

# TEACHER COMMITMENT AND STUDENTS ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION IN OYO TOWN, NIGERIA

## ***Abstract***

*This study investigated the effect of teacher commitment to teaching on students' academic achievement in English reading comprehension among senior secondary school 2 students in Oyo metropolis, Nigeria. The correlation research design was adopted. Two hundred and forty students and six teachers from six schools were purposively selected as participants for the study. The two instruments used were reading comprehension achievement test ( $r = 0.76$ ) and teacher commitment to teaching questionnaire ( $r = 0.81$ ). Three research questions were answered using frequency counts, percentage, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that teacher commitment to teaching is low, students achievement in reading comprehension is low, teacher commitment to teaching has no significant relationship with students achievement in English reading comprehension ( $r = .205$ ). Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers of English Language should be more committed to teaching for effectiveness.*

**Keywords:** Teacher commitment, achievement, English reading comprehension, teaching

## **Introduction**

Reading comprehension is a means of understanding and deriving meaning from a particular text. It is a meta-cognitive skill which involves vocabulary knowledge as well as critical thinking. A reader draws inferences from the words and the expressions that a writer uses to communicate information, ideas or viewpoints by making use of prior knowledge. For effective reading comprehension to take place, a reader should be conscious and take note of certain factors such as concentration, level of familiarity with the passage, identification of sentence constructions whether simple, complex, compound or compound-complex, types of lexis whether monosyllabic or polysyllabic, style of the writer which could be formal or informal and theme which relates with main idea and relative ideas. The relative ideas assist in understanding the total message of a passage read by putting the material in a proper context. It could be deduced from the afore-mentioned factors that reading comprehension is a multi-faceted process which involves thinking, predicting, questioning, evaluating, defining and redefining.

Reading comprehension enhances the perception of “principal thought” as the fulcrum of the supporting details or the elaborations (Olowonmi and Falade, 2014). Bateye (2017) remarked that reading comprehension is a complex mental process that could not be analysed without a definite description of vocabulary construction of a given text. Vocabulary knowledge is not a unitary competency; rather it could be broken down into separate competencies. One of such competencies is the “breath” and the “depth” of vocabulary knowledge. The breath of vocabulary knowledge refers to the number of words a reader possesses while the depth is the extent of knowledge that a reader has about each of the words. Mehmet (2019) viewed the breath and the depth of vocabulary as the quantity and the quality of lexical knowledge respectively.

Ripple (2021) listed four pre-requisites for effective reading comprehension and they are: decoding skills, fluency, vocabulary and background knowledge. Whenever any of the aforementioned skills is lacking, comprehension does not take place. However, it should be realised that with the presence of the afore-mentioned pre-requisites, reading comprehension is not necessarily automatic because some important strategies like re-reading for clarification, predicting, making connections to prior knowledge, surveying the text and

taking of notes might still be required. It could be inferred that a student's ability to decode or answer literal questions does not imply that he or she understands the text.

Reading comprehension assists students to gain information about the text they have read thereby increasing their vocabulary, their familiarity with the written language as well as developing their concepts of the print. A reader might try to interpret what he or she has read using his or her own native language in order to aid retention. Once the concepts are retained, they would be recalled successfully when the need arises. Reading comprehension has been identified as a strong predictor of students learning outcome in all subject areas, be it Science, Mathematics or English Language (Adegoke, 2010; Lee & Buxton, 2013; Fakeye, 2014; Adeyinka, 2020).

The term comprehension strategies are sometimes used to refer to the process of reasoning. Teachers are expected to use the strategies: predicting, making inferences, summarising, evaluating, self-questioning, comprehension, monitoring and asking questions to teach the students the necessary comprehension skills. Otagburuagu (2010) remarked that many teachers are guilty of testing comprehension in the classrooms rather than teaching it. It should be noted that reading comprehension should not be limited to asking questions on texts without considerations for developing specific skills in students. Therefore, reading comprehension should be taught in the classroom rather than tested.

The goal of reading comprehension is to assist students in understanding a specific written language. Students comprehend effectively when they monitor their understanding of the text as they read and use fix-up strategies such as re-reading or summarising when understanding breaks down. However, many adolescents struggle to comprehend text due to lack of background knowledge, inability to relate text to prior knowledge, difficulty in decoding words, inability to attend to meaning while reading, inability to use comprehension strategies, deficits in meta-cognition, that is, unawareness on the part of a reader that he or she is not comprehending or difficulty in understanding the meanings of words (Pressley, 2006; Boardman, Roberts, Vaughn, Wexler, Murray and Kosanovich, 2008; Reed and Vaughn, 2010). To be an effective reader, one should make a link between the language of the text and one's mental perception.

Reading comprehension, at times, is kept at the low level of recalling information explicitly stated in a text, but it goes beyond it because it involves complex thinking skills.

An effective comprehension skills include but not limited to the following: ability to locate and recall main idea of a passage and to figure out relationship between the details and the main ideas; ability to locate thought pattern, ability to recognise author's purpose, ability to draw inferences and come to conclusion on what is read, ability to organise and summarise what is read, ability to make predictions and ability to distinguish between facts and opinions (Adediran, Adebajo and Adeoye, 2018). In developing reading comprehension skills, ability to read well and possess a good command of vocabulary should be encouraged; the more the vocabulary a reader has at his or her possession, the higher the level of comprehension.

Reading comprehension holds a lot of importance even to the life of an individual; for instance, an individual who reads and comprehends what he has read is often exposed to cogent, classical and personalised information about the society at large; he does not need to depend on information from third parties which most times are undependable and could be misleading. An individual who masters the act of reading comprehension usually turns out to be a good public speaker and a good leader. He or she would be able to self-regulate the vital points to drive home his or her views concerning a subject matter (Borkowski and Whiteman, 2008).

Poor English reading comprehension could be caused by poor language background, poor vocabulary, lack of training and practice in reading comprehension skills. Raymond (2019) investigated factors responsible for poor reading achievement of pupils in Yola South and North Local Government Areas of Adamawa state and it was found out among others that lack of commitment of teachers to their responsibilities, teachers lacking the skills to teach phonics and fundamental skills were major causes of low reading comprehension level among students. As teachers, students should be prepared for linguistic, cultural or conceptual difficulties they are likely to face with English reading comprehension text. Teachers could do this by exposing students to reading activities that would activate their existing schematic knowledge. Unfortunately, the conventional method of teaching English reading comprehension is still widely used in most schools in Nigeria. Kolawole (2005), Pressley (2006), Maduabuchi (2008) and Adeyinka (2020) that the awful performance of secondary school students at external examination was due to their lack of proficiency in reading comprehension.

In West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE), English Language Paper 1 is compulsory for all candidates and it comprises two passages which test comprehension and summary writing respectively. This aspect of English comprehension carries high marks among other aspects examined. The marks allotted to different aspects tested in the examination are as shown below:

Continuous writing (Essay and letter)	50
Comprehension passage	40
Summary	30
Total	120

**Source: WASSCE Syllabus, 2023**

From the above analysis, it could be observed that essay accounts for 41.67% of the total score whereas comprehension and summary account for 33.33% and 25.00% respectively. Apart from the 40 marks allotted to reading comprehension, comprehension is also relevant to all other aspects because a student could not perform well in the summary aspect without an understanding of the text. Therefore, when a student is deficient in reading comprehension, it is not uncertain that the student would fail English Language examination and other subjects.

Several attempts have been made in the past to address the issues of students' deficiency in reading comprehension. Eze (2019), Obateru and Lawal (2019), Awolere and Muriana (2020), Olagbaju and Senghore (2020), and Bakare (2021) research on instruction in strategic awareness skills, usage of pictures, interaction effect of home literacy of pupils and their self-concept, availability and utilisation of teaching resources and the use of dialogic and shared book reading as means of enhancing English reading comprehension with less emphasis being placed on teacher commitment to teaching.

Teachers are known to be one of the major factors that influence students' academic achievement and they likewise play a crucial role in educational attainment because they translate educational policies and principles to action. This means that a teacher does influence the whole process of learning. In October, 2021, Africa's leading literacy project commended Nigerian teachers for their commitment to quality education (Nwakaudu, 2021). This implies that teachers are important tools for improving students' academic performance.

Mashood, Musa and Ibrahim (2020) used structural equation modeling to determine the relationship between teacher knowledge and students' academic performance with mediating effect of teacher commitment. The finding revealed that there was a direct and a significant relationship between teacher knowledge and students' academic performance; also, teacher commitment was able to mediate on the relationship between teacher knowledge and students' academic performance. This indicates that commitment is an essential element for successful teaching and learning processes. When a teacher sets high standards for students, they take their studies seriously. The distinct characteristics that teachers have are their dedication and commitment to improve students' achievement.

Teacher commitment to teaching is a key factor that influences the teaching and the learning processes in classrooms. It has a great contribution to the future of the students, the school and the nation as a whole. A committed teacher goes beyond self-satisfaction by applying more efforts to the completion of the task he is being assigned to, this in turn motivates learners to strive hard in accomplishing the set goals. It implies that commitment is highly related to teachers' work performance. Abiodun, Ogundeji and Asaanre (2020) conducted a research on teachers' skills as predictors of students' academic achievement in Mathematics. The result revealed that teacher commitment was a significant factor as it inspired and motivated students to be high achievers. This agreed with the opinion that teachers successes depend on their effectiveness in terms of their commitment to teaching, which in turn would enhance students' academic achievement (Abyot, Menna and Mesfin, 2017). From all indications, teachers could be referred to as agents of positive change.

Teaching is a complex and a demanding career that requires intense dedication; therefore, when a teacher is committed to his work, the result is reflected in the students' performance and their general achievement. On the other hand, when a teacher lacks passion and zeal for teaching, it reflects negatively on the academic achievement of the students. Therefore, teacher should be committed to work in order to propel the students to achieve academic excellence. Some teachers appear to exhibit laissez-faire attitude to teaching because they accidentally find themselves in the classroom. Such teachers do manage teaching appointment till they gain employment in their specialised professions. Based on this, they seem to develop lukewarm attitude towards the school as well as the students. This

agrees with the opinion of Adedokun (2020) that stated that teachers cannot exonerate themselves from problem of deficiency in reading comprehension among the students.

Peretomode and Bello (2018) investigated the level of teacher commitment in Edo state; the result showed that the overall level of teacher commitment to school organisation was very high. This could be due to threat sanctions against erring teachers when they failed to perform their duties or absent themselves from school. Also, the result revealed that female teachers were more committed to teaching than their male counterparts. This could be due to the fact that women seem to prefer teaching profession because of domestic activities they are involved in as mothers, while most men prefer lucrative jobs where fat salary would be earned to take care of families.

Studies have shown that teacher commitment to teaching has very strong links with academic successes in literary creativity (Adeosun, 2020; Omobowale, 2021); in Science Education (Awolere, Owonikoko and Odoje, 2020); in Mathematics (Abiodun, Ogundeji and Asanre, 2020) and in Summary Writing (Ohia, 2020). However, the extent to which it could predict achievement in reading comprehension in Oyo, Nigeria would be determined in this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Reading comprehension is a key to every student's success in his or her academic endeavour; this could be the reason for recognising it as an aspect of English Language in the school curriculum. Evidence available from both internal and external examinations revealed that students' performance has not been encouraging in English reading comprehension due to the difficulties encounter by students when answering examination questions. Scholars' efforts to address this problem influence researches and attract use of different strategies such as reading awareness skills, interaction effect and self-concept, dialogic and shared book reading, among others; yet the reading comprehension difficulty persists. However, it appears the contributions of teacher commitment to students' achievement in English reading comprehension in secondary schools have not be given much focus over the years. Hence, this study investigated teacher commitment as predictor of students' achievement in English reading comprehension.

## Research Questions

1. What are English language teachers rating in commitment to teaching?
2. What is the level of achievement of students in English reading comprehension?
3. What relationship exists between teacher commitment to teaching and students achievement in English reading comprehension.

## Methodology

The study adopted the correlation research design as it sought to establish the relationship existing between independent and dependent variables. The population consisted of all of senior secondary II students and their teachers of English language in the three Local Government Areas in Oyo town, Nigeria. The three Local Government Areas are: Atiba, Oyo East and Oyo West respectively. From each of the local government areas, purposive sampling technique was used to select two senior secondary schools making a total of six (6) schools. From each of the schools, one intact class of senior secondary 2 students was randomly selected, making a total of six (6) intact classes. A total of 240 students and six English language teachers participated in the study. Two research instruments used for data collection were reading comprehension achievement test ( $r=0.76$ ) and teacher commitment to teaching questionnaire ( $r=0.81$ ).

## Results

Research Question: 1: What are English language teachers rating in commitment to teaching?

**Table 1: English Language Teacher Rating in Commitment to Teaching**

S/N	Items	SA(%)	S(%)	D(%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1	My aim is to continue being a teacher	3(50.0)	2(33.3)	1 (16.7)	0(0.0)	1.67	.82
2	I keep loving teaching profession every day	3(50.0)	3(50.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1.50	.55
3	I love to teach my student reading comprehension	4(66.7)	2(33.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1.33	.52
4	I keep tolerating my students even when they exhibit negative attitude	2(33.3)	3(50.0)	1(16.7)	0(0.0)	1.83	.75
5	I derive full satisfaction from teaching	4(66.7)	2(33.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1.33	.52
6	I am always aspiring to making my students achieve their academic goals	4(66.7)	2(33.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1.33	.52
7	I voluntarily choose to be a teacher	3(50.0)	3(50.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1.50	.55
8	The student's behaviour does discourage me from teaching effectively	1(16.7)	2(33.3)	1(16.7)	2(33.3)	2.67	1.21
9	Teaching is too difficult a task with unsuitable remuneration	2(33.3)	1(16.7)	1(16.7)	2(33.3)	2.50	1.38
10	The workload puzzled me off the profession	1(16.7)	2(33.3)	1(16.7)	2(33.3)	2.67	1.21
11	I love academic environment	3(50.0)	3(50.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1.50	.55



12	I have a clear sense of achievement in teaching	3(50.0)	3(50.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1.50	.55
13	When given a better office, I would not quit teaching	1(16.7)	4(66.7)	0(0.0)	1(16.7)	2.17	.98
14	Some factors are discouraging me from teaching	1(16.7)	3(50.0)	2(33.3)	0(0.0)	2.17	.75
15	When given opportunity to choose any other profession, I would still choose to be a teacher	1(16.7)	3(50.0)	1(16.7)	1(16.7)	2.33	1.03
16	I am satisfied with every bit of what it is involved to be a teacher	1(16.7)	4(66.7)	0(0.0)	1(16.7)	2.17	.98
17	I see a better future for teachers	5(83.3)	1(16.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1.17	.41
18	Bogus remuneration cannot lure me away from teaching profession	0(0.0)	4(66.7)	1(16.7)	1(16.7)	2.50	.84
19	Teaching is stressful	4(66.7)	2(33.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1.33	.52
20	I am always encouraged by my students' achievement	4(66.7)	2(33.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1.33	.52
	Grand mean=1.87						

The grand mean for teacher commitment to teaching is 1.87. This indicates that teacher commitment to teaching is below average when compared with the threshold. The result showed that teachers have low commitment to teaching. This could be due to lack of motivational factors such as compensation packages. This negates the findings of Peretomode and Bello (2018) who investigated the level of teacher commitment in Edo State in which the result revealed that the level of teacher commitment to school organisation was very high. However, the finding of this study agrees with the findings of Raymond (2019) on factors responsible for poor reading achievement among secondary school students. The result revealed among others that lack of commitment of the teachers to their responsibilities was the major cause of poor reading comprehension.

Research Question 2: What is the level of achievement of students in English reading comprehension?

**Table 2: Level of students' achievement in English reading comprehension**

	Students' scores
N Valid	240
Mean	4.48
Standard deviation	2.33
Minimum	0.00
Maximum	11.00

The students mean score in English reading comprehension achievement is 4.48 with the standard deviation of 2.33. The minimum students' score is 0.00 while the maximum score is 11.00 out of 20 marks, which indicates that students' achievement in English reading comprehension is low. This agrees with the findings of Kolawole (2005), Pressley (2006), Maduabuchi (2008) and Adeyinka (2020) that the awful performance of secondary school students at external examination was due to their lack of proficiency in reading comprehension.

Research Question 3: What relationship exists between teacher commitment to teaching and students achievement in English reading comprehension?

**Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Teacher Commitment to Teaching and Students Achievement in English Reading Comprehension**

Pearson Product Moment Correction		Students English Reading Comprehension
Teacher Commitment	R	.205
	Sig.	.691
	N	6

Table 3 revealed that the correlation between teachers commitment to teaching and students achievement in English reading comprehension is not significant ( $r = .205$ ,  $n = 6$ ;  $p > .05$ ). The result revealed that the correlation between teacher commitment to teaching and students achievement in English reading comprehension is not significant. This indicates that teacher commitment to teaching has no positive relationship with students' achievement. This result appears surprising, because it is expected that students should learn more from a committed teacher. This however, negates the findings of Mashood, Musa and Ibrahim (2020) who established that the relationship between teacher knowledge and students' academic performance with mediating effect of teacher commitment. The result showed that teacher commitment is able to mediate on the relationship between teacher knowledge and students academic performance. Also, the result negates the assertion of Abyot, Menna and Mesfin (2017) that teachers' successes depend on effectiveness in terms of their commitment to teaching which enhances students' academic achievement. There is connection between

these results and that of Abiodun, Ogundeji and Asanre (2020) who established that teacher skills as predictors of students' academic achievement in Mathematics. The result revealed that teacher commitment is a significant factor as it inspires and motivates students to be high achievers.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it could be concluded that teacher commitment to teaching is vital in determining students' achievement in English reading comprehension in the study area. The study has lots of implications for teachers of English reading comprehension, school administrators, parents and Ministries of Education. There is need to develop and implement effective intervention programmes towards eliminating poor English reading comprehension

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

Teachers should be given incentives for hard work. Their salary should be paid to time, leave bonus disbursed to them at the appropriate time, and promotion granted to them whenever they are due for it.

Schools should provide enabling environment that enhances teaching and learning. There should be a time allotted to English reading comprehension on the time table and provision should be made for standard libraries and well-furnished classrooms.

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