

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in Hausa

Results for Bauchi & Sokoto

The ability to read is one of the most important skills a child can learn. For this reason, the Nigeria Northern Education Initiative (NEI), with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), collaborated with SUBEB, the Ministry of Education, the College of Education and others to conduct the Early Grade Reading Assessment in P3 in February and March 2011 in Bauchi and Sokoto states. The purpose of EGRA was to measure pupils' ability to read in Hausa, the language of instruction in P1- P3.

❖ What is the Early Grade Reading Assessment?

EGRA measures various skills that are necessary for children to read fluently and understand what they read. The test is conducted orally and one-on-one with pupils. EGRA results tell us whether children have acquired these key skills, and if not, what areas need to be improved.



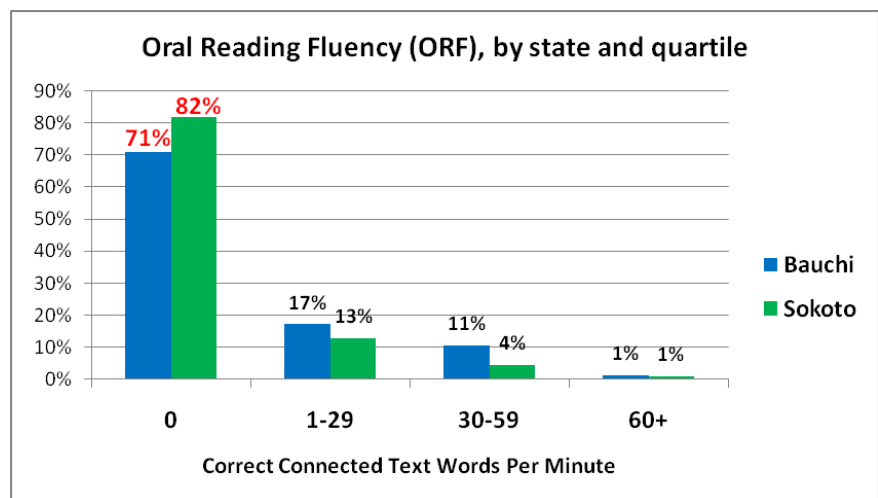
❖ Why measure pupils' reading ability in Hausa?

Measuring pupils' reading ability in Hausa is important for several reasons. First, children learn to read best in a language that is familiar to them. This is because they arrive at school with an extensive vocabulary in their first language, which helps them learn to read with understanding. Becoming a good reader in Hausa also helps children to learn English, since many of the key skills related to reading are transferrable from one language to another.

❖ EGRA Results

EGRA in Hausa was administered to 1,982 pupils in Bauchi and 2,041 pupils in Sokoto, in both public and Islamiyya schools in rural and urban areas. Overall, their scores were very low.

- On average, pupils in Bauchi were able to correctly say the sounds of only 6 letters of the Hausa alphabet per minute. In Sokoto, the average score was 4 correct letters per minute.
- The majority of the pupils could not read any syllables and had not learned to decode words.
- 7 out of 10 children in Bauchi and 8 out of 10 children in Sokoto could not read any words of a short Hausa story. Fewer than 10% could read the story with good comprehension. In Bauchi, girls' reading scores were lower than boys, a difference that is statistically significant.



Questionnaires administered to pupils, Head Teachers and Hausa language teachers at the schools visited further revealed that:

- More than half of pupils reported they do not have a Hausa textbook.
- Half of pupils said they never read aloud to someone at home.
- Head teachers and teachers are not aware of the problem and do not understand the importance of teaching reading in Hausa in the early grades.

Importantly, EGRA results also tell us that that pupils who were able to read fluently and with good comprehension were more likely than pupils who did not to (1) have a Hausa textbook; (2) have time to practice reading at school and at home; and (3) have a teacher who has been trained to teach reading.

The EGRA Hausa results point to the clear need to improve children's reading skills. There are many actions that education authorities, teachers and parents can take to do so:

EDUCATION AUTHORITIES AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- ❖ **Train teachers to teach reading, and provide them with ongoing support.** Teachers need guidance on methods for teaching reading skills. Pre-service teacher training for student teachers in Primary Education Studies needs to focus on how to teach key reading skills. Teachers already working in schools can be trained through in-service training. LGEA officials, Inspectors, and Head Teachers should monitor teachers' performance and provide support to teach reading.
- ❖ **Provide pupils with text.** Without books, children cannot practice reading, and they are therefore unlikely to learn to read. Education authorities should ensure that Hausa books are procured and provided to every pupil, so they can practice reading every day in their classroom.
- ❖ **Establish reading benchmarks and monitor reading progress.** Specific benchmarks for each reading skill (i.e., letter sounds, oral reading fluency) should be established for each class. This will help teachers, parents, education authorities, and pupils know if children are obtaining reading goals.



TEACHERS

- ❖ **Teach reading in Hausa:** Children must be taught to read. Teachers should focus on key reading skills, like letter sounds, phonemic awareness, and decoding. If pupils can read, this also improves their performance in other subjects.
- ❖ **Teach reading early.** Pupils can and should be able to read by the end of P1. Therefore, teachers should teach reading in Hausa early.
- ❖ **Make reading a focus of instruction.** Children need to practice reading *every day* to become fluent readers. The class timetable should include at least one hour per day for reading.

PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- ❖ **Talk, sing and tell stories to children.** Parents and other family members can talk to children about common daily activities, such as going to the market. They can also sing songs and tell stories to build children's knowledge of sounds and words, increase vocabulary, and ability to express themselves.
- ❖ **Read to your child.** Parents, siblings and other community members who are literate can read books, newspapers, signs, food packaging and other text to young children. They should ask children questions about what they are reading, talk about the meaning of words, and discuss the story.
- ❖ **Listen to your child read:** Having children read out loud is very helpful. Even parents who are not literate can help their children by asking them to read for at least 20 minutes a day. Parents or other members of the family can ask them questions and praise them for their efforts.