

Book Maintenance Practice among Primary School Pupils in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The role of textbook is vital in language learning. Hence, teachers, parents, school administrators, proprietors, government and other stakeholders attach importance to the provision of prescribed textbooks in school. English language dominates official communication in Nigeria, and enjoys an unequalled status in the country's education. However, learner performance in the language over the years has been worrisomely low. Many factors have been responsible for the poor performance, prominent among which is inadequacy of instructional materials. That learner attitude to instructional materials also matters has been suggested in the literature. Thus, the present study set out to describe textbook maintenance practice among Primary School pupils in Ilorin, Kwara State Nigeria. The sample for the study were 200 randomly selected Primary Six pupils from 10 schools in the three local governments that made up Ilroin. Four research questions and two hypotheses were generated. The research hypotheses were tested using the chi-square and t-test respectively. Findings from the study revealed that gender and school type have significant influence on textbook maintenance practice among primary school pupils in Ilorin. Consequently, it was recommended that teachers, proprietors, government, parents and publishers should encourage the students to cultivate the right attitude to English (and other) textbooks.

Introduction

The place of textbook in the implementation of school curriculum cannot be over-emphasized. No lesson can give all the facts that a book will give; not even the radio or the television can. The current technological marvel – the computer/Internet – vital and urgent as it appears, cannot replace the textbook, particularly in an emergent economy like Nigeria. Within the text-book, the reader can see himself, his friends and relations, the proximate community and the entire world; he could see God on “His Majestic Throne”, and Satan “burning in Hell”! Across the world, educational planners, curriculum experts and relevant other stakeholders do not ignore what happens in the book industry. As observed by Christopher (2006), “Books and literacy are sine qua non for development, and education binds all three together” (p.56). Books help to preserve culture, revitalize the economy and shape a nation's political future (Baran, 2002). In classroom instruction, the textbook plays a vital role. According to Idowu (2008), instructional materials, especially the textbook, help in making “the school look like home to children” (p.167). In this connection, language educators (Olajide, 2004 ; 2010, Akinwale 2003 & Idowu, 2003) counseled that the teacher be cautious in selecting textbooks for use in schools. The scholars proposed varied criteria that the teachers could follow in so doing. Idowu specifically highlighted the steps that may be followed in using textbooks in the classroom.

Concerns about textbooks on English in Nigeria particular should be understandable in view of the vital role the language plays in the country. It is the language of the mass media, politics, religion, commerce, social interaction and education (Bamgbose, 1971, Alabi, 1994; Olajide, 2004, Adedimeji, 2010). Hence, government attaches great importance to the teaching and learning of the language. Much as Nigeria wants the indigenous languages to grow (FRN, 2004 & Olajide, 2007) English remains the strongest tongue in the country. As from upper primary school, English serves not only as a tool for learning, but also as a subject of study. Without passing it at the Ordinary (School Certificate) Level, a learner cannot secure admission into any Nigerian higher institution of learning. In spite of the attention that the teaching and learning of English enjoys from government, schools and other lovers of education in the country, the performance of learners has remained poor over the years. A number of factors have been adduced for the worrisome situation. While certain quarters (Christopher, 2003; Akinwale, 2008) argue that the textbook situation is deplorable and cannot produce effective education, others (Olajide 2004) depose that the situation could be converted to an advantage, if the teaching-learning process becomes more critical, resourceful; and that the attitude of learners could influence their performance in language (Aderibigbe, 1992; Ayelaagbe, 1982).

Statement of the Problem

The literature has consistently pointed to the need to develop language skills among learners at whatever level. It has emphasized the role of instructional materials, especially the textbooks, in language instruction. A learner that passes a basal textbook he has used in a class to an upcoming younger sibling is not only engaged in caring and sharing that the world encourages today, but relieving their parents of some financial burden. Though scholars (Christopher, 2006 & Idowu, 2008) are agreed that the textbook is vital to language learning and that much is yet to be done regarding book development in Nigeria, they could not provide notable information on the way primary school learners in particular maintain available textbooks. The literature available to this researcher has also not explained if book maintenance practice among the learners has to do with the learners' gender and type of school they attend, especially in the English as a second language (ESL) context. Across Nigeria, governments spend heavily on providing textbooks on the core school subjects of English and Mathematics, but it would seem that not much has been done to ascertain that learners handle the textbooks provided carefully and usefully enough to make it possible for the textbooks to be passed to future generations of learners. These observations point to a scholarly gap.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was therefore to ascertain the measures taken by primary school pupils in Ilorin to maintain their English textbook. Specifically, the researcher sought to find out:

1. if gender has to do with the measures taken by the pupils to maintain the English textbooks; and
2. whether the type of schools attended by the pupils influences textbook maintenance practice among them.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The population for the study was all the primary school pupils in the three Local Government Areas of Ilorin East, Ilorin West and Ilorin South, Kwara State, Nigeria. From the schools, five public and five private were selected, and from each of the schools, 10 male and 10 female pupils were randomly selected. All the subjects for the study were in Primary Six. The assumption had been that the subjects had sufficient exposure to textbooks and would have formed textbook maintenance habits of which they were about to transfer in the secondary schools.

Instrumentation

A researcher-designed questionnaire served as the instrument for the study. Section A of the questionnaire sought personal information from the respondents, such as the names of their schools, their gender, and if they had the prescribed English textbook. Section B contained five items meant to obtain information related to English language textbook. For example, one question sought information about who provided the textbook. Another concerned how the respondent protected the textbook. Section C of the instrument involved an observation schedule for physical inspection of the books to note the dimensions in which the respondents actually interacted with their textbooks. In order to validate the instrument, a copy was given to each of 20 (10 male and 10 female) teachers of English in Model Secondary School, Government Secondary School, Ilorin, Bishop Smith Memorial School, Ilorin, Cherubim and Seraphim College, Ilorin, and Ansaru-deen College, Ilorin, Nigeria. The evaluators adjudged the instrument as being valid. Thereafter, 20 copies of the instrument were administered on randomly selected junior secondary school pupils in Okene, Kogi State. Their responses were compared using the Pearson Product Moment statistic which gave a co-efficient of 0.78.

Procedure for Data Collection

Two hundred copies of the questionnaire were taken to the 10 primary schools in Ilorin with the help of 10 research assistants who had been trained on how to interact with the respondents, especially regarding completion of Sections A and B of the questionnaire and the physical inspection of the textbooks. The assistants were led to the sampled schools by the researcher who first sought the permission of the principals before the assistants could operate. The data gathering phase of the study lasted two days. The first day featured familiarization with the sampled pupils, while the second involved the actual collection of data.

Results

The results of the study are presented below. Three questions were raised related to the history and use of the textbooks, while two research hypotheses were generated.

Table 1. shows that majority (92%) of the respondents possessed the prescribed textbooks, while only nine percent did not. It was also observed that those who did not have the textbooks had no substitutes, English textbooks varied from public to private schools. All the male and female pupils in the private schools had the prescribed textbooks.

Table 1: Pupils' Responses to if They Had the Prescribed English Textbooks

Questionnaire Item	Public Schools								Private Schools							
	Male				Female				Male				Female			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1 Whether respondents the recommended text	42	84	8	16	45	90	2	10	50	50	00	00	50	50	00	00

Table 2: On who Provided the Textbook

Questionnaire Item	Public Schools								Private Schools							
	Government				Parent				Government				Parent			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
2 Who provided you with the textbook?	42	84	45	90	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	50	100	50	100

From table 2, above, it could be seen that all the respondents with books (87% of the total sample from public schools) received their textbooks from the government (Kwara State Government of Nigeria), while all the respondents (100% of the sample) in the public schools got their own textbooks from their parents.

Table 3: How Regularly the Textbook Were Used in Class

Questionnaire Item	Public Schools								Private Schools							
	Yes				No				Yes				No			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
3 Does your class use the textbook regularly in lessons	29	58	32	64	21	42	18	36	46	92	49	98	4	8	1	2

Table 3 reveals that majority of the respondents in the public schools agreed that the prescribed textbooks were used regularly during lessons. More (64%) of the female respondents in that category of schools agreed than their male counterparts, 58% of whom affirmed so. Nearly all the respondents (92% male and 98% female) from the private schools reported that they used the prescribed textbooks regularly in their classrooms.

Table 4: Whether Respondents Wrote Inside Their Textbooks

Questionnaire Item	Public Schools								Private Schools							
	Yes				No				Yes				No			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
4 Do you write inside your textbook when reading?	34	68	16	32	19	38	31	62	23	46	27	54	8	16	42	84

From table 4, it may be seen that more (68%) of the male respondents in the public schools wrote in their textbooks while reading, whereas few of the female respondents in the same category of schools ever wrote in their own textbooks. Generally, more males than females in both types of school, wrote in their textbooks. Very few females (16%) in the private schools wrote inside theirs.

Table 5: Probability Statistical Table Showing the Result of the Test of the hypothesis on the Influence of Gender on Book Maintenance Practice among Primary School Pupils in Ilorin

Questionnaire Item	Probability	Being Significant or Not at 0.05 Alpha Level
5. How do you protect your textbook: a) By wrapping? b) Not wrapping, but touching it carefully? c) By not touching it at all?	0.74	S

Table 5 indicated that there was a significant (0.74) difference in how male and female respondents across the schools maintained their textbooks with respect to wrapping, not wrapping, and keeping the textbook carefully.

Table 6: Probability Statistical Table Showing the Results of the test of the Hypothesis Related to the influence of School type on Book Maintenance practices among Primary School Pupils in Ilorin

S/N	Questionnaire Item	Probability	Being Significant or Not at 0.05 Alpha Level
6.	How do you protect your textbook: a) By wrapping? b) Not wrapping, but touching it carefully? c) By not touching it at all?	0.87	S

Table 6, revealed that school type influenced the ways the respondents maintenance their textbooks.

Summary, Discussion and Recommendations

In this study, an attempt was made to identify textbook maintenance practices among primary school pupils in Ilorin. There were three research questions and two null hypotheses. The first hypothesis was tested using the chi-square statistic, while the second was subjected to the t-test. It was found that majority of the pupils, regardless of the school they attended, had the prescribed textbooks. This may be attributed to the importance that the government and parents attached to the provision of instructional materials. Also, it was found that more of the students in the private schools had the relevant books than their counterparts in the public schools. That situation may be the private schools possible greater capacity to get parents to support their children in school, more especially when the study also revealed that parents (rather than government) supplied the books in those private schools. The study showed that private schools emphasized the use of textbooks in English language lessons than their public counterparts.

The former category of schools diversified the textbooks used on their pupils in the bid to fully challenge the pupils. This probably accounts for endowed parents' preference for the private schools which seem to record better overall performance than the private schools. That majority of the pupils of private schools avoided writing inside their textbooks may have stemmed from the disciplinary tone of such schools. It was observed that many of the textbooks in the public schools were defaced, torn, or mutilated. A great number of the textbooks had their spines broken or cover designs blurred. The study further showed that gender has a significant influence on textbook maintenance among the pupils. Generally, female pupils tend to pay more attention to the things they use and their (the pupils') physical appearances. Moreover, it was found from the study that school type has significant influence on maintenance. Though this study could not locate where the significant difference lay, this researcher assumes that public primary schools would need to do more regarding textbook maintenance among the students, especially in view of government's policy to make the textbooks revolve among the pupils.

Another implication of this study is that pupils' attitude to textbook maintenance could extend to other school facilities and life generally. Thus, primary school teachers should take time to inspect their pupils textbooks to encourage more effective maintenance practices among the pupils. The teachers should also encourage the use of workbooks in classes, to enable the pupils to write, speak and listen based on the experiences in the main textbooks. Publishers should also be more innovative about their book designs and presentations. Parents need to remain committed to the education of their children by not only providing the needed textbooks and other instructional materials, but also ensuring that such textbooks are carefully used by the pupils in their carrying out of take-homes. Habit formation among the pupils – leaders of tomorrow – should matter to all stakeholders in education. It is possible that other variables, like students' home background and career aspirations, have to do with textbook maintenance among all categories of learners. Other researchers may therefore wish to investigate such variables.

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