literary appreciation is, therefore, the students' ability to recall and apply the skill of literary appreciation after some period of exposure to the rules. The assumption is that achievement and retention of students improve based on the instructional approach used.

On the approaches that content teachers could employ to increase the likelihood of success for students, Sims and Flatley in Nwosu (2012) suggested two general approaches thus: participation-conducive-environment and provision of feedback. One of such methods that provide these two conditions is peer tutoring. Peer tutoring refers to students working together to help one another learn or to practice an academic task. Students are trained to teach a concept or skill to other students or to a group of students under the leadership of the teacher. It is a learner-centred method where learners contribute, direct and participate in the learning events extensively.

Peer tutoring enables the students to develop their skills to organize and plan learning activities. By working in collaboration with others, they give and receive feedback

about their work and finally evaluate their own learning. According to Mercer and Mercer (2005), peer tutoring strategy enhances the learning process in that, it provides the tutee with an opportunity to practice and learn a targeted academic skill, review and learn subject content until mastery is achieved. It also provides tutors and tutees with an opportunity to develop appropriate social skills. Finally, it enhances the self-concepts of tutors and tutees by making positive statements about their skills or abilities. Bowman-Perrott (2009) concludes that it provides one to one coaching during implementation. The students learn through teaching and get the opportunity to correct their errors. Miller, Topping and Thurston (2010) pointed out that the benefits for tutee during peer tutoring include effective learning, individual attention, free responding to companions more than teacher and friendship with peer. It provides the learners opportunities to enhance their social and behavioral abilities, including communicating, sharing and cooperating with each other in the classroom. It is equally effective in improving learner's self-esteem. According to Maheady and Gard, (2010) the weak students who are not active participants of the class are helped in peer tutoring to become active participants of the class and enhance their tendency to share views with their peers which they cannot share with their teachers.

Teachers utilize various forms of peer tutoring such as class-wide tutoring, cross age tutoring and mutual/reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT). In the latter, learners alternate the roles of tutor and tutee. A student that is taught in one instance becomes the tutor at another instance. According to Esteve in Uroko (2010), reciprocal peer tutoring (RPT) could be defined as a learning situation where students take turns acting as the tutors and tutees for instruction or review of academic materials. Students are assembled in groups of two or more and are trained to work together to prompt, monitor and evaluate each other, while working toward group goals or rewards that are contingent upon group achievement.

In this case, students exchange roles during tutoring session, both giving and receiving academic assistance while the teacher supervises rather than participate in the intervention. The students dialogue among themselves as each learner acts in response to another. The dialogue is usually structured by the use of four strategies, sometimes known as the Fabulous Four, which are predicting (tutoring), clarifying, questioning and summarizing (Oczkus in Uroko, 2010). The goal of reciprocal peer tutoring is to use discussion to enhance students' overall learning goals.

The motivation for the study stemmed from the persistent decline in students' performance in Literature-in-English, particularly in literary appreciation, in Nigerian secondary schools. Studies such as Adejimola and Ojuolape (2013) revealed that many students find it difficult to interpret poems and prose due to the dominance of teacher-centered instructional methods that limit interaction and critical engagement. Conventional teaching approaches often emphasize rote learning rather than interpretive and analytical understanding (Ali et al, 2015). Consequently, students develop a negative attitude toward the subject, which affects their achievement levels. Research by Asika (2015) highlighted the need for learner-centered approaches that promote collaboration and peer interaction to enhance comprehension in literature classrooms. However, limited empirical studies in Nigeria have compared the effectiveness of Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT) with conventional methods in teaching literary appreciation. This gap provided the impetus for the present study, which sought to determine whether RPT a strategy proven effective in science and reading comprehension (Baha, 2015) could improve students' literary interpretation skills. Therefore, the study was motivated by the need to enhance students'

engagement, achievement, and retention in literary appreciation through an innovative, interactive learning approach that aligns with contemporary pedagogical demands

Objective

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

Research question

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

Hypothesis

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

METHOD

The study adopted a quasi-experimental research design, specifically the pretest-posttest non-equivalent control group design, as described by Uzoagulu (2010). This design was chosen because it allowed for experimentation without complete randomization. Intact classes were used and randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. The experimental group was exposed to the Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT) learning strategy, while the control group was taught using the conventional teaching method. The design was symbolically represented as $O_1EXO_2O_3$ for the experimental group and $O_1C-XO_2O_3$ for the control group, where O_1 represented the pretest, X the treatment, O_2 the posttest, and O_3 the retention test.

The area of the study was Anambra State, Nigeria, which comprised six educational zones and 21 local government areas with 254 public secondary schools under the Post Primary School Service Commission (PPSSC, 2019). The state, created in 1991 with Awka as its capital, had a population of 4,055,048 and was predominantly inhabited by the Igbo ethnic group. It was bounded by Kogi, Enugu, Imo, Rivers, and Delta States. The area was considered appropriate for the study due to the observed decline in students' interest in reading-intensive subjects like Literature-in-English, partly because of the state's strong commercial activities. It was anticipated that applying the RPT strategy would help improve students' engagement and performance in the subject.

The population of the study consisted of 11,640 Senior Secondary II (SSII) students from 254 public secondary schools in Anambra State, including 5,135 males and 6,505 females studying Literature-in-English (PPSSC, 2019). SSII students were selected because they were a non-examination class and thus more readily available for research activities. Moreover, they had been adequately introduced to basic literary appreciation techniques necessary for understanding the poems covered in the study. A sample of 65 SSII students, consisting of 43 females and 22 males, was selected through multi-stage sampling techniques involving both simple random and purposive methods. First, one educational zone was selected randomly, followed by two local government areas within that zone. Seventeen co-educational schools within the selected LGAs were purposively sampled to ensure gender representation. From these, one school from each LGA with qualified Literature-in-English teachers was randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. The experimental group consisted of 31 students (11 males and 20 females), while the control group had 34 students (11 males and 23 females).

The instrument for data collection was the Literature-in-English Achievement and Retention Test (LART), developed by the researcher with input from experienced Literature teachers. It consisted of twenty items based on five foreign poems from the WASSCE and SSCE syllabuses (2016–2020). Ten items were short-answer questions on the poems, and ten were on an unseen poem. The LART served as the pretest (Test 1), posttest (Test 2), and retention test (Test 3). Each test contained similar content but varied slightly in wording and poem lines to reduce recall bias. To ensure validity, the LART was reviewed by five experts: one in measurement and evaluation, two in curriculum studies, and two in literary studies. They assessed the instrument's clarity, relevance, and appropriateness in relation to the study's objectives. Their recommendations were incorporated into the final version.

The reliability of the LART was determined through a trial test with 12 SSII students in Enugu State. Three independent scorers evaluated the scripts, and their results yielded an inter-scorer reliability coefficient of 0.68. Using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 (KR-21), the internal consistency of the instrument was calculated to be 0.721, indicating good reliability. Data were collected through trained Literature-in-English teachers who served as research assistants. Before the treatment, the pretest was administered and scored. Following the intervention, posttests and retention tests were also administered and evaluated.

The experimental procedure began with a one-week training of the teachers on the study's objectives, content area, lesson plans, and the implementation of both RPT and conventional teaching strategies. Pre-testing followed, after which the six-week treatment commenced. The experimental group was taught using the Reciprocal Peer Tutoring method, where students worked in heterogeneous groups of four with assigned roles—tutor (predictor), clarifier, questioner, and summarizer. Roles rotated after each session to ensure balanced participation. The teacher acted as a facilitator, guiding group discussions and summarizing key points after each lesson. Conversely, the control group was taught through conventional teacher-centered methods involving lectures and question-answer sessions. At the end of six weeks, both groups took the posttest, and two weeks later, a retention test was conducted to assess knowledge retention. To maintain fairness and validity, both groups were taught the same content for the same duration using identical lesson plans and classroom conditions.

The researcher implemented measures to control extraneous variables. The use of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) helped adjust for initial differences in students' academic ability. Teacher-related variables were controlled by training and using regular Literature teachers of the sample schools. Environmental and instructional conditions were standardized, while the Hawthorne effect (altered behavior due to awareness of being studied) was minimized by integrating the pretest and posttest into normal school assessments. Pretest sensitization was prevented by immediately retrieving test materials and modifying test items for each phase. Data analysis involved the use of mean and standard deviation to answer research questions, while hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance using ANCOVA. The null hypotheses were accepted when the calculated p-value was equal to or greater than 0.05 and rejected otherwise.

RESULT

Research Question 1: What are the mean achievement scores of students in literary appreciation when taught using reciprocal peer tutoring and conventional method?

The data for answering research question 1 were analyzed with mean and standard deviation and results presented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Pretest and Posttest mean scores of Students taught literary appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring and Conventional Methods

Groups	Pretest			Post test		Mean gain scores
	N	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
RPT	31	41.24	9.44	68.83	10.02	27.59
Conventional method	34	32.70	8.03	35.61	9.72	2.91

Data in Table 1 show that the students taught literary appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring had a Pretest mean of 41.24 with standard deviation of 9.44 and a Posttest mean of 68.83 with standard deviation of 10.02, while those taught with the conventional method had a Pretest mean of 32.70 with standard deviation of 8.03 and a posttest mean score of 35.61 with the standard deviation of 9.72. The results also show that the students taught literary appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring had a mean gain of 27.59 while those taught with the conventional method had a mean gain of 2.91. This showed that Reciprocal Peer Tutoring had increasing effect on the students' academic achievement, having recorded higher mean gain (27.59) than the conventional method (2.91).

Testing of Corresponding Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students in literary appreciation when taught with reciprocal peer tutoring strategy and conventional method.

The data for testing hypothesis 1 were analyzed with ANCOVA and the results presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of Achievement Scores of Students Taught literary appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	20821.185 ^a	2	10410.593	187.294	.000
Intercept	4274.189	1	4274.189	58.905	.000
Pretest	3647.791	1	3547.791	63.827	.000
Group	11639.153	1	11639.153	211.397	.000
Error	3668.554	63	53.384		
Total	195493.000	65			
Corrected Total	23389.739	64			

Table 2 shows that a significant Probability (P)-value of 0.00 was obtained. Since the Probability-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students in literary appreciation when taught with reciprocal peer tutoring strategy and conventional method.

Discussion

The analysis of research question one revealed that Reciprocal Peer Tutoring had higher and increasing effect on the students' academic achievement in literary appreciation. It further showed that Reciprocal Peer Tutoring has significant effect on students' achievement in literary appreciation. This implied that students exposed to literary

appreciation using Reciprocal Peer Tutoring had higher mean achievement than their counterpart taught using the conventional method. The findings were in agreement with those of Uroko (2010), Eze (2014) and Nmonwu *et al* (2018), who in their separate studies found that Peer Tutoring was very effective in enhancing students' academic achievement in reading comprehension, Economics and manufacturers' final accounts respectively. The finding further corroborated with Ogundola (2016) who reported that students taught Technical Drawing using Peer Tutoring strategy significantly achieved higher than their counterparts taught using the conventional method. The effectiveness of this teaching strategy on students' achievement in literary appreciation could be due to the approaches and principles of Reciprocal Peer Tutoring. In other words, learners were allowed to be fully involved in the instruction. According to Rahmasari and Madiun (2017), in Peer Tutoring learners have more opportunity to respond to academic materials, engage in active learning and not passive learning, ask each other questions, respond, correct mistakes and provide positive feedback. All these qualities contribute to the effectiveness of the strategy in enhancing students' achievement.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (RPT) strategy significantly enhanced students' achievement in literary appreciation compared to the conventional teaching method. Findings revealed that students exposed to RPT demonstrated higher mean scores and greater improvement in understanding, interpretation, and analysis of literary texts. This implies that collaborative and interactive learning strategies such as RPT promote deeper engagement, critical thinking, and retention among students. The conventional teacher-centered approach, though widely used, was found to limit students' participation and independent reasoning. Therefore, the adoption of RPT in Literature-in-English classrooms provides a viable and effective means of improving students' academic outcomes and fostering learner autonomy. Teachers are encouraged to integrate RPT into their instructional practices to make literature lessons more participatory and meaningful. The study further suggested that curriculum planners and school administrators should provide professional development opportunities for teachers to acquire the necessary skills for implementing peer tutoring strategies effectively. In conclusion, Reciprocal Peer Tutoring offers a dynamic pedagogical framework that aligns with modern learner-centered education and has the potential to transform the teaching and learning of Literature-in-English in Nigerian secondary schools, thereby enhancing students' overall academic performance and appreciation of literary works.

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