
ASSESSMENT OF THE MASTERY OF REGISTERED
WORDS IN SOCIAL STUDIES BY PRIMARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS AND PUPILS IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

One major purpose of Social Studies education is the inculcation of appropriate and relevant knowledge into learners. This could be attained if learners comprehend the information contained in Social Studies texts which could be guaranteed through the understanding and mastery of the key words/registered words in the texts. Registered words are essential in instruction generally as the meanings of new words are very often emphasized, whether in books or in the classrooms. They are also central to Social Studies teaching and are of paramount importance to learners' comprehension and understanding of passages. Teaching registered words may be problematic because many teachers are not confident about best practices in teaching key/registered words and at times do not know where to begin to form an instructional emphasis on word learning. This paper therefore looks at the efficacy and fluency of teachers and their students in pronunciation, application, spelling and dictation of registered key words in Social Studies. A mixed method approach was adopted in the

study in which one hundred and twenty primary five pupils and nine teachers were observed during social studies instruction sessions to determine their mastery of some registered words in social studies. The pupils participants involved in the study were given a test in dictation/spelling, pronunciation and interpretation at the end of the intervention session. Collected data were analyzed with the t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance. The study observed that registered words were not properly and adequately used by both teachers and pupils and that a correlation exists between the teachers' and pupils' skills/competency in the measurement. It was therefore recommended that learners should be frequently exposed to targeted keywords spelling, pronunciation, interpretation and usage during Social Studies instruction.

Keywords: Mastery of registered words, Registered words/keywords/ key concepts

Introduction

Improving learners' academic achievement in virtually all school subjects has been of paramount concern of teachers over the years. Educators have also opined that a relationship exists between teachers' methods of teaching and students' academic achievement. Hence, concerted efforts have been directed by researchers at experimenting and discovering various methods that can yield expected learning outcomes in learners.

Likewise, the objectives of Social Studies instruction according to Okam (2001) and Akinlaye (2003) in Aisiku & Ibhafidon (2017) are commonly categorised into knowledge (cognitive), skills (psychomotor), values and attitudes (affective) objectives. Of these three, the knowledge objectives always take lion shares during classroom instruction. Others hinge on the level of knowledge acquired by the learners. The knowledge component is expected to enable learners to acquire and understand specific pieces of information and ideas like the facts, concepts, generalisations and theories contained in the body of information. Their ability to decode

the information contained in texts will largely depends on their ability to decipher the key words/registered words in the text.

The ability to understand and gain knowledge from texts is a fundamental skill required in every school subject as well as in everyday life. Unfortunately, large numbers of school-age children experience significant problems in learning to read (Lee, Griggs & Donahue (2007). As students progress through school, the demands of independently extracting and retaining information from texts increases. If we are to impact in students the ability to independently gain knowledge from texts, we must understand what types of intervention efforts are most effective in increasing students' ability to comprehend what they are reading. One promising area of intervention is in mastery of registered key words. There exist individual differences in vocabulary acquisition level in early school years. By the end of second grade, disadvantaged students can lag two years behind the average students in their class and four years behind students in the upper quartile (Biemiller, 2015).

It is very essential to lay a solid foundation for pupils at the basic education/primary school level on which further knowledge could be laid at higher levels. The successful inculcation of appropriate values and attitudes into the learners now as children which will be useful to them later as adults in the society will largely depends on their ability to understand and appreciate these values and the concepts there in contained in Social Studies texts provided. Moreover, the Social Studies curriculum content is organised around societal themes and concepts or keywords which are necessary to be internalised by learners.

In order to understand social studies texts, its keywords/key concepts and themes are crucial to be mastered by the learners. Keywords mastery is needed to express our ideas and to be able to understand other people's sayings. Mastery learning is an instructional strategy and an educational philosophy proposed by Bloom (1968). According to Webster (2015), mastery refers to:

- The authority of a master, dominion, the upper hand in a contest or competition; superiority, ascendancy and

- Possession or display of great skill or techniques, skill or knowledge that makes one a master of a subject.

Hornby (2009) defines mastery as complete knowledge or complete skill. Mastery therefore, means complete knowledge or great skill that makes someone a master in a certain subject. The quality of any individual's keywords knowledge depends on the person and his motivation, desires and the need for the words (Hatch and Brown, 2008). Keywords mastery refers to the great skill in processing words in social studies. It is an individual's achievement and possession (Rivers, 2009); the biggest responsibility in increasing knowledge is in the individual himself. The success in widening keywords mastery requires motivation and interest on the words of a language. Keywords mastery is an individual's great skill in using words in Social Studies, which is acquired based on their interest and motivation. Keywords mastery plays an important role in learning skills and it has to be considered that keywords mastery is one of the needed components in learning social studies and acquisition of skills.

Keywords are often used as a critical tool for second language learners because limited keywords in a second language impede successful communication. Nation (2012) describes the relationship between keywords knowledge and the usage in social studies as complementary. Knowledge of keywords enables ease of social studies concepts use and, conversely, use of social studies concepts leads to an increase in keywords knowledge. The importance of keywords is demonstrated daily in and out of school. In classroom, the active students pose the most sufficient keywords. Scholars such as Laufer and Nation (2014), Maximo (2000), Read (2012), Gu (2009), Marion (2008), Nation (2012) and others have realized that the acquisition of keywords is essential for successful second language use and plays an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts. In Social Studies as a subject and English as a foreign language (EFL), learning keywords plays a vital role in acquisition of skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing (Nation, 2012). These are essential skills in Social Studies. River and Nunan (2011) further argue that the acquisition

of an adequate keyword is essential for successful skills learning because without extensive keywords, we would find it difficult to use structures and functions that have been learnt for communication purposes.

Huckin (2005) opines that readers of texts (in Social Studies for instance) rely heavily on keyword knowledge and the lack of that knowledge is a big obstacle to overcome. In production, when we have a meaning or concept that we wish to express, we can select to express this meaning or concept. Many scholars argued that keyword is one of the most important, if not the most important component in learning.

Wilkins (2005) stated that there is not much value in being able to produce learning skills if one has not got the keywords that are needed to convey what one wishes to say. Without learning the Social Studies key concepts, very little can be conveyed. It is remarkably possible that the open ended of a keyword system is perceived to be the cause of difficulty faced by learners. Another reason is that, unlike other discipline terminologies, keywords do not have rules which learners may follow to acquire and develop their knowledge.

The keyword method is another well researched, memory enhancing mnemonic technique that helps students to understand and recall new vocabularies, simple facts and concepts. It can also be used to help in associating an object with its attributes, which is especially important in Social Studies giving the plethora of places and names that pupils are expected to remember. It can especially help pupils understand both abstract and concrete ideas.

It requires learners to follow three steps:

1. Recode: select part of an unknown word/concept with which you are already familiar
2. Relate: use an image that relates the recoded (shortened) word to the definition of the new word you are trying to learn in an interactive way.
3. Retrieve: use a keyword for your newly learned word.

It was first used after some researchers realized that the imagery or visual strategy was difficult for many young learners. It has proven effective in terms of the high school foreign language vocabulary acquisition of language novices and is likely transferable to Social Studies environment.

Recent studies indicate that teaching keywords may be problematic because many teachers are not confident of the best practice in keywords teaching and at times do not know where to begin to form an instructional emphasis on word learning (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). Teaching concepts is a crucial aspect in learning Social Studies as concepts are based on words (Thornbury, 2008). It is almost impossible to learn a concept without words; even communication between human beings is based on words. Hence, acquisition of keywords is a central factor in Social Studies teaching and learning.

Walters (2009) says teaching keywords is one of the most discussed parts of learning. When the teaching and learning process takes place, some problems would be faced by the teachers. They have problems of how to teach students in order to gain satisfying results. The teacher should prepare and find out the appropriate techniques, which will be applied to teaching. A good teacher should prepare himself with up-to-date techniques. Teachers need to master the materials in order to be understood by students and make them interested and happy in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The teachers should be concerned that teaching keywords is something new and different from students' relative concepts. They also have to take into account that teaching Social Studies for young learners is different from teaching adults learners. The teachers have to know the characteristics of their learners. Moreover, they need to adopt good techniques and suitable materials in order to gain the targeted teaching. The third step is compiling vocabulary notebooks. This provides a memory aid and independent learning through setting up vocabulary notebooks in which some Social Studies key concepts are assembled.

Some Social studies registered /key concepts and themes that could be so listed in pupils' keywords notebooks include: democracy, gender, justice, religion, family, terrorism, citizenship, governance,

crime; freedom, ethnicity, civilization, social mobility, culture, social stratification, politics, socialisation, globalization, value, ethnicity, justice, unity, religious tolerance, communication, crime, environmental sanitation, political awareness, political participation, social awareness, child marriage, insurgency, etc. Learners can also list mnemonics and their meanings such as MAMSER, WHO, UNESCO, ECOWAS, EU, AU, UNICEF, ILO, NAFDAC etc into their notebooks.

However, there has always been a cry about the nose diving nature of the standard of education in Nigeria which has been attributed to many factors. One of such factors is the weak foundation laid for learners at the lower basic/primary education level. The observed weak foundation in learners during early school age which affects knowledge acquisition at higher levels and the attempt to provide teachers with variety of appropriate alternative teaching approaches informed this delve into discovering how mastery of registered words/keywords could promote effective Social Studies instruction.

Purpose of the Study

The goals of this study are:

- i. To determine the efficacy in pronunciation of registered words by Social Studies teachers and pupils.
- ii. To determine the level of efficacy in spelling registered words by primary school Social Studies teachers and pupils.
- iii. To ascertain the fluency of primary school Social Studies teachers and pupils in the use of registered words.
- iv. To show the relationship between teachers' and pupils' spelling, fluency, and pronunciation of registered words.
- v. To determine the difference in pre-test and post-test scores of pupils in mastery of keywords in Social Studies.
- vi. To suggest modes of applying keywords mastery to effective Social Studies instruction.

Research Questions

Answers were provided to the following questions in the study:

1. How fluent are primary school Social Studies teachers and pupils in the use of registered words?
2. Is there any relationship between teachers' and pupils' spelling, fluency, and interpretation of registered words in Social Studies?
3. Is there any significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of students in mastery of Social Studies keywords?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis tested in the study is:

Ho 1: There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of students in mastery of Social Studies keywords.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed method approach. It employed both the descriptive survey and quasi experimental designs. A representative sample from the Social Studies teachers and pupils of primary schools in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State was selected for the study. One hundred and twenty (120) primary five pupils from three public primary schools and nine Social Studies teachers were involved in the study. A 20-item observation schedule was designed to assess the mastery of keywords by the nine Social Studies teachers who were selected through the incidental sampling technique. A pre-test was first conducted on the pupils, thereafter, they were led to identify and taught the pronunciation, spelling, meaning and usage of some keywords in Social Studies texts after which a post-test was conducted to assess their mastery (i.e. pronunciation, spelling, interpretation and usage) of the keywords and explanation of the texts. The content validity of the instruments was determined by two specialists in Social Studies Education in the Faculty while a reliability coefficient of $r=0.92$ was obtained using the test-retest method in a pilot study. The data collected was subjected to the t-test statistic formula to determine the homogeneity of the groups.

Results

Tables 1: Respondents’ pre-test scores on spelling, pronunciation and fluency of registered words

Variables	Observations	
	Teachers	Students
Spelling	53.3%	37.2%
Pronunciation	93.3%	80.2%
Usage/meaning	26.7%	23.76%

The table presents the scores of the subjects obtained through classroom observations during Social Studies instruction before intervention. The teachers’ percent scores were 53.3%, 93.3% and 26.7% in spelling, pronunciation and fluency of usage respectfully while the pupils scored 37.2%, 80.2% and 23.76% respectfully. Both teachers and pupils have very good performance in pronunciation of the key concepts. The teachers were fair in spelling but poor in fluency of usage and interpretation. The students performed poorly in the two variables too.

Table 2: Summary of pre-test and post-test of students’ mastery of keywords

Group	No.	Total Score	Mean (X)	D/f	“t” Cal	“t” Tab	Decision
Pre-test	120	1972	16.43	119	8.68	1.980	Reject Ho
Post-test	120	2172	18.10				

The table provides the pre-test and post test scores of the pupils on spelling, pronunciation and fluency and interpretation of registered words. The total scores were 1972 and 2172 for the pre-test and post-test respectfully while the mean scores were 16.43 and 18.1 respectfully. When the scores were subjected to the “t” test analysis, the calculated ‘t’ was 8.68 while the table value was 1.980. Since the calculated ‘t’ was greater than the table value, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of students in mastery of registered words.

Discussion

The study attempted an assessment of the mastery of key words/ concepts and themes by primary school teachers and pupils in Social Studies. The findings from the study showed that the Social Studies teachers were able to pronounce the registered words appropriately (93.3%) but had an average skill in spelling (53.3%) while most of them have low skill in fluency of use and explanation of social studies texts (26.7%). The findings revealed that before the intervention, most pupils also performed well in pronouncing the identified registered words at a good percentage of 80.2% with a poor performance (37.2%) in spelling and few of them were only fluent (23.76%) in usage. The students could not use and interpret the registered keywords appropriately as used in the texts with 23.7% performance but 80.2% of them have high skills in pronunciation. It is interesting to note that a good percentage of the pupils can pronounce the registered words, skilfully (80.2%) (Table 1). This finding indicates that there is a reasonable level of registered words literacy skills in the learners, which can enabled them use keywords for Social Studies learning.

The result in table one further shows that there was a significant relationship between Social Studies teachers and pupils' spelling, fluency and pronunciation of registered words. This is because the scores of both followed the same curve.

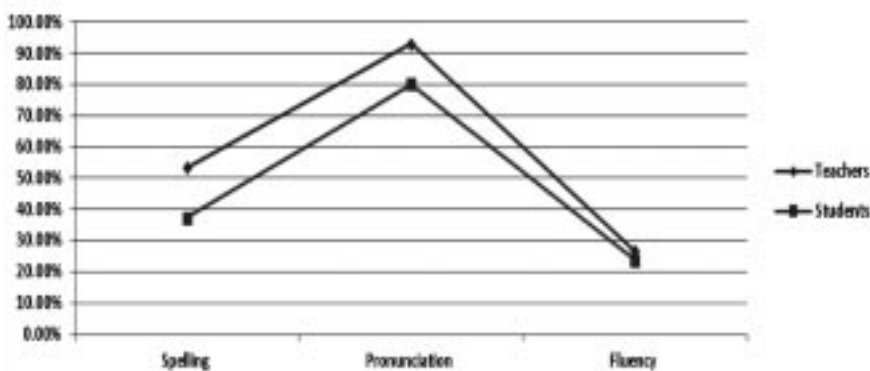


Fig. 1: Comparison of spelling, pronunciation and fluency of keywords usage by Social studies teachers and pupils.

Teaching keywords may be problematic because many teachers are not confident about the best practice in keywords teaching and at times do not know where to begin to form an instructional emphasis on word learning (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). It is almost impossible to comprehend a passage without understanding its keywords. Even communication between human beings is based on words. It is a fact that acquisition of relevant keywords is a central factor in social studies instruction.

Meara (2011) asserts that keywords have been acknowledged as second language greatest single source of problem. This remark may possibly reflect the fact that the open ended nature of a keyword system is perceived to be the cause of difficulty experienced by learners. Another reason is that keywords do not have rules learners may follow to acquire and develop their knowledge.

Walters (2009) also observes that teaching keywords is one of the most discussed parts of teaching. When the teaching and learning process takes place, some problems would be faced by the teachers. They have problems of how to teach students in order to gain satisfying results. It is a known fact that one cannot give what he doesn't have. Therefore, a teacher's competency level will as well determine his pupils' level of competency in the task he teaches them. This was supported by Abor, Farah, Geral & Jeremy in Obadiora & Obadiora (2019) that instructors that are not clear enough in presenting information cause students to have a mis-understanding of the information and sometimes resulting in failure. Likewise, Obadiora & Obadiora further quoted Du Perez (2004) that learners could not do well in studying when their teachers who were supposed to guide them did not know the subject themselves.

Aside teachers' knowledge, Buzuzi & Kasiyandima (2004) in Obadiora & Obadiora (2019) reported that some of the methods teachers adopt to teach do not help students to develop conceptual understanding of the subject matter. Hence, discovering effective teaching methods in Social Studies according to Akinlaye (2002) in Aisiku & Ibhafidon (2017) has been the focus in professional discourse among Social Studies educators especially since its introduction into the Nigerian school system. However, there is no

best method of instruction since it is difficult to answer the question “what is the best method of teaching?”. Rather, the question to ask is “what is the appropriate method of teaching a given topic to a particular group of learners under a certain peculiar condition?” Therefore, Social Studies teachers, as an element of the eclectic nature of Social Studies, should extend their tentacles outside their enclosed shells to experiment and adopt strategies applied in other fields of study that may be beneficial to effective Social Studies instruction. Hence, teachers are enjoined to prepare and find out the appropriate modes of effectively utilizing keywords learning strategy during instruction to have effective teaching and learning of the Social Studies concepts.

In the attempt to effectively adopt registered words or keywords learning strategies, experts have suggested lots more techniques that are helpful and easier for students to learn keywords. According to Stahl & Fairbanks (2005), students probably have to see a word more than once to place it firmly in their long-term memories. This does not mean more repetition or drilling of the word, but seeing the word in different and multiple contexts.

Teachers therefore, may also need to encourage students to keep a keyword notebook because a great deal of registered words growth ultimately depends on the learners themselves. They may ask students who are successful Social Studies keyword learners to share the content of their notebooks with their peers. For students who need help, they can demonstrate how to set up a keyword notebook that is neat and organized in a manner that will facilitate multiple retrievals of the words. If the notebook is not set up well, then learners are less likely to practice the words, which will defeat the purpose of keeping the notebook.

Conclusion

Keywords acquisition is a crucial component of reading and comprehension. The goal of mastery of keywords is to help students to be able to pronounce, spell, interpret and use many words so that they can comprehend the information provided in texts and thereby improve in their academic achievements. Students need to be exposed to modern and contemporary new words to build

their personal vocabulary to develop deep levels of words knowledge and acquire learning strategies that aid their independent reading and understanding of texts in Social Studies.

Mastery of keywords should permeate classroom instruction. It should contain and cover many concepts that have been skilfully and carefully chosen from the wide range of disciplines into the Social Studies in order to reduce gaps and improve students' abilities to apply words knowledge to the task of comprehension and interaction with their multifaceted environment.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings from the study, it is suggested that:

1. Learners should be frequently exposed to targeted keywords spelling, pronunciation, interpretation and usage during Social Studies lessons.
2. Mastery of keywords should be vigorously pursued by teachers in order to increase words learning and comprehension by pupils.
3. Reading texts aloud should occasionally be practiced by learners to enhance their word knowledge during Social Studies lessons.
4. Social Studies concepts acquisition should be encouraged by teachers through questioning strategies of teaching.
5. Exposing learners to target keywords spelling, pronunciation, interpretation and usage should also be adopted during Social Studies instruction.
6. Teachers should encourage students to keep keyword notebooks because a great deal of registered words growth ultimately depends on the learners' efforts.
7. Teachers should endeavour to constantly update their knowledge through in-service trainings, workshops and seminars.

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