





The Impact of Integrating Rhyming Poetry into Vocabulary Instruction Among Primary School Pupils in Ido Local Government, Nigeria.

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Keywords	Abstract
Rhyming poetry vocabulary development primary education phonological awareness language instruction	This study investigates the impact of integrating rhyming poetry into vocabulary instruction among primary school pupils in Ido Local Government, Nigeria. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the research involved an experimental group receiving poetry-based instruction and a control group following traditional teaching methods. Quantitative data were collected through standardized pre-tests and post-tests measuring vocabulary acquisition, retention, and reading comprehension. Qualitative insights were gathered via classroom observations, structured interviews, and focus group discussions to assess pupil engagement and perceptions of the poetry-based approach. Findings revealed that the experimental group exhibited significant improvements in vocabulary development, phonological awareness, and reading comprehension compared to the control group. Additionally, pupils reported increased motivation and enjoyment during poetry sessions. However, challenges such as selecting culturally appropriate poems and time constraints within the curriculum were identified. It was recommended among others that educational authorities should incorporate rhyming poetry into the language curriculum to enhance vocabulary development and phonological awareness. Teachers should receive training on effective methods for selecting and utilizing poetry in the classroom to maximize its benefits for vocabulary instruction. The study concludes that incorporating rhyming poetry into language

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instruction can effectively enhance vocabulary development and overall language proficiency among primary school pupils.

Introduction

Rhyming poetry has long been recognized as a powerful tool in language acquisition, particularly for young learners in the formative stages of their education. The rhythmic and repetitive nature of rhyming poetry makes it engaging and memorable, fostering an enjoyable learning experience for lower primary school pupils. By presenting new words in a structured and predictable manner, rhymes enable children to recognize patterns in language, improve phonemic awareness, and enhance their ability to decode unfamiliar words. Through repetition and rhythm, rhyming poetry aids in embedding new vocabulary into the long-term memory, enabling children to recall and use these words in both spoken and written communication.

Additionally, rhyming poetry encourages active participation, as pupils often recite or chant verses aloud, reinforcing their learning through auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modes. The multisensory nature of this learning approach appeals to a wide range of learners, making it an effective tool in diverse classrooms. Moreover, rhymes introduce pupils to the nuances of word sounds, syllables, and phonetic combinations, which are fundamental building blocks of language development. As children engage with rhymes, they also acquire contextual understanding of words, as the narrative or thematic flow of poetry provides meaningful contexts for new vocabulary.

The impact of rhyming poetry extends beyond mere word recognition to fostering creativity and imagination in pupils, as they are encouraged to explore the meanings of words and their applications in various contexts. When integrated into the curriculum, rhyming poetry becomes a playful yet impactful strategy to support literacy and language development. Ultimately, this approach contributes significantly to vocabulary development by equipping pupils with the tools to understand, internalize, and apply new words effectively in their academic and social interactions.

Vocabulary development is the process of acquiring and expanding the words an individual understands (receptive vocabulary) and actively uses (expressive vocabulary) in both spoken and written communication, and as Van Gemert (2024) explains, it plays a vital role in language acquisition and literacy, particularly during the early years of education. A robust vocabulary not only enables children to communicate effectively and comprehend texts but also equips them to

interacting meaningfully with their environment by understanding the appropriate use of words in various contexts—a foundation that strongly influences reading comprehension and overall academic success. Engaging strategies such as interactive games, group discussions, and visual aids have been shown to enhance vocabulary retention and practical application *Handig, Gabriel, García & Domingo, (2023)*, while regular practice and reinforcement are especially critical for bridging vocabulary gaps among English Language Learners (Krishnasamy & Abdul Aziz, 2024)). Moreover, shared reading experiences and diverse instructional techniques have been found to broaden both the depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge (*Arslan, 2024*), with a solid vocabulary foundation closely linked to improved reading and writing performance (Green & McLachlan, 2024) and the development of cognitive and social skills that facilitate effective communication (Narayan & Goundar, 2024). Despite these benefits, vocabulary development



faces challenges in meeting the diverse needs of students from multilingual and varied socio-economic backgrounds, necessitating flexible and tailored teaching strategies. Among the most powerful tools to enrich vocabulary is the art of poetry, which, through its rhythmic patterns, creative language, and memorable expressions, transforms learning into an enchanting journey that ultimately culminates in poetry.

Palmer (2023) described poetry as a unique form of literature that utilizes figurative language to uncover deeper meanings within a subject. Defining poetry can be complex, as it encompasses a wide range of styles and structures, some of which may follow specific patterns, rhyme schemes, or stanza lengths, while others may not adhere to any set rules. Unlike novels and short stories, which are typically written in straightforward prose, poetry is often composed in verse, incorporating rhythm and meter to enhance its expressive quality.

Goepel (2024) further explained that poetry serves as a powerful literary medium, using rhythmic and figurative language to evoke emotion and convey profound ideas. Though generally more concise than other literary forms, poetry allows for creative and abstract exploration of themes, engaging readers through its distinctive use of sound and structure. One of the most captivating aspects of poetry is its rhythmic and melodic quality, particularly in rhyming poetry, which enhances linguistic appeal and memorability.

Rhyming poetry has long been recognized as a powerful tool for enhancing language and literacy skills in young children, with extensive research demonstrating a strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (Elleman et al., 2009). Given the considerable individual differences in vocabulary size early in schooling, educators have increasingly turned to innovative methods such as rhyming poetry to provide repeated exposure to words and their sounds, thereby facilitating phonological awareness and word recognition. Preliminary evidence suggests that active recitation of rhyming verses—not just passive listening—leads to improved reading and spelling outcomes. This approach is particularly beneficial in diglossic languages like Arabic, where the significant gap between spoken and formal varieties can be bridged by transferring oral language proficiency into literacy skills. Moreover, poetry plays a crucial role in second language acquisition by enhancing pronunciation accuracy (Reilly, 2012), promoting motivation, creativity, and self-expression, and fostering multi-skill development and learner interaction (Gönen, 2018). It has been shown to develop meaningful literacy (Hanauer, 2012) and even produce measurable improvements in test scores (Özen & Mohammadzadeh, 2012). Integrating poetry into language instruction enables learners to create strong connections between language and its usage, encourages interaction with the language, and heightens their eagerness to learn. Studies indicate that reciting poetry enhances pronunciation and expands vocabulary (Lazar, 1996; Khatib, 2011; Özen, 2012; Mittal, 2014), while its rhythmic structure and memorable patterns improve phonemic awareness and word retention (Dixit, 2023). Poetry not only introduces diverse vocabulary in meaningful contexts, enriching comprehension and language skills (Bush, 2020), but also stimulates creativity and critical thinking as learners experiment with new words, thereby boosting their expressive vocabulary (Friday, 2024). In classrooms, research has demonstrated that poetry reinforces effective reading and writing by fostering a profound connection with the language, with studies such as those by Ruba Jamal "Mohammed Hilmi" AL-Bakri (2019) highlighting its positive impact on vocabulary and pronunciation. All these findings underscore the significant potential of using rhyming poetry as an instructional tool, which some studies had worked in relation to this.



Empirical review highlights the significant role of poetry in enhancing children's vocabulary development and overall language proficiency. Al-Jarf (2015) demonstrated that incorporating poetry into English language instruction can markedly improve students' vocabulary acquisition and retention. In a similar vein, Kadioglu (2005) investigated poetry-oriented, learner-centered activities and found that such approaches not only enriched the vocabulary repertoire of elementary students but also bolstered their overall communicative abilities. Complementing these findings, Atay (2007) revealed that analyzing poetry through a language-based approach positively influenced students' language awareness and critical thinking skills.

Further empirical evidence supports the use of poetry in fostering communicative competence in diverse language learning environments. Gültekin (2006) showed that incorporating poetry in EFL speaking classes created meaningful interaction opportunities, thereby enhancing second language communication. Ozen and Mohammadzadeh (2012) found that poetry-based vocabulary teaching activities led to a broader and more extensive vocabulary knowledge among learners. Ahmad (2014) provided additional support by demonstrating that a stylistic, communicative approach to teaching poetry could significantly improve grammar, vocabulary, and integrated language skills in Saudi ESL learners compared to more traditional methods.

Moreover, Reilly (2012) argued that poetry plays a crucial role in developing pronunciation and vocabulary, while also expanding learners' understanding of semantics, syntax, and pragmatics, as well as enhancing cultural awareness, self-expression, and motivation. In a practical classroom setting, Yusuf and Ahmed (2019) observed that integrating rhymes into literacy instruction in primary schools significantly boosted pupils' phonological awareness, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Most recently, Rajan and Saadat (2024) found that engaging children with rhymes not only aids in learning vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation but also builds oral confidence as learners describe objects and ideas. This indicates that collective findings of these studies provide robust empirical evidence that poetry—through its engaging and rhythmic nature—serves as an effective tool for enhancing vocabulary development and overall communicative competence in young learners.

Statement of the Problem

Vocabulary development is a critical component of language acquisition and literacy, forming the foundation for effective communication and academic success. Globally, educators grapple with significant individual differences in vocabulary knowledge among young learners, and innovative teaching methods are continually being explored to address these challenges. One promising approach that has emerged is the use of poetry—particularly rhyming poetry—which offers repeated exposure to language through engaging rhythms and patterns, thereby enhancing phonological awareness and word recognition skills.

Worldwide, numerous studies have shown that poetry can significantly boost vocabulary acquisition, improve reading comprehension, and foster creativity and critical thinking. These investigations suggest that when children actively recite and interact with poetry, they not only expand their vocabulary but also develop stronger language skills overall. However, while the existing literature underscores the benefits of poetry-based interventions, much of the research has concentrated on short-term gains and specific cultural contexts, leaving several key areas underexplored.



In Nigeria, the challenge of effective vocabulary development is compounded by limited instructional resources and a diverse pupil population with varying linguistic backgrounds. Nigerian educators often struggle to implement engaging and innovative teaching strategies that can meet the needs of all pupils. Although research from other regions indicates that poetry can be a valuable tool for language development, there is a noticeable gap in empirical studies examining its long-term impact and effectiveness within the Nigerian educational context.

The gaps in the literature include a limited understanding of the sustained effects of poetry-based learning on vocabulary retention, insufficient comparative analyses between different poetic forms, and a lack of integration with modern digital teaching tools. This study aims to fill these gaps by investigating the impact of rhyming poetry on vocabulary development among primary school pupils in Nigeria. By employing a culturally relevant framework and exploring both immediate and long-term outcomes, the study seeks to contribute empirical evidence that not only supports the global discourse on innovative language teaching methods but also offers practical solutions for enhancing vocabulary acquisition in Nigerian classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of rhyming poetry on the vocabulary development of primary school pupils in Nigeria. This research aims to explore how integrating poetry into language instruction can enhance vocabulary acquisition, retention, and effective use in both spoken and written communication. Specifically, the study seeks to:

examine the impact of integrating rhyming poetry on vocabulary acquisition and retention among primary school pupils.

evaluate the extent to which rhythmic and interactive aspects of reciting poetry influence the development of phonological awareness and reading comprehension compared to traditional vocabulary instruction

investigate the perceptions of primary school pupils regarding the effectiveness of rhyming poetry as an instructional tool for vocabulary development.

Investigate the challenges and opportunities do teachers encounter when incorporating rhyming poetry into vocabulary instruction in the Nigerian educational context.

Research Questions

What is the impact of integrating rhyming poetry on vocabulary acquisition and retention among primary school pupils?

How does the use of rhyming poetry influence the development of phonological awareness and reading comprehension compared to traditional vocabulary instruction?

What are the perceptions of primary school pupils regarding the effectiveness of rhyming poetry as an instructional tool for vocabulary development?

What challenges and opportunities do teachers encounter when incorporating rhyming poetry into vocabulary instruction in the Nigerian educational context?



Results

Quantitative Data Analysis

Table 1: Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores Between Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Mean Pre-Test Score	Mean Post-Test Score	Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	t-Value	p-Value
Experimental	65.4	85.7	20.3	5.2	7.81	<0.001
Control	64.8	70.2	5.4	4.9	1.98	0.056

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean scores and standard deviations for both groups. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean differences between the pre-test and post-test scores within each group.

Interpretation of Findings

The experimental group, which received poetry-based instruction, showed a significant improvement in vocabulary acquisition, with a mean increase of 20.3 points from pre-test to post-test ($t = 7.81, p < 0.001$). In contrast, the control group exhibited a smaller, non-significant gain of 5.4 points ($t = 1.98, p = 0.056$). This suggests that integrating rhyming poetry into vocabulary instruction is more effective than traditional methods.

Table 2: Phonological Awareness and Reading Comprehension Scores Post-Intervention

Group	Phonological Awareness (Mean Score)	Reading Comprehension (Mean Score)
Experimental	88.2	84.5
Control	75.6	78.3

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were utilized to determine the mean scores for phonological awareness and reading comprehension in both groups. An independent samples t-test was performed to assess the differences between the experimental and control groups.

Interpretation of Findings

The experimental group outperformed the control group in both phonological awareness and reading comprehension, with mean scores of 88.2 and 84.5, respectively, compared to 75.6 and 78.3 in the control group. These results indicate that the use of rhyming poetry enhance not only vocabulary acquisition but also related language skills.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Theme 1: Enhanced Engagement and Motivation



Findings

Teachers reported that pupils in the experimental group displayed increased enthusiasm during poetry sessions. Pupils expressed enjoyment and actively participated in reciting and creating rhymes, which fostered a positive learning environment.

Interpretation

The engaging nature of rhyming poetry appears to boost motivation and participation among pupils, potentially leading to more effective vocabulary learning.

Theme 2: Improved Pronunciation and Phonological Awareness

Findings

Both teachers and pupils noted improvements in pronunciation and the ability to recognize sound patterns. Pupils became more adept at identifying rhyming words and syllable structures.

Interpretation

The rhythmic and repetitive elements of rhyming poetry contribute to enhanced phonological awareness, facilitating better pronunciation and listening skills.

Theme 3: Challenges in Implementation

Findings

Some teachers faced difficulties in selecting appropriate poems that matched the pupils' proficiency levels and cultural context. Additionally, time constraints within the curriculum posed challenges for incorporating poetry-based activities.

Interpretation

While beneficial, the integration of rhyming poetry into vocabulary instruction requires careful selection of materials and consideration of curriculum scheduling to address potential challenges effectively.

Theme 4: Positive Perception of Poetry as a Learning Tool

Findings

Pupils expressed that learning through poetry was enjoyable and helped them remember new words more easily. Teachers observed that pupils were more willing to engage with complex vocabulary when presented in a poetic format.

Interpretation

The positive reception of poetry-based learning suggests that it is an effective medium for introducing and reinforcing new vocabulary, making the learning process both enjoyable and memorable for pupils.

Discussion of Findings

The study's findings underscore the significant impact of integrating rhyming poetry into vocabulary instruction for primary school pupils. The experimental group, which received poetry-based instruction, demonstrated a substantial improvement in vocabulary acquisition and retention compared to the control group. This aligns with Matthew (2024) indicating that the rhythmic and repetitive nature of rhyming poetry enhances phonological awareness, thereby facilitating better vocabulary learning.



Furthermore, the experimental group outperformed the control group in both phonological awareness and reading comprehension assessments. This suggests that rhyming poetry not only aids in vocabulary development but also strengthens overall language proficiency. Collins (2020) found that the use of rhyme and rhythm in poetry has been shown to support the development of phonemic awareness, which is crucial for reading success.

Qualitative data revealed that pupils found poetry-based learning enjoyable and engaging, leading to increased motivation and participation. Teachers observed that pupils were more enthusiastic during poetry sessions and demonstrated greater willingness to experiment with language. This heightened engagement is consistent with Matthew (2024) findings that suggest poetry's playful use of language can make learning more appealing to young learners.

However, some challenges were noted in the implementation of poetry-based instruction. Teachers reported difficulties in selecting appropriate poems that matched pupils' proficiency levels and cultural contexts. Additionally, time constraints within the curriculum posed challenges for incorporating poetry-based activities. These challenges highlight the need for careful planning and resource allocation when integrating poetry into language instruction.

Summary of Findings

The study investigated the impact of integrating rhyming poetry into vocabulary instruction among primary school pupils in Ido Local Government, Nigeria. The experimental group, which received poetry-based instruction, demonstrated a significant improvement in vocabulary acquisition and retention compared to the control group. Additionally, pupils exposed to rhyming poetry showed enhanced phonological awareness and reading comprehension. Qualitative data revealed that both teachers and pupils perceived poetry-based learning as enjoyable and engaging, leading to increased motivation and participation. However, challenges such as selecting appropriate poems and time constraints within the curriculum were noted.

Conclusion

Integrating rhyming poetry into vocabulary instruction effectively enhances vocabulary development, phonological awareness, and reading comprehension among primary school pupils. The engaging nature of poetry fosters a positive learning environment, increasing pupil motivation and participation. Despite implementation challenges, the benefits of poetry-based instruction suggest it is a valuable tool in language education.

Recommendations

Educational authorities should incorporate rhyming poetry into the language curriculum to enhance vocabulary development and phonological awareness.

Teachers should receive training on effective methods for selecting and utilizing poetry in the classroom to maximize its benefits for vocabulary instruction.

Schools should allocate sufficient time and resources for poetry-based activities, ensuring that time constraints do not hinder the implementation of this effective instructional strategy.



Future studies should explore the long-term effects of poetry-based instruction on vocabulary retention and examine its applicability across different cultural and linguistic contexts.

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