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Probing the Impact of the Eclectic Approach in the Reading Comprehension Competence of Basic Schools Pupils in Ghana: With Kuka Primary School in Focus

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ABSTRACT

The paper caused an investigation into the causes of Kuka M/A Primary pupils' inability to read comprehension passages and to sustain their interest in reading comprehension using eclectic approach. Literature was provided to support the study. Action research design was used in the study. A sample size of fifty (50) pupils was drawn from the entire school population for data gathering purposes. The instruments employed for the study were tests and observation while data were analyzed using frequency tables. The study revealed that lack of participatory activity in the classrooms, lack of pre-reading skills, absenteeism, and others were the causes of the pupils' inability to read. The study further revealed that using an eclectic approach improves pupils' performance in class. It became known that most of the pupils were now interested in reading comprehension passages very well because the lessons adopted the interactive activity-based approach. A number of recommendations were made to assist stakeholders of the school to make good use of this current study to improve upon their performance.

INTRODUCTION

According to Margaret and Snowling (2013), the English language is not just about being able to read and write but it goes beyond that. Afari & Okunner (2005) also share the view that, English is the official language of the country, it is the language of Education, law and government, trade and Commerce, Broadcasting, and entertainment. The English language serves as a service subject for all other subjects in basic school curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2003). It is therefore acknowledged that, the English language has been, continues to be the medium of communication, cultural transmission, and served as a foundation for all academic work in our country today (Distance Learning Academy, 2016)

English Language paper is compulsory to all school candidates and other categories of candidates who aspire to do courses at the universities, polytechnics, colleges and among other institutions in the world. Learning English can help you attain and achieve more career convenience because these days, the job market is comprehensive and various companies wish for employees who can connect with partners and clients all over the world. In sum, that means the recommendation of employees who speak English as high.

Finally, English is considered as an official language in most countries in the world since it is used in institution such as law court, banks to mention but few. We cannot therefore ignore the English language teaching in our schools or teach it haphazardly; otherwise, the Ghanaian child will find it difficult to improve his or her life. The importance of the English language is explained already, the situation is not the best in the case of Ghana when most students find it difficult to read in English language. Against this background, this research considers it fit and duty-bound to help build the foundation level of the Basic

Primary School pupils of Kuka M/A Primary School in reading. Kuka M/A Primary School is located in the Bawku Municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The school forms part of cluster of schools in the Kuka Circuit of the Bawku Municipality and specifically located in a village called Kuka-Natinga. The school has enough furniture; pupils test books, and some classrooms.

However, the school has inadequate teaching and learning materials such as language games and flash cards. The school has no library and this denies most of the pupils the opportunity to have access to storybooks and other relevant materials. It is very important to state that, most people in Kuka-Natinga in Ghana happens to be local oriented farmers and petty traders and as a result of this, they engage their children in these activities which expose most of the children to the use of the local language at home, in the school, at farm and at market. Parents' attention is not concentrated on the education of the wards but rather on farming. This explains why the teaching and learning of English language is difficult in Kuka M/A Primary.

The reasons stated above-affected pupils' performance regarding reading and other subjects and hence the need for this research to improve upon the situation giving birth to our research paper topic as: "Probing the Impact of the Eclectic Approach in the Reading Comprehension Competence of Basic Schools Pupils in Ghana: With Kuka Primary School in Focus". This research observed during most of the reading comprehension lessons that, most pupils could not read simple passage fluently as expected. It was further realized that pronunciation was very difficult on the part of the pupils and punctuation marks were all ignored and as a result, no meaningful reading was done on the passage being read. It is against this background that, this research is being conducted

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to help improve upon the problem. This research work believes that pupils of Kuka M/A Primary have no knowledge of pre-reading activities. This work equally second hand guesses that wrong pre-reading approach is an underlying factor to the pupils' inability to read comprehensively. The paper would want to underscore the point that the Eclectic Approach would be the effective means to overcoming pupils' reading inability and so shares the view that reading strategies presented in a scientific order will improve pupils' reading difficulties. To this effect, the study aims to diagnose the causes of Kuka M/A Primary School class three pupils' inability to read comprehension passages fluently.

Develop strategies that will help address pupils' knowledge in reading. To capture the interest of pupils in reading and their involvement in the class and to help pupils to read in order to improve their vocabulary. The following are the research questions that this research paper intends to answer in the research work: a. what are the causes of Kuka M/A Primary School pupils' inability to read and understand textbooks? b. What strategies can help improve the pupils' knowledge in reading? Finally, what impact will the eclectic approach make on the reading abilities of Kuka M/A Primary School pupils?

Significance of the study

The research work will be beneficial to English language teachers because it will serve as a reference material and help teachers get the right method of teaching English language, especially in reading. In addition, the study will provide practical use of teaching and learning materials to teach reading in the primary levels, hence given teachers of English language a variety of teaching learning materials and strategies to teach reading. Finally, the study will make pupils independent in their communication in English language and in reading on their own.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Meaning of Reading

Toertch (1998) have three definitions of reading. According to him reading means learning to pronounce words, reading means learning to identify words and get their meaning and lastly reading means learning to bring meaning to a text in order to get meaning from it. Mitchel (2003) however says, reading is defined as "an individual's total interrelationship with symbolic information. Rockets (2014) said reading is defined as making meaning from print. Ulmarian (2001) in his book, he said: "Reading is an activity characterized by the translation of symbols or letters into words and sentences that communicate information and mean something to the reader". As for Wattle (2002), reading is the most effective for learning a key skill that opens the door to physical intellectual and moral improvement.

According to *Encarta Students Dictionary* (2009), reading is an activity characterized by the translation of symbols or letters into which words and sentences that have meaning to the individual. The Encarta further said that

the ultimate goal of reading is to understand written materials, to evaluate it and to use it for one's needs.

Tsadiday(1993) also defined reading as the ability to hold a conversation written materials or to get a message that has been set out in the form of words, letters or numbers instead of ordinary writing. However, Rosenblatt (1994) believes that every reading act is an event or transaction involving a particular reader and an occurring at a particular time in a particular context.

The meaning does not reside but happens or comes in to being during the transaction between the reader and the text. Reading is defined by Jeans and Stalin (2004) as an activity characterized by translation of symbols in letter into words and sentences that have meaning to the individual.

Meaning of Reading Comprehension Panel (2010), defines reading comprehension as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language." On the other hand, Janne (2006) viewed reading comprehension as the process of using one's prior knowledge and the writer's clues to infer the author's intended message. Tarigan (2008) suggests that reading comprehension is a kind of reading activity that aims at understanding literary standards, critical review, printed drama and pattern of fiction. Suyant (2007) on the other hand states that the aim of reading comprehension is to get information from reading passage.

Meaning of Reading Comprehension

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Meaning of Eclectic Approach

Kumar (2013) notes, "The eclectic method is a combination of different method of teaching and learning approaches". It can be viewed as principled eclecticism implying that the approach is characteristically desirable, coherent and pluralistic to language teaching. In contrast, larsen-Freeman (2000) describes the eclectic approach as not a concrete single method, but a method that combines listening, speaking, reading and writing and includes some practice in the classroom. Li (2012) said, reading can educate and acquire all sorts of information. If one can read, he or she has an open to his or her word of knowledge, we receive so much information via radio, television and multimedia experience yet none of these avenues has the ability to educate as the fundamental

skills of reading.

According to Sir Francis B. (1997) reading makes a full man. Through reading, the individual perceives, comprehends, interprets and evaluate life. This depends on the quality of materials that are read. Reading as education skills is important because, it is the most effective self-reliance tool for learning a skill that appears moral for self-improvement. It is true that the capacity of an individual to benefit from formal education depends largely on the quality and quantity that he or she does. Anderson (1998), suggests that sparkling the interests of middle grades, students through career education activities, helping them in this way to see that reading is a life skill that is relevant to their future success. The children can choose occupation that interest them and list that reading skill each occupation requires. Annor (1997) wrote that learning to read is the acquisition of attitudes, skills and knowledge. According to him, the inability to read can affect the child's learning to appreciate and practice those things, which are essential to preservation and improvement.

Causes of Pupils' Inability to read

The *Encarta Students* (2009) stated that dyslexia is one of the causes of inability to read. The *Encarta* defines dyslexia as the inability to learn to read fluently. Eckert (2001) of Brain Institute of the University of Florida, wrote that, "children from low-income families perform more poorly in reading as compared to their colleagues from rich families. Children from poor families perform poorly in reading because they may not have been sent to school at the right time. Such children may also lack reading materials and the confidence and courage to learn. Amoateng (1994) states that, the causes of reading difficulties are mental retardation, visual and hearing impairment and communication disorder. Morgan (2014) every child can learn to read. "We work with children who have already fallen behind and 98% progress well with the right help." So never accept the prognosis that a child cannot read. Some of the factors that cause reading inability include lack of exposure to printed materials, low intelligence, lack of important pre-reading activities such as the inability to recognize letters and the ability to attach sound to letters.

Reading Strategy

Cobbetal, Zahar & Spada (2003) explained that the jigsaw reading method is an activity related in which students are asked to work in groups of four (4). This means pupils have a role to play. The approach involves putting together a passage that has been broken up into a number of small sections, one or two sentences divided between four (4) readers. Each pupil has the opening sections. The pupils who have the section which follows on from opening, reads and following sections and takes turns to make a complete sentence or passage. They explained that this strategy has been very useful to many learners in the world since it assists them in quickly recognizing

words. Ministry of Education (2004) stated that, Pre-reading activity is one of the strategies of teaching skills. They define pre-reading activities as skills a child acquire after the child has gone through a series of activities that ensure the pupils' success in formal reading.

To Asamoah, Kutor & Chilisa (2004), Pre-reading skills helps pupil to move the eye from left to right since letters have to be sounded in the right order from left to right, assist them to handle books appropriately and finally, it assist them to find similarities and difference between sound made by objects and animals. Finally, the *Encarta Students* (2009) also described word study as improving reading skills. This involves the use of dictionary, studying words parts and learning how to find the meaning of a word from the context. When children are not sure of their spellings they should check from their dictionaries. According to them, this activity encourages pupils to use words, read effectively, and locate meaning.

Reading Strategies to Improve Reading Skills

Ministry of education (2004) suggested that pre-reading activities is one of the best ways to improve reading skills. M.O.E. explained that the teacher needs to follow certain principles in presenting pre-reading activities. These principles include starting with concrete things which include the use of real objects, actions participatory activities and experience, followed by the use of semi-concrete things, which involves realistic representations, the use of photos, cut out forms, magazines, colored illustrations and then finally upping the game with the use of semi-abstract things, which includes the use of stick figures, black-and-white illustrations. According to Asamoah et al (2004) use abstract things which involve using symbols, letters and words. These principles align with the educational saying, that children learn and understand better, when it progresses from the known to the unknown, simple to complex and concrete to abstract.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The research used was action research design for the study. Action research concerns itself with immediate solution to local problems. In other words, action research is a systematic collection of information designed to bring short-term solutions to problems. The researchers used action research because he is actively involved in carrying out the activities that lead to the identification of the problem. The action research aims to solve classroom problems in a basic school through applying scientific methods. It deals with local problems and it is conducted in the local setting. However, action research is aimed at contributing to knowledge due to its limitation to the local setting.

The research instruments used were observation and test. Firstly, we observed a reading comprehension lesson taught by the class teachers to obtain correct information about the research. The observation revealed that most of the pupils have difficulties in reading a passage fluently, he further realized that pronunciation was very difficult

for the pupils and punctuation marks were all ignored and as a result, no meaningful reading was done. Two series of tests were conducted to ascertain the gravity of the situation. Rijlaarsdam (2004) test as a procedure for measuring a sample of behaviour.

This takes the form of task or series of task with the aim of obtaining information on an individual behaviour in a scientific area of study. The researcher informed the pupils about the exercise before conducting it (pre-test). The exercise was marked over ten (20) and ten (10) was considered as a pass mark (average). The researcher conducted another test (post-test) after the pre-test

to determine the effectiveness of the intervention implemented. It was also marked over ten (20) and ten (10) considered as average. The performances of the pupils in the two tests were later analyzed using statistical tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of this article deals with the presentation, analysis and discussion of data considering the specific research questions posed. After carrying out the research instrument for data collection, the research obtain the following as the results of its findings.

Table 1: Data from Observation

Area of observation	Remarks
Pupils participation in a lesson	Poor
Teacher method of teaching	Wrong
Pupils pronunciation of words	Poor
Classroom condition	Poor

Source: Author's Survey 2022

From the table three (3) above pupils participation in the lesson was found to be poor. Most pupils did not have much interest in reading just because they do not know the importance of reading and there was the fear of being intimidated by teachers and pupils when a mistake is made. In addition, it was observed that, the teacher's method of teaching was wrong. So most pupils did not understand what the teacher was teaching because of using a wrong approach instead of an eclectic method. Pupils' pronunciation of words was poor as well. Due

to the wrong teaching method, most pupils could not pronounce words as they should.

The classroom condition was observed to be poor for students. This was because the researcher observed that while the teacher was teaching seriously, pupils were disturbing and some were sleeping. This means classroom control was very poor. The classroom did not have much space hence any ventilation. The results on the table indicate evidence of our research that needed to be solved.

Table 2: Results Obtained by Pupils during the Pre-Test

Marks	Number of Pupils	Percentage (%)
0 – 4	30	60
5 – 9	15	30
10 – 14	3	6
15 – 20	2	4
Total	50	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork data 2022

From table 2 above, thirty (30) pupils scored between zero (0) and four (4) marks representing 60% out of 100%, fifteen (15) pupils scored the marks ranging between five (5) to nine (9) which represents 30% low performance, three (3) pupils scored between ten (10) and fourteen (14) marks representing 6%, whilst only two (2) pupils the scored the mark between fifteen (15) and

twenty (20) out the fifty (50) lots of pupils representing 2% of the entire sampled population. From the results of the pre-test presented on the table two (2) above, it was observed that out of fifty (50) sampled pupils, five (5) pupils representing 10% scored between five (5) marks and above. The rest of the forty-five (45) pupils who represent 90% of the pupils scored marks ranging from

Table 3: Marks obtained by Pupils during the Post-Test Results

Marks	Number of Pupils	Percentage (%)
0 – 4	0	0
5 – 9	2	4
10 – 14	8	16
15 – 20	40	80
Total	50	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork data, 2022

zero to nine (9) which really below the average school that a pupil should obtain in a reading text. These scores in a pre-test therefore painted the larger picture of our research problem understudy that indicated that larger portion of the class did not perform well.

Table three (3) above presented the scores of the performance of the same sample grouped after an intervention was put in place using the eclectic approach. The said table shows a contrast of the situation comparing it to what was witnessed at the pre-test stage.

From the table three (3), the scores of the post-test shows that two (2) pupils only representing 4% scored between five (5) to nine(9) points and forty-eight (48) pupils which is the larger majority of the class representing 96% scored the average mark of five (5) and above. Comparing the results of the pre-test to that of the post-test, one can clearly deduce that there has been a massive improvement over pupils' performance in the post-test indicating that the intervention measures implemented for teaching of the concept "reading comprehension" have been successful.

General Outcome of the Study

The research describes that general outcome of the study was most successful. The general outcome is successful because the objectives set by the research were 90% achieved at the end of the research work. The evidence backing his successes is the post-test results where a very few pupil fell below the pass mark. The contributions of pupils were excellent during the intervention stage. The reason is that, the research used the best intervention method.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the observation made during the lessons and the pupils' performances during the two tests, we concluded that the use of the appropriate teaching learning materials in delivering lessons will always help the pupils improve their reading comprehension skills. However, poor and lack of supervision on the part of education authorities such as Directors and above all Circuit Supervisors is a major contributing factor to the pupils' inability to read effectively. Also, lack and as well as inadequate supply of reading materials is a major factor that hinders the school in its quest to improve upon the reading skills or inability of the pupils in our target school. Finally, poor and non-cooperative attitudes of parents towards the education of their wards was canker that fuels the inability of the pupils to read accurately.

To this effect, we are making the recommendations based on the study conducted. These this paper believes can help improve the teaching and learning of reading in basic schools in Ghana and other African countries if implemented. Teachers should have thorough knowledge of the linguistic and cultural background of their pupils coupled with in-depth knowledge of the various methods and techniques in teaching reading. The teachers should equally; be innovative by acquiring supplementary readers

in their schools, be familiar with the English alphabet sounds, use English lesson teaching and learning materials in their teaching coupled with language games. They should break the reading passages into smaller and intelligible parts for easy reading. The Ghana Education Service (G.E.S), District Education Directors and all Stakeholders must see it as a necessity to provide the required textbooks, learning resources to help improve teaching and learning in deprived communities. It is also important that in-service programs be organized regularly to upgrade teacher's knowledge in contemporary issues concerning reading comprehension.

After these courses, follow-up exercises should be organized to ascertain that teachers are using the new knowledge they have acquired during the In-service training sessions in teaching reading. The parents and guardians on their part supervise and encourage their wards at home to read. In spite of the illiteracy background of some parents, it must be made clear to them that it is important for them to see to the welfare of their children. They should therefore help their children by providing basic study books and asking their older siblings to help them academically.

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