

# Differential Effectiveness of Roundtable and Direct Instructional Strategies in Enhancing Reading Comprehension Achievement of Pupils with Learning Disabilities in Oyo, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study investigated the reading comprehension achievement of pupils with learning disabilities in Oyo State, Nigeria, using the roundtable and direct instruction methods. A pretest–posttest control group quasi-experimental research design was employed. A total of seventy-five pupils were purposively selected from three primary schools, with twenty-five participants from each school. The participants were assigned to two experimental groups (Roundtable and Direct Instruction) and one control group. Two validated instruments were used for data collection: the Myklebust Pupils Rating Scale (reliability coefficient  $r = 0.78$ ) and the Reading Comprehension Achievement Test ( $r = 0.82$ ). One hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), and Duncan's Multiple Range Test for post-hoc comparisons. The findings revealed a significant main effect of treatment on the reading comprehension achievement of pupils with learning disabilities. Pupils in the Roundtable group recorded the highest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 32.97$ ), followed by those in the Direct Instruction group ( $\bar{x} = 31.55$ ), while the control group had the lowest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 25.61$ ). The observed differences among the groups were statistically significant ( $F(2, 62) = 4.62, p < 0.05$ ). The effect size of the treatment was 13.0%, indicating a moderate (fair) impact. Based on these results, the null hypothesis was rejected. The roundtable strategy demonstrated a particularly strong effect in enhancing reading comprehension among pupils with learning disabilities. It is therefore recommended that both roundtable and direct instruction strategies be incorporated into reading comprehension instruction. Additionally, the employment of more specialized teachers is essential to effectively address reading comprehension challenges in schools.

**Keywords:** Roundtable strategy, Direct-instruction strategy, Reading comprehension achievement, Poor academic performance.

## Introduction

The persistence in pupils poor academic performance could be traceable to gross deficiency in reading comprehension skills and ability. Thus, <sup>12</sup> remarked that reading comprehension is a skill that is learnt throughout schooling and it is integrated into each subject and everyday lesson. It therefore implies that reading comprehension is not peculiar to English language; success in other school subjects depends on pupils proficiency in reading comprehension. A reader's visual processing, flexibility in reading, logic and reasoning skill do affect comprehension level. Reading comprehension includes word identification, sound of speech and fluency,

uncovering main ideas, finding specific details, recognizing sequence, predicting outcome, following directions and evaluation. Reading comprehension is the ability to read the words on a printed page and understand the language being used. It involves the interaction between a reader and the text shaped by the reader's cognitive processes. It includes analysing the text critically in a way that makes understanding of the information easier to retain and recall as and when due. [10] posited that understanding is the most salient issue in comprehension exercises; thus, questions on English comprehension are to test pupils degree of concentration, assimilation, logical reasoning and ability to make inferences.

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All these are test of understanding. [2] suggested that when a reader does not comprehend the text, the words do not carry a deeper meaning. The reader may just be skimming over the reading and not retaining the information provided.

[13] had given several reasons as causes of poor reading comprehension among pupils with learning disabilities. These include cognitive abilities, language skills, background knowledge, home, school and social environment, as well as vocabulary knowledge. Cognitive ability according to <sup>15</sup> is to anticipate both the form and the content of the material being read, identify the main ideas, recognize and recall specific ideas, follow segmental events, instructions and stages of an argument while perceptual ability involves increase in span of recognition, rhythmical movement of the eyes and elimination of certain reading deficiencies such as vocalization, regression, head involvement and figure pointing.

[9] remarked that attitude is a central factor that affects reading comprehension performance of pupils. Attitude plays a significant role because it determines the successes or failures in reading comprehension as an integral part of English Language as a subject. High score performance in reading comprehension is contingent on pupils positive attitude to reading [20]. [19] emphasized teachers' characteristics as significant to reading comprehension of pupils. Furthermore, he stressed that there should be a lay down procedure to follow viz: planning, preparation and practice. A good teacher should make use of different teaching methodologies and strategies during classroom interactions in order to take care of both slow and fast learners. Good teaching gives passionate and emotional responses in pupils. [4] categorized environmental factors into two viz: school factors and home factors as determinants of effective reading comprehension performance. Class size was emphasized as significant, the larger the class size, the lesser the teacher's effectiveness and probability of identifying the difficulty level of the subject in line with the pace with which he/she passes instruction to pupils. When the class size is small, teacher would be able to provide more individualized instruction and have less classroom management challenges. [3] opined that library facility provision and usage is crucial to pupils reading comprehension performance as they are encouraged to visit the library to get additional information, thus, they acquire more vocabulary. [7] however, mentioned parental factors as a powerful influencer on pupils level of reading comprehension acquisition. At home, pupils start reading from the elementary level that is, mastery of the twenty-six letters of alphabet, then to word formation, sentence construction, paragraph development taking into consideration the topic sentences, the use of context clue to get meanings and so on until he or she gets to the level of synthetic reading, that is, ability to read inferentially using several books at the same time and then merge the ideas as a whole. This implies that the development of reading comprehension skill starts from home.

Parents could read to their children and vice versa for proper mastery of all the concepts at early stage before fixation.

[16] reported a finding that the joint contributions of proficiency in English and home background on pupils' achievement in English reading comprehension was significant. [11] found out that instruction in strategic reading skill enhanced pupils reading comprehension achievement. In the same vein, it was revealed that the use of stereotyped method of teaching that is being operated in many readings lesson does not assist the pupils to develop critical reasoning skill, pupils should be guided by appropriate strategies at the levels of pre-reading, during reading and after reading. However, in view of different strategies such as exit-slip, semantic-gradient, scaffolding instruction, differentiated instruction, peer enquiry among others that were put in place by researchers to enhance pupils performance in reading comprehension, the problems persist and that informed the adoption of round table and direct instruction method of teaching as interventions to improve on reading comprehension performance of pupils identified as learning disabled in this study. Roundtable strategy is synonymous to cooperative learning strategy and it was propounded by Johnson and Johnson in 1991. It is an instructional method of assembling group of pupils to work together, structured to listen to one another, and often the sitting arrangement is in circles or in clusters with a view to improve on their reading comprehension performance. It is an active learning strategy that can be applied to improve reading comprehension by having pupils read a text and then collectively discuss and write about its idea, supporting details and inference in a rotational way. This structured discussion helps pupils synthesize information and build on one another's understanding, leading to improved comprehension skills. [5] highlighted six steps to an effective roundtable strategy for reading comprehension. This includes getting an overview, asking question, writing in yoyo book, taking note, reviewing notes and taking action. These steps would assist in retaining what was read. [19] in a study in Negeri in Indonesia, 5 Lubukhinggau found improvement of pupils literal reading comprehension using round table technique. In the same vein, [18] SMP Negeri 5 Lubukhinggau in Indonesia found that teaching reading comprehension using roundtable technique was significantly effective.

Potency of Roundtable and Direct Instructional strategies is being researched and promoted as effective means of solving issue of poor reading comprehension, a persistent issue, where pupils struggle with understanding, interpreting and extracting meaning from text, moving beyond traditional teacher-led question and answer to foster critical thinking, vocabulary and deeper engagement. On the other hand, Direct-Instructional Strategy is a thoroughly developed, high structured method of teaching that is rapidly developed and strengthening relationship and commitment of teacher to pupils. The process includes participation of pupils at all times, where pupils are made to actively respond either as one voice in a unified group or as individuals

within a group. In this method, the educator is the sole facilitator handling the curriculum that defines measurable goals and alignment with educational standards he/she presents to his/her pupils [8].

Previous studies have highlighted the effectiveness of direct instruction as a structured and efficient teaching method. According to [1], direct instruction is characterized by a fast-paced lesson structure that promotes effective teaching and learning. This pace helps sustain pupils' attention, encourages active participation, stimulates critical thinking, and minimizes disruptive behavior, as learners remain continuously engaged throughout the lesson. In contrast, [6] emphasized that knowledge in direct instruction is presented in an explicit and systematic manner. Pupils are guided to apply this knowledge in real-life situations, and through repeated practice, the acquired skills become internalized, contributing significantly to their cognitive development.

Empirical evidence further supports the effectiveness of direct instruction in improving reading comprehension among pupils with learning disabilities. For instance, [2] reported a significant positive effect of direct instruction as an intervention for enhancing reading comprehension skills in this group of learners. Similarly, [21] examined the impact of direct instruction on third-grade pupils in the Irbid Kasbah District of Jordan. The findings revealed that the method significantly improved reading comprehension skills irrespective of gender or other socio-demographic variables, indicating its broad applicability and effectiveness. In another related study, [6] found that the use of the Direct Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy significantly enhanced pupils' reading comprehension. The results demonstrated a marked difference in learning outcomes between pupils taught using the DRTA strategy and those who were not, highlighting the effectiveness of structured instructional approaches in reading comprehension, a meta-analysis study conducted by [1] evaluated a research-based direct instruction curriculum implemented with a group of 30 pupils with learning disabilities. The intervention lasted between 35 to 45 minutes daily over a period of six months to one year. The study reported a substantial overall effect size of 0.93, indicating a strong impact of the intervention. The findings revealed that:

1. Direct instruction is a highly effective strategy for improving the reading comprehension performance of pupils with learning disabilities.

2. Pupils responded more positively when direct instruction was delivered by their regular classroom teachers compared to trained research assistants.

The study also highlighted that the components of direct instruction curricula are firmly grounded in scientific research. Additionally, these curricula undergo rigorous testing and validation before being implemented in educational settings, ensuring their reliability and effectiveness for both educators and learners.

### Statement of the Problem

Reading comprehension is an important aspect of English Language subject in the school curriculum. However, comprehension remains a serious difficult task to pupils in schools irrespective of their cognitive competence in school and this no doubt, has posed a serious concern that necessitate urgent attention to stakeholders with vested interest in education, viz: the curriculum planners and teachers. Pupils with learning disabilities exhibit substantial reading comprehension achievement deficit when answering questions in examinations; furthermore, most class teachers seem less proficient with appropriate teaching methodologies that would have further enhanced reading comprehension of these pupils, thus leading to poor academic performance. The issue now is that if the 'regular' pupils are having a serious challenge in reading comprehension exercise due to of high level of intelligence that it requires, definitely, pupils with learning disabilities would be experiencing a profound difficulty in it. No doubt, scholars effort to address this problem influences researches and attracts use of different strategies such as exit-slip, semantic-gradient, scaffolding instruction, differentiated instruction, peer enquiry among others; yet, the problem is persisting.

### Purpose of the Study

In light of the reviewed literature, this study was designed to examine the efficacy of roundtable and direct instruction strategies in enhancing the reading comprehension achievement of pupils with learning disabilities. The study seeks to determine whether these instructional approaches can significantly improve learners' academic performance compared to conventional teaching methods.

### Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested in the study:

1. There is no significant main effect of treatment (roundtable, direct instruction, and conventional methods) on the reading comprehension achievement of pupils with learning disabilities.

### Methods

This study employed a pretest–posttest control group quasi-experimental research design to evaluate the differential effectiveness of roundtable and direct instruction strategies on the reading comprehension achievement of pupils with learning disabilities. The design allowed for comparison between experimental groups and a control group while controlling for initial differences in participants' reading abilities.

Twenty-five (25) learning disabled pupils were selected each from three nominated primary schools in Oyo, Nigeria, using purposive sampling method of selection, making a total of seventy-five participant pupils.

Validated research instrument used include:

- i. Mykleburst Pupils Rating Scale (1981) @ 0.78
- ii. Reading Comprehension Achievement Test @ 0.82

Treatment packages used in this study are:

- i. Roundtable strategies
- ii. Direct-Instruction
- iii. Conventional Classroom Teaching Method.

### Procedure for Data Collection

Three primary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria, were purposively selected for the study. Participant pupils, identified by their class teachers, were screened for eligibility using two standardized instruments: the *Myklebust Pupils Rating Scale* and the *Reading Comprehension Achievement Test*. Based on the screening results, eligible pupils were assigned to experimental and control groups. The researchers recruited and trained three research assistants on the proper implementation of the two instructional strategies: Roundtable and Direct Instruction. These assistants facilitated the intervention sessions for the experimental groups, while pupils in the control group were taught using the conventional method of reading comprehension instruction. The intervention was conducted over a period of eight weeks, with three instructional sessions per week. Each session focused on improving pupils' reading comprehension skills through structured and interactive teaching approaches tailored to the assigned group.

### Treatment Procedures

#### Experimental Group I: Roundtable Strategy

The roundtable strategy emphasized collaborative learning, active participation, and vocabulary development to enhance reading comprehension.

#### Learning Materials

Instructional materials used during the intervention included recommended pupils' textbooks, word cards, and prepared typewritten comprehension passages.

#### Instructional Steps

1. The teacher introduced the concept of goal-setting and explained its importance in improving reading comprehension.
2. Pupils were guided to set clear and achievable personal goals based on the comprehension passage provided.
3. The teacher encouraged pupils to reflect on what they intended to achieve from the reading activity and made these goals explicit.
4. Pupils were assisted in identifying strategies to accomplish their stated goals effectively.
5. Emphasis was placed on the importance of vocabulary mastery as a key component of comprehension.
6. Pupils, in collaboration with the teacher, identified unfamiliar or difficult vocabulary items in the passage. These words were written on the board for group discussion.
7. Pupils worked together to determine the meanings of the identified words and practiced their correct pronunciation.
8. The teacher monitored the activity, corrected errors, clarified misunderstandings, and provided feedback to ensure accurate comprehension and proper language use.

### Exercise and Reinforcement

#### Exercise

At the end of each instructional session, pupils were guided through revision activities to assess their understanding and provide feedback.

The teacher engaged the pupils by asking the following questions:

- i. Can you explain what you have learned in this lesson?
- ii. What activities are expected when working on a reading comprehension passage?
- iii. How would you correctly pronounce the vocabulary items written on the chalkboard?

These questions were designed to reinforce comprehension, encourage reflection, and promote active participation among the pupils.

### Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement was employed to motivate and encourage pupils' learning. Pupils who demonstrated excellent performance during the lesson were commended by the teacher. This reinforcement strategy helped to build confidence, sustain interest, and promote continuous engagement in reading comprehension activities.

### 2. Experimental Group II – Direct-Instruction Steps

i. The researchers arranged the seating of pupils in a semi-circular formation to facilitate easy interaction and effective engagement during the instructional sessions.

ii. Researchers identify and write some identified vocabularies in the passage, pupils attention was directed to the words written on the chalkboard and guided in identification of words as they are written on the board. Pupils later used independent practice of words, pronunciation and usage.

iii. Researchers collect feedback for further necessary reinforcement.

iv. Teacher teaches word recognition to enhance mastery knowledge of the subject matter:

(a) calling on individual pupils to pick word card, identify and pronounce words written on the cards.

(b) Instructing pupils to write dictated words and pronounce words written by themselves on the chalkboard.

v. Pupils are made to read aloud the comprehension passage repeatedly.

vi. Pupils are exposed to weekly practical: review word recognition and read the passage aloud.

vii. Pupils are instructed to relate the vocabularies in the content of the passage for discussion.

viii. Questions and answer in the passage read were carried out in the exercise.

### 3. Control Group – Conventional Method

Same comprehension passage were exposed to them like those in experimental group, but without treatment.

i. Pupils are instructed to listen while teacher reads to the pupils hearing.

ii. Pupils are instructed to read aloud individually, while teacher pronounces specific identified words for pupils

iii. Pupils are expected to practice answering of questions on the passage orally.

iv. Pupils are made to answer questions in their note books.

v. Teacher made repetition of items I-IV to enhance mastery of the comprehension passages.

**Post-Test Measure**

The *Reading Comprehension Achievement Test* was administered to pupils with learning disabilities after the completion of the treatment period. The post-test was conducted for all three groups involved in the study—Roundtable, Direct Instruction, and Control—to assess the impact of the instructional strategies on pupils' reading comprehension achievement.

**Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to determine the effectiveness of the roundtable and direct instruction strategies on pupils' reading comprehension achievement. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize the data. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to control for pretest differences and examine the main effect of treatment on the dependent variable. Additionally, Duncan's Multiple Range Test was used as a post hoc analysis to determine the magnitude and direction of differences among the treatment groups where significant effects were observed.

**Results**

**Hypothesis Testing**

**Hypothesis:**

There is no significant main effect of treatment (roundtable, direct instruction, and conventional methods) on the reading comprehension achievement of pupils with learning disabilities.

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Treatment*

Variables	Mean	SD	95% confidence interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Round Table	32.87	6.62	30.22	35.51
Direct Instruction	31.55	5.32	29.42	33.67
Control	25.60	7.86	22.46	28.75

The results of the analysis presented in Table 1 indicate that pupils in the Roundtable group achieved the highest mean post-test score ( $\bar{x} = 31.55$ ), demonstrating superior performance in reading comprehension.

*Table 3: Duncan's Post hoc*

(I) Treatment (J) treatment		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Roundtable	Direct Instruction	1.320	1.529	.391	-1.735	4.376
	Control	7.260*	2.501	.005*	2.260	12.260
Direct Instruction	Roundtable	-1.320	1.529	.391	-4.376	1.735
	Control	5.940*	2.084	.006*	1.774	10.105
Control	Roundtable	-7.260*	2.501	.005*	-12.260	-2.260
	Direct Instruction	-5.940*	2.084	.006*	-10.105	-1.774

**Discussion of findings**

The findings of this study revealed a significant main effect of treatment (Roundtable, Direct Instruction, and Conventional methods) on the reading comprehension achievement of pupils with learning disabilities. This indicates that the type of instructional strategy employed plays a crucial role in enhancing pupils' comprehension skills. These results are consistent with the findings of [2] and [21], who also reported a significant positive effect of instructional strategies on pupils' reading comprehension achievement, irrespective of gender or other socio-demographic variables.

In contrast, pupils in the control group recorded the lowest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 25.60$ ), reflecting comparatively lower achievement. This suggests that the Roundtable instructional strategy was more effective in enhancing reading comprehension among pupils with learning disabilities than the conventional method.

*Table 2: ANCOVA of tests of between-subjects effects*

Source of variations	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Eta Sq.
Corrected Model	19045.087	12	1587.091	64.322	.000	.926
Intercept	349.669	1	349.669	14.172	.000	.186
Pretest	3805.578	1	3805.578	154.234	.000	.713
Treatments	227.945	2	113.927	4.619	.013*	.130
Total	88255.000	75				

Table 2 presents the summary of the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) examining the effects of treatment on the reading comprehension achievement of pupils with learning disabilities. The results indicate that the observed mean differences among the three groups (Roundtable, Direct Instruction, and Control) are statistically significant ( $F(2, 62) = 4.62, p < 0.05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.130$ ). The effect size ( $\text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.130$ ) suggests that approximately 13.0% of the variance in reading comprehension achievement can be attributed to the treatment, indicating a moderate effect. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant main effect of instructional strategy on pupils' reading comprehension achievement.

To further identify the specific group differences, Duncan's Multiple Range Test was conducted, as presented in Table 3. The post hoc analysis revealed that pupils in both the Roundtable and Direct Instruction groups performed significantly better than those in the Control group. This finding underscores the effectiveness of structured instructional strategies over conventional teaching methods in improving reading comprehension among pupils with learning disabilities.

The agreement between the present study and previous research further reinforces the effectiveness of structured and interactive teaching approaches in improving learning outcomes among pupils with learning disabilities. The results further showed that those exposed to treatment (Roundtable and Direct Instruction) exhibited far more considerable treatment gain contrary to those in control group. In consonance with the findings in this study, <sup>6</sup> found out that the use of the Direct Reading Thinking Activities strategy improved pupils reading comprehension. In the same vein, <sup>19</sup> in a study had found improvement of pupils in literal reading comprehension using roundtable technique.

The superior performance of the treatment groups compared to the control group may be attributed to the fact that both roundtable and direct instruction strategies are research-based and have undergone extensive validation and testing. Their structured and systematic approaches to teaching likely contributed to improved learning outcomes among pupils with learning disabilities, the findings of this study further revealed that the roundtable strategy demonstrated greater effectiveness than the direct instruction method. This may be due to its interactive and participatory nature, which actively engages pupils in the learning process through collaboration, discussion, and shared problem-solving. In contrast, while direct instruction also proved effective, it is predominantly teacher-centered, with limited opportunities for active learner participation. The observed difference in effectiveness between the two strategies may therefore be attributed to the learner-centered orientation of the roundtable approach, which fosters deeper understanding, increased engagement, and improved retention. This likely explains the superiority of the roundtable strategy over the direct instruction method in enhancing reading comprehension achievement among pupils with learning disabilities.

### Recommendations

On the whole, the stakeholders in education, viz teacher's parents, government and curriculum planners should collaborate and provide necessary enlightenment that promote positive steps for identification, assessment, referral education of pupils with learning disabilities, especially in an inclusive educational setting. Teachers should be allowed to go through refresher courses, workshops and seminars where they would be made to update their knowledge and pedagogy. They should not limit students to exposure stereotyped method of learning and thus, ensure application of new instructional strategies such as roundtable and direct instruction with the aim of making students explore and develop the ability for reading comprehension achievement in school and also to proffer appropriate remediation where and when necessary.

Parents should be alive to their responsibilities in terms of assisting their children to develop intellectually; they should create enough time for them to read for at least one or two hours every day and not during examination period only. They should also be ready to buy all the prescribed texts for their children. Government should ensure that teachers' interests are preserved by providing an enabling school environment; teachers' salaries are promptly paid, promotions and fringe benefits attached not necessarily delayed. The government should provide well-equipped language laboratories in schools so as to give pupils opportunities to practice whatever learnt in reading comprehension.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the use of roundtable and direct instruction strategies significantly enhances the reading comprehension achievement of pupils with learning disabilities.

These results provide valuable insight into effective instructional approaches and contribute meaningfully to existing knowledge on improving reading outcomes for learners with special educational needs. The study has important implications for teachers, school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders in the education sector. It highlights the need to adopt innovative and evidence-based instructional strategies, such as roundtable and direct instruction, to address persistent challenges associated with poor reading comprehension among pupils with learning disabilities. Although both strategies were found to be more effective than the conventional method of instruction, the roundtable strategy emerged as the more effective approach in this study. Its interactive and learner-centered nature appears to foster greater engagement and deeper understanding, thereby leading to improved learning outcomes. Therefore, integrating these strategies—particularly the roundtable approach—into classroom practice is strongly recommended to enhance reading comprehension achievement among pupils with learning disabilities.

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