EFFECTS OF TWO METHODS OF INSTRUCTION ON STUDENTS' CRITICAL RESPONSE TO PROSE LITERATURE TEXT IN ENGLISH IN SOME SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BENIN CITY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of two methods of instruction on secondary school students' critical response to Prose Literature text. The study adopted a pretest, posttest, control group quasi experimental design. The participants in the study were 84 Senior Secondary II students of Literature-in-English purposely selected from four Schools in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State. Two intact classes were randomly assigned to each of the treatment and control groups. Three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level. The instruments used were: Critical Response to Prose Literature Test (r = .75), Questionnaire on Home Background of Students (r = .82), and Critical Response to Prose Literature Test Marking Guide. Data obtained were subjected to Analysis of Covariance and graph. The results showed significant main effect of treatment on students' critical response to Prose Literature ($F_{(1, 77)} = 44.731$; $p < .05$). Students exposed to Engagement Strategies Method performed better than those exposed to the Conventional Method of instruction. Further, home background of students had no significant effect on students' critical response to Prose Literature text ($F_{(2, 77)} = 4.902$; $p < .05$). There was significant interaction effect of treatment and home background of students on students' critical response to Prose Literature text ($F_{(2, 77)} = 3.508$; $p < .05$). It was concluded that Engagement Strategies Method is effective in promoting students' critical response to Prose Literature text. Teachers of Literature-in-English should employ Engagement Strategies Method in teaching Prose Literature to students in Senior Secondary Schools.

Key Words: Methods of instruction, Engagement strategies method, Critical response, Prose literature text, Read aloud and explain.

Introduction and Background

Reading is an effective tool of learning especially in formal education. The ability to read is positively linked to academic achievement. Besides, reading is needed by an individual to function fully in literate societies. For instance, participation in a democracy, ability to cope with postsecondary education setting, literacy demands of many work places and self-fulfillment are largely contingent on the ability to read. Hence, a student's level of efficiency in reading directly affects the nature of his or her entire school and post-school life.

Further to being literate, the ability to select and evaluate information is of utmost importance in the contemporary world. People of all ages are confronted with a vast amount of information, both in print and electronic formats. They need to know how to critically analyse and evaluate the varied texts they read in order to avoid gullibility. In this way, readers are expected to move beyond the texts' message to "question, examine and dispute power relations that may exist

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between readers and authors" (McLaughlin and Devoogd, 2004, p. 18). Readers should not accept the printed word without questioning the author's purpose for writing the text, the particular perspective the author is representing and any other voices or perspectives that are not expressed in the text. This is because a text represents a particular stance or point of view that an author wishes to pass across. There is no ideologically "innocent" text. A text positions readers and influences them in one way or the other.

However, as central as reading and the ability to read with a critical edge are to academic achievement and participation in modern societies, students are becoming aliterate. A general decline in students' reading and ability to read critically has been observed over the years as persistent problems confronting the education system (Omojuwa, 1989; Oyetunde and Muodumogu, 1999; Kolawole and Ajayi, 2004; Ezeokoli, 2005; Oyinloye and Ofodu, 2008). This situation is linked to a number of factors; foremost among them is the way reading is taught in schools. The way reading is taught in schools is not conducive for producing students who love to read (Cullinan, 2000; Oyetunde, 2002; Kolawole, 2005). Traditionally, reading is seen as extracting information from print. Quite often, the activity of reading is equated with being able to recognise alphabets and the sounds they represent, the words they form on a page and the meaning the string of words convey. As a result, students learn to comprehend basically at the literal level and tend to experience difficulties in understanding texts that require them to read critically. The frustration that students experience when reading discourages them from engaging in regular reading activities.

But, there is a way to reverse the trend of students' apathy towards reading and their inability to read critically. A number of studies indicate that the study of Literature can be a particularly productive way of creating a love for reading in individuals and teaching the skills of interpretation and critical analysis more effectively. Literature is an inviting medium, both in content and structure, in which all students can productively develop, analyse, and defend interpretations (Langer, 2000). The processes involved in understanding Literature are a natural and necessary part of a well-developed intellect. Putnam (1978) studying practical reasoning, argues that literary understanding, with its attention to knowledge about how people live, is a critical component of scientific thought, and that imagination and sensibility are essential instruments of practical reasoning. Dworkin (1983), in a related work, argues that the understanding of Law can be enhanced by literary readings, and calls for lawyers to read legal documents through literary-interpretive as well as logical-analytic means. The study of Literature encourages students to enter imagined worlds and explore, examine, and reflect on both current and timeless issues as well as their individuality and humanity. The critical thinking skills uniquely offered by the study of Literature include: cultivating a questioning mind, exploring personal and social issues, and interrogating and managing ambiguities and multiple perspectives (Singapore Literature English Teaching Syllabus, Lower and Upper Secondary, 2013).

Literature "has the potentials to challenge, arouse, interest, and awaken in students a passion for reading" (Long and Gove, 2003). It plays an important role in building students' skill and desire for

reading (Knickerbocker and Rycik, 2002). Exposure to literature builds students' confidence in their ability to make meaning from text and encourages students to voice and justify their opinions. Text in Literature offers a wide scope for exploration and growth in the competencies required for modern times. Interrogation of text enhances students' analytical capability and challenges their thinking practices. Empathy and an ability to relate to others and confidence in the way they express themselves help students in their efforts to participate and contribute to society. Responding to the challenges of the future will require individuals who can think for themselves with imagination and purpose (Trish, 2009). The knowledge, skills and dispositions acquired and grasped in the study of Literature stands students in good stead as active citizens of both their countries and the world.

In secondary schools in Nigeria, Literature is offered as Literature-in-English in the school curriculum. It is further subdivided into the three genres of prose, poetry and drama. The aims and objectives of teaching Literature in English as described in the Senior Secondary School Curriculum include among others: giving students a rich and well rounded humanistic education; reinforcing the English Language skills already acquired by the students; exposing students to the beauty and potentials of language; equipping the students to develop the capacity for independent thought and judgment; developing students ability to respond appropriately and independently to literary works; and preparing the students to pass literature in the Senior Secondary School Examinations and the Joint Matriculation Examination and also to prepare them for work (Federal Ministry of Education, 2009, p. iii). The aspects of the aims and objectives of teaching Literature in English that have to do with developing in students the capacity for independent thought and judgment and the ability to respond appropriately and independently to literary works can effectively be achieved if students are taught to respond critically to works of Literature.

Responding critically to Literature texts involves moving beyond literal, text-based responses (knowledge and comprehension) to responses initiated by purposeful and reflective thinking through analysing, synthesising, interpreting, and evaluating issues and ideas encountered in text. These activities are all part of critical thinking. The term critical thinking suggests the idea of not readily accepting any given viewpoint. In terms of students reading a literary text, critical thinking would involve asking why or how questions about the text: why has the writer used this character as the hero/heroine? /why is the story narrated in the first person? and other similar questions. It also involves seeing relationships between events, analysing events, synthesising evidence and evaluating both the content of a text and the language used to express ideas contained within it. Engaging critically with a text implies not taking anything at face value: it means inferring the different meanings underlying a text and being able to give textual evidence in support of interpretation(s). Expatiating on the idea of critical response, Long and Gove (2003) describe critical respondents as purposeful (having reflected from more than one point of view); curious; able to get to the essence (the core) of the problem; adept at drawing from prior knowledge; deep "reflectors" (willing to risk presenting another opinion or point of view that might be unpopular); and good at "feeling" as well as thinking through a problem and then acting on it.

In order to foster critical response to Literature texts in students, the teaching/learning environment must be one that promotes curiosity and questioning. One way by which students' active learning can be promoted in the Literature classroom is by the use of Engagement Strategies. Engagement Strategies, according to Long and Gove (2003), is a three-tiered process – (1) Ask open-ended questions, listen to, honour, and respond to students and encourage students to read between the lines of the texts; (2) Invite students to investigate and find out about explicit and implicit text information – to dig a little deeper into the texts' meaning; and (3) Encourage students to pose and solve problems about important text events – to provide a credible environment for promoting students' critical response to Prose Literature texts. The three interrelated strategies were adapted by Long and Gove (2003) from Edmiston and Long (1999). They are based on the British methodology Drama in Education. The following three paragraphs provide a backdrop for understanding these engagement strategies as provided by Long and Gove (2003).

Strategy 1 (Ask, Listen, Honour, Respond, and Encourage): This engagement strategy requires the teacher to read the text a number of times before introducing it in class. The teacher must prepare ahead of time so that s/he can map out when to stop periodically during the reading of the text in class to "wonder" (ask open-ended questions that would pique the interest and curiosity of the students). The teacher listens attentively to students' responses, honour each comment offered, respond positively to all comments, and encourage students to "wonder" as they read so that they can connect more profoundly with the text.

Strategy 2 (Investigate and Find Out): Using strategy 2, the teacher and students explore either an implicit or explicit part of the story to deepen the information therein and act as co-authors to the text. To deepen students' thinking, the teacher might position the students as people from a character's background – past or present. Both students and teacher agree on their various roles and the teacher models what s/he expects from the students. The students, positioned as people from a character's background, become investigators of equal competence. They vest themselves into the story and invent what might have happened to gain deeper understandings of why characters act as they do.

Strategy 3 (Pose and Solve Problems): The teacher creates an environment that challenges students as co-authors by posing a problem for students to solve. Edmiston (1998) refers to this as the "A, B, C's of drama – All need to face a Big problem that we all Care about" (p. 49). This 'big problem' could be derived from tense real-life situations or situations in the text that calls for immediate action. In the process of problem solving, students are compelled to view issues from more than one perspective or point of view, to reflect, question, and take action beyond the obvious (in other words, to critically respond to the text).

When teachers use the three interrelated engagement strategies, they can help guide the students to significantly reflect upon, and connect more profoundly with text. Using engagement strategies

requires that the teacher provides equal opportunities for all the students to respond to the text; they are all invited to operate as excellent readers while supporting one another in multi-layered thinking and doing. Engagement Strategies is a form of scaffold that can promote critical response in students because it empowers them, through imagination, to explore real life issues that are important to them and take action. Thus students inevitably become more attentive to their learning and acquire more sophisticated critical skills.

Engagement Strategies reflects an attempt to provide students with a learning environment that supports active learning. Active learning is a key factor in teachers' efforts to engage learners with a work of Literature. Active learning in Literature does not arise from mere exposure to great books or from listening passively as others discuss them (Torres, 2011). Rather, as Nance (2010) notes: "Students need to read for themselves, think critically about what they read, and then express and develop their responses through discussing and writing" (p. ix). Active learning in the Literature class would entail students developing the ability to purposefully access information from a variety of sources, analyse and evaluate the information and then integrate it to construct a personal knowledge base from which to make intelligent decisions (Nwosu, 2003 as cited in Olagunju and Ojo, 2006). It must stimulate students' creative and critical thinking on literary works (Ayodele-Bamisaiye, 2000). Rather than the teacher handing down the answers to the students, they are given the tools to learn to think for themselves. However, Literature instruction has not been characterised by active learning.

Studies on the teaching of Literature over the years reveal the dominance of the traditional lecture instructional style. Literature instruction remains dominated by text-based approaches which rely on comprehension-as-outcome pedagogies. In other words, literature teaching is concerned about students arriving at predetermined textual understandings and interpretations (Grant, 2012; Aukerman, 2013). Sumara (2002) found that schools tended to implement curriculum in which students quickly read several books and teachers created tests to assess the ability of students to recall facts from literature. This approach, he believes, defeats any chance of students' finding enjoyment or meaningful experience in literature. Lewis (2000) observes that literary texts are often taught through the language and technology of reading comprehension which often takes over the reading and teaching of Literature. This method of teaching Literature also features prominently in English as a second language situation.

According to Samuel (1995), teachers of Literature in a second language situation believe that their primary task is to prepare students to pass examinations. Thus they concentrate only on what they think the students need to master. Dyer's (2007) study in South Africa revealed that the sampled teachers approached literature study in the way prescribed by the examination – teaching students to learn to extract fixed "correct" meanings from text. Samuel (1995) further argues that the examination system seems to require only superficial analysis of the texts which students study; if a student is able to reproduce the banked knowledge, s/he passes the paper. It is also believed that it is beyond the competency of second language learners to provide analysis of literature texts which taps appreciative and evaluative responses. Hence, the examination is characterised by

questions which do not require the learner to reveal his/her creative or critical skills. Classroom practices, therefore, are directed to a large extent towards passing the examinations and not necessarily the development of students' appreciation of Literature. This practice is evident in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Describing what transpires in Literature classes in Nigeria, Ogunsiji (2003) observes that they are characterised by teachers focusing on story narration, treating past examination questions and engaging students in vocal reading of the text. The teaching is geared towards getting students to learn the facts of the story and being able to recall them for examination purposes (Ogunnaike, 2002). This form of teaching rarely engages the students actively in the learning process and leaves no room for them to contribute their own meaning to the reading of text. Students thereby rely solely on the teacher and/or the text for interpretation of meaning. They come to view the teacher as the sole interpreter of what is contained in the text and reproduce what the teacher has taught (for those who pay attention in class) in order to pass examinations. They might also find it unnecessary to read the actual texts, depending on book summaries or the teacher's notes for interpretation (Ezeokoli, 1985; Aluko, 1985; Ogunnaike, 2002; Olutoyin, 2010; Igubor, 2011). This situation does not make for meaningful and critical reading as texts only become meaningful when they are read. Labo-Popoola (2010) notes that intensive reading is required of students if they are to understand the text. Thus, literature without a reader is merely a print on a page, but when readers bring their curiosities, emotions and life experiences to the text (Giorgis and Johnson, 2003), their responses can become critical.

Consequent upon the way the teaching of Literature is handled, students' performance in Literature-in-English examinations have been less than satisfactory. Results from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) Chief Examiner's Reports for Literature-in-English have consistently shown that a major weakness of candidates in the examinations is that of failure to read the prescribed texts. In addition, candidates have displayed lack of critical thinking skills by dwelling more on narration when answering questions and giving shallow, scanty and irrelevant answers to questions. Again, commenting on the weaknesses of the candidates in the prose section (Paper 3) of the examination, the 2008 through 2014 reports show that candidates failed to focus on the demands of the questions asked. They derailed by reproducing the story-line of the text instead of focusing on the requirement of the questions.

Furthermore, candidates exposed their inability to critically analye and comment on issues from texts according to the demands of the questions (WAEC, 2009). The sections on poetry and drama (Paper 2) were not different. Candidates' dismal performance was blamed on shallow knowledge of the texts which was traced to their reliance on "summaries" of the text. Not surprisingly, the section of the reports dealing with candidates' strengths show that most candidates performed better in questions on character and role than other question; candidates did well in questions relating to narration (WAEC, 2008-2014). From these reports, it is evident that conventional/traditional modes of teaching Literature brings about the development of inadequate skills of interpretation and analysis in students. What students seem to have developed instead is a

set of superficial knowledge about the texts that enables them to answer questions involving comprehension and narration.

In a bid to improve Literature teaching by involving students in the learning process, a number of studies have been carried out with researchers experimenting with different methods and strategies of teaching (e.g. Ogunnaike, 2002; Olasele, 2007; Ezenandu, 2012; Long and Gove, 2003). However, investigation focusing on using Engagement Strategies in the Literature classroom that leads to students' critical response to text in an ESL setting is missing. Thus this study focuses on using three interrelated Engagement Strategies – (1) Ask open-ended questions; listen to, honour, and respond to students; and encourage students to read between the lines of the text; (2) Invite students to investigate and find out about explicit or implicit text information – to dig a little deeper into the text's meaning; and (3) Encourage students to pose and solve problems about important text events – to provide a credible environment for fostering students' critical response to Prose Literature texts.

In addition to instructional strategies, there are other factors that can influence students' reading and response to literary texts. This study focuses on home background of students. This choice is hinged on the fact that the home environment is a major contributory factor in a child's educational and cognitive development (Verna and Campbell, 2003). Since a learner spends a greater proportion of his/her time at home, s/he is to a large extent influenced by home experiences especially those with educational biases and intent (Ezeokoli, 2005). The learner is part of the family, thus his/her thought and communication patterns, views and ideas are shaped to some extent by what happens in the home. However, as Ezeokoli (2005) notes, the occurrence and extent of educational activities at home vary from one home to another. As used in this study, home background of students covers parents educational background, parental support of children's learning and the availability of literary materials in the home.

Statement of the Problem

Reading and the ability to critically evaluate messages encountered from various sources is a prerequisite for full and meaningful participation in modern societies. However, pedagogical practices in many Literature classrooms reveal traditional teacher dominated instruction rather than critical discussion of texts. Literature classes are still dominated by reading and explaining by the teacher and asking comprehension questions. Students are not engaged in reading the actual texts and are not encouraged to develop a critical stance when attending texts. Previous studies have examined the methods, strategies, techniques and problems of Literature teaching. Others have focused on using practices aimed at engaging students in Literature lessons but without concentrating on how to develop student's critical response to texts. It is against this background that the study investigated the effect of Engagement Strategies Method on students' critical response to Prose Literature in some secondary schools in Benin City. It also determined the moderating effect of home background of students on their critical response to Prose Literature.

Hypotheses

Based on the stated problem, the following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- HO1: There is no significant main effect of treatment on students' critical response to Prose Literature text in English.
- HO2: There is no significant main effect of home background of students on their critical response to Prose Literature text in English.
- HO3: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and home background of students on students' critical response to Prose Literature text in English.

Methodology

The study employed the pretest, posttest, control group quasi-experimental design with a 2 x 3 factorial matrix for the purpose of data analyses. The categories of variables used in the study were: (1) the independent variable (the instructional method) which was manipulated at two levels - Engagement Strategies method and Conventional method of teaching Prose Literature-in-English, (2) the dependent variable (critical response to Prose Literature-in-English), and (3) the moderator variable (home background of students).

The participants in the study comprised 84 Senior Secondary School two students of Literature-in-English in public secondary schools in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State. Four secondary schools were purposively selected from 15 public secondary schools in Ikpoba-Okha local government area of Edo State. Thereafter, the ballot procedure was used to randomly select one intact class of SS 2 in each school to participate in the study. Two intact classes were randomly assigned to each of the treatment and the control groups. The criteria for the selection of schools were:

i. The schools must have professionally qualified Literature teachers with at least three years post-qualification teaching experience.
ii. The schools must have presented candidates for WAEC and NECO examinations for at least five years.
iii. The schools must be far away from each other.
iv. The schools must be willing to participate in the study.
v. A majority of the students in the selected classes must have the text to be studied.

Seven instruments were used in the study. They consist of four response instruments and three measurement instruments: (1) Critical Response to Prose Literature Test (CRPLT) (2) Teachers' Instructional Guide on Engagement Strategies (TIGES) (3) Teachers' Instructional Guide on Conventional method of teaching Prose Literature (TIGCM) (4) Lesson Notes (5) Questionnaire on Home Background of Students (QHBS) (6) Evaluation Checklist for Assessing Trained Research Assistants (ECATRA) (7) Critical Response to Prose Literature Test Marking Guide (CRPLTMG). Two of the measurement instruments are discussed in details:

Critical Response to Prose Literature Test (CRPLT)

The CRPLT was self-designed. It was used to measure the students' performance before and after treatment. It is a 9-item instrument made up of two sections – A and B. Section A contains five short answer questions while Section B contains four essay questions. The test focused on the following aspects adopted from Sommers, Androne, Wahlrab, and Polacheck's (2006) map of literary response:

1. Constructing the test (developing interpretations beyond the literal meaning of the text's actions; "reading between the lines").
2. Citing text (offering evidence to support interpretation/emotional responses).
3. Judging reflectively (questioning issues raised by the author's writing choices including authorial slant and bias, intended or unintended)
4. Developing interpretive authority/exercising agency (expressing confidence in the value of personal interpretation through argument making; testing their responses against the text).
5. Recognizing textual moves (observing/assessing authorial choices/strategies in terms of the elements of fiction, e.g. plot, style, setting, theme, etc.).

The prose text used for the study – Purple Hibiscus – is recommended by WAEC and NECO for Senior Secondary Schools. It was chosen because it was the only prose text not yet taught in the selected schools.

Questionnaire on Home Background of Students (QHS)

This instrument was developed by the researchers. It solicited information on factors of students' home background that could influence their critical response to Prose Literature. It is divided into four sections – A, B, C, and D. Section A covers students' demographic data. Sections B, C, and D addresses the three aspects of students' home background – parents' level of education, Parental support of children's learning, and availability of reading materials in the home. Sections B and D are designed as checklists with the items scored 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 in the order they occur in the questionnaire. Section C is a modified Likert-scale with four options – Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

The two measurement instruments were constructed by the researchers and subjected to expert opinions of some lecturers in the field of Language and Literature teaching from the Faculties of Arts and Education, University of Ibadan, to read for face and content validity. Thereafter, the instruments were test-run for reliability and co-efficients of .75 and .82 were respectively obtained for the CRPLT using Kuder Richardson 20 (KR 20) and the QHS using Cronbach's alpha.

Research Procedure

The study was carried out in four (stages). The stages were:

    I.   Identification of schools and training of research assistants
    II.   Administration of pretest
    III.   Treatment: During the treatment stage, the experimental and control groups were exposed to different instructional strategies for eight weeks.

Experimental Group (Engagement Strategies Method)

The experimental group consisted of two Senior Secondary Schools from the local government selected for the study. Two intact classes of Senior Secondary School II students offering Literature in English were selected from both schools. The classes were exposed to Engagement Strategies Method using the following steps:

Step 1: Students silently read the passages under consideration, finding answers to guiding questions provided by the teacher.

Step 2: Students are led by the teacher in a discussion of the answers to the guiding questions; students' responses are listened to, commended, and they are encouraged to support their answers with relevant citations from the text.

Step 3: Students are placed in mixed ability groups of 5-7 to investigate an issue raised from the passages considered.

Step 4: Students present the results of their investigations in a plenary session and share their ideas with the class.

Step 5: Students regroup and are asked to solve a problem posed by the teacher in relation to what has been read.

Step 6: Students present their solutions to the problem in a plenary session.

Step 7: Students are led by the teacher to reflect on personal experiences that relate to the issue(s) discussed in the text.

Evaluation: Students are given specific tasks (e.g. Students are asked to write a summary of the answers to the guiding questions considered).

Follow-Up Activity: Students are provided with tasks designed to make them prepare for the next lesson (e.g. Read up chapters 1-4, identify the themes therein and investigate the theme of domestic violence).

Control Group (Read Aloud and Explain)

The control group consisted of two Senior Secondary Schools from the local government selected for the study. Two intact classes of Senior Secondary School II students offering Literature in English were selected from both schools. The classes were exposed to the Read Aloud and Explain Strategy, which is typical of the conventional classroom using the following steps:

Step 1: The teacher reads aloud the first paragraph and explains.

Step 2: The students read aloud in turns while the teacher comes in at interval to give corrections and explain concepts or issues raised.

Step 3: The teacher invites the students to ask questions on the passages read and answers them accordingly.

Evaluation: The teacher asks questions to test the students' comprehension of the lesson.

Conclusion: The teacher copies note on the chalkboard.

Assignment: The teacher gives assignment on the novel.

Administration of posttest

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) and graph. All hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level.

Results

The results are presented in the order of the hypotheses formulated.

HO1: There is no significant main effect of treatment on students' critical response to Prose Literature text in English.

In order to test this hypothesis, the Analysis of Covariance was computed. The summary is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of ANCOVA of Posttest Critical Response to Prose Literature Text by Treatment and Home background of Students

Source		Type 111 Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Hypothesis	52877.485	1	52877.485	31.563	.026	.937
	Error	3560.419	2.125	1675.301			
Pretest	Hypothesis	433.504	1	433.504			
	Error	11018.763	77	143.101	3.029	.086	.038
Treatment	Hypothesis	21949.914	1	21949.914			
	Error	999.751	2.037	490.708	44.731	.021*	.956
Homebackg	Hypothesis	5003.061	2	2501.298			
	Error	1007.566	1.974	510.298	4.902	.171$^{n.s}$	.832
Treatment × homebackg	Hypothesis	1004.097	2	502.049			
	Error	11018.763	77	143.101			
					3.508	.035*	.084

* Significant at p < .05

Table 1 shows that there is significant effect of treatment on students' critical response to Prose Literature text (F (1, 77) = 44.731; p < .05). This means that there is a significant difference in the critical response to Prose Literature text between students exposed to Engagement Strategies and those in the control group. Based on this finding, hypothesis 1 is rejected.

In order to determine the group with the highest mean score, the Estimated Marginal Means were computed and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Estimated Marginal Means for Engagement Strategies Method and Conventional Method

Grand Mean = 29.997

Treatment	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Engagement Strategies method	46.381	1.903	42.592	50.170
Conventional method	12.953	1.853	9.256	16.650

Results on Table 2 show that the Engagement Strategies method had a higher mean score (= 46.381) than the conventional group method (= 12.953). This implies that students exposed to Engagement Strategies performed better than those exposed to the Conventional mode.

H02: There is no significant main effect of home background of students on their critical response to Prose Literature text in English.

Table 1 indicates that home background of students has no significant effect on students' critical response to Prose Literature text in English (F (2, 77) = 4.902; p < .05). Hypothesis 2 therefore, is not rejected.

Table 3: Estimated Marginal Means for Low, Medium, and High Home background of Students

Grand Mean = 29.997

Home background of Students	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	20.020	2.309	15.423	24.618
Medium	29.697	2.199	25.318	34.075
High	39.285	2.307	34.691	43.879

Table 3 shows that the mean scores for the Low, Medium, and High Home background of students differ with students in the High level scoring a higher mean (= 39. 285), followed by those in the Medium level (= 29.697) and finally those in the Low level (= 2.307). This implies that students in the High level performed better than those in both the Medium and Low levels. Likewise, students in the Medium level performed better than those in the Low level.

HO3: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and home background of students on students' critical response to Prose Literature text in English.

From Table 1, the interaction effect of treatment and home background of students on students' critical response to Prose Literature text is significant (F (2, 77) = 3.508; p < .05). Based on this finding, Hypothesis 3 is rejected. This result implies that treatment and home background of students did influence students' critical response to Prose Literature text in English.

The details of students' mean scores across the groups are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Estimated Marginal Means of the Interaction Effect of Treatment and Home background of Students
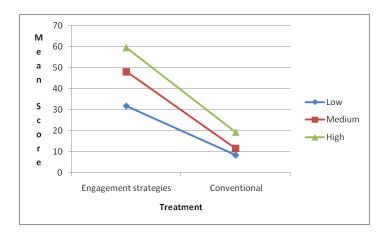
Treatment Homebackg.		Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Engagement Strategies	Low	31.720	3.449	24.841	38.589
	Medium	47.988	3.197	41.622	54.355
	High	59.436	3.198	53.067	65.804

Conventional	Low	8.320	3.260	1.829	14.811
	Medium	11.405	3.024	5.383	17.427
	High	19.134	3.322	12.519	25.749

Table 4 reveals an ordinal trend in the differences in the mean scores across the groups. In both treatment groups, the mean scores of the High level groups of Home background of students are higher than that of students in both the Medium and Low level groups (= 59.436; 19.134). The same trend is noticed in the other two levels as the Medium level groups perform higher than the Low level groups (= 47.988 and 11.405; 31.720 and 8.320).

Figure 1 presents this ordinal trend in a line graph.

Figure 1: Interaction Effect of Treatment and Home Background

The graph shows that the interaction is ordinal with the high home background students consistently performing better than the medium home background students while the low home background students stood at the bottom of the performance graph for both Engagement Strategies and the Control groups.

Discussion of Findings

The focus of this study was to determine the effects of two modes of instruction on secondary school students' critical response to Prose Literature text in English. The findings revealed significant main effect of Engagement Strategies on students' critical response to Prose Literature text. Findings indicated better critical response of students in the experimental group than those in the control group. A possible reason for this may be because students in the experimental group were exposed to a learner-centred mode of instruction geared towards making them critically conscious of the issues raised in the text under consideration. This view is supported by the study of Long and Gove (2003) whose use of Literature Circles and Engagement Strategies resulted in students' responses becoming more critical. Similarly, Beach, Park and Thein's (2007) use of Literature Circles in promoting critical response to a work of Prose Literature resulted in the

"critical consciousness" of the learners; they learned to think, argue and arrive at conclusions by considering multiple perspectives. Henson (2003) cites the following as some advantages of learner-centred instruction: students' increased intellectual curiosity, creativity, drive, and leadership skills. In using Engagement Strategies, teachers and students are co-participants in the process of meaning-making. Students become engaged in critical reflection of events and ideas raised in the text (Long and Gove, 2003). Thus, students can come up with meanings that they truly constructed themselves. As Meyers and Jones (1993) assert, "learning is truly meaningful only when learners have taken knowledge and made it their own (p.20)".

Another possibility that may explain the significant main effect of treatment on students' critical response to Prose Literature text is the potential of Engagement Strategies for promoting personal response to what is read. Personal response requires readers to make connections between information and events in the text to the reader's own experiences, to other texts, and to the real world. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) refer to these connections as "text-to-self", "text-to-text", and "text-to-world". In using Engagement Strategies, students are provided with opportunities to relate what they are reading to what is available in their schema. They are able to explore real life issues that are important to them and take action both as individuals and as a group. As a result, they become more attentive to their learning and acquire more sophisticated critical skills (Long and Gove, 2003). Learning increases when students make connections to what they are reading. Providing opportunities for students to personally respond to texts enhance their understanding of texts, which is the ultimate goal of reading. When students make connections, they are actively constructing meaning of the event, thus building higher levels of learning (Morrison and Wlodarczyk, 2009).

In addition, the findings highlight the fact that because students are used to answering questions which demand little more than recollection of facts from text, answering questions that required them to think and respond critically proved difficult; though more so for those in the control group. This accounts for the fact that although the mean score of the experimental group (= 46.381) is higher than that of those in the control group (= 12.953), it is still a barely good performance. This seems to confirm Hall and Piazza's (2008) observation that students

> "…engagement with and interpretation of texts is likely rooted in how they think they need to read and respond to texts to be successful in school. Students are more likely to search for correct answers in texts—not challenge or look for implicit messages— because they have internalised such behaviors as the correct way to engage with texts in school" (p.33).

The above observation is also in line with the sentiments expressed by the various WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports (2008-2014) earlier cited in this study which show that questions having to do with story narration are favoured more by students.

Furthermore, findings revealed that home background of students did not have significant effect on students' critical response to Prose Literature text. Although there was an ordinal trend in the

mean scores across the groups with students in the High group performing better than those in the Medium and Low groups; and students in the Medium group performing better than those in the Low group, it was not significant. This result is contrary to those of Fan and Chen (2001), Baker and Scher (2002), Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) and Flouri and Buchanan (2004) who report that home background of students influence students interest in and performance in school and reading tasks. This result may not be unconnected to the fact that the impact of home background of learners is stronger during the early years (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Bonci, 2008). The average age of the subjects used in this study was 15years.

However, the influence of home background on students' critical response to text should not be underestimated. Home background factors such as access to reading materials, number of reading materials, book-reading frequency and the degree of parental involvement, have been found to affect students' literacy practices (Ezell, Gonzales and Randolph, 2000). The home literacy environment – "spaces and atmospheres where learning, exploration and reading are fostered and encouraged" (Van Vechten, 2013, p.9) – is crucial in developing the literacy and language skills of students. In addition, as Kirby (2008) notes "having many books in the home does not contribute to literacy acquisition; it is what is done with the books that matters" (p.115). In most cases, what is done with the reading materials depends on parental beliefs and education levels (Van Vechten, 2013).

Not to be overlooked also is the home culture of the students. Cultural tendencies impact the way children participate in education as has been shown by a number of studies (Purdie and Neill, 1999; Bennett, 2003 as cited in Rosenberg, Westling and McLeskey, 2008). Culturally, Nigerian children are not given much opportunity to share in discussions or argue out their points of view at home. They learn from an early age that expressing their views is a sign of disrespect and that the elders' opinions are always considered right (Umobong, 2010; Akinbote, 2011). The culture of silence suppresses critical response and its manifestation in school. This is because expressing one's point of view and providing support for the views held is an integral component of critical response.

Similarly, culture shapes the way people interpret the world around them. Students are products of their family upbringing and environment (Parlakian and Sanchez, 2006). Thus, one of the obstacles in helping students develop critical response to text is that students themselves may resist using texts in ways that require them to examine their beliefs and actions that are contrary to their cultural and social expectations (Piazza, 2006). They may find it uncomfortable to move beyond their views of the world and may express disinterest in reading and discussing texts in a way that challenge their ideas (Hall and Piazza, 2008).

On the contrary, in homes where the parents are educated and enlightened, children are allowed the opportunity for self-expression. The free flow of verbal communication between parents and their children promotes cognitive and social skills (Steinberg, 2001). Similarly, Epstein (2001) observes that secondary school students benefit from parental involvement such as family

discussions about school and parental support for students' independence and responsibility for self. So, homes which allow students' the freedom of independent thought and self-expression are more likely to produce students who are able to respond critically to text read. Although home background of students did not have a significant effect on students' critical response to Prose Literature text, it is possible that with prolonged use of the Engagement Strategies, the effect of home background of students on their critical response to Prose Literature text will be manifested.

Moreover, the results showed that the interaction effect of treatment and home background of students on their critical response to Prose Literature text was significant. This is in spite of the fact that home background of students as a moderator variable was not found to be significant in explaining students' critical response to Prose Literature text. This may not be unconnected with the fact that students' mean scores across the groups followed an ordinal trend which indicates that students differed in their critical response to Prose Literature text based on their home background level (High, Medium, and Low), although the difference was not significant. This result therefore shows that home background of students has a lot to do in supporting learning (Gottfried, Fleming and Gottfried, 1998; Feinstein and Symons, 1999; Baker and Scher, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Harris and Goodall, 2007).

The findings of the study have shown that Engagement Strategies is an effective instructional tool for promoting critical response to Prose Literature texts in students. The value of a learner-centred mode of instruction in stimulating students' engagement with learning tasks is also reinforced. In addition, the home has an important role to play in issues relating to students' participation in school learning. It is thus concluded that students' apathy towards reading and their subsequent inability to respond critically to Literature texts could be effectively tackled through learner-centred methods of instruction that encourages students to actively participate in the process of meaning making in the learning process. It is recommended that teachers should adopt Engagement Strategies method in their teaching of Literature-in-English. Teachers of Literature-in-English should move away from text-based approaches to teaching that focus on "right" answers and predetermined interpretations. Rather, they should teach their students to reflect deeply on what they are learning, questioning others' interpretations, being willing to take cognisance of another's point of view and arriving at interpretations and conclusions that can be sustained with ideas from the text read.

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