

## ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND STUDENTS' READING COMPETENCE IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

The study examined influence of electronic media resource on students' reading competence at the senior secondary school level, with the aim of ascertaining their readiness for higher education, in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria . The study adopted an ex-post facto research design and used a sample size of 1,090 students. The researchers developed two sets of instruments called Electronic Media Resource Questionnaire (EMRQ) and Reading Competence Test (RCT) for the study. The research raised three hypotheses which was tested at 0.05 level of significance with 1,088 degree of freedom. The resulting data were analyzed using independent t-test statistics. The findings revealed that students who had access to television and radio programmes excelled significantly higher than those who lacked the exposure. It was also discovered that students who were more exposed to television programmes performed higher than those who were more exposed to radio programmes in their level of reading competencies. It was recommended among other things that more electronic instructional materials should be made available and literarily used in all classes at the secondary school level to enhance positive reading achievement for quality education at the higher level.

**Key words:** Electronic media, television, radio and students' competence

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Practitioner Points:

1. What is already known about this research

- It is generally believed that students' competence in reading have been negatively influenced byn the mirage in electronic median exposure
- Most developing countries find it difficult to control and enforce media regulations because of how electronic media reaches unspecified audience
- Parents and care givers lack adequate media education; so they use the television as an attention getting activities to the children, thre by getting them addicted.

What this paper adds:

- The findings showed that students more exposed to television programmes had higher reading competence than those less exposed to such programmes. The students' reading competence was positively influenced because of their frequency of contact with the medium as seen in their performance.
- Furthermore, the findings on students' reading competence and their exposure to radio programmes showed that students more exposed to radio programmes have higher reading competence than those less exposed.
- Findings on the comparison of performance of students more exposed to television programmes, and those more exposed to radio programmes than television showed that students more exposed to television programmes performed higher than those more exposed to radio programmes.

Implication for practice:

- Parents and teachers will be enlightened to ensure that good reading materials are made available early enough in the child's environment (home/and school). They should be good readers themselves, in order to motivate students to love reading as a hobby.

- Students should consciously be exposed to positive electronic media interaction. They should be taught the right to question, analyze and evaluate any information presented to them through electronic media resource and not regard all information received as absolute truth.
- The positive influence of electronic media is brought afore and properly harnessed to aid reading competence of students.

## Introduction

The dawn of modern technological advancement in Nigeria has witnessed excessive use of both electronic and print media by all. The media have unending power to influence students' reading competencies (Onukaogu, 2002). It should be noted that students at senior secondary education level in Nigeria whose reading competencies have been fully developed through their interaction with the media stand a better chance to face challenges at the higher education level.

To enhance and sustain the current state of our technological advancement and civilization, Williams (2005) counsels that it has become imperative that our students develop their reading skills to the level of competence. Through reading, students are empowered to learn from the experiences of those nations whose teaching technologies are ahead of ours. They are opportune to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills to move the Nigerian nation forward and to develop the stature and robustness in technology, commerce, science and education that characterize the developed World (Omojuwa, 2005).

In addition Onukaogu (2002) confirmed that the mass media have the greatest influence on the youths, because they learn about the world through the print and non-print media. The information received from the media serves as a source of energy to those exposed to them as it would aid them in their relationship with others and general adjustment at the higher level. However, the media agencies which can influence include radio, television, newspaper, magazines and books. What link these media with their audience are language and the power to decode messages lies in people's ability to read competently. In Nigeria, most children from homes where books are available for reading would prefer such books to be serialized for viewing

on the screen (Omojuwa, 2004). This attest to the fact that mass media has influence on students' reading competence which invariably affects their entire academic performance.

Reading is a dynamic process in which the reader is not only involved in information search, but also in information reformulation, summarizing, editing, confirmation and rejection (Obanya, 2003). Reading comprises visual elements and non-visual elements. The visual elements are the letters that constitute words which combine to form the grammatic constituents of the written text. The non-visual element is the context or background, the mind set, experiences and readers' motivation (Onukaogu, 2003 & Ransinski, 2006). Thus, if the individual reader does not have any competence in reading, there is no way he can comprehend the meaning of the text. Onukaogu (2003) in supporting the power of reading asserted that written text affects people and condition their response towards it. This is because of their various reasons or purpose for reading. To some, it broadens their visions, empowers their minds, provides avenue for leisure, deepens their horizon and makes it possible for them to inter-relate with other people, places and events.

Furthermore, the positive attitude of students towards reading can be achieved through both direct instruction and incidental awareness of reading, viewing and listening. Undoubtedly, the television and radio resource are the best tools that can offer both direct and incidental awareness to students which can at the same time influence their reading competencies (Adegbite, 2002). The importance of electronic media resource in which the researchers have adopted for this study in promoting and facilitating education in general has been well recognized. Kruidenier (2002) further stated that the advantages of applying electronic media (television and radio resource) to education include the fact that the potential size of the audience could be enormous. He added that the quality and effectiveness of the message may be superior to that of the classroom teaching in normal educational processes. The electronic media has the ability to illustrate abstract concepts using animation or dramatization.

Television is a mass communication channel that conveys messages through audio-visual electronic means. Ibe-Bassey (2004) posited that in America, it is widely believed that people receive more of their education from electronic media, that is, from television viewing in elementary and high schools. He calls the relationship between electronic medium and reading competence "educational broadcasting". Ibe-Bassey submits that educational broadcasting is the

bedrock for academic achievement, and is also the broad use of television or radio to educate. It is easier to turn on a television set but harder to turn off the set, than to go to the library for a book. This is why reading for some children has become a necessity, more of a burden than a pleasure (Baran, 2004).

In support of this view, Ibe-Bassey (2004) asserted that the television's two modalities, of seeing and hearing make it possible for information to reach the brain of the learner. The frame of television screen turns everything that happens on it into a stage and everything that is seen or heard upon it into a sign. Everything that takes place upon the stage has an emotional impact. This implies that television represents sliding scale of reality, where it is important that we are aware in the light of such manipulation. It means that it is imperative that our young learners who are preparing for higher education be taught to view television critically. In so doing, they will indeed be able to distinguish realities from contrived fiction. They will equally improve their reading skills since reading is acknowledged as a foundation for all subjects and prerequisite to continuous development (Omojuwa & Timothy, 2006). Also, a study conducted by Gbodi (2004) aimed at ascertaining whether the use of instructional video-taped programme enhances reading skills among young school learners in Minna-Niger State , Nigeria . The study showed that the experimental group that used video taped reading instructional programme performed better than the control group that had the conventional/traditional rote learning.

Furthermore, radio is a type of electronic media that conveys messages through audio electronic means. It is one of the oldest electronic medium used for the transmission of information. The radio has been given a very high rating as a medium for non-formal education. Omojuwa (2004) submitted that students who listen to radio educational programmes develop reading competencies faster than those who do not even try. Omojuwa posits that there is no excuse for any class of Nigerian learners not to be exposed to the radio. This medium has been the most accessible by the rich and the poor in the society because it could be utilized with or without power supply and it is very portable to be carried about.

The researchers in this study are equally concerned with senior secondary students' reading comprehension competencies in readiness for higher education as they interact with the electronic media. As earlier discussed, the electronic media will lead students from television to active participation in life, to reading and to critical and creative thinking. For instance, television

viewers also read some messages on the television screen in addition to listening and viewing and draw their conclusions. Equally, Abbott (2003) opined that intelligent reading necessarily involves the decoding of signs and the extraction of meanings. The meanings then have to be considered and then accepted, rejected or put on hold. Abbott was of the opinion that a book is not made to be believed but to be questioned. Hence, the ability to question a given text lies in the reader's acquisition of reading competence. Weiner (2005) asserted that reading comprehension takes place when words are decoded and associated with their meanings in the reader's memory, and phrases and sentences are processed rapidly or fluently enough so that the meaning derived from one word, phrase or sentence are not lost before the next is processed.

Hence, Mercurio (2005) and Vaezi (2005) confirmed that reading comprehension is the ultimate goal of any reading activity. They added that it is a collective term that describes the result of grasping the meaning from a text with one's intellect which is a task that involves many skills. Thus, to achieve reading comprehension, the reader employs skills such as identifying the main idea of a passage, summarizing the context of a text, generating questions about the information in the text and looking for clues that answer those questions. This state makes a reader competent and ready for higher education.

It is essential for teachers of English, especially at the senior secondary school level in Nigeria to recognize that reading comprehension is essentially the same as thinking and should be taught in whichever electronic medium. As a higher cognitive activity, reading does not occur at various skills and cognitive levels. Reading performance at the higher levels usually builds on reading competence at each of the preceding lower levels, as illustrated on the table of reading competence below:

Table 1

## Reading Competence

Level	Skills Involved	Reading Behaviour	Goals
Literal comprehension	Word and/or sentence recognition	Associating words and sentences with sounds: possibly the prevalence of reading aloud	Visual perception, attention, (non-technical vocabulary).
	Reading along the lines (understanding the main idea of gist of a text)	Reading for expression or literal meaning (exact meaning).	Elementary 'technical' vocabulary with a limited variety in terms of register.
Inferential comprehension	Reading between the lines	Reading for implied meaning	Speed improvement; a wider variety of registers, and using reading as a study.
Evaluative comprehension	Reading across the lines	Reading for creative reaction to the reading (relationship of thought)	Speed improvement: analytical ability and advanced language, literature, and imaginative thinking development, (competent reading).

**Source:** Obanya, P. (2001). Towards a reading society. *Africa Reads*. 1(2), 3.

Analysis of the table indicates that for reading to be meaningful, the process must involve gradual movement from level one to four. It is at this climax that reading becomes internalized as a habit and a tool for continuous self-employment. Thus, reading competence can be realized when a reader reads beyond the lines and does so as a self-directed and pleasurable activity.

Therefore, the investigators in this study were concerned with what is presented to our adolescent learners, and also how such presentation improves their reading competencies in readiness for higher education.

## Objectives of the Study

The study set out to:

1. Determine the influence of students' exposure to television programmes on their reading competence in Uyo senatorial district.
2. Examine the influence of students' exposure to radio programmes on their competence in Uyo Senatorial district.
3. Compare the reading competence of students between those more exposed to television programmes and those more exposed to radio programmes than television.

## Research Hypotheses:

At 0.05 level of significance, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no significant difference in the reading competence of students more exposed to television programmes and those less exposed to television programmes.
2. There is no significant difference in the reading competence of students more exposed to radio programmes and those less exposed to radio programmes.
3. There is no significant difference in reading competence between students more exposed to television programmes and those more exposed to radio programmes than television

## Scope of the study

The study was limited to exposure of senior secondary school students to electronic media resource (television and radio programmes-independent variable) at Uyo Senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State , Nigeria . It was also limited to reading for exact meaning, for information, for summary, (gist), implied meaning and relationship of thought as sub-variables for competence (dependent variable).

## Methods

The study adopted an ex-post facto research design, while the area of study was Uyo Senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria . In this study also, students' exposure to electronic media resource differentiated in terms of sub-variables such as television and radio programmes, were compared in terms of students' reading competence. As a survey, only a proportion of the large population was administered with instruments. This design made it possible for generalization to be effected across the population with a degree of precision.

## Population

The population of the study comprised all 2008/2009 senior secondary two (SSII) students, from the 67 public secondary schools in Uyo Senatorial District. Current record in the State Secondary School Board shows that there is an estimated population of 7,467 SSII students in Government owned secondary schools in the Senatorial District .

## Sample and Sampling Technique

In order to ensure sufficient representation of various segments of the population, the researchers adopted stratified random sampling technique to classify schools into Local Government Areas. A ratio of 5:1 was used to select 5 public secondary schools from each of the nine Local Government Areas in the Senatorial District. Forty-five schools formed the sample schools for the entire district, while 15% of the SSII students' population formed the sample size of 1,120. However, with a mortality rate of 30 the sample size was left at 1,090 students.

## The Instrument

The instruments used for data collection were one researcher developed instrument called “Electronic Media Resource Questionnaire” (EMRQ) and “Reading Competence Test” (RCT). The competence test was extracted and adopted to suit the students’ class and background. It comprised four reading passages of which passages one and three were extracted from Azikiwe (1998), while passages two and four were culled from Ranjimanikum (2003).

The researchers developed 20 items for the questionnaire, and it required respondents to tick ( ) their appropriate responses lettered A-D. Ten items tested students’ exposure to television programmes while the next ten items tested their exposure to radio programmes. The options were graded with the highest score ranging from A (4), B (3), C (2), D (1). To select the more exposed and less exposed groups, those who scored from 10-20 marks on the questionnaire formed the more exposed group, while those who scored from 9 and below formed the less exposed group. Further, the researchers developed 20 question competence test and respondents were required to produce their own answers. Questions measured all of reading competencies.

## Validation of Instrument

The instruments were validated in the following phases: face criterion, construct and predictive levels.

## Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest method. The data obtained from 20 respondents from two administrations were subjected to statistical treatment, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ). This resulted in reliability indices of 0.5 and 0.8 respectively.

## Administration of the Instrument

The instruments were administered by the researchers and assisted by the English language teachers in each of the sample schools. The 15% sample size of the SSII students in each public school varied in number from (17-54) as the population varied from (92-270) in each of the public schools.

## Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using independent t-test statistics.

## Results

In this section, results of data analysis based on the three hypotheses that guided the study are presented in 3 tables and comments are made under each table.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference between the reading competence of students more exposed to television programmes and those less exposed to television programmes.

**Table 3: Independent t-test Analysis of the difference between the Reading Competence of Students more exposed and those less exposed to Television Programmes.**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Reading competence of students more exposed to television programmes	941	32.3592	20.62	48.137*	1.96	Ho rejected
Reading competence of students less exposed to television programmes	149	28.2215	18.573			

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$  level;  $df = 1088$ ; critical t-value = 1.96

The result shown in Table 3 indicates that the calculated t-value of 48.137 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. This means that students more exposed to television programmes gain higher reading competence than those less exposed to such programmes. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected in favour of the alternate. The reason for this result is that as students adequately utilized television viewing as they watch and read headlines or bill boards in television programmes, this helps to develop their reading competence.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference between the reading competence of students more exposed to radio programmes and those less exposed to radio programmes.

**Table 4: Independent t-test Analysis of the difference in Reading competence of students who are more exposed to and those less exposed to Radio Programmes.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Reading competence of students more exposed to radio programmes	940	32.2003	20.692	48.407*	1.96	Ho rejected
Reading competence of students less exposed to radio programmes	150	19.3333	15.46447			

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$ ;  $df = 1088$ ;  $t\text{-critical} = 1.96$

The result in Table 4 reveals that the calculated t-value of 48.407 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in reading competence of students more exposed to radio programmes, and those less exposed to radio programmes was thereby rejected in favour of the alternate. The reason for this result is that those students who get in contact with the medium get motivated to read as they listen to live reading of models and other programmes that enhance reading competence.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant difference in reading competence between students exposed to television programmes and those exposed to radio programmes.

**Table 5:** Independent t-test analysis of reading competence and exposure to television and radio programmes

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit
Reading competence of those more exposed to television programmes	451	35.621	18.564	42.606*	1.96
Reading competence of those more exposed to radio programmes than television	639	24.583	16.711		

\*Significant at  $p < .05$ ;  $df = 1,088$ ,  $t\text{-critical} = 1.96$

The results in Table 5 show that the calculated t-value of 42.606 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. This means that there is a significant difference in the reading competence of students between those more exposed to television programmes and those more to radio than television. From the means performances, those more exposed to television programmes than radio performed higher (35.621) than those more exposed to radio than television (24.583)

### Discussion:

The goal of this study was to examine influence of electronic media resource on students reading competence at the senior secondary school level, with the aim of ascertaining their readiness for higher education in a developing country, like Nigeria . The findings showed that

students more exposed to television programmes had higher reading competence than those less exposed to such programmes. The students' reading competence was positively influenced because of their frequency of contact with the medium as seen in their performance.

The observed difference in the findings of this study is in line with the study conducted by Omojuwa and Timothy (2006) which investigated the influence of television viewing, frequency of the performance in reading comprehension of senior secondary school students. The results indicated that high frequency television viewers performed significantly better than moderate and less frequency viewers in reading comprehension competence.

The findings of the study are also in line with study conducted by Gbodi (2004). The author in this study aimed at ascertaining whether the use of instructional video-taped programme enhanced reading skills among young school learners in Minna-Niger State, Nigeria. The study confirmed that the experimental group that used electronic medium performed better than the control group who were taught with the conventional rote learning.

Furthermore, the findings on students' reading competence and their exposure to radio programmes showed that students more exposed to radio programmes have higher reading competence than those less exposed. The results coincide with Omojuwa (2004) who submitted that students who listen to radio educational programmes develop reading competence faster than those who do not even try. It is obvious from the findings of the study that radio has been given a very high rating as a medium for non-formal education (Onukaogu, 2002). This exposure increases the experience a listener has of cognitive resources available to him. Hence, as the metacognitive skill is enhanced, the students' reading competence is also improved as he brings his personal experiences into the reading process.

Furthermore, findings on the comparison of performance of students more exposed to television programmes, and those more exposed to radio programmes than television showed that students more exposed to television programmes performed higher than those more exposed to radio programmes. The findings are in line with Ibe-Bassey (2004) who asserted that the television's two modalities of seeing and hearing makes it possible for information to reach the brain of the learner who is able to distinguish realities from contrived fiction and automatically improve on their reading competencies.

Finally, the findings are also in support of the counsels of Onukaogu (2003), Ibe-Bassey (2004) and Williams (2005) that our secondary school students who are frequently exposed to electronic media resource develop their reading skills to the level of competence in readiness to face the challenges at the higher education level.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Government should as a matter of urgency provide more electronic instructional materials in schools and ensure that they are literarily used in all classes at the secondary school level to enhance positive reading achievement for quality education at the higher level.
2. Parents and teachers should ensure that good reading materials are made available early enough in the child's environment (home/school). They should be good readers themselves, in order to motivate students to love reading as a hobby.
3. Students should consciously be exposed to positive electronic media interaction. They should be taught the right to question, analyze and evaluate any information presented to them through electronic media resource and not regard all information received as absolute truth.

### **Conclusion:**

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that secondary school students' reading competence in readiness for the challenges at the higher education level is influenced by their exposure to the electronic media resource.

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