

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**IMPROVING ENGLISH READING HABITS/SKILLS OF PRIMARY SIX  
PUPILS: A CASE STUDY OF ST. PAUL'S RC PRIMARY „B“ SCHOOL**

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**A thesis in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Languages,  
submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Education  
(Teaching English as a Second Language)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**SEPTEMBER, 2019**

## **DECLARATION**

### **STUDENT'S DECLARATION**

**I GLORIA KANIA LUUSEH**

declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:.....

Date: .....

### **SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis/dissertation/project as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

**NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. KWAKU OFORI**

Signature:.....

Date:.....

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to lovely my husband, Seidu Ganiu, my children Seidu Ottis and Seidu Nadrat and all my siblings by whose support led to the successful completion of this study. Thank you.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank the almighty God for all the many blessings he has bestowed upon me, for giving me the opportunity to begin and finish this program successfully climbing once again the ladder of learning.

The successful completion of this work was made possible through the help and supervision of my supervisor, Dr. Kweku Ofori. I wish to express my profound gratitude to you for meticulously going through every bit of this work and making comments when necessary.

I also wish to show my appreciation to all my lecturers of Department of applied Linguistics of the University of Education, Winneba for their encouragement throughout my studies.

I am also thankful to the entire teaching staff and pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary School „B“ especially, Madam Fatimat Racheal Amadu for her support to the success of this project.

To all who have contributed in diverse ways to the success of this project, I say a big thank you and may God bless you.

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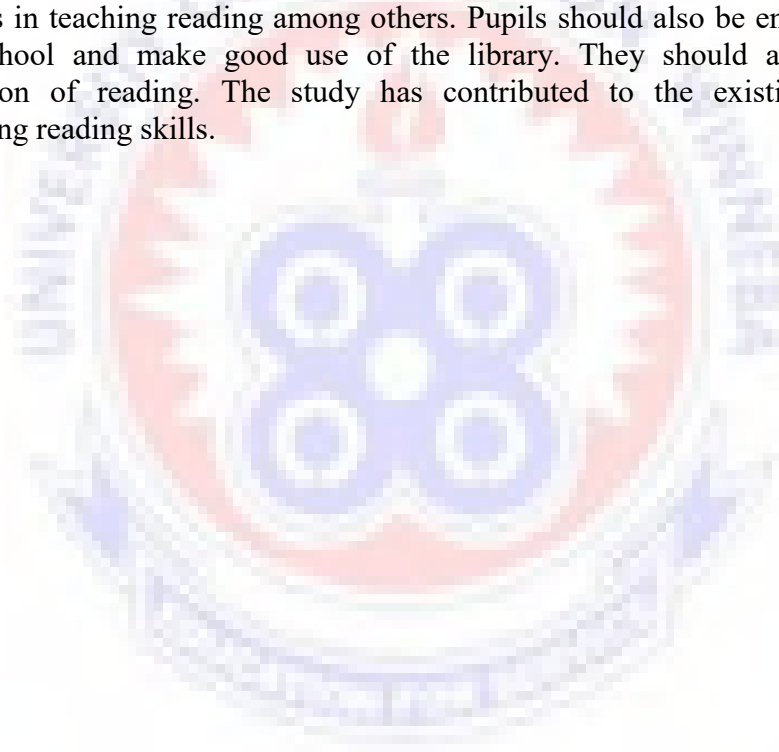
## ABBREVIATIONS

GES	-	Ghana Education Service
TED	-	Teacher Education Division
NRP	-	National Reading Panel
USA	-	United State of America
APW	-	Auditory Processing Weakness
TLMs	-	Teaching and Learning Materials
MOE	-	Ministry of Education
TaMA	-	Tamale Metropolitan Assembly
PTA	-	Parent Teacher Association
L1	-	Mother-tongue
L2	-	Second Language (English)



## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the poor reading skills among pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary School „B“. The purpose of the study is to find out the causes of poor reading skills, the effects of poor reading skills on the pupils and the strategies that can be adopted to improve upon them. This was done through data collection tools interview, observation and questionnaire. The sample size used was thirty-eight (38) class six pupils and six (6) teachers of St. Paul's R/C Primary School. The study confirmed that students of the school had difficulty in reading and that it had dire consequences on the pupils' academic performance, communication skills and their competence level in reading. It was discovered that this causes were as a result of inappropriate teaching methodologies, inadequate time allocated to reading and inadequate use of TLMs on the part of the teachers while the causes ascribed to the pupils were inadequate reading after school, pupils' perception of reading, inadequate library visitation and the types of books they read. The study therefore proposed that increasing the time allocation on the timetable, usage of modern strategies like the Syllabic and Phonics methods in teaching reading among others. Pupils should also be encouraged to read after school and make good use of the library. They should also change their perception of reading. The study has contributed to the existing literature on improving reading skills.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Introduction

Reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation. Reading can also be said to be making meaning from prints. Reading requires a process of comprehension, that is, the construct and understanding from print, recognition, that is identifying the words in print and fluency, which means coordinating identified words and making meaning so that reading is automatic and accurate. Similarly, De Certeau, (1984: p.165) affirms that „reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning. It is a means of language acquisition, of communication and of sharing information and ideas“: The reading process requires constant and continuous practice, creativity and critical analysis.

“Reading is the process where a learner looks through a written text to understand what is being written”. (William, 1984)

Rohani (1992) in her book entitled: „Anthropology of poetry for young people“, defines reading as a highly personal activity that is mainly done silently, alone. Reading according to Brunan (1989) defined reading as a two way interaction in which information is exchange between the reader and author. Anderson, et al (1985) in their book entitled “Becoming a nation of readers” defined and proposed five principles that guide it successful enactment:

1. Reading is a constructive process
2. Reading must be fluent
3. Reading must be strategic
4. Reading requires motivation
5. Reading is a continuously developing skill

The reading process involves basically three stages. The pre-reading stage which allows the reader to activate background knowledge, preview the text and develop a purpose for reading. The second stage occurs during reading where the reader makes predictions as he/she reads and then confirms or revises the prediction. The final stage occurs after reading which allows the reader retells the story, discuss the elements of the story, answer questions and compare it to other texts.

In the light of good reading skills, it is therefore very important to cultivate in students good reading skills right from the primary school level. This enables the child to acquire basic reading techniques, which then leads to good comprehension after reading. Since the primary school is regarded as the foundation, acquiring good reading skills from that level gives a solid background to the child in later stages of education that is Junior High School level and beyond.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

In Ghana, English is the official language of administration, business law and the learned professions. It is the medium of instruction for formal education at all levels except the lower levels of public school. There has however been a public outcry of the declining interest as well as poor reading skills among pupils over the years. This problem is not limited to only Ghana but has become an internal canker. Research indicates that there is an increasing concern in many countries around the world over the poor reading skills of pupils not only in the basic schools but also at the tertiary level. Le Rocks, Hugo Muller and Nell (2005), Bella (2013). Bean (2004) indicated there are many pupils with reading disabilities in American schools which has become a great concern for many people. The Annual National Assessment (ANA) of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in 2012 in South Africa conducted a study on

pupils in 1-6 and grade 9 in English language and mathematics which also revealed that most pupils could not read, pronounce some words in their comprehension books correctly and lack the ability to make inferences from given information in a text or spell frequently used words correctly. However, the most situation was the inability of pupils to read with understanding (Bella, 2013).

According to Hugo et al (2005) the situation is even more worrisome since many tertiary students in South Africa have poor literacy skills and knowledge.

In Ghana, according to the 2013 National Educational Assessment (NEA) of English Competencies among primary three and six pupils across ten regions, mostly pupils within this category in the public's schools could not read and others could read simple work but cannot understand what they have read (USAID 2013).

According to The Ashanti Regional Director of Education, Joseph Kwabena Onyinah, who was speaking at the launch of the seventh Ghana International book-fair in Kumasi, the poor reading habits among pupils and students to the influence of the media and internet. He mentioned the growing habit of watching of television programs (television), video shows and playing other games on the internet as the chief cause of low reading habits.

St. Paul's R/C Primary „B“ is not an exception of this nationwide as well as internal problem. This problem is particularly observed among the primary six pupils of this schools who have constantly had serious challenges to the entry of J.H.S due to their inability to pass the transitional test (which is a reading test) conducted by the St. Paul's R/C Primary „B“ is located in the Gumbihini Community of the Tamale Metropolis in the Northern region of Ghana. This community is dominated by illiterate folks who are largely farmers and petty traders.

There is no library facility in St. Paul's R/C Primary as well as the community to motivate pupils to read on their own at their leisure time. However, pupils engage in hand-work such as hairdressing, Carpentry, Mechanic, dressmaking and petty trading after schools and over the weekends, this does not allow pupils to have time for the book and reading for that matter.

More so, the high illiteracy level of the community cannot be left out. Similarly, inappropriate methods employed by teachers in the teaching and learning of English language and for that matter cultivating reading skills has led to student's inability to read.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Poor reading skills is global issue which has become the center of attention for many people. Educationist, Stakeholders, Policy makers and parents in Ghana are particularly worried about this canker. Most pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary „B“ find it very difficult to read simple words and sentences. The researcher observed that most class six pupils of St. Paul's R/c primary do not only find it difficult to read simple words and sentences but also have serious challenges pronouncing English words correctly while others do re-reading of words and lines. This situation has resulted in the students' inability to comprehend speed and poor academic performance in the school. According to Pretorius and Bohlman (2002) learners who do not learn how to read during their elementary school years have difficulty in navigating the school curriculum during their higher level of education. Despite the numerous strategies adopted by management and staff of the school to improve and develop the reading skills of the pupils, the problem still persist. It is owing to this fact that this study seeks to develop practical and effective strategies to develop good

reading skills among the pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary "B" in Gumbihini in the Northern Region of Ghana.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The research aims at investigating the reasons for the poor performance in English Language reading among St. Paul's R/C Primary School and also recommend generally accepted strategies teachers in primary schools can adopt to improve reading skills of students.

The specific objectives are:

1. To ascertain the challenges students face in reading.
2. To examine the existing state of reading skills among class six pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary „B“
3. To develop strategies to improve upon the reading skills among primary six pupils of the St. Paul's R/C Primary school.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions are very vital in unraveling the problem of the poor reading skills of students and the way to improve them.

1. What are the causes of poor reading skills among primary six pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary school
2. What is the state of reading skills of the primary six pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary school
3. What effective strategies can be adopted to improve upon the reading skills of primary six pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary school

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The study will contribute to improving teaching and learning skills. Therefore the study comes as a reference to some difficulties that face students in reading and will help students, teachers, education officers and all who have interest in the implementation of policies and programs on education to have a clearer view of the problem associated with reading skills.

This research would bring to bear the reasons for the poor reading of students, the realization of parents on the role they play in complementing the efforts of the teachers in developing the reading skills among children. The research would help improve the reading skills of the students as well as help teachers come out with suitable techniques and methodology for teaching reading at each level.

### **1.6 Limitations and Delimitations**

This research like all other researches that have been conducted before has some limitation. The major limitation in this research has been financial constrain. The other limitation faced by the researcher was the time factor. Both factors mentioned have made the researcher limit the study to St. Paul's R/C primary school „B“ class six „A“ in the Gumbihini community in the Tamale Metropolis. The perception of some teachers that this research is a personal issue made some teachers cooperation to the research very minimal. Also, the research concentrated on improving reading skills and not other aspects of English as it is generally accepted that the fundamental to good English proficiency is to improve the reading skills.



## **1.7 Organisation of the Study**

The research work is divided into five (5) chapters.

Chapter 1 gives introduction to the topic, the background of the study, the statement of problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the research, research questions, limitations and delimitations of the study, significance of the study and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 gives literature view of the study. It talks about authorities who have delved into the field of teaching English and what the findings of their research were in connection with the causes or problems of low proficiency in reading and recommended solutions.

The third chapter presents the methodology used for the research and intervention used to curb the problem.

The fourth chapter deals with the findings of the study and analysis of results of the questionnaires. It contains the details analysis of the various responses that were answered by the respondent and presentations on charts.

Chapter 5 provides discussions of the findings and recommendations and also suggests areas for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter deals with other relevant literature about improving reading skills. It puts into perspective views and opinions put forward by others on reading skills. Other works reviewed on factors influencing reading among pupils, approaches and methodologies for the teaching and learning of reading and various theories related to reading.

#### 2.1 Literature on Causes

In scrutinizing the definition of reading, Donald et al, (1987), is development and interactive. The reader interacts with the written materials making use of skills already acquired and linking it to his knowledge of the world. Reading is a „global process involving learned skills. The process specifically incorporates an individual’s linguistic knowledge, and can both positively and negatively be influenced by non-linguistic internal and external variables or factors“ (Donald et al 1987: p.9). We actually read much more than words every day and reading can be explained as an act of interpretation or making sense of all events that take place around us.

In scrutinizing the definition of reading, Donald et al 1987: p.9) observed that the definition views reading as strictly a mechanical sound process that presents reading as an interaction between what is read and what is already known which allows meaning to occur. Different teaching emphasis will result from these different definitions of reading. For example, a teacher who defines reading as strict learning of sound out of letters will spend more time at the early grade levels, teaching letter sound relationships and less time reading to students, presenting written forms of

students' oral stories and doing activities related to the overall meaning of stories or sentences.

Reading skills refer to the specific abilities that enable a person to read with independence and interact with the message. It is something the pupil must learn himself. From this, all what the teacher can do is to indicate what is to be done; give help where needed while the pupil does it and sees to it that reading is done properly. It implies that reading must be practiced by the learner and the facilitator's role is to guide him to acquire the skills himself. Flesch (1955, p. 21) also relates reading to a set of mechanical skills. To him, learning to read is like learning to drive! The child learns the mechanics of reading by moving the eye from left to right and when he is through, he can then read letter by letter. Later, he relates sound to letters until he knows how to produce a word which is the basic linguistic unit of language analysis. This is the traditional way of learning how to read. It helps the child in word recognition.

Reading as a skill that should cover the three domains namely; cognitive, affective and the psychomotor. It is therefore important for language teachers to be equipped with knowledge about reading skills. This would help the students to emulate their teachers and acquire the good standard of reading skills.

Reading is a process whereby a reader gathers meaning from a printed text. Similarly, Day and Bamford (1998) stated that it is possible to offer a definition that most experts accept as helpful in understanding reading from cognitive point of view. They define reading as „the construction of meaning from a printed or written message“ The construction of meaning or comprehension involves the reader connecting

information from the written message with previous knowledge to arrive at an understanding.

Southgate et al. (1981, p. 22-23) on the other hand, postulated that the definition of reading has changed over the years, sometimes as a result of findings and the gaining of new knowledge and sometimes as a result of what appears to be the whims of fashion. They view reading as a thoughtful process in which the reader endeavor to communicate and also to contribute his own experiences and thoughts to the problem of understanding.

## **2.2 Concept of reading**

Literacy is considered the most important element of high quality education. Pupils would lose the needed creativity and pertinent information with regard to health, social, cultural and political issues as well as sources of pleasure and enrichment if they do not have effective literacy skills (Baatjies, 2003, Bella, 2003, Gunning, 2007). Reading offers pupils easy access to a vast world of information, fulfillment and enjoyment. It has been reiterated that reading is part of nation building and that it is the most important linguistic skill that needs to be developed in young learners. According to Schmidt (2002), the ability to read is critical components of academic performance among pupils. They emphasized that there is a strong correlation between poor reading ability and poor academic performance among pupils. Reading is essential for learning and so if learners have not properly mastered the skills, their potential for success in the learning context is impeded. The ability to read and at the same time acquire relevant knowledge is achieved through good reading skill.

In the formal School setting, much of the school learning takes place in the form of reading either from the chalkboard, text book or from the media. It has been observed that being proficient in reading is a fundamental requirement in life Lovette et al (2002); Nel & Hugo (2012). According to Shaywitz & Shaywitz (2005), reading is „magical“ as it is an opening to a vast world of information, fulfillment and enjoyment and after a person acquired the skill, he feels he is not the same as those who cannot read.

Irrespective of the effective role of reading, its difficulty still shows its ugly head among pupils in many parts of the world. Reading difficulty is a situation where an individual fail to acquire Rapid, context-free word identification skill. Reading difficulty is an unexpected obstacle for children who possess the intelligence, motivation and educational edge. According to Ruteranna (2012) reading difficulty is mostly associated with children who come from households where they hardly see the adults reading. He asserted that, even within literate household, most adults do not often practice reading due to lack of reading materials or busy work schedules. Reading difficulty as stated is not limited to only Ghanaian pupils but the international world.

### **2.2.1 International concept**

Internationally, research on reading indicates that there is a growing concern in many countries around the world over reading disabilities among pupils. According to Hugo et al (2005) many learners lack the necessary reading abilities to make success of the academic year at school and even at the tertiary level. A study conducted among 15 year old children in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in Newziland, France, Sweden and Finland revealed that there are many pupils with reading difficulties. The study indicated that about

40% of the fourth graders could not read basic or simple words under the supervision of their teachers. The result indicated that children of the black American background were worse of when it came to reading difficulties. About 69% of them could not read or pronounce basic words and sentences (Temple et al 2005). A similar study carried out in the year 2007 in the USA also revealed that over 40% of school children experienced significant problems in becoming competent readers. According to Temple and Co., more than 40% of the fourth and eighth graders in the USA failed to read at the level considered basic to performing grade level school work. The US Department of education indicated that developmental delays in reading were a chief cause of reading difficulty among pupils. Also, the economic background of pupils was identified to be one of the causes of this problem.

### **2.2.2 Africa concept**

In Africa, education and language issues are very complex because of the multi-ethnic and multilingual situation (Ouedraogo 2002; Owu-Ewie 2006). According to Muntenda 2008, children in Namibia learn to read formally in their mother tongue but learn English as a second language from grade one with an intention of developing strong literacy skills in English language. However, when pupils enter grade four, they are unable to read well either in their home language or English. This was also confirmed by South African Consortium monitoring education quality (SACMEQ) in their report which found out that the grade six (6) learners were not able to read text with understanding. Moreover, Namibia recorded the lowest reading performance in the South Africa Development Communities (SADC) region. The situation was even worse with only 25% of learners reaching the desired of reading competencies. Moreover, in Uganda, the first school was established by the Catholic and protestant missions whose main aim was to train Catechist. The educational system went

through various reforms from mission school to privately owned school until 1997 when the Republic adopted the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme. As a result, schools were characterized by overcrowding, unqualified teachers, lack of resources and reading materials which were in low level and quality (Nalusiba, 2010).

Intervention activities through programs such as learner attachment improvement program and quality improvement development support were suggested in order to overcome or address the challenges and to help learners improve their general academic performance.

### **2.2.3 Ghana concept**

In Ghana, studies have shown that reading difficulties and disabilities is a major challenge facing many pupils both in the public and private schools. Some of those who are able to read are also unable to understand what they read.

In the year 2013, USAID through National Education Assessment (NEA) conducted a research on the reading competencies of the pupils in primary three and six in the ten regions of Ghana. The pupils were put in 3 categories; i) Below competency ii) Minimum competency iii) Proficiency.

This assessment revealed that 41.9% of class three and 31.3% of class six pupils were below competency. 29.7% of class three and 29.8 of class six pupils had minimum competency and for English language Proficiency, class three attracted 2.4% while class six attracted 30.0%. It has been reported that recent studies have not changed the proficiency significantly (USAID 2013). It must however be noted that the study indicated that children in urban and private schools did better than those in the rural and public schools.

The use of L1 by children has been theoretically confirmed to be beneficial at the lower primary level but the multilingual situation in the country especially in the urban schools have made it cumbersome to use Ghanaian language as a medium of instruction. It has been proven that 50-60% of the children in urban schools speak different languages thereby making it impossible to insist that all the children be instructed in all different languages depending on where the child is located (Ouedrago, 2002; Owu-ewie, 2006). However, some professionals maintain that children can transfer knowledge from L1 to L2 but it becomes difficult when the child cannot master the L1. This could pose negative effect in transferring the knowledge. Baker (2000) maintains that there is low academic performance especially in English language in Ghanaian schools despite the use of different activities at the lower primary and this need to be investigated. The causes could be many but there should be proper planning for good performance.

### **2.3 The importance of Reading**

Reading is very important to every individual no matter one's academic status or career. It is envisaged that no other skills taught and learnt by students in school is more crucial than reading. Reading is considered as the key to the success chopped in all subjects in the school curriculum. Reading helps students to develop the desire to research for understanding. It plays an essential role on the daily lives of most people.

To be able to function effectively in a literate society such as ours, there is the need to develop the habit for reading. Burns, Roe and Ross (2002, p. 3), agree with this by saying that: „the ability to read is vital to the functioning in a literate society such as ours“. In school, reading more than anything else cut across every subject area. Not being able to read textbooks, do research in the library, or read the teacher's notes on



the blackboard directly affects the quality of a student's learning. It is of this reason that the proper teaching and learning of English is of concern to both parents and students.

Sakyi-Baidoo (2003, p. 84), listed the following as some of the reasons why we need to read;

- i. It gives us access to information. We get new information as we read books, newspapers, journals and tracts.
- ii. Reading enables us to crosscheck information we get from other people. We can crosscheck such facts from books.
- iii. It helps us to do revision. We can read through the notes we have written or other people have written, we revise and also refresh our minds about what we have some time ago.

Reading is very significant because when you read extensively, you understand English in varied circumstances and it assists you to thrive and survive academically.

## **2.4 Types of Reading**

Reading may be done in several ways in the classroom and outside the classroom. These include intensive reading, extensive reading, skimming and Scanning.

### **2.4.1 Extensive reading**

Extensive reading is used to derive a general understanding of the subject and includes reading longer texts for pleasure. Extensive reading involves reading a larger quantity of text of interest at a relatively short time to have a feel of the text or message (Sakyi-Baidoo, 2003). Reading larger amounts of comprehensible and interesting texts, provide learners with automatic practice of word recognition and decoding symbols on the printed page. This is an obvious way to developing the

linguistic and world knowledge necessary for reading, Day and Bamford, (1998, p. 19).

### **2.4.2 Intensive reading**

Intensive reading is generally used on shorter reading text as a means to extract specific information. Brown (1989) remarked that “intensive reading calls attention to the grammar of form, discourse makers and other surface structure details for the purpose of understanding literal meaning, rhetorical relationship, implication and the like”. He draws an analogy to intensive as a zoom lens strategy.

Maduekwe (2003) also says intensive reading involves reading exact meaning, reading for relationship of thoughts and reading for implied meaning. According to her, it is the type of reading that requires careful study and detail classroom handling by the teacher and she points out again that the aim of intensive reading is to arrive at a profound and detailed understanding of text, not only of what it means but also how the meaning is produced. These two things are important because intensive reading is intended primarily to train students in reading strategies.

### **2.4.3 Skimming**

Skimming is a quick reading of a text to get to know the general message the writer wants to convey to his readers and to know how the text is organized that is, the structure of the text (Owu-Ewie, 2015).

Skimming is used to quickly gather the most important information or gist by running your eyes over the text, noting important information. By skimming, readers go through the reading materials quickly in order to get the gist of it , to know how it is organized or to get an idea of the tone or intention of the writer (Grellet,1981). The idea of skimming is just to identify the gist and not the details of the text.

#### **2.4.4 Scanning**

Scanning refers to reading a particular literary piece closely to find specific information needed. This is done by running your eyes through a text slowly for specific information. Madueke (2007) suggests that some steps necessary for successful scanning include; proper mental attitude, concentration, a purposeful thought, close attention to the printed page and awareness of time limit technique among others. With scanning, the reader has a specific question with which he seeks to answer and once the answer is obtained, the reader terminates the reading.

### **2.5 Factors Affecting Reading**

#### **2.5.1 General maturity**

According to Schonell (1996), maturity is the level of growth reached by a child as assessed by development in a number of different directions in relation to chronological age. Growth according to him can be seen in physical, intellectual, social and emotional terms. The psychologist asserts that growth varies from child to child.

General maturity is a factor in reading ability. Even though maturity can be equated to competence, there are several factors that contribute to reading achievement other than growth in age. It therefore means that it is not always the case that a 6 years old child will be able to read and a 4 years child cannot. The view of Schonell is peculiar to children. If students of St. Paul's R/C Primary School were introduced to reading at the early stage, they would have been fluent in reading before they got to the JHS level.

### **2.5.2 Influence of Mother tongue on English Language**

According to Anderson and Urguhart (1984, p. 43) „poor first language readers will read poorly in the foreign language. Poor reading in a foreign language is due to inadequate knowledge of the first language““. The L1 is therefore of importance as it is easily transferred to reading in the target language. Thus, inefficient reading techniques adopted in the first language may grossly affect the foreign language reading.

However, the mother tongue (L1) can influence the pronunciation of some words during reading. Nnamani (2004) recognize that it is generally accepted that the syntax of educated Africans is not different from Standard British English. The only area where there is a marked difference is in the area of pronunciation. This difference has been attributed mainly to the interference of the mother tongue. The African has been conditioned by his mother tongue sound system to hear only those sounds that his ears are accustomed to hearing. He is therefore largely unaware of the various sounds found in the English language because these sounds do not occur in his mother language.

Sethi and Dhamija (2010, pg. 10) recognize that the influence of the mother tongue in the learning of the second language normally causes mispronunciation. As one transfers the sound system of his mother tongue to that of the second language he either replaces unfamiliar sounds with those in his mother tongue that appear to be closest to them, or he is unable to produce some of the sounds or sounds combination altogether.

### **2.5.3 Lack of phonological knowledge**

To be able to speak a language, it is necessary to know about the sound system of the language. According to Fly (1965), the problem of knowing the sound system of a language comes about due to pupils not knowing the relationship between letters they read and speech sounds they present. Most pupils cannot read because they are not taught major phonic rules in the early stages of instructions. Fly identifies adults including teachers as having a weak knowledge of phonics. „Phonics are still of use to adults because even if they are doing any volume of reading at all, will come across new words that they have never seen before“ (p. 95). This statement exposes us to the dangers that pupils without knowledge in phonics usually go through when reading.

### **2.5.4 Environmental factors**

Children from good home backgrounds have larger meaning vocabulary than those from homes where opportunity for verbal growth is restricted. Briggs and Elkind cited in Lapp and Flood (1976), found that early readers came from homes in which the parents' occupation and education level were high and parents read to children.

Sheldon and Carillon cited in Schonell, (1966), showed that superior reading ability was associated with:

- a. A number of books in the home
- b. Favourable attitudes of the child to school

In addition to the home background, pre-school contributes to the child's early reading achievement. Kindergartens vary greatly in their focus. One may emphasize social and personal growth. Another may stress on the importance of training the senses. Still others may emphasize cognitive growth. But all these programs are

geared towards a common goal- the development of the child. The program aids children's language development which is a factor to early reading achievement.

### **2.5.5 Physical Impediment**

Reading is a physical act requiring the reader to include symbols („picture“ symbols). Certain factors therefore affect or may hinder the reader. According to Lamb and Arnold (1980), the reader must first see and identify the word before making meaning to them. Unfortunately one is inhibited from doing this by vision. This means the reader depends on good eye sight, without which reading is impossible. Also deafness and other auditory factors do not support reading. Agreeably, these deficits make it difficult to read fluently at an appropriate rate.

### **2.6 Previous Studies on Causes and Improving poor Reading Habits**

There are many studies that have been carried out to ascertain the causes of poor reading habits and some ways to mitigating them. Kleopas Mule (2014) carried out a research on types and causes of reading difficulties affecting the reading of English Language in Ogongo circuit of the University of Namibia. The purposeful sampling technique was employed by the researcher to select the three Grade 4 classes. The selection was made in order for the researcher to obtain a more accurate picture of reading difficulties experienced by the Grade 4 learners in the Ogongo circuit. In total, 92 Grade 4 learners from the selected three schools participated in this study. For the purpose of finding out the causes of reading difficulties among the Grade 4 learners in the Ogongo circuit, the researcher used the observation and reading tests as data collection instruments.

The researcher found that the causes of reading difficulties were lack of English language development in learners, lack of English reading materials, insufficient word recognition strategy and lack of comprehension skills. The reason that learners failed to acquire decoding skills was that the teachers lacked the competencies in teaching reading English explicitly. The teachers must possess the requisite specialization required to teach English as a subject, and reading in particular. It was also noted that in all the three schools, the theoretical approach in teaching reading in English was used. There should be a wider exposure of learners to a variety of reading materials for them to acquire fluency.

Sapey (2015) carried out an investigation into causes of poor reading comprehensions skills, its effects on their academic performance and ways to improve it in the Ketu South Municipality of the Volta Region. This was done through interviews and observations. The sampled size used for the study was twenty-five (25) consisting of twenty (20) students and five (5) teachers from the language department. The findings of Sapey (2015) confirmed that the causes of poor reading skills of students resulted from failure to follow how reading materials are organized, negative attitude of students towards reading, limited text scope and time allocated for reading on the timetable. The researcher also found out that most teachers do not use the appropriate methods of teaching reading because they do not have the opportunity to upgrade themselves. Upgrading of teachers' knowledge on more innovative ways of teaching English reading, equipping school libraries among others were the recommendations made by the researcher.

Similarly Naafan (2018) also carried out a research to develop reading strategies to improve upon the reading culture among upper primary pupils of Malshegu Kidz Active Foundations School in Tamale in the Northern Region. The researcher adopted a qualitative approach (action research) with a non-probability sampling technique to get the respondents. The total population for the study was ninety-seven (97) which consists of thirty (30) pupils in class four, thirty-four (34) pupils in class five and thirty-three (33) pupils in class six in the Kidz Active Foundation School. Three (3) teachers (one from each class) were also selected for the study. The study revealed that reading difficulties among pupils were not only associated with economic or environmental factors but also language factor and learning style as well as inadequate exposure to books. Among the numerous strategies employed to improve upon reading skills of pupils, the syllabic method was identified as the most effective and successful method. The researcher therefore made a recommendation that emphasis should be placed on the syllabic method of teaching reading at the basic level. Also, reading competitions should be organized periodically in schools.

### **2.7 The Frame Work (Theory)**

A theory is defined as “a scientifically accepted set of principles offered to explain a phenomenon” (Schunk, 2008, p. 337). Similarly, Sadoski and Paivo (2007), defined theory as a set of interrelated constructs, definitions and propositions that presents a systematic view of the phenomenon with the purpose of predicting and explaining the phenomena. In relation to this study, behaviorism and constructivism were regarded as interrelated constructs and were considered relevant in presenting a systematic view of reading difficulty and approach in solving the reading difficulty.



According to Etsey and Ocran (2002) the different types of methods and different notions of people about how reading should be taught stems from the psychological orientation that influences their beliefs. They identified three (3) major psychological orientations or theories that have influenced the teaching of reading since the early 1900. These are the behaviorist psychology, cognitive psychology and the cognitive-constructivist, or simply constructivism.

The cognitive psychologist views the mind as central to learning and reading in particular. To the advocates of cognitive psychologist, the background knowledge of the reader (about the text being read) is very important. In their view, without it, people will not understand text or understand new ideas that they learn (Etsey and Ocran, 2002).

The cognitive psychologist believes in the Schema theory, which explains how our background knowledge is an important aspect that influences our learning of new knowledge and the way we interpret text that we read. The theory is of the view that all kinds of knowledge that a person acquires, either through experience or reading is packed in organized structures in our brains termed Schemata. This schema is described as an abstract knowledge structure that “exist in memory as something that a person knows” (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Mayer 2002) cited in Etsey and Ocran (2002, p. 84). The cognitive theory, also referred to as the Top-down model/Approach of teaching reading assumes that the reader relies heavily on his or her background or world of knowledge to help him process meaning from text. Cognitivist contends that one’s prior knowledge and experience play more important role in reading.

According to these scholars, when one reads a text, the words in the text do not have the meaning on their own, rather the background experiences that a reader brings to the text enables him or her to gain personal meaning of the text (Durkin, 2004). This implies that a reader's understanding of the words of sentences in a text depends on the background knowledge and experiences he brings to the reading process.

The constructivist however, emphasizes the idea that reading is a process in which the reader actively searches for meaning in what she reads. They believe that two different readers do not construct exactly similar meaning of the same text. Because each reader is influenced by his or her unique background experiences and intellectual make up, they can read the same text but come out with different interpretation (Etsey and Ocran, 2002).

From the explanation given above, it is realized that these two theories (the cognitive and the constructivist theories) will not help achieve the objective of this study. The reason knowing that early readers who are trained in this approach can over rely on their background knowledge and their opinions to overrule the meaning they construct of a text. Such readers can ignore the text and its contribution to overall meaning of the text.

However, this study intends to adopt the behaviorists-bottom-up/sub-skill approach to teaching reading. The reason being that unlike the other theories, the behaviorists theory emphasizes on the application of phonics and syllabic methods in teaching reading and this is the foundation upon which interventions in this study are based. The behaviorists views reading as a matter of decoding single letters, words or focusing on areas such as eye-voice span speed of reading and lip movement during silent reading (Hebert & Raphael, 1996). The behaviorists embrace the saying that

“teach children phonics and they will be able to read”. The proponents of this theory believe that the first stage of reading development is the decoding stage.

According to them, the reader process text by first recognizing the lower level of units of language; the letters and their corresponding sounds and also by synthesizing these lower level units into more complex units. They explain this to mean that the reader first perceive and read letters and then continue to combine the letters into words, then synthesis several words to form phrase, clauses, sentences and then finally coming to processing a text, they hold the view that once the child masters decoding skills or can decode a text very well, using the knowledge of phonics, he or she will drive meaning of the text automatically.

The behaviorist contend that the best way to help non-readers learn to read is by directly and systematically teaching them phonetics or the ability to decode letters and sounds and then blend the sounds to form two, three or polysyllabic words.

According to Reutzel and Cooter Jnr. (2000), the behaviorist is of the conviction that efficient decoding leads to comprehension and that lack of phonics knowledge is the fundamental cause of reading disability. They even caution that allowing children to attempt to read books without knowing the letters and sounds they represent can lead to reading failure.

### **2.7.1 Theoretical Rationale**

Research has shown that no single method has a complete solution to the reading problems of children. It is therefore necessary to combine the best practices in two or more methods. This gives the pupils a lot of room for innovation so as to make the child read successfully. According to Ghana Education Service/Teacher Education Division (2004, p. 217) if we combine the teaching of „phonics“ and or syllabic

methods with look and say (i.e basic sight words) learners will be able to read at ease.

In view of this, the study employed a number of interventions. The phonic and the syllabic methods helped pupils to pronounce words without difficulty.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology of the research. It also discusses the research design, the procedure used to collect the data for the study as well as the instruments used to gather the data and the procedures used to analyze the data gather from the participants

#### **3.1 Population of the Study**

Best & Kahn defines population as „a group of individuals who have one or more characteristics in common and are of interest to the researcher“. The population of St Paul’s R/C primary B located in Gumbihini in the Northern Region of Ghana is the population for this study. The population of the school is made up of primary one to six (1-6) with twelve individual classrooms (double stream). The total number of pupils is four hundred and sixty-eight (468) of which one hundred and eighty-six (186) are boys and two hundred eighty-two are girls (282). The age of the pupils ranges from six (6) to seventeen (17) years. The number of teaching staff of the school is twelve (12) excluding the head teacher

The target group for this study is primary six pupils including four classroom teachers. The primary six pupils were moving to JHS yet they could not read a simple passage fluently or meaningfully.

### **3.2 The Sample for the Study**

A sample is a small portion or population that is selected for observation and analysis. According to Tuckman (1999), sampling is the act, process or the technique of selecting a suitable sample or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population. In this research, the respondents selected for the study is primary six (6) pupils of St Paul's primary „B“ school. This is the only class selected out of the twelve classes within the school as the sample for the study

The class six pupils were sampled for the research because they were to exist the primary level into the Junior High School level after having stayed in the school for five academic years. The class six pupils are supposed to read as one of the requirements for promotion to the St Paul's Junior High School and thus demand of pupils to be fluent readers. And for that matter pupils have just an academic year to polish up their reading skills and read fluently in order to be promoted to Junior High School. Another reason why the researcher selected this class is the fact that the researcher is a classroom teacher of the said class, and so she could just cease the opportunity to prepare the pupils for promotion to the Junior High School as well as the rest of their academic journey

### **3.3 Sample Size of the Study**

A sample size of study is a fraction or a part of a total number of respondents selected from a group or sample to participate in a study. The sample size for the study is thirty-eight (38) out of seventy-three (73) pupils of St Paul's Primary 6 pupils. St Paul's primary has double stream with 12 classes, that is, each class has A and B. the

primary six A has a population of thirty-seven (37) and B has a population of thirty-six (36) totaling seventy-three (73).

It is however worth mentioning that the researcher teaches in class six of the school of which the researcher selected for the study. The researcher particularly selected her own class for the study because it will enable her control the data collection process. In addition to thirty-eight pupils, six (6) classroom teachers of St Paul's R/C primary B school were also sampled and interviewed. There are twelve classroom teachers including the researcher in the school and six out of the twelve were sampled to participate in the study

### **3.4 Sampling in Research**

A sample can be defined as a set of respondents (people) selected from a larger population for the purpose of a survey (Webster, 1985). According to the Hillington hospital NHS Trust, sampling in research terms is a group of people, objects or items that are taken from a larger population for measurement. The sample representative of to ensure that we can generalize the finding from the research sample to the population as a whole. According to them to draw conclusion about a population from a sample we must use inferential statistics to enable us to determine a population's characteristics by directly observing only portion (sample) of the population. We obtain a sample of the population for varied reasons as it is usually not practical and almost never economical

### **3.5 Sampling Technique for the Study**

Sampling technique refers to the processes and procedures that are used to select participants for the study. There are two main types sampling or sampling techniques namely Probability Sampling (examples of which include simple random sampling

stratified sampling and cluster sampling) and Non-Probability Sampling (some examples include purposive sampling, convenient sampling and snow ball).

The researcher used simple random sample technique to select the participants this study. Simple random sampling according to Wiley (2009) is a sampling design in which  $n$  distinct units are selected from the  $N$  units in the population such a way that every possible combination of  $n$  units is equally likely to be sample selected, with simple random sampling the sample mean is an unbiased estimator of the population mean. In other words simple random sampling refers to a sampling technique which offers every participant equal opportunity or chance to be selected for the study. The researcher the researcher adopted this technique because it is independent and offer equal chance to all pupils in the class to be selected as a sample member. This technique is said to be independent owing to the fact that the selection of an individual did not affect the selection of the other.

By this technique the researcher provided pieces of paper with IN and OUT inscription on them for participants to pick. A choice of IN indicates that the pupil sampled to participate in the study and an OUT choice indicate that the pupil cannot participate in the study.

St Paul's primary six has population of seventy-three (73) pupils of which forty-seven (47) are girls and thirty-six (36) are boys. Forty-seven (47) pieces of paper with the inscription IN and OUT comprising nineteen (19) IN and twenty- six (26) OUT were wrapped and given to the girls to randomly pick and of which nineteen (19) girls were sampled to participate in the study. Thirty-six (36) of such wrapped pieces of paper comprising nineteen (19) IN and seventeen (17) OUT were offered to boys too to randomly pick, of which nineteen (19) boys picked IN and seventeen (17) picked



OUT, given a total sample size of thirty-eight (38) participants. Gender equality was respected in this study since the number boys is equal to the number of girls, that is, nineteen girls and nineteen boys were selected to participate in the study.

### **3.6 Research Design**

Research design refers to the overall strategy on choose to integrate the different component of the study in a coherent and logical manner thereby ensuring you effectively address the research problem .it constitute the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Labara, 2009) in designing a research it is essential to identify the type of evidence needed to answer the research questions in a responsible manner.

The researcher adopted the qualitative design in this study. Qualitative research according to McMillan and Schumacher (1993, p. 479) is primarily an inductive way of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories. The researcher used Interview, questionnaire and observation as instruments in this study

### **3.7 Data Collection Instruments**

Data collection instruments are basically the ways and means by which a researcher collects or gather information from participants for the study. In this study the researcher used three different instruments to gather the data. These instruments are; observation, interview and questionnaire.

#### **3.7.1 Observation**

Observation according to Marshall and Rossman (1989) is „systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts, in the social setting chosen for the study“.

Observation enables the researcher describe existing situation using the five senses, providing a „written photograph“ of the situation under study (Erlandson et al, 1993).

Observation method of collecting data is said to be a participatory study, this is because the researcher has to immerse herself in the setting where her respondents are while taking notes or recording. The researcher used this instrument because by personally observing they pupils read will give her a first-hand information about the reading state as well as the possible causes of the poor reading habits of the pupils of St Paul’s R/C primary B. The researcher therefore joined pupils and her colleagues in their respective classes starting from class six to class one to observe pupils as the read to other members of the class as well as observe how teachers teach reading in their classrooms. The researcher visited each class twice on two different occasions and spent a period of twenty-four (24) days comprising six weeks in observing the twelve classes. The following are some of the observations that were made by the researcher which ran through all the classes;

- i. The majority of the pupils were reluctant to read and exhibited cooled feet when called upon read
- ii. Pupils were counting words rather than reading
- iii. Pupil were struggling in pronouncing two, three- and four-letter words.
- iv. Pupil could not read independently but rather the teacher end up reading in any attempt struggling reader.
- v. Teachers do not use TLMs to teach reading.
- vi. Teachers do not take pupils through pre-reading activities to prepare them to read.
- vii. Teachers do not pay attention to library reading time on the timetable.

The above observation activity was carried out prior to the intervention after which the researcher sampled class six as a case study. However, after the model was used in class six the story of the said class changed. Below are some of the observations made by the researcher;

- i. Most pupils perceived some books to more interesting and struggled or scrambled over such book.
- ii. Most pupils dropped all other activities and picked their reading materials before the researcher came to the class.
- iii. Pupils concentrated and read independently.
- iv. Pupils independently consulted the researcher for help in the pronunciation of challenging words outside class.
- v. Pupils listed difficult word/items and looked for their meaning in the dictionary.
- vi. Pupils were highly prepared and motivated to express themselves in class to indicate their progress and/or perfection.
- vii. Pupils argue constructively and participate satisfactorily on issue of interest during discussion.
- viii. Most students discuss other worrying issues such as summarization of text and text difficulty with the researcher during their leisure time

### **3.7.2 Questionnaire**

Questionnaire is a data collection tool where participants answer questions or respond to statement in writing. A questionnaire is used when factual information is desired. (Alhassan, 2006).

The researcher used a questionnaire because of the fact that it was not time consuming. Again, data could be collected from a large group of respondents (Students and teachers) at the same time.

The questionnaires were of two kinds; one for the students and the other for the teachers. Some of the areas that it touched were the students reading habit, students' perception about reading, availability of reading materials in the school or community and finally students' general impression about the reading project by the use of the model. The questionnaires were administered to ascertain from the pupils as well as the teacher the possible causes of poor reading skills/habit among pupils. Another questionnaire

### **3.7.3 Interview**

Interviews are primarily done in qualitative research and occur when the researcher asks one or more participants general, open-ended question and record their answers. Often audiotapes are utilized to allow more consistent transcription (Creswell, 2012)

(McNamara, 1999). In qualitative research especially, interviews are used to pursue the meanings of central themes in the world of their subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the of what the interviewee says (McNamara, 2009)

Interviews are primarily done in qualitative research and occur when the researcher asks one or more participants general, open-ended question and record their answers. Often audiotapes are utilized to allow more consistent transcription (Creswell, 2012)

McNamara (1999) identified the following types of interviews.

- i. Informal conversational interview; no predetermined questions are asked, in order to remain as open and adoptable as possible to the interviewee's nature and priorities; during the interview the interviewer „goes with the flow“
- ii. General interview guide approach; the guide approach is intended to ensure the same general areas of information are collected from the interviewee, this provides more focus than the conversational approach but still allows a degree of freedom and adoptability in getting the information from the interviewee
- iii. Standardized, open-ended interview; the same open-ended questions are asked to all interviewees: this approach facilitate faster interviews that be more easily analyzed and compared
- iv. Closed, fixed-response interview; where all interviewees are asked the same questions and asked to choose answers from among the same set of alternatives. This format is useful for those not practiced in interviewing
- v. Telephone interview; here questions are asked over the phone

The researcher combined both the general guide approach and closed, fixed-response interview in study, this because these interview methods allowed for freedom adoptability in getting information from interview as well as provide the same question to the interviewees.

### **3.8 The Research Site**

Relevant instruments were used for the research, observation, interview and). The school under study is St. Paul's R/C Primary „B“. The School is located at Gumbihini in Tamale Metropolitan Assembly, Northern Region of Ghana. The school is near the Holy Cross Church. It is a Catholic Mission Schools

### **3.9 Conclusion of the Chapter**

This dealt with the methodology of the study. It also looked at the population of the study. the chapter also further discussed the sample for the study as well as the sample size for the study and sampling in research. It also looked at the sampling technique for the study and the research design. The instrument used for the data collection was also discussed and it was revealed that the researcher used observation, questionnaire and interview. The site of the study was also looked at.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

The aim of this study is to present and analyze the data gathered on the poor reading skills of class six pupils of St. Paul's R/C primary school. The chapter presents an indepth analysis and discussions of the findings of the data collected. The research was based on three main questions thus:

1. What are the causes of poor reading skills among primary six pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary School?
2. What are the effects of poor reading skills of the primary six pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary School?
3. What effective strategies can be adopted to improve upon the reading skills of primary six pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary school

This chapter analysis and discusses the poor reading skills of pupils under two main causes. These are, teacher related and pupil related causes. It also discusses the effects of poor reading as well as the strategies that can be adopted to improve upon them. The teacher related causes identified were, Inappropriate Methodologies used, inadequate time allocated to reading, Limited textbooks, lack of continuity of reading after class, types of materials read, pupils' perception about reading and poor library usage among others were the main possible causes of pupils inability to read. The chapter also finally summarize the causes, effects, strategies and made conclusions.

In line with the research question (1), „what are the causes of poor reading skills among primary six pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary school?“. The responses provided by teachers were as follows:

#### **4.1 Teacher Related Causes of Poor Reading Skills**

The data was collected through observation, questionnaire and interview pertaining to the possible causes of poor reading habit among pupils of St. Paul's R/C primary in Tamale. Four different causes identified were discussed below;

The questions: „Do you use TLMs in teaching reading“, what is the time allocated for reading in a week, what methods do you use in teaching and Do you have enough teaching and learning materials were posed to the teacher to ascertain the actual causes of poor reading habits among the pupils. The analysis of the various teacher related causes of poor reading skills among pupils have been discussed below:

##### **4.1.1 Inappropriate Teaching Methodologies**

Pupils' poor reading skills can be apportioned to the methods employed by the teacher in teaching and imparting reading skills to the pupils. This was deduced from the interview conducted with the teachers.

Researcher: *What methods do you use in teaching?*

1<sup>st</sup> Teacher: *I read two times and people read after me. After which I allow them to read by themselves. When they finish reading I allow them answer the question on the passage.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Teacher: *I group pupils to do peer reading after I model reading for three times for pupils to listen and read after me.*

3<sup>rd</sup> Teacher: *I read the passage and pupils read after me. After which I allow the good readers to read and the poor ones to read after them.*

Out of the six (6) teachers that were interviewed, five (5) of them indicated that during reading sessions, they drill the pronunciation of difficult words with pupils and



model read for pupils to listen. Findings from the interview further revealed that teachers are not informed about the changing faces of language pedagogy and hence do not equip themselves with innovative ways and modern approaches of teaching reading which will eventually improve the reading skills of the pupils. From the follow up observation carried out by the researcher it was further revealed that teachers group pupils to read do model reading to them through parroting and allow children to read the whole time. Employing appropriate methodology in teaching reading is of great importance. This view of using appropriate methods in teaching reading is in tandem with Naafan (2018) who also opined that the use of the appropriate teaching methods is key to developing reading skills of pupils especially at the elementary level.

The research also revealed that teachers do not take children through pre-reading activities which is key as far as good reading skills development is concerned. The teacher walks into the class and writes the topic and the key words on the chalkboard. He drills the pronunciation of key words with pupils. He then distributed books to pupils in groups. She read the passage and pupils read after her. Pre-reading activities will prepare learners' minds for actual reading. This finding is in line with Vacca and Vacca (1989) which said pre-reading activities and discussions before reading will reduce the uncertainty that the pupils bring to the text. This is further affirmed by Nunan (2003) that all experiences which are accumulated and brought to the reading text belong to the reader's background knowledge.

#### **4.1.2 Time allocated on the time table for reading**

The study also identified time allocation as one of the causes of poor reading skills among class six pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary School. This finding is in line with Nelie (2015) who also posited that the time allocated on the timetable for reading does not afford teachers the chance to impart the necessary skills of reading to pupils. For the right skill to be inculcated in pupils there is the need for teachers to find more time to take pupils through the requisite prior activities to usher them into actual reading. From the interview as well as the observation, it was revealed that there was not enough time allocated for reading in a week. This is evident in the fact that, out of the twelve periods allocated for the study of English language, only two periods are apportioned to teaching reading. Reading is not as simple as teachers think; it needs a lot of time and patience in order to be able to read properly. Blair (1995), synergistic algorithm designed to survey the idea of reading disclosed that reading is greater than the sum of its activities and suggested the following equation:  $A > B + C$  (A=reading, B=skills instructions and C=discussion and extension). The persistent poor reading skills exhibited by the pupils are as a result of inadequate time allocated for reading on the time table.

#### **4.1.3 The use of teaching and learning materials during lessons**

In order to find out whether teachers use teaching and learning materials to teach reading, the researcher posed the question: **Do you use teaching and learning materials in your reading lessons?** The table below shows the answers to this question.

*Table 1: Teaching and Learning Materials and its Usage*

Response	Number of Teachers	Percentage (%)
Not always	2	33
Always	3	50
Not at all	1	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100</b>

From the above table, two (2) teachers representing thirty-three per cent (33%) responded “**Not always**”, Three (3) teachers representing fifty (50%) also responded „**Always**“ and one (1) teacher representing seventeen (17%) responded “**Not at all**”. These responds revealed that most of the teachers do not use teaching and learning materials in teaching reading. The researcher decided to further investigate the above responses by observing teachers teach in their classrooms. Contrary to their responses given, the researcher observed that teachers use few torn textbooks to teach reading. Flash cards or word cards, pictures, tape recorders among others as they claimed they used to teach reading was not the case. Some of these items were not available and the few ones that were available were neatly decorating the cupboard. This was a clear indication that teaching and learning materials were not being used in the school. The importance of teaching and learning materials cannot be over emphasized. The use of TLMs motivates learners, provides clarification and increased vocabulary as well as develops the interest of learners in the lesson. Pupils need to feel that the materials from which they are learning have to be connected with the real world and must be related positively to the aspects of their lives, (Worth; 1984).

#### 4.1.4 The school environment as a cause of reading difficulties.

Some school practices can contribute to pupils reading problems. Pupils with reading difficulties are not practicing enough to improve their reading abilities due to large class size. Pupils who do not read well in class stand the chance of being poor readers. The reason being that the number of pupils in a class can influence the effectiveness of teaching reading. Smith (2015) opines that, noisy environment in schools also disturbs pupils reading. As a result of these opinions given, the researcher made provisions to find out ways that the school environment contributes to pupils reading difficulties. Through the interview with the teachers, the researcher found out some of the conditions in the school that contribute to pupils reading difficulties. The responses given by the teachers are analyzed on the table 2 below.

*Table 2: School Environment as a Cause to Reading Difficulty*

Teachers responses	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Large class size	3	50
Noisy environment	1	16.66
Lack of teacher motivation	1	16.66
Reading materials available	1	16.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table, the responses of the teachers showed that one of the main causes of reading skills improvement is the class size. This makes it difficult for the teacher to attend to all of them. . According to Flesch (2014), poor classroom management and large class size can result in reading difficulties. That is, if classrooms are arranged improperly due to large class size, it distracts pupils' attention in reading. As a result of this pupils face difficulties in reading.

## 4.2 Pupils-Related Causes

Apart from teachers contributing to the poor reading habits of class six pupils of St. Pauls' R/C primary school, the pupils themselves are a contributory factor to their inability to read. Discussed below are the pupils' related causes of their poor reading skills:

### 4.2.1 Reading after class

In order to ascertain whether or not pupils read after class, the researcher asked pupils the following question

Researcher: "*Do you read after classes?*"

Pupil 1: *Yes*

Pupils 2: *No*

The pupil's responses are tabulated below;

*Table 3: Reading after School*

Pupils Responses	Number of pupils	Percentage (%)
Yes	9	27
No	29	73
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>

The data above shows that there was little continuity of reading after school. Out of the thirty-eight (38) pupils, it was shown that twenty-nine (29) of them do not read after class while just nine (9) of them did. Continuous reading is very vital as far as development of good reading skills is concerned. In order for pupils to improve upon their reading skills, as in the case of St. Paul's primary „B“, it is necessary for pupils to continue reading even outside school. This will enable them build on their

vocabulary and word recognition skills which is very good for good reading skills. This goes to affirm the assertion by Edward et al (1986), that Continuous reading will produce significant gains in the reading skills, vocabulary and decoding of words. It is therefore of great significance that pupils“ read outside the school in order to improve upon their reading skills.

#### 4.2.2 Type of books pupils read

Responds to Question 3 of the questionnaire; what types of books do you read?

Pupils 1: *Textbook*

Pupil 2: *Notes*

Pupil 3: *Storybook*

Pupil 4: *Notes*

Pupil 5: *Notes*

Majority of the pupils answered that, they only read their notes. This is shown in the table 4 below.

*Table 4 Types of Reading Materials*

Pupils Responds	Number of pupils	Percentage (%)
Textbook	3	8
Storybook	6	15.7
Notes	29	76.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>

A comparative analysis of the data shows that all the thirty-eight (38) pupils were reading varied kinds of text. The response showed that only three (3) pupils

representing eight per cent (8%) had access to textbooks after school. The majority which is twenty-nine (29), representing seventy-six point three per cent (76.3%) of the respondents read notebooks after school. The rest of the respondents representing fifteen point seven (15.7%) answered that, they read storybooks. Although reading of textbooks is good, in order for learners to improve upon their reading skills it is important that they read a wide range of varied texts. This is corroborated in the view of Rosenthal (1973), who indicated that materials that involve children in constructive activity, for example, tend to generate more language than “pull toys”.

#### 4.2.3 Library visitation

Question 4 “Do you visit the library?” was posed to ascertain whether pupils use the library or not, over the weekend or holidays. Below is a table 5 to show the data.

*Table 5: Library Visitation*

Pupils Responds	Number of pupil	Percentage
Yes	6	16
No	32	84
<b>Total</b>	38	100

The patronage of the library by pupils at their free or leisure time was very low even though they do not have enough reading materials at home and in school. Thirty-two of the respondents representing eighty-four percent (84%) do not visit the library during weekends, while just Six (6) pupils representing sixteen percent (16%) visited the library during weekends. The trend is not too pleasing as it has a high tendency of not improving the reading skills of the pupils. The Catholic library which is a kilometre (1km) away from the school is stocked with up to date reading materials. Since it is a Catholic library, it has enough books in stock to serve the pupils even

though most of these books are Christian related books. Udofia (2000) affirms this view that the objective of the library is to provide adequate collection of reading materials for pupils reading development. It is in this light that it is necessary for pupils to use the library more frequently in order to improve upon their reading skills. It is therefore clear that poor patronage of library facilities is one of the causes of poor reading skills of the pupils.

#### 4.2.4 Pupils perception of reading

Question 6: How do you see reading?

Pupil 1: *Uncertain*

Pupil 2: *Difficult*

Pupil 3: *Interesting*

Pupils 4: *Difficult*

Pupils 5: *Difficult*

The table 6 below shows the responses to the question 6:

*Table 6: Perception of Reading*

Pupils Responds	Number of pupils	Percentage (%)
Uncertain	1	2
Interesting	4	11
Difficult	33	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>

From the responses above, thirty-three (33) pupils which represent eighty seven percent (87%) of the total respondents said reading was difficult. Four of the pupils which represent eleven percent (11%) said reading was interesting while just one (1) pupil representing two percent (2%) said they were uncertain. Pupils' perceptions



about reading go a long way to affect their like or otherwise of reading. This is affirmed by Hom and Maxwell (1983) who stated that pupils who had the perception that the task given them was easy showed greater amounts of interest and therefore were more motivated to complete the task than pupils who had the perception that the task given them was difficult.

#### **4.2.5 The home as a cause of reading difficulties**

The home in which children grow also influence their ability to read. Homes that are plagued with poverty and family instability produce children who are at risk of school failure Scaldof (2013). According to south gate (2014), the home plays an important role on pupils reading ability. In order for a child to become good reader, the home must provide the child with adequate reading materials and a conducive environment to practice reading. Lack of motivation factors causes reading problems because some pupils are not motivated by their parents to read.

The combination of individual and environmental causes produces an increased risk of reading difficulties. Children who are homeless have little energy to focus on school. They are overburdened and have little or no time for school. Often, parents who are under-educated may lack the time and skills to nurture literacy by providing reading materials and motivating children to read.

The researcher observed pupils attitude in school and found out that, most pupils are not motivated or encouraged to read. The researcher assigned pupils to practice reading the first two paragraphs of unit 18 in their test book at home. A reading test was conducted on that same assignment given to pupils. Most of the pupils could not read the two paragraphs which were assigned to them to practice at home. This made the researcher to draw conclusion that, pupils are not motivate to read or encouraged

to read. Pupils could not read the passage as the researcher expected of them. This indicated that, pupils are not advised or made to do private studies at home and this affects their academic performances.

#### **4.2.6 Summary of the Poor Reading Skills**

The analysis of the poor reading skills in the study revealed that the problem is partly caused by teachers and partly by pupils. Inadequate use of TLMs, Inappropriate teaching Methodology and time allocated to teaching reading on the part of teachers and lack of continuity of reading after school, poor attitude towards reading and poor usage of library on the part of the pupils themselves were identified to be the reasons for persistent poor reading skills in the pupils.

#### **Research Question 2**

„What are the effects of poor reading skills of the primary six pupils of St. Paul’s R/C Primary School?“

#### **4.3 Effects of Poor Reading Skills**

When the research question two was asked, „What are the effects of poor reading skills of the primary six pupils of St. Paul’s R/C Primary School?“ the responses of the teachers were as follows.

##### **4.3.1 Poor Performance in other Subject areas**

The interview conducted with the teachers revealed that most of the pupils performed abysmally in other subjects because they found it difficult to read and understand the texts. One of the teachers said:

**Teacher:** *“A clear indication of the effects of poor reading skills is in Mathematics where pupils can solve a question given in figures but will not be able to solve the*

*same question when put in a word problem form.* This makes it difficult for them to answer the questions accurately. According to Silverman et al (1983), there are substantial reading demands in all content areas with text often at high readability level. This finding is in line with the findings in the literature review of Koranteng (2011) who argues that learners performance in other subject areas depends on their ability to read and understand a text. This is also confirmed by Ricket, and Lerner (1989) findings that reading difficulties are the leading causes of failure in academic performance

#### **4.3.2 Poor communication skills**

The interview conducted with the teachers also revealed that Pupils“ who find it difficult to read fluently will have adverse effect on their communication skills.

During the researcher“s interaction with teachers, one teacher also stated;

Teacher: *“In order to promote understanding in other subject areas, I have to translate whatever I teach in the local dialect (Dagbani) even when teaching mathematics.* Aside the disclosure by the teacher, the researcher observed that one of the pupils who wanted to visit the gents made gestures to depict that and could not speak until asked to speak dagbani by the teacher, and then he took permission. Pupils who cannot read properly to comprehend also lack good oral skills. The observation is closely related to Conley, (1992) who suggested in his literature review that when pupils have difficulty in reading, it affects their communication competence and limits vocabulary development in them. This is a clear indication that a poor reading skill is one of the effects among pupils of St. Paul“s R/C Primary School.

### **4.3.3 Incompetence in reading**

During the research, the researcher found that Pupils' poor reading skills and comprehension made them incompetent readers:

Text: *The school is 30 minutes away from the market.*

Pupil: *The school is 30 away from the market.*

This was revealed during the observation in their reading lessons. The researcher realised that pupils found it difficult to read freely and flexibly while recalling information. Three of the pupils said they forget what they read by the time they have finished reading the text entirely. This remark was affirmed by a teacher who said that pupils easily forget what they read. This is in consistency with Madueke (2007) who stated that poor readers have problems with back-skipping, omission, fixation as well as visual wondering making them incompetent readers.

### **4.3.4 Summary of the Effects of poor reading skills**

The analysis of the effects of poor reading skills on pupils reveals that poor general academic performance, poor communication skills and incompetent reading are the identified effects of poor reading skills in pupils.

### **Research Question 3**

What effective strategies can be adopted to improve upon the reading and comprehension skills of primary six pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary school?

## **4.4 Some Effective Strategies That Can Be Adopted To Improve Upon Reading**

### **Skills**

#### **4.4.1 Using modern approaches to teaching reading and comprehension**

The study revealed that it is appropriate for teachers to employ modern approaches in the instruction of reading and comprehension in their classrooms. This will help

enhance the Pupils' knowledge and skills in reading and understanding. This is in line with Baleeta (2004) as indicated in the literature review that, reading and comprehension like any other literacy skill can be enhanced when the teacher employs varied methods of handling it. Reading and comprehension should be seen as an aspect of learner literacy skill that can be enhanced through various roots.

### **Syllabic Method**

This method allows pupils to read by breaking the word into parts called syllables. For example the word „Computer“ can be broken into its syllabic parts as follows: Com-pu-ter.

This approach may slow down reading, it enables pupils develop word-attack skills and also helps pupils to read words on their own.

With the syllabic approach, the researcher used the following procedure:

1. Wrote the word(s) on chalkboard example reseat, consideration, postman, institution.
2. I made each pupil try to pronounce the words one after the other
3. I then break the words into syllables example Con-si-de-ra-tion, Post-man, In-sti-tu-tion
4. I then read the syllables for pupils to hear.
5. I read the word by blending the syllables of the words.
6. I then practiced steps 3 to 5 with the pupils with other words.

### **The phonic method**

The phonic method involves the correct pronunciation of the names and sounds of the letters of the alphabets. According to Wendy and Lisbeth, (1990), phonic approach to reading is based on letters and sounds. They further stated that it basically has to do

with teaching pupils letters of the alphabet, and the combination of letters, phonetically, so that the letter „a“ is pronounced /æ/, the letter „b“ is pronounced /b/, the letter „c“ is pronounced /k/, „ph“ is pronounced /f/ and so on. The syllabic and Phonic methods as discussed extensively in chapter two are method proposed by majority of the teachers as an effective method that could be used to curb the situation. This method breaks the words down into parts depending on the number of stresses found in the word. This proposed method was equally recommended by Naafan (2018) who says that the syllabic and phonic method should be the emphasis of primary school teachers in teaching reading as it records the most effective results and that children are more likely to develop the habit of reading.

#### **4.4.2 Enough time should be allocated to reading**

The study also identified enough time allocation as one of the factors that can promote Pupils“ reading abilities. The study indicated that in order to assist pupils to develop their reading skills they should be given enough time to practice. This can be achieved by increasing the number of periods on the timetable. As stated by the behaviorist, as learners“ continuously practice what they learn, their level of understanding increases. Since it was observed that reading skill was allocated only two periods in a week which does not ensure the building of pupils“ reading skills, allocating enough time will help remedy this problem.

#### **4.4.3 Conclusion**

The chapter analyzed the data collected through the questionnaire, observation and interview used to collect the data on the causes, effects and the strategies to curb the reading challenges among the pupils“ of St. Paul“s R/C Primary School. In all, three

teacher-related causes and four student related causes were identified and two strategies were suggested in curbing the situation.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the research conducted on St. Paul's R/C Primary School „B“ with the intention to help students with reading problems overcome them and read fluently with understanding. The researcher used various intervention measures and instruments like interview, questionnaire to gather data about the extent of the reading problem among students. The gathered data were presented and analyzed. Conclusions were made and the necessary recommendation given for due consideration.

#### **5.1 Summary of major findings**

The major discovery of the project shows that poverty among families is contributing negatively towards students' academic work and reading in particular. Instead of studying after classes, students sell to supplement their family's income. Again, most of the students with reading problems do not read after classes. Furthermore, students do not have access to library facilities in the school to take advantage of its use to better their learning. Incidentally, some teachers contribute to students poor reading

competences, but when teachers are motivated by their teachers can change their negative perception about difficulties they encounter in reading and see it as a challenge for which they can overcome. Finally, students with special needs can be helped to overcome them when special programs are prepared for them to learn through mastery of reading.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Based on the outcomes of the project, the researcher would like to make the following

1. More emphasis should be placed on the syllabic method by all teachers of basic schools since it was identified as the most effective method in improving reading abilities among pupils. The study also indicated that pupils who were able to read effectively were more likely to cultivate the habit of reading culture than those with reading difficulties. In this regard, teachers must strive to improve upon the reading abilities of their pupils.
2. Teachers and school administrators should organize reading competitions periodically in schools as a means for promoting reading culture. There should also be reward packages such as books, dictionaries and cash prizes among others for pupils who excel in these competitions.
3. Basic school teachers should also pay special attention to pupils with reading difficulties to enable them overcome their problems. This would go a long way to encourage them.
4. Basic school teachers should also use concrete and attractive teaching and learning materials (TLMs) as well as learner-centred activities when teaching reading. This would not only promote understanding, but also sustain the interests of learners.



5. Finally, parents/guardians and government should endeavour to provide pupils with the required reading books and materials so as to enable them develop the habit of reading.



### **5.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

The outcomes of this project revealed that reading culture can be developed among pupils through numerous strategies. Since this project was carried out in just the upper primary classes of a particular school, the researcher recommends that further research/projects be carried out in other schools in and outside the District or Region. It is also recommended that further projects be carried out in the Lower Primary level across the country.

### **5.4 Conclusions**

The objectives of this research were to assist pupils of St. Paul's R/C Primary School to overcome their problem of reading. From the research, the researcher gathered that teachers are the images of students so they should do everything possible to help students entrusted to them. Though the research is comprehensive, it is not exhaustive, as the condition that prevailed for the poor reading habit could vary from school to school.

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## APPENDIX „A“

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

What is your qualification?

1. How long have you been teaching English?
2. How often do you teach English reading?
3. How do you teach English reading?
4. Do you use teaching and learning materials in your reading lessons?
5. Does your class have enough reading text books for each lesson?
6. What are the possible causes of poor reading skills from the school environment?
7. What methods do you use in teaching English reading?
8. How many periods are allocated for reading?
9. Do students have difficulties in reading?
10. How does this affect students' academic performance?
11. What strategies do you think would be appropriate to address these problems?
12. How best can teachers teach reading?

## APPENDIX „B“

### QUESTIONNAIRES FOR PUPILS

1. What is your age?
2. Sex A) Male B) Female
3. Do you read after class? A) Yes B) No
4. What do you do after class...
5. Why students do not read after school?
6. What types of reading material do you read? A) Storybooks B) Notebooks C)  
Textbooks
7. Do you visit the Library? A) Yes B) No
8. What do you do during the library periods? A) Read
9. How do you see reading? A) Difficult B) Interesting C) Boring