Assessment Of English Language Reading Comprehension Textbooks Used In Public And Selected Private Primary Schools

Adetokunboh Abayomi Adepoju, (PhD)

Department of Primary Education, Adeyemi College of Education,
Ondo

Abstract: The proliferation of publishing companies has led to the publication different textbooks on the same subject or course. The study was carried out to examine different textbooks used for English reading comprehension in both public and private primary schools with a view to ascertaining the approved, the unapproved and the causes of this divergence. The study used activity learning theory and employed mixed method to collect numerical and non-numerical data. Simple random and purposive samplings were used as sampling techniques. The study used face to face oral interview, list of recommended textbooks and constructed an inventory to get textbooks used for English reading comprehension in both public and private primary schools to collect data. Numerical data were analysed using simple percentage while non-numerical data were analysed using thematic analysis. The study found out that a vast majority of the primary schools use unapproved textbooks and that corruption is the major reason why the Ministry recommended many textbooks as optional for English reading comprehension. The study came up with a conclusion and made some recommendations which include strict compliance with the use of approved textbooks and heavy sanction against the use of unapproved textbooks.

Keywords: textbooks, approved/unapproved, comprehension, corruption, primary schools

I. INTRODUCTION

During curricular implementation, which is teaching, instructional materials are needed among which and the most prominent are textbooks; teaching reading is not an exception in this regard. The most commonly used instructional material in teaching reading is the textbook. Other instructional materials such as flash cards and reading corners are supporting, not common and within the reach of most teachers and learners. Supporting this view, Cakir (2015) avers that the course book (textbook) is the most commonly used in foreign language teaching. At the primary school level, reading is one of the key areas outlined by the curriculum. Listening, speaking, writing, literature and grammar are other aspects to be taught and learnt (NERDC, 2007).

In teaching and learning reading comprehension standard textbooks that contain necessary contents are required to actualise the stated objectives of education. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014), Section 2 (19) a, states that, primary education is to, *'Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.'* If this objective is to be achieved, comprehension textbooks are needed to impart literary skills.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the fact that there is a recommended English language textbook for primary schools, it was observed during teaching practice supervision exercises that different textbooks were/are being used to teach English reading comprehension in both public and private primary schools assigned. In other words, there is no uniformity in the reading comprehension textbooks used which is injurious to national curricular implementation. The discrepancies were notorious in private primary schools as different private primary schools use different materials for reading comprehension. This appalling situation prompted the researcher to carry out this study to examine different English reading comprehension textbooks

used in both public and private schools in order to ascertain the recommended ones and the causative factors of this discrepancy.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study set out to examine English reading comprehension textbooks used in primary schools in Ondo with a view to identifying some problems associated and making possible solutions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:
- ✓ to identify the recommended textbook (s) for English reading comprehension for primary schools;
- ✓ to identify the textbooks used for English reading comprehension in public and different private primary schools: and
- ✓ to ascertain the cause(s) of using different textbooks for English reading comprehension in public and private primary schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study raised the following research questions:
- ✓ What is/are the recommended textbook(s) for English reading comprehension in primary schools?
- ✓ What are the textbooks used for English reading comprehension in both public and private primary schools?
- ✓ Why do public and different private primary schools use different textbooks for English reading comprehension?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading and comprehension are inseparable. In other words, they are interdependent. Comprehension in a simple sense means understanding. Comprehension is the talent to interpret author's message using formally acquired experience (Daly, 2003 and Wessel, 2007). Lending credence to this view Kennison (2014) says in comprehension the first word on the line is identified which gives insight into the grammatical class of the word, the meaning, the pronunciation and sentence construction to arrive at meaning in the contextual situation. Making deductions from these definitions, this study hereby defines comprehension as the process of interaction between the reader and the reading materials with the aim of decoding the message being communicated through the print or digital media. The background knowledge of the reader is very crucial in this regards. For example, holding an umbrella signifies rainfall. Comprehension is of two categories, listening comprehension and reading comprehension. Listening comprehension refers to a situation where a listener listen with rapt attention a read message without holding the material while reading comprehension is reading a material placed before a reader which is more popular in the academic circle and will be the focus of this study. Reading comprehension NERDC (2007) can either be silent reading or reading aloud.

In English reading comprehension, whether silent reading or reading aloud, English reading textbooks which contain information are required. Textbooks are ready made sources of information written by experts (Cruickshank, Jenkins and Metcalf, 2009). Textbooks contain table of contents and accompanying exercises meant to test learners' skills. Textbooks are the major language materials in the classroom that perform fundamental functions in the educational system such as provision of contents of the curriculum, effective teaching and learning and effective communicative purposes (Erlina, Marzulina, Patiloka, Astrid, Yansyah and Mukminin, 2018). Adding to these, Rezat (2006) remarks that, textbooks are means of instruction, instruments and objects of learning. In addition, textbooks also provide leaning opportunities for learners and engage them in logical reasoning (Hong and Choi, 2018). This study believes that textbooks/course books are readily available materials that provide scholarship prospects for learners in the sense that they are common, accessible and transferable.

Fischer, Ernst and Mason (2017) categorise textbooks into two. They are, the traditionally conventionally printed textbooks called traditional textbooks and the on-line textbooks called open textbooks. Readers have free access to open textbooks with minimal cost to print or copy as against the conventional ones. Open textbooks give room for flexibility in teaching. Similarly, Erlina, Marzulina, Patiloka, Astrid, Yansyah and Mukminin, (2018) categorises textbooks into printed, electronic, on-line or off-line. In summary, this study categorises textbooks into soft and hard copies.

Another form of textbooks are picture books that present contents inform of images to appeal to readers' senses of sight. These are powerful materials for vocabulary development (Montelongo, Hernandez, and Herter, 2015). Similarly, Bersh (2013) claims that picture books are used to develop language and vocabulary through visual imagery. This study concurs with these scholars that picture books allow learners to comprehend what they cannot grasp in written forms through pictorial presentation of concepts. These are majorly used in elementary classes. The level of difficulty of a textbook depends on the origin or cultural setting. Hong and Choi (2018), remark that textbooks from Korea, America and Taiwan contain more problems that require explanation than textbooks from Cyprus and Ireland.

The use and the production of textbooks are influenced by the system of education and traditional teaching and learning and financial gains of the publishers/author, market force, that is, competition in terms of sales, remark Rezat, (2006) and Sternberg (2017). Other factors that negative influence the production of textbooks are decline in the reading culture, high time consumption, high cost of purchase and piracy which makes textbooks available on the internet free of charge (Sternberg 2017). Speaking in similar vein, Bakare (2015) says curriculum is influenced by culture, corruption, personal and political interests in the society. Since textbooks are offshoots of the curriculum, there is no gainsaying the facts that these factors will also influence the production and the use of textbooks. In Nigerian society, textbooks are provided by parents (Adepoju and Akinboboye, 2016) while Adepoju

(2018) found out that governments, at all levels, are the sole providers of textbooks.

As good as textbooks are, they cannot replace teachers and as useful as textbooks are, learners should not be exposed to all manners of reading materials because some are injurious to their academic and moral well- being which should be censured (Rezat, 2006 and Adepoju and Akinboboye, 2016). Similarly, to check the circulation and use of unapproved textbooks, Ondo State Government made available a list of recommended textbooks and advocated strict compliance (OSME, 2017).

Similar studies have been carried out in the past by scholars in this area but they defer in terms of objectives and findings. The work of Sternberg (2017) considered why writers prefer writing academic papers to writing textbooks and Fischer, Ernst and Mason (2017) only assessed the quality of open textbooks used by readers. The study of Hong and Choi (2018) was a comparative analysis of reasoning and opportunities provided in America and Korean-based textbooks. As good as these studies are, non of them researched into different textbooks used for English reading comprehension and the reasons for these differences, the gap which this study sought to fill.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted activity learning theory. Activity theory postulates object-based human activity and the use of textbook is object-based (Rezat, 2006). Activity theory bridges the gap between theory and practice. Lewis, Moore and Nang (2015), opine that for learning to be effective there should be a link between the curriculum and the classroom practice and the major object for classroom activities and practices is the textbook. Activity theory allows learners to have control over the object (textbook) of learning. This gives room for manipulation and activities in the learning process. The fundamental components of activity theory are the subject, the object and the mediating artefact (Rezat, 2006). Contributing to this theory, Salkhanova, Lee, Tumanova, and Zhusanbaeva, (2016), remark that activity leaning theory makes the learner the subject that controls the activities in the class instead of the object that is affected by factors and adds that the theory transforms human learning to linguistic activities. In this regard, the learner (subject) subjects the artefact (textbook) to an object of activities. The study adopted this theory because of its appropriateness which has textbook as its nucleus which is the crux of this research.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted mixed methods approach because of the numerical and non-numerical data were collected and analysed Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, (2018). Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the samples used for the study. Random sampling allowed the study to give equal opportunity of being selected to government schools while purposive gave the study the opportunity to get rich data from the targeted

samples that could provide information needed. In this regard, twenty out of one hundred and four public primary schools were randomly selected. Purposive sampling was used to select twenty out of numerous private primary schools, three head teachers of private primary schools, one author/publisher, one ministry of education official and one Local Government Education Authority official.

Three research instruments were used, namely, face to face oral interviews, documents (textbooks, and list of recommended textbooks) and a self-developed instrument titled: ''An Inventory of English Reading Textbooks Used in Primary Schools.'' Face to face oral interviews were used to collect data from three head teachers of three private schools, one author/publisher and one ministry official and one official of Local Government Education Authority. Documents were used to identify the recommended textbooks and the inventory was used to harvest English reading comprehension textbooks used in different schools. The list of books used in private primary schools was presented on a table, the number recommended by Ministry of Education was presented and summary of interviews presented. Numerical data were analysed with the use of simple percentage while non-numerical data were analysed according to the themes derived and visual presentations.

V. CREDIBILITY

The study used two sources discussed above to collect data qualitative data, *data triangulation*. The self-developed inventory was thoroughly scrutinised by an expert to avoid typographical errors. Instead of using the real names of the participants, who volunteered information, pseudo names were used to ensure *anonymity*. Consequently, the participants were christened Participant A, Participant B, Participant C, Participant D, Participant E and Participant F. The schools were also named School A-T. In addition, skewed reporting was avoided to ensure *confirmability*. The study also employed the use of *thick and rich* description in analysing data in comprehensive and clear way to convince readers. Participant A, Participant B and Participant C are the head teachers of the three private primary schools, Participant D is an author/publisher, while Participants E Participant F are ministry official and Local Government Education Authority officials respectively.

VI. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSES

A Table Showing Textbooks Used in Both Public and Private Primary Schools

PN	Public Pry Schools	Recommended	Private Pry Schools	Recommended
A	Learn English	X	Extension Modern English for Primary Schools	X
B	Learn English	X	Nigeria Primary	√

			English	
C	Learn English	X	Extension Modern English for Primary Schools	X
D	Learn English	X	English for Primary Schools (UBE Edition)	X
E	Learn English	X	Nigeria Primary English	√
F	Learn English	X	High Standard English for Primary Schools	√
G	Learn English	X	Macmillan Brilliant Primary English and Nigeria Primary English	√*
H	Learn English	X	Nigeria Primary English	√
I	Learn English	X	English Studies for Primary Schools and Nigeria Primary English	X
J	Learn English	X	Communicative English for Primary Schools	√
K	Learn English	X	Modular English Course for Primary Schools	√
L	Learn English	X	English Insideout	X
M	Learn English	X	Spectrum High Standard English	X
N	Learn English	X	Daily English Language for Primary Schools	X
O	Learn English	X	Modern English for Primary Schools	√
P	Learn English	X	Macmillan New Primary English	X
Q	Learn English	X	Premier English for Nigerian Primary Schools	X
R	Learn English	X	High Standard English for Primary Schools	X
S	Learn English	X	English Studies for Primary Schools	X
T	Learn English	X	Macmillan Brilliant Primary English and Nigeria Primary English	√*

Key: √=Recommended, √*-Supplementary, X=Not Recommended

PN=*Pseudo Names.* These refer to the names given to the schools instead of their real names.

Table 1

From the above table, it is clear that the twenty (20) public schools use *Learn English* for English reading comprehension. This represents one hundred per cent (100%) which shows that all public primary schools use uniform textbook for English reading comprehension while in private primary schools, fourteen different textbooks were identified from the twenty selected schools. The most popular among the textbooks used in the private schools is *Nigeria Primary English* used in schools B, E, G, H, I and T which forms twenty seven per cent (27%) followed by those used in schools A, C, G, T, I and S respectively which form nine per cent (9%) each and the least used are those books used in schools D, J, K, L, M, N, O, P and Q which form four per cent (4%) each.

On the ground of compliance, all public primary schools, that is, one hundred per cent (100%) use unapproved textbooks, which, unfortunately, were supplied by the government. On the side of private primary schools, eleven schools, which form fifty five per cent (55%) use unapproved textbooks, two schools which form ten per cent (10%) use supplementary textbooks while only seven schools which form thirty five per cent (35%) use recommended textbooks.
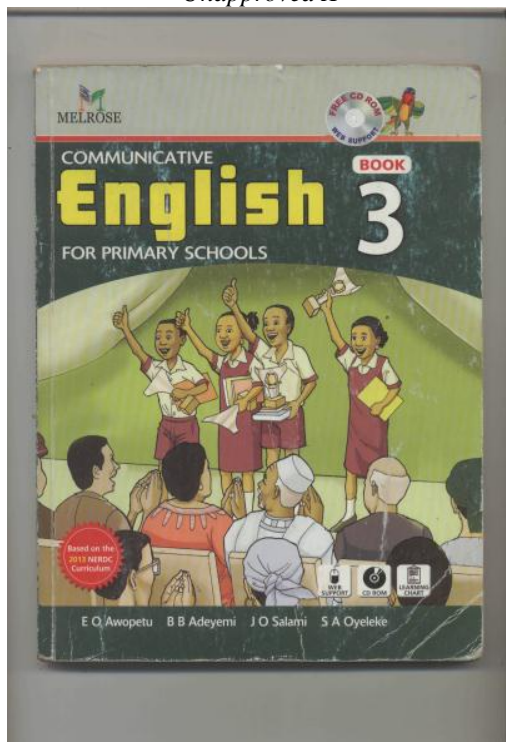
PICTURES OF SAMPLES OF TEXTBOOKS
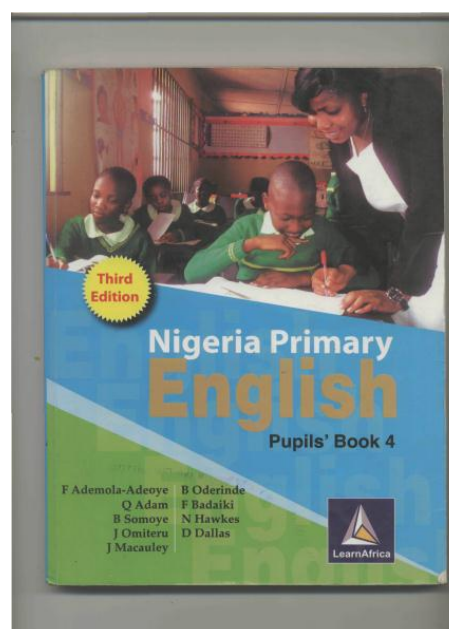
Approved √
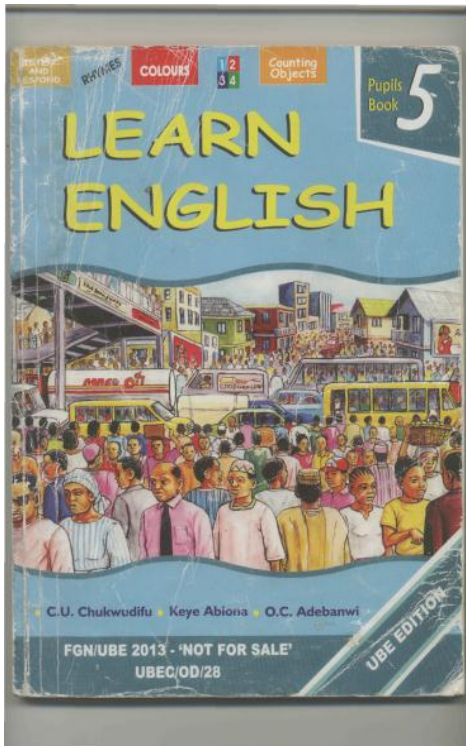
Unapproved X

Unapproved X
Picture 1
EXCERPTS FROM DOCUMENT

A document titled *Approved List of Books for Pre-Basic, Lower, and Middle Basic Classes Schools for 2016/2017 to 2020/2021 Academic Session in Ondo State,* dated 25th July, 2017, revealed as follows:
✓ that seventeen books that are curriculum compliant were recommended as optional books on the main list;

✓ that four books that are curriculum compliant were recommended as optional books on the supplementary list;
✓ that two books that are curriculum compliant were recommended as optional books on the revisional list; and
✓ units in the Ondo State Ministry of Education were directed to ensure strict compliance.

The excerpts above reveal that a total number of seventeen curriculum compliant books were recommended as optional texts out of which any school is at liberty to choose anyone preferred. In addition, four supplementary books were recommended to complement the main books while two books were recommended for revision. The document stipulates strict adherence.

CONCISE SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' INTERVIEWS

In summary the participants said:

The Ministry recommended different textbooks for reading comprehension in primary schools. Such include textbooks Evans, Lantern, Oxford and Macmillan. Textbooks recommended are those that are curricular compliant. Publishers lobby ministry officials to get their books recommended. Ministry recommended and schools adopt many publishers to guide against monopoly, artificial scarcity and protect the economic interests/jobs of citizens.

VII. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The oral interviews the non-numerical data collected show that different schools use different comprehension books because of the following factors which are hereby in this study discussed thematically.

CORRUPTION

From the data collected the major reason while many publishers find their way into the ministry and many reading books are in use in schools is corruption in form of lobby and bribery. All the participants commented that ministry officials take bribe to get books recommended. For example, Participant A said, *'If I am a publisher and able to romance, romance in the sense that. I don't want to use that language. If I am able to to to bribe them, I think I will have my way. Because there are lots of textbooks that over ride the so called recommended textbooks by the ministry because the publishers are not able to find their way into the ministry.'* Participant D said in similar vein that, *'Emm we have to give something.'* Though, Participant E, denied this but agreed that gifts are given after the recommendation as gratifications. This implies that any publisher who refuses to bribe, no matter how good the publisher's book is, the book will not be recommended. In other words publishers of sub-standard textbooks who can offer bribes will have their books recommended at the detriment of the learners thereby, sacrificing quality on the altar of corruption. This finding is similar to the view of Bakare (2015) who opines that curriculum is adversely

influenced by corruption. This singular act will deny learners the opportunity of having access to quality materials.

CONTROL AGAINST ARTIFICIAL SCARCITY

As a result of the proliferation of the publishing industry many companies sprang up to compete in the market. These companies include Evans, Lantern, Oxford and Macmillan and to guide against monopoly, the ministry had to recommend many publishers. Participant E said many books were recommended to guide against monopoly and artificial scarcity and that if limited number of books were recommended many companies will fold up and people thrown into the labour market. Speaking in similar vein, Participant B said, *'we were using Macmillan before but when we did not eem see, find it in the shop, market we changed to Nigeria Primary English.'* This finding supports what Rezat, (2006) says competition influence the production of textbooks. If another company had not been on ground when Macmillan had challenges as revealed by the participant, learners would not have got an alternative. In this case, the ministry is justified.

LACK OF SINGLE REGULATORY BODY

Public and private primary schools in Ondo State are under two different regulatory bodies. Private primary schools are under the direct supervision of Ondo State Ministry of Education while public primary schools are under Local Government Education Authorities as confirmed by Participant E and Participant F. This non-centralised supervision gives room for lack of uniformity in the use of textbooks in both private and public primary schools despite the fact that the same textbooks were recommended for these two sets of schools. This finding concurs with the view of Rezat, (2006) which say textbook is influenced by the system of education. Since the two sets (private and public) of schools belong to the same level education, the best is to put them under the same regulatory body as it is with secondary and tertiary institutions.

CURRICULUM COMPLIANCE

Books recommended are books that are curricular compliant according to the participants. Participant A said, *'…if the publisher follows such the recommended curriculum to prepare such text, the ministry will be choiceless but to recommend such textbooks for schools…'* Participant E also shared similar view by saying, *'...the, it must be approved by NERDC fist.'* This finding is in line with Erlina, Marzulina, Patiloka, Astrid, Yansyah and Mukminin (2018) which says textbooks provide essential ingredients of the curriculum.

GOVERNMENT'S INTERVENTION IN THE PROVISION OF TEXTBOOKS

Data collected revealed that books are supplied free of charge by government in government schools. That gives room for uniformity in those schools. Participant F said, *books are given by government to help our students to read.'* This

implies that parents of pupils in public schools do not provide books for their children. This finding is in line with finding of Adepoju (2018) which revealed that government is the major provider of textbooks and contradicts Adepoju and Akinboboye, (2016) who opines that parents provide textbooks for their children.

The findings of this study are appalling. All public schools use unapproved textbooks which to the chagrin of this study were supplied by government that recommended textbooks and warned against the use of unapproved textbooks (OSME, 2017). What a contradiction? The private primary schools are not spared of this evil because majority of them, fifty five per cent (55%), use unapproved textbooks, thirty five per cent (35%) only use the approved textbooks while ten per cent (10%) use supplementary textbooks. Drawing logical inferences from the data collected, the study is of the strong opinion that a vast majority of primary schools use unapproved textbooks occasioned by shambolic educational policies and corrupt practices. This situation is not only degrading but also reprehensible, demeaning, condemnable, shameful and corrupt.

VIII. CONCLUSION

There is no gainsaying the fact that numerous textbooks were recommended for English reading comprehension and there is influx of unapproved textbooks for English reading comprehension in primary schools in Ondo state caused by administrative ineptitude and shambolic government policies. This has actually given room for non-uniformity and inequality in the reading materials and standards of textbooks.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the awful findings of this study, it is hereby recommended as follows:

Government educational regulatory bodies should ensure that only approved textbooks are used in schools.

Schools that use unapproved textbooks should be heavily sanctioned.

Only one regulatory body should supervise both private and public primary schools.

Only few standard textbooks should be recommended. A situation where over twenty textbooks are recommended as optional is uncalled for.

Unapproved textbooks found in schools should be confiscated and destroyed.

It is the belief of this study that if these recommendations are implemented, this trend will be reduced to its barest minimum. Further research can focus on the quality of textbooks used for English reading comprehension.

REFERENCES

[1] Adepoju, A.A. (2018). Active learning strategies used by teachers during english reading comprehension lessons in six selected primary schools in nigeria. Alice: An

unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the University of Fort Hare, Alice, South Africa.

[2] Adepoju, A.A. & Akinboboye, F.J. (2016). Inculcating good character and morals in children through reading. In Afolabi, F.O. and Loto, A.B. (eds.) Issues and concepts in education for national security and development. Ibadan: Masterprints Publishers.

[3] Bakare, V.O. (2015). A conceptual approach to education and teaching profession for nigerian undergraduate. Ile-Ife: Brain Box Educational.

[4] Bersh, L.C. (2013). The curricular value of teaching about immigration through picture book thematic texts sets. The Social Studies. 104 (2), 47-56.

[5] Cakir, I. (2015). Instructional materials commonly employed by foreign language teachers at elementary schools. International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education. 8(1), 62-82.

[6] Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2018). Research methods in education (eight edition). New York: Routledge Palmer.

[7] Cruikshank, D.R, Jenkins, D.B and Metcalf, K.K. (2009). The act of teaching. New York: Mac Graw Hill.

[8] Daly, C. (2003). Reading. In Davison, J and Dowson, J. Learning to teach english in secondary schools: a companion to school experience. New york: Routledge Falmer.

[9] Erlina, D., Marzulina,L., Patiloka, N.L, Astrid, A., Yansyah, T. and Mukminin, A (2018).

[10] Research on educational media: balancing between local and target language cultures in english electronic textbooks. Turkish on-line Journal of Educational Technology. 17 (2), 111-119.

[11] Federal Republic of Nigeria (2007). 9 year basic education curriculum english language for primary 4. Ikeja: NERCD.

[12] Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). National policy on education (NPE). Lagos: NERDC

[13] Fischer, L. Ernst, D. and Mason, S. (2017). Rating the quality of open textbooks: how reviewer and text characteristics predict ratings. International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning. 18 (4), 142-154.

[14] Kennison, S.M. (2014). Introduction to language development. Washington, D.C: SAGE Publications Inc.

[15] Lewis, A., Moore, C. and Nang, C (2015). Using video of student-client interactions to engage students in reflection and peer review. Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice. 12 (4),1-18

[16] Montelongo, J.A., Hernandez, A.C. and Herter, R.J. (2015). Teaching English Spanish cognates using the texas 2x2 picture books. Texas Journal of Literacy Education. 3(2), 101-112.

[17] Ondo State Government (2017). Approved List of Books for Pre-Basic, Lower, and Middle Basic Classes Schools for 2016/2017 to 2020/2021 Academic Session in Ondo State. Ondo State Ministry of Education

[18] Rezat, S. (2006). A model of textbook use . In Novotná, J., Moraová, H., Krátká, M. & Stehlíková, N. (Eds.). Proceedings 30th Conference of the International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics Education. Vol. 4, 409-416.

[19] Salkhanova, Z.H., Lee, V.S, Tumanova, A.B. and Zhusanbaeva, A.T. (2016). The subject-object approach as a direction of the learning theory in the context of modern linguistic education paradigms. International Journal of Environmental & Science Education .11 (10), 3730-3745.

[20] Sternberg, R.J. (2017). Why it is so hard for academics to write textbooks. Psychology Teaching Review. 23 (1), 79-84.

[21] Wessels, M. (2007). Practical guild to facilitating language learning. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.