

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA

**THE EFFECT OF POOR READING COMPREHENSION ON THE
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS OF KOFORIDUA
PRESBYTERIAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL ONE IN THE NEW JUABEN
MUNICIPALITY (EASTERN REGION)**

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

DECEMBER, 2020

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Bernice Adinkra 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

We 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.

Dr. Mrs. Rebecca Akpanglo-Nartey. (Supervisor)

Signature :.....

Date:.....

DEDICATION

This piece of work is dedicated to Whitney Asirifi Amoah



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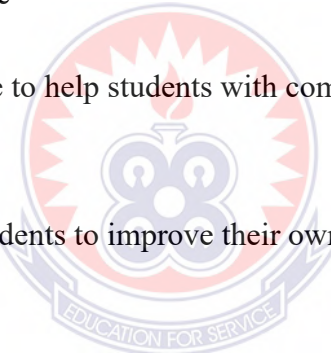
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which poor reading comprehension affects academic performance of Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School in the New Juaben District (Eastern Region), Ghana. The study's objective was to establish the comprehension errors made by students, the effects of poor reading comprehension on students' academic performances for the various subjects in the school and the strategies put in place to address poor reading comprehension. The research approach is qualitative. The target population for the study was the pupils of Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School in the New Juaben south Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The researcher used the purposive sampling technique. A simple passage was given to the students to read and answer the comprehension questions that followed. All students (N = 22) that scored less than three out of five in the comprehension exercise, being 9 boys and 13 girls were selected. The end of first term exams scores for these students were investigated to know the impact of their reading comprehension on their academic performances. Based on the responses given by pupils and teachers it was found out that the students had difficulty in their English reading comprehension and it affected their general academic performances. The impact of poor reading comprehension on the academic performance of students in Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School One in English language was higher in female students than in male students



CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Comprehension is the essence of reading and the active process of constructing meaning from text (Durkin, 1993). Comprehension depends not only on characteristics of the reader, such as prior knowledge and working memory, but also on language processes, such as basic reading skills, decoding, vocabulary, sensitivity to text structure, inference, and motivation. As readers mature in their comprehension skills, they are able to progress efficiently from the stage of learning to read to the ultimate goal of reading to learn (Yovanoff, Duesbery, Alonzo, & Tindal, 2005). With the growing effect of reading comprehension on pupils' academic performances as indicated by scholars (Carmine, Silbet & Kameenui, 1997; Mercer & Mercer, 2001; Runo, 2010), the researcher seeks to understand the impact of poor reading comprehension on the academic performances of Koforidua Presbyterian JHS one students. This chapters thus discusses the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study , research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitations of the study assumptions and operational definitions of term.

1.1 Background to the study

One of the most worrisome problems facing basic school teachers today is that many students come into their classrooms without the requisite knowledge, skills or disposition to read and comprehend the materials placed before them (Snow, Bosons, & Graffin, 1998). Comprehension is the process of eliciting and making meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. This process is a task of both reader and text factors that happen within a larger social context. It is also a process in which readers make meaning by interacting with text through the

combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the views of readers related to the text (Duke, 2003; McNamara & Magliano, 2009; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). When students do not understand what they read, one will wonder how they would be able to answer questions placed before them. It is based on this that in 2018, Spencer and Wagner reported that reading comprehension, or the process of engaging text for the purpose of extracting and constructing meaning has paramount importance to academic success and future life outcomes. Reading comprehension is a complex process, involving a variety of cognitive and linguistic skills. As a result, deficits in the comprehension process can potentially lead to deficits in academic performance. Understanding how to improve reading comprehension outcomes for all students who are facing increasing academic challenges, should be the primary motivating factor in today's literacy research agenda.

Although much has been written about poor reading comprehension in the last years (Duke, 2003; RAND Reading Study Group, 200), majority exists in the international community. The impact of poor reading comprehension on the academic performance of students and strategies on how to improve it still pique the interest of educators. The question of the effect of poor reading comprehension on the academic performance of students in Ghana with particular reference to Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School in the New Juaben District (Eastern Region) still remain unanswered. This research seeks to evaluate the impact of poor reading comprehension skills on the academic performance of students in Koforidua Presbyterian JHS in respect.

1.2 Statement of the problem

One of the disturbing problems facing basic school teachers in the classroom is the inability of students to comprehend what they read ((Snow, Bosons, & Graffin, 1998). This has resulted in many challenges in pupils' academic performances across the globe. This has driven many researchers to inquire into the impact of poor comprehension on pupils' academic performances (Duke, 2003; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002), majority of which exists in the international community. However, the question of the effect of poor reading comprehension on the academic performance of students in Ghana with particular reference to Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School in the New Juaben District (Eastern Region) still remains unanswered as there was no data to that effect at the New Juaben South Municipal Education Office (New Jaben South Education Directorate, 2019) and this research seeks to find out the impact of poor reading comprehension on the general academic performances of the students.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which poor reading comprehension affect academic performance of Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School in the New Juaben District (Eastern Region), Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this research are to find out;

1. the comprehension errors made by students
2. the effects of poor reading comprehension on students' academic performances for the various subjects in the school,
3. the strategies put in place to address poor reading comprehension.

1.5 Research questions

Based on the objectives of this study the research questions are:

1. What are the the comprehension errors made by students of Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School One in the New Juaben District (Eastern Region), Ghana?
2. What are the effects of poor reading comprehension on students' academic performances for the various subjects in Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School One in the New Juaben District (Eastern Region), Ghana?
3. What strategies are put in place to address poor reading comprehension on students' academic performances in Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School One in the New Juaben District (Eastern Region), Ghana?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Data and information obtained from this study can be used to inform teachers and students about learners with poor reading comprehension to improve their academic performance. Policy-makers are informed about students' poor reading comprehension and the need to train basic school teachers on strategies to improve them. Teachers are made aware of students in this category and the need to offer them assistance. Finally, parents can gain from their children's improved academic performance.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The researcher would not able to go to all schools in Ghana and even those in the Eastern Region due to limited time frame. The research would be delimited to Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School in the New Juaben District in the Eastern Region of Ghana and also only to students who cannot comprehend what they read.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The results would have to be treated with some caution and should not be generalized to other District/Regions since data was collected only in Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School in the New Juaben District in the Eastern Region of Ghana, though they may be referred to in other comparative studies of a similar nature. Again, only the JHS One students in the school were considered. In addition only the end of term exams scores for first, second and third terms of students were used for this research.

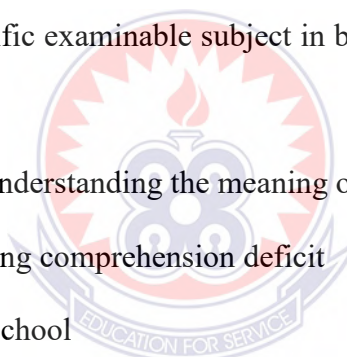
1.9 Operational Definitions of term

Academic Performance: It refers to how well or badly individual student scores in each specific examinable subject in basic school as indicated by scores and grades.

Comprehension: understanding the meaning of what one reads

SCD: specific reading comprehension deficit

JHS: Junior High School



1.10 Organization of the study

Chapter one presented a brief background information of the study, including the statement of the problem and purpose of the study. It listed stated the limitations and delimitations of the study. The chapter on the review of literature was structured under six headings: conceptual framework, reading comprehension, theories of reading comprehension, effect of poor reading on academic performances of students, effective strategies for improving reading comprehension and effect of gender on poor reading comprehension.

Chapter three dealt with the methods and procedures used for this study. The chapter focused on the design, population, sample and sampling technique, research

instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis plan. Results of the study and discussion are presented in chapter four under the following headings: (a) Reading comprehension errors that affect Students' academic performance, (b) effects of poor reading comprehension on academic performance and (c) Strategies that Enhance Reading Comprehension.

Summary, conclusions and recommendations were made in chapter five.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Relevant literature to the study is discussed in this chapter. The review was presented under the following sub-headings: conceptual framework, reading comprehension, theories of reading comprehension, effect of poor reading on academic performances of students, effective strategies for improving reading comprehension and effect of gender on poor reading comprehension.

2.1 Conceptual framework

This research believes in the view of McNamara and Magliano (2009) that reading comprehension which is the process of engaging text for the purpose of extracting and constructing meaning has paramount importance to academic success and future life outcomes.

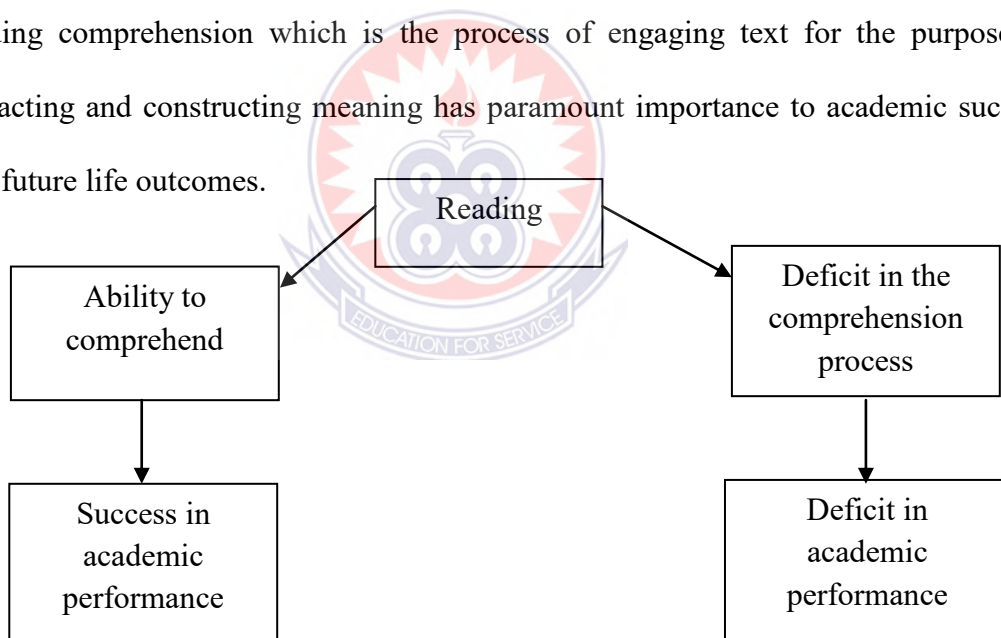


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

From the figure above, when one is reading, a deficits in the comprehension process potentially lead to deficits in academic performance while the ability to comprehend leads to success in academic performance.

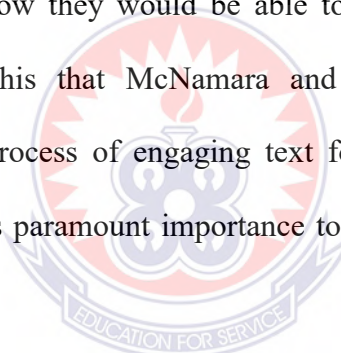
2.2 Reading Comprehension

According to RAND Reading Study Group (2002), comprehension is the process of eliciting and making meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. McNamara and Magliano (2009) emphasized that this process is a task of both reader and text factors that happen within a larger social context. Duke (2003) stated that comprehension is a process in which readers make meaning by interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the views of readers related to the text.

Kintsch (1998) and van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) defined reading comprehension as the process of creating meaning from text. The purpose is to get an understanding of the text rather than to acquire meaning from individual words or sentences. The outcome of reading comprehension is the mental representation of a text meaning that is combined with the readers' previous knowledge. This is called a mental model (Johnson-Laird, 1983) or a situation model (Kintsch, 1998). This model defines what has been learned (RAND Reading and Study Group, 2002). Keenan, Betjemann, and Olson (2008) expressed that reading comprehension needs the successful expansion and arrangement of a lot of lower-and higher-level processes and skills. Accordingly, there are many sources for possible comprehension break and these sources are different based on the skill levels and age of readers.

Reading comprehension is a complex interaction among automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enables the reader to create a mental representation of the text (Van den Broek & Espin, 2012). Comprehension depends not only on characteristics of the reader, such as prior knowledge and working memory, but also on language processes, such as basic reading skills, decoding, vocabulary, sensitivity

to text structure, inferencing, and motivation. As readers mature in their comprehension skills, they are able to progress efficiently from the stage of learning to read to the ultimate goal of reading to learn (Adams, 1990; Yovanoff, Duesbery, Alonzo, & Tindal, 2005). Comprehension is the process of eliciting and making meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. This process is a task of both reader and text factors that happen within a larger social context. It is also a process in which readers make meaning by interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the views of readers related to the text (Duke, 2003; McNamara & Magliano, 2009; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). When students do not understand what they read, one will wonder how they would be able to answer questions placed before them. It is based on this that McNamara and Magliano, (2009) that reading comprehension, or the process of engaging text for the purpose of extracting and constructing meaning has paramount importance to academic success and future life outcomes.



2.3 Theories of Reading Comprehension

Many theories such as the bottom-up view, the top-down view, the interactive view and the simple view of reading comprehension have emerged over the years. Each of these theories are relevant within the present context and are thus, briefly discuss below.

The bottom-up theory (Gough, 1972) state that learning to read progresses from children learning parts of language (words) to understanding the whole text (meaning). Just like when we are playing a jigsaw puzzle, bottom-up models in reading comprehension makes the process of uniting pieces of a reading text into one whole complete comprehension over the reading text. Gough states that reading is a

sequential or series of mental process. Readers, according to Gough, begin by translating the parts of written language (letters) into speech sounds, then together they form certain words, and words unite to reach global understanding of the author's written message. Teachers who believe that bottom-up theory fully explain how children become readers often teach sub-skills first. They begin instructions by introducing words and how to pronounce them, proceed to giving the meaning of those words. Then, students are directed to connect word meanings to comprehend the whole text. Although bottom-up theories of reading comprehension show the process of decoding parts of a reading text, there is an ultimate goal of reading the text that is reading comprehension. The followers of this theory believes that reading is visual and meaning will come up in the end through analytical process applied to linguistic signals in the written text. Meaning is then constructed by joining visual small linguistic parts bit by bit into a total whole meaning. Readers are viewed as individuals who rely on the text to infer meaning since meaning is believed to lie in the text. Readers are linguistic code breakers of the written text in order for them to uncover meaning hidden in the text. According to the bottom-up view of reading comprehension, readers move from an understanding of parts of language (e.g., letters, words) to an understanding of meaning or the whole; thus, from phrases to passages (Gough, 1972). Comprehension is thought to be a product of the acquisition of hierarchically arranged sub-skills (Dole et al., 1991). Thus, lower-level word recognition skills precede the development of more complex skills that lead to an eventual understanding of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs.

Top-down approach states that comprehension starts from the top that is the reader to the down that is the text. The top-down approach emphasizes readers bringing meaning to the text based on their valuable experience and background and

interpreting the text based on their prior knowledge (whole language). Top-down reading models teach students to read by introducing them to literature as a whole. Instead of teaching students to read by sounding out each word in a sentence, teachers read whole passages of a text. Students begin to use context clues to translate unfamiliar words. They help students concentrate on the whole meaning of a passage. The theory also works with those just learning to read, as readers rely on their previous knowledge to translate text or unfamiliar words. In this model the readers sample the text for information and contrast it with their world knowledge, helping to make sense of what is written. The focus here is on the readers as they interact with the text. This model starts with the hypotheses and predictions then attempts to verify them by working down to the printed stimuli. This view of reading was called the psycholinguistic guessing game.

According to “The Top-Down Reading Model Theory” (2016) states that the top-down approach encourages students to focus more on understanding the main ideas of a passage than understanding every word. Even if students do not understand each word, they are likely to grasp the meaning of a text as a whole. She continues that this model encourages students to rely on their own knowledge and use context clues to understand new concepts or words. Readers use their knowledge of the content matter instead of their knowledge of the vocabulary used in a particular piece of text. Students could also use context clues to determine the meaning of words that have more than one use. For instance, the word “read” is pronounced differently depending on the context in which it is used. Students using the top-down reading theory could rely on context clues to help them determine the correct meaning of particular text.

The top-down (i.e., conceptually-driven) view of reading comprehension believes that readers move from meaning down to the component parts of words as they engage with text (Pearson, 2016). According to this view, a reader's mental frameworks or schemas are the driving force behind successful reading comprehension. Readers are actively integrating new information that is encountered in the text with information that they have already stored within their previously established mental representations (i.e., background knowledge).

In the interactive view of reading comprehension the top-down and bottom-up aspects are combined. Based on this view, reading comprehension requires the reader to devote attentional resources to the more basic features of the text (e.g., letters, words) while simultaneously focusing on the more general aspects (e.g., syntax, semantics) and actively interpreting what is being read. Proficient readers are those who successfully engage with multiple sources of information provided within the text and information that is not readily available from the text. Good readers are able to recognize and interact with key features of the text, such as lexical characteristics, at the same time that they are more broadly identifying the purpose of a passage or a paragraph.

The simple view of reading asserts that reading comprehension is the product of decoding ability and language comprehension (Hedge 2003). The simple view also has substantial empirical validation. For example, decoding has emerged as a reliable predictor of reading comprehension ability in a variety of instances. In fact, poor decoding skills are associated with reading comprehension problems (Hedge 2003). The simple view provides a potential explanation for the reading comprehension problems of children with SCD that is consistent with their observed oral language

deficits: Reading comprehension requires both adequate decoding and adequate oral language comprehension. According to this classification system, children with good decoding and good comprehension are adequate readers; children with poor decoding and good comprehension are garden-variety poor readers; children with good comprehension and poor decoding meet criteria for dyslexia; and children with good decoding and poor comprehension have specific reading comprehension deficit (SCD). Thus, a mastery of both decoding and language comprehension is necessary for reading proficiency.

There are three types of theories of reading comprehension. They are: mental representations, content literacy, and cognitive processes.

1. Mental Representations

Kintsch (1998), expressed that when a reader is reading a text, he can create a mental representation of the text that explains how the reader understands the text. A lot of researches supported the many levels of representation are included in constructing meaning. According to Kintsch (1998), when a reader is reading a text, three various levels of mental representation are created. They are the surface component, the text-base, and the situation model.

Kintsch (1998) continued that when the words and phrases and not the meaning of the words and phrases, are encoded in the mental representation, this is defined as the surface component of mental representation. The text-base indicates the meaning of the text and is composed of those parts and connections that are arose from the text itself without increasing anything that is not clearly identified in the text. A text-base can be made without any memory of the accurate words or phrases from

the text. In a pure text-base, the reader applies previous knowledge to create a more perfect and consistent mental representation.

According to Kintsch (1998), the situation model is a structure that combines the text-base and the related features of the reader's knowledge. In order to create a text-base, some previous knowledge is required but this knowledge is a more general one that is necessary for decoding texts in general, while the previous knowledge in the formation of a situation model is more specific regarding the content of the text.

2. Content Literacy

Content literacy is the ability to read, understand, and learn from texts from a particular matter. There are three types of content literacy: general literacy abilities, content-specific literacy abilities, and previous knowledge of content. The general and the content-specific literacy abilities indicate some more general type of knowledge that does not hinge on the detailed content of a particular text. This knowledge is applied to make a text-base in the mental representation (McKenna & Robinson, 1990). Previous knowledge of content is the knowledge that is related to the content of a particular text and is applied to make a situation model in the mental representation. For example, it is not obvious that mathematics makes a necessity for content-specific literacy abilities and the reading comprehension in mathematics hinges on more general literacy abilities and previous knowledge. It can be stated that the symbolic language in mathematics is the main cause for the need of content-specific literacy skills (McKenna & Robinson, 1990).

3. Cognitive Processes

The application of syntactic and semantic rules together with the activation of more particular previous knowledge occurs automatically and unconsciously. Various cognitive processes are more or less conscious. Perception is defined as the highly

automatic and unconscious processes. For instance, when we see a dog and directly know it as a dog; we are conscious of the outcome of the process but there isn't any active and conscious thought processes for this identification (Kintsch, 1992). Problem solving deals with active thinking when we want to remember the name of a person we see and know. Accordingly, when we read a text without having any difficulties in comprehending what we read, the process is related to perception than problem solving because the process of comprehending is unconscious. This is comprehension is located somewhere between perception and problem solving (Kintsch, 1992).

2.4 Effect of Poor Reading on Academic Performances of Students

Reading comprehension has always been viewed as critical to academic success. Many scholars have concluded that poor reading comprehension as a reading difficulty has a great adverse effect on pupils' academic performances in all subjects. According to them, since students cannot comprehend what they read, they are not able to understand what the questions seeks from them to provide and hence sit by the paper till their time is up without writing anything or writing absolutely what is not related to what the questions seek (Carmine, Silbet & Kameenui, 1997; Mercer & Mercer, 2001; Runo, 2010). Poor reading comprehension which is a reading difficulty is the principal causes of failure in school (Carmine, Silbet & Kameenui, 1997). According to Mercer and Mercer (2001), between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of school-going learners have reading difficulties such as reading comprehension which affects their academic performances. Runo, (2010) also notes that if teachers do not identify children with poor reading comprehension early and provide them with appropriate interventions students will only fall in the wait - and - fail method. Some

research works conducted in Kenya highlighted that learners with problems in reading and comprehending English have problems in school performance in general.

A study done by Runo (2010) on identification of reading disabilities and teacher oriented challenges in teaching reading to standard five in Kenya concludes that the learners who scored poorly in the wordlist and reading passage were equally poor performers academically in primary schools. This was in line with her conceptual framework which indicated that both internal and external factors cause reading difficulties, hence poor academic performance. She further concludes that there is need to train the primary school teachers on the methods of identifying reading difficulties in learners to avoid learners' continued failure in school subjects. The researcher in this study wished to establish whether the same case applied to basic schools in Ghana and particularly in Koforidua Presbyterian JHS and whether poor reading comprehension is a major contributing factor to their poor academic performance.

2.5 Effective Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension

Scholars have identified a lot of strategies for reading comprehension (Ahmadi & Gilakjani, 2012; Wood, Wolosshyn, & Willoughbt, 1995; Yang, Dai, & Gao, 2012; Wixson et. al, 1987; Su, 2001; Stahl, 2003, Song, 1998). Some of these strategies are discussed below in detail.

2.5.1 Fluency

Fluency is the automatic recognition of words that frees up the cognitive capacity required for comprehending the meaning of the words (Parry, 1996). Considered a bridge between decoding and comprehension (Paris et. al 2005), reading fluency took center stage after the results from the National Reading Panel (2000) were published. Although early studies recognized decoding as the skill that predicted

differences in comprehension skills between children (Paran, 2003), a landmark study of struggling readers revealed that only those who practiced reading the words until they automatically recognized them were able to accurately answer comprehension questions about the text (Parry, 1996). A study of at-risk second graders also revealed that accuracy and rate of oral reading uniquely predicted comprehension ability (National Reading Panel (2000). However, fluency appears to be a larger influence in developing reading comprehension skills for younger readers compared to older ones. As text becomes more challenging with each grade level, fluency becomes less predictive of reading comprehension and, instead, gives way to vocabulary (Yovanoff, Duesbery, Alonzo, & Tindal, 2005). In a multivariate study of Florida students' reading comprehension scores, National Reading Panel (2000) discovered that oral reading fluency did explain the differences in comprehension among third grade students while vocabulary emerged as a major factor among older students. In the section that follows, research on the role of vocabulary in comprehension development is discussed.

2.5.2 Vocabulary and Semantic Processing

In order to extract meaning from text, a strong sense of semantics is required. That is, children have to understand what words mean before they can construct understanding of text passages. The first empirical study of the correlation between word knowledge and reading comprehension was published over 70 years and has been replicated in decades of research consistently identifying knowledge of vocabulary as a primary predictor of reading comprehension development (Armbruster, Anderson, & Ostertag, 1987; Alyousef, 2005; Biggs, 1993; Donald, 1991; Davis, & Simmons, 2011). In one longitudinal study of children from kindergarten through second grade, Pressley (2002) discovered that vocabulary skills,

such as oral definitions and word retrieval, were the best predictors of reading comprehension development. A similar study of at-risk second graders revealed that verbal IQ was a statistically significant predictor of reading comprehension in both the beginning and end of school year assessments. Further, vocabulary knowledge is a consistent predictor of reading comprehension from fourth through eighth grades as well (Yovanoff, Duesbery, Alonzo, & Tindal, 2005). Finally, research suggests that students with poor comprehension exhibit a lack of semantic awareness characterized by an inability to attach meaning to words (Brookbank et. al, 1999; Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant, 2004). In a comprehensive review of research, the National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that vocabulary instruction facilitates the development of reading comprehension, especially when students are repeatedly exposed to vocabulary words. Further, the Panel recommended explicit instruction in vocabulary through a variety of active learning methods and contexts. Indeed, the preponderance of research indicates that vocabulary is a key contributor to reading comprehension development.

2.5.3 Visualization

Another key component of reading comprehension is the active construction of a mental image of the text. These mental images are fluid and change as the reader continually assimilates new text (Woolley, 2010). Visualization is an application of the dual-coding theory of reading (Davis & Simmons, 2011), the concept that readers process both visual representations of verbal information and of objects to create meaning. Also referred to as mental imagery, research suggests that this skill contributes to comprehension (Pressley, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000) and enhances memory of the text (Deacon & Kirby, 2002). Instruction in visualization is supported by research as well. In a large-scale study of Pueblo County Schools, third

through fifth graders trained in mental imagery while reading made greater reading comprehension gains than their matched control group (Cziko, 1980). In addition, Center et al. (1999) and Brown et al. (1995) found statistically significant correlations between visualization training and reading comprehension scores of students when used as part of a multiple-strategy instruction intervention.

2.5.4 Working Memory

Working memory has also been identified as an integral part of reading comprehension. Working memory is defined as an executive function responsible for keeping and updating information in the mind (Gillet & temple, 1994). Further, working memory is responsible for managing the process of extracting information from text and integrating it with prior knowledge to create meaning (Gambrell & Bale). Sequences of text-based information are held in working memory and integrated with new incoming text and with prior knowledge held in long-term memory. Research has established a correlation between working memory and comprehension (Joshi & Aaron, 2000). In a study, (Jonson & Kirby, 2006) found working memory to be a direct predictor of reading comprehension scores among third and fourth graders, although not significant for first and second graders. Further, a similar result emerged from a study of 8 to 16 year olds, identifying working memory as a statistically-significant predictor of reading comprehension (Honig, Diamond & Gutlohn, 2000). The findings from these three studies suggest that as text complexity increases with grade level, a greater amount of working memory is needed for assimilating longer sentences with new vocabulary into rapidly changing mental images. However, recent research indicates that composite executive function scores are statistically significant predictors of reading comprehension scores in pre-

kindergarten through third grade as well (Gu, 1994). Indeed, working memory seems to play a critical role in reading comprehension across age groups.

2.5.7 Reasoning and Inference

Inferential reasoning is the ability to use information in the text to determine additional information that is only implied by the text. In a review of studies on inference skills for reading, researchers at the National Foundation for Educational Research (2008) discovered that the ability to draw inferences is directly related to reading comprehension ability. In unrelated studies, Cornoldi and Oakhill (1996) reported that students' inferencing skills contribute to future comprehension skills; and Levy et al (1991) discovered that students with poor comprehension also lack inferencing ability. The process of inferential reasoning requires both short-term and long-term memory, acting on retrieval of background knowledge combined with the text to arrive at the implicit information from the text (NFER, 2008). In a study of the factors that contribute to reading comprehension among Florida students, Schatschneider et al. (2005) discovered that in addition to verbal knowledge, reasoning ability was the dominant factor among 10th grade students' reading comprehension scores. The growing body of research continues to acknowledge the role of reasoning and inferencing abilities in reading comprehension.

2.5.8 Activating and Using Background Knowledge

In this strategy, readers activate their background knowledge and apply it to aid them comprehend what they are reading. This knowledge consists of individuals' experiences with the world together with their concepts for how written text work, involving word recognition, print concepts, word meaning, and how the text is formed (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Schema theory is very important in comprehension

process (Kirby, 1988; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Kirby, Parrila & Pfeiffer, 2003). This theory is based on how people form and activate their previous knowledge. This theory explains that as persons learn about the world, they create a series of knowledge structures or schemas. These schemas develop and shift as the persons learn new information through experience and reading. For instance, a child's schema for dog can involve her or his comprehending of the family pet such as white, furry, and fun. When the child gets more experiences with a lot of dogs in different environments, the dog schema develop and can be improved. It can relate to other schema-kinds of dogs like colors of dogs; foods that dogs eat; places where they stay when the family is on holiday; and dangerous dogs. Cognitive scientists stated that successful readers permanently relate their prior knowledge to the new knowledge they face in texts. Good readers activate their schema when they start reading. The first schema impacts how readers comprehend and react to a text (Pichert & Anderson, 1977). Schemas are particularly significant to reading comprehension. When learners have knowledge of a text's organization, this can help them to understand better that text (Armbruster, Anderson, & Ostertag, 1987).

2.5.9 Generating and Asking Questions

In this strategy, readers ask themselves pertinent questions in reading the text. This strategy assists readers to combine information, recognize main ideas, and summarize information. Asking appropriate questions permits successful readers to concentrate on the most important information of a text (Wood, Woloshyn, & Willoughby, 1995). Creating relevant questions helps good readers to concentrate on difficulties with comprehension and to take the necessary actions to solve those problems (Nunes, & Bryant, 2006).

2.5.10 Making Inferences

Readers assess or draw conclusions from information in a text. In this strategy, writers do not always provide full information about a topic, place, personality, or happening. Instead, they provide information that readers can use to read by making inferences that integrate information of the text with their previous knowledge. Through this process, readers can improve their skills to make meaning. Being able to make inferences is an important factor for readers' successful reading (Olson, 1994).

2.5.11 Predicting

In this strategy, readers are able to gain meaning from a text by making educated guesses. Successful readers apply forecasting to make their existing knowledge to new information from a text to obtain meaning from what they read. Before reading, readers may apply what they know about a writer to forecast what a text will be about. The title of a text can operate memories of texts with the same content, permitting them to guess the content of a new text. During reading, successful readers can make predictions about what will occur next, or what opinions the writer will offer to support a discussion. Readers try to assess these predictions ceaselessly and change any prediction that is not approved by the reading (Gillet, & Temple, 1994).

2.5.12 Summarizing

Readers combine information in a text to elaborate in their own words what the text is about. Summarizing is a significant strategy that allows readers to remember text rapidly. In this strategy, readers can be aware of text structure, of what is significant in a text, and of how opinions are related to each other. Effective summarizing of explanatory text includes things like condensing the steps in a

scientific process, the steps of development of an art movement or the episodes that result in certain important historical happenings. Effective summarizing of narrative text includes things such as connecting happenings in a story line or recognizing the elements that stimulate a character's activities and conduct (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2000).

2.5.13 Comprehension Monitoring

In this strategy, readers have the ability to know when they comprehend what they read, when they do not perceive, and to apply suitable strategies to make better their understanding. Successful readers know and check their thought processes as they read. Strategies that successful readers use to improve their understanding are called "fix-up" strategies. Particular repair strategies involve rereading, reading ahead, explaining the words by looking them up in a, or asking someone for assistance (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). Successful readers try to use different strategies to make meaning as they read. They do not use similar strategies; instead, they like to expand and practice those strategies that are beneficial to them. Moreover, they are very flexible in the application of their strategies, they change from strategy to strategy, and they apply various strategies with different types of texts (Paris, Wasik & Turner, 1991). The important point here is that successful readers can make good decisions about which strategies to apply and when to use them. A lot of students can gain from explicit instruction that teaches them to apply particular strategies for understanding a text. The other point is that particular comprehension strategies can be taught and learned and that their conscious use can help readers to ameliorate their comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).

2.6 Who are the “poor comprehenders”?

The factors listed in the previous section indicate the characteristics that will lead to poor reading comprehension. Children with low levels of skill in the various contributing factors will struggle with reading comprehension, children with more areas of low skill will struggle more, and the more they struggle the more their interest will suffer, creating a vicious cycle. It is no secret that many children prefer other activities to reading, and that uninteresting text content can turn a capable reader into an unenthusiastic reader very quickly (Pressley, 2002, chapter 8).

Two subgroups of children who show poor reading comprehension deserve mention. First, it should be no surprise that children with reading disabilities have difficulties in reading comprehension (Cornoldi & Oakhill, 1996): these children's most obvious and primary problem is with word reading, which is critical for reading comprehension. However it is important to recognize that some reading disabled children can develop adequate or even good levels of reading comprehension, especially if time constraints are not imposed (Lefly & Pennington, 1991). It is not yet clear how they do this, but it almost certainly involves a great deal of practice, re-reading, and strategy use.

Secondly, some authors refer to a group of children termed *poor comprehenders* (e.g., Cain, Oakhill & Bryant, 2004; Nation, 2005). These children have normal word level processing, but also have some language comprehension difficulties that interfere with reading comprehension. These language difficulties involve drawing inferences, understanding figurative language, and monitoring their own comprehension. Most current assessment approaches to reading disability will overlook these children who may need intensive language-oriented intervention. Some of these children may have low general ability; hence, it may not be surprising

that they have low reading comprehension. However, this is no excuse not to teach them. Other children, though this is not yet clear, may have relatively specific difficulties in comprehension processes, difficulties that targeted instruction may help to overcome; this remains a question for future research.

2.7 Effect of Gender on Poor Reading Comprehension

In general there seems to be a general agreement by researchers that, boys are poor in reading comprehension than girls as numerous studies conducted on reading comprehension between boys and girls reveal that girls outperform boys in reading comprehension (Pressley, 1976;). According to recent research by Pollard-Durodola et al., (2011) there is a significance gender effect on ability to read and comprehend. Clinics and schools in USA identify four times as many boys as girls who have learning disabilities (Rayner et all 2001). Reid et al., (2009), study on gender differences in reading have also confirmed that reading disability is higher in males than in females with the average ratio being four males to one female. Adams (1990) claim that more male brains are prone to excessive balance in information processing strategies than female brains. In Kenya, the National Development Plan (2002 - 2008) records that a slightly higher percentage of males who repeated classes in 1999 (13.8 per cent boys and 13.29 per cent girls) than girls. This could probably be as a result of more boys being reading disabled than girls. Runo (2010) indicates that there were more boys (103) than girls (78) who could not read in her study. Nation (2005) points out that since girls generally develop earlier than boys; researchers often attribute their superior early reading skills in part to this biological factor. Nation further points out that the ability to learn and use language contains a female advantage from as early as during the first years of schooling. This could be one of the reasons for the

better performance of girls than boys in the earlier studies. The current study sought to establish the above fact in the case of Koforidua Presbyterian JHS.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research approach used to collect data. It includes the design, population, sample and sampling technique, research instruments and data collection procedures.

3.1 Research Design

The research design is qualitative and the research approach is descriptive survey. Behets and Vergauwen (2006) noted that using qualitative methods is essential when studying field experiences. The descriptive nature of such studies allows readers to learn about specific events and make judgments regarding the ability to generalize the findings to their own settings. According to Baha (2016), descriptive survey describes what exists and tries to pave the ground for finding new facts. It includes gathering of data related to, products, people, individuals, events and situations and then organize, tabulates, depicts and describe the outcome. The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present, and the main characteristic of this method is that the researcher has no control over the variables; he can only report what has happened or what is happening.

3.2 Population

A population is a group of elements or causes, whether individuals, objects or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the result of research (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). The target population for the study was the pupils of Koforidua Presby in the New Juaben south Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The school is located directly opposite to the Eastern Region Ministries compound. The students in the school are mainly students who

reside in the central indigenous Koforidua suburbs being Srodai, Oguaa and Betom. The language spoken by the people is Akwapim twi. Parents or guardians of the students in the school are basically traders and most of them are not educated and are not really interested in the provision of the needed requirements for their wards' education. The school has a total population of 223 pupils made up of 122 girls and 101 boys. The individuals involved in this study were the JHS One students of the school (N = 51). In all, the first term exams scores for all the subjects studied by the students were analyzed.

3.3 Sample and Sampling technique

The researcher used the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a sampling procedure in which researchers hand pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment on the ability of the particular group to provide information about the issues under study. A simple passage was given to the students to read and answer the comprehension questions that followed. All students (N = 22) that scored less than three out of five in the comprehension exercise, being 9 boys and 13 girls were selected. The end of first term exams scores for these students were investigated to know the impact of their reading comprehension on their academic performances.

3.4 Research Instruments

The instruments used for this research are observations, interview and test.

3.4.1 Observation

It is the process of gathering information about the child by watching, listening and recording. The researcher used observation as one of the instruments to elicit information for the study. In order to obtain appropriate data on pupils' reading

comprehension abilities, an observation of the first term exams scores for the sampled pupils was done to have a fair idea on the impact of students' poor reading comprehension on their general academic performances in the subjects they study at school.

3.4.2 Interview

It is the process of gathering information about the child through face to face interactions. The researcher also used interview to gather the needed information from the sample. All the students were also called and they were involved in an interview communication. It was also observed that the students do not only make mistakes in written English but also in their speech. This was done by conducting face to face interview which lasted for three hours due to privacy. Also, some teachers were interviewed to gather other important information. The teachers were interviewed to seek their opinion on causes of poor academic performance for the students they teach, teachers' suggestions on what to do in order to make learners' with reading difficulties comfortable in the school and Strategies put in place to help students with comprehension errors in the school. The researcher also used interview to gather the needed information from the sampled students. All the students were also called and they were involved in an interview communication. This was done by conducting face to face interview which lasted for three hours due to privacy

4.4.3 Test

Test is a task or series of tasks which are used to measure specific traits or attributes in pupils. In educational settings, test includes paper and pen instruments, which contains questions that students and pupils respond to. It is also defined as a device that makes one demonstrates his or her level of ability, mastery of competency

in a specific area. It is also said to be a measure of a person's ability, knowledge or performance in a given domain or measuring a person's ability knowledge (Brown, 2004; Hughes, 2003). It takes series of task to obtain information on an individual behavior. The reason why test is chosen is: it allows individuals to demonstrate their competencies in a specific area and also less expensive and time efficient. Test can be considered as stimulus that helps the gathering of information from pupils. Despite the above advantages, test may have a subjective tendency that is the assessor can interpret test scores using his or her discretions. There is also the tendency of the teacher being partial in administering and scoring test items. Finally, the reliability and validity of test items may not be assured. The test that was used for this research was the end of first term exams for the 2019/2020 academic year. The exams answer sheets of students were observed and errors made in the usage of tenses under ignorance of rule restriction, overgeneralization, incomplete application of rule, and false concept hypothesized were discussed.

The test was given to the students to identify common comprehension errors made by them. A short passage that was followed by five comprehension questions that students had to answer (See appendix) was used.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

To enable the researcher collect the needed data from the sample participants, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the University of Education Winneba. The letter was further used to obtain permission from the English department to collect data from the schools. The researcher personally went to the schools where after permission was sought from the school authorities tested the

students for selection. The exams scores of selected students for the first were collected for analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis Plan

In general the data collected was analyzed quantitatively. Descriptive statistics were presented in percentages and mean scores were used. The Manwhitney U statistical approach was also used to ascertain differences for boys' and girls' effect of poor reading comprehension on their academic performances.

Research question one –“What are the effects of poor reading comprehension on students' academic performances for the various subjects in Koforidua Presbyterian JHS?” was analyzed using percentages and mean scores. The various scores for the various subjects for the selected students were analyzed to ascertain the impact of poor reading comprehension on the students' scores in each subject.

Research question two –“In what respect do the effect of students' poor reading comprehension on their academic performances show differences for boys and girls in Koforidua Presbyterian JHS One?” was analyzed using the Manwhitney U statistics. At a significant level of 95% ($p < 0.05$) boys and girls were compared to know who has the highest impart of poor reading comprehension on their academic performances and to know if it were significant.

Research question three –“Does the effect of poor reading comprehension on pupils' academic performances show any differences for boys and girls for the core subjects?” was analyzed using the Manwhitney U statistics. At a significant level of 95% ($p < 0.05$) boys and girls were compared to know if there was a significant

difference between boys and girls on the impart of poor reading comprehension for the core subjects (Maths, English, Science and Social studies.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter deals with presentation and analysis of the data collected from the field of study by the researcher. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which poor reading comprehension affect academic performance of the students of Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School one in the New Juaben District (Eastern Region), Ghana.

A test was given to the students out of which common comprehension errors made by the students were identified and analysed. Again, teachers were interviewed to seek their opinion on causes of poor academic performance for the students they teach, teachers' suggestions on what to do in order to make learners' with reading difficulties comfortable in the school and Strategies put in place to help students with comprehension errors in the school. An observation of the first term exams scores for the sampled pupils was also done to have a fair idea on the impact of students' poor reading comprehension on their general academic performances in the subjects they study at school.

This chapter thus discussed data collected based on three main research questions centered on: (1) the comprehension errors made by students that affect their academic performance, (2) the effects of poor reading comprehension on students' academic performances for the various subjects in the school, (3) the strategies put in place to address poor reading comprehension.

4.1 Comprehension Errors that affect Students' Academic Performance

The first objective of this research was concerned with comprehension errors that affect student's academic performance. Among the typical reading difficulties; problems with vocabulary, word recognition, reading comprehension and reading rate (Feagans, 1983), the researcher singled out reading comprehension as a major contributor to poor academic performance and sought to investigate.

4.1.1 Teachers opinion on causes of poor academic performance

Teachers were asked in a structured interview to select among: Poor Reading comprehension difficulties, School Administration, Quality of the staff, Learner's previous academic background and Teaching methods, the one which in their view were the causes of students' poor academic performance. The result is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Teachers opinion on causes of poor academic performance

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Poor reading comprehension difficulties	4	40
School administration	1	10
Quality of the staff	1	10
Learner's previous academic background	2	20
Teaching methods	2	20
Total	10	100

Table 1 indicates that majority of teachers said that reading difficulties was the main cause of poor academic performance in Koforidua Presbyterian JHS One. Four (4) of the respondents representing 40% responded to that effect, learners previous

academic background representing 20%, while teaching methods were also another strong contributor of poor academic performance representing 20%. The results agree with Ricket, List and Lerner (1989) findings that reading difficulties are the principal causes of failure in school.

4.1.2 Common Comprehension Errors made by students

A reading passage was administered to the students in the class. The researcher noted the errors made by the students while answering the comprehension questions that followed the passage and were categorized as; misformation of sentence, omission of words needed, addition of words not needed and misordering of words. The errors made by the students selected for the research is tabulated and analysed below.

Table 2: Common Comprehension Errors as Per Learners' Data

Type of Error	Frequency	Percentage
Errors of Misformation of sentence	50	75.75
Errors of Omission or a word needed	11	16.66
Errors of Addition of words not needed	5	7.57
Errors of Misordering of words	0	0
Total	66	100

Analysis on the common comprehension errors was done from the test administered to the students. The results revealed that words misformation was the most common error with a percentage of 75.75%. This kind of error is indicated by the use of wrong form or morpheme or structure. Word omission was also a common comprehension error with percentage of 16.66% word omitted. Other common

comprehension errors included words added at a percentage of 7.57%. This kind of error is characterized by the presence of an item which is unnecessary or must not appear in well-formed sentences. Word misordering however was not observed with a percentage of 0%. Misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or a group of morphemes in the sentence. The high presence of these errors made by the students is an indication that the students did not understand what they were reading. It is therefore worthy of note at this point that the comprehension error made by the students is likely to affecting the students' performance in the English language.

4.2 Effects of poor reading comprehension on Academic Performance

The second research question sought to find out the effects of poor reading comprehension on students' academic performances (First term exams; 2019/2020 academic year), for JHS One pupils in Koforidua Presbyterian JHS was analysed. 22 students who were identified to have problem with reading comprehension's scores in the various subjects studied at JHS were analysed to see if their difficulty had any effect on their performances in the various subjects.

4.2.1 Effects of poor reading comprehension on students' academic performance

The first term exams scores for the students selected, for all the subjects studied in the school, was observed and analysed. The averages of the scores gained by the students with reading difficulties in each subject was calculated and analysed and compared with their counterparts who were without difficulties.

Table 3: Effects of poor reading comprehension on students' academic performance

Subject	Mean (%) score students with compression difficulties	Mean (%) score students without compression difficulties
MATHS	26.5	67.8
ENGLISH	22.6	57
SCIENCE	31.3	66
SOCIAL	33	76.4
ICT	34.6	56
BDT	47.6	69.1
RME	46.5	76.8
FRENCH	58.5	70.1
TWI	41.8	65.3

Table 3 above shows poor average scores for almost all the subjects for students with reading comprehension difficulties. In mathematics the average score for the selected students was 26.5%; far below average compared to 67.8% for those without difficulties. Even though the subject is mathematics, instructions for the exams were in English and because these students selected are students who could not read and comprehend well, they were not able to read and understand what the examiner wanted. A typical indication of this is when the students were interviewed and majority of them said questions given in the exams were difficult and their major concern was that they did not understand the questions at all in most cases. This confirms their performance as indicated above. In English language, the average score for students with difficulties was 22.6%, which is also far below a pass compared to those without the problem who had 57%. It happens to also be the subject that recorded the least average score among the other subjects for the weak students. English language recording low average scores raises a lot of concern since

it is the medium of communication in writing exams in all the other subjects. It is therefore not surprising that the students recorded low scores in almost all the other subjects because the students could not read to understand what the examiners wanted in the exams and thereby not able to give the correct answers in the exams written. In science, the weak students recorded an average score of 31.3% while the good ones recorded 66%. Furthermore the weak students' average in social studies was also poor. The students recorded an average of 33.0% in the subject while their counterparts without comprehension difficulties recording 76.4. In ICT, another below average score was recorded for the weak students; thus 34.6%.

In BDT, RME and TWI, the students' scores were quite higher however; it was still not up to a 50%. The average scores were 47.6%, 46.5% and 41.8% respectively. In these subjects the weak student's scores were quite higher and close to their counterpart in the stronger group who had 69.1%, 76.8%, 65.3% respectively compared to the other subjects discussed earlier.

If the table is critically analyzed it could be seen that the students' average scores in mathematics (26.45%) and English Language (22.59%) were seriously low and could be said that the students' inability to read and comprehend seem to have most effect on the scores for English Language and Mathematics than the other subjects.

The impact of poor reading comprehension on French was less than in all the other subjects. It is quite surprising that the students are able to read and comprehend the French language and obtain higher mark with an average of 58.45%. With French being another language subject, it could be said that the students had a strong foundation in the primary school than they had in English language or the French exams was probably too easy to pass.

When you take Ghanaian Language (Twi) which is another Language subject, students' average score (41.82%) was also slightly higher than in English language, and can be said that the students are able to read and comprehend their local language more than in English Language.

From the table above, it may be said that pupils' inability to read and comprehend in English language seem to have a great effect on almost all the other subjects except French, which recorded over 50% on the average. From the table above, it could be seen that, the weak students failed in most of the subjects recording averages below 50%. These result confirm what Carmine, Silbet and Kameenui (1997) reported that poor reading comprehension which is a reading difficulty is the principal causes of failure in schools.

4.2.2 Students' responses to their performance in the first term exams in an interview

In an interview, students' opinion on their first term exams in general was sought, the intention was to identify if students could read to understand the questions that were given to them. The result is shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Students' responses to their performance in the first term exams

Students' responses	Frequency	Percentage
Could read to understand the questions given	5	22.7
Could not read to understand the questions given	17	77.3
Total	22	100

When the sampled students were called and were involved in an interview communication, they were asked if they could read and comprehend questions that was given to them in their first term exams. The results show that majority of the students (17), representing 77.3% said they could not read to understand the questions that were given them in the exams and as such, they could not answer the questions that were given them resulting in the acquisition of low percentages. A few (5) representing 22.7% were those who said they could read to understand what was given to them in the exams. It was also observed that the students do not only make mistakes in written English but also in their speech. It was evident when the students were asked the same questions after the passage used for the research was read to them. Even when they were asked the questions by the researcher, most of them could not comprehend to give correct answers needed

4.2.2 Poor reading comprehension trends for male and female students.

For the students who had difficulty in English reading Comprehension, the researchers sought to find out if there were any significant differences in their academic performances for the various subjects studied in the school. The result is indicated in table 7 below.

Table 5: Comparing the differences for male and female students in their academic performances using Mann-Whitney U statistics.

SUBJECT	STUDENT	NO. OF STUDENTS	OF MEAN RANK	LEVEL OF SIG. P < 0.05
MATHS	Female	13	12.85	0.24
	Male	9	9.56	
	Total	22		
ENGLISH	Female	13	10.88	0.593
	Male	9	12.39	
	Total	22		
SCIENCE	Female	13	11.77	0.815
	Male	9	11.11	
	Total	22		
SOCIALSTUDIES	Female	13	11.5	1
	Male	9	11.5	
	Total	22		
ICT	Female	13	10.5	0.385
	Male	9	12.94	
	Total	22		
BDT	Female	13	12.08	0.616
	Male	9	10.67	
	Total	22		
RME	Female	13	12.35	0.462
	Male	9	10.28	
	Total	22		
FRENCH	Female	13	11.92	0.713
	Male	9	10.89	
	Total	22		
TWI	Female	13	11.27	0.84
	Male	9	11.83	
	Total	22		

To investigate whether male and female students differ on the impact of poor reading comprehension on academic performance, Mann-Whitney U statistics was calculated with the SPSS version 20. The analysis showed that there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the performance of male and female students in all the subjects.

However, in general there seems to be a general agreement by researchers that, boys are poor in reading comprehension than girls as numerous studies conducted on reading comprehension between boys and girls reveal that girls outperform boys in reading comprehension (Topping et al. 2003; Gambell and Hunter 2010; White, 2007; Lynn and Mikk 2009). According to recent research by Lerner (2006), there is a significance gender effect on ability to read and comprehend. Reid et al., (2009), study on gender differences in reading have also confirmed that reading disability is higher in males than in females with the average ratio being four males to one female.

From the table above, it is realized however that the impact of poor reading comprehension on the academic performance of students in Koforidua Presbyterian Junior High School one in the New Juaben South Municipality (Eastern Region), Ghana in English language was rather higher in female students than in male students. This was also evident in the interview conducted on the students.

4.2.3 Teachers' opinion on the effect of poor reading comprehension on students' academic performance.

Teachers' opinion on the extent to which they agree with the statement that poor reading comprehension difficulties affect academic performance, was sought. The responses of the teachers given during the interview was tabulated as indicated in table 6 below

Table 6: Teachers' opinion on the effect of poor reading comprehension on students' academic performance

Teachers View	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	9	90
Disagree	1	10
Total	10	100

From the table 6 above, Ninety percent (90%) of the teachers agreed that reading comprehension difficulty affect performance in all other academic subjects. Only 1 teacher representing 10% disagreed. The study thus found that majority of the teachers from the sampled school agreed that poor reading skills affected academic performance in all the examinable subjects. It is realized at this point that teachers' opinions are right from the analysis of the performance of the students as indicated and analysed in table 3 and 4. This is also confirmed by Ricket, List and Lerner (1989) findings that reading difficulties are the leading cause of failure in academic performance

4.3 Strategies that Enhance Reading Comprehension

As the third research question, the researchers sought to find out what could be done to improve and make students with poor reading comprehension comfortable in the school.

4.3.1 Teachers' strategies used to enhance reading comprehension in the school

Teachers were asked to state the strategies they use to enhance reading comprehension in their school. As a major stake holder in the school, they were asked to select among others the effective strategies relevant in improving students' poor reading comprehension difficulties in the school. What teachers said they used were tabulated and indicated in table 7.s

Table 7: Strategies put in place to help students with comprehension errors in the school

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Use of class readers	6	60
cognitive collaborations	1	10
Correcting the errors made	2	20
Library lessons	0	0
Paraphrasing answers	1	10
Total	10	100

Table 7 shows strategies put in place to help students with comprehension errors in the school. It seemed that teachers readily followed the layout of English text books where reading comprehension should be conducted every week. 60% of the respondents said they used class readers out of which they help students to answer comprehension questions that followed the passages but forsook library lessons which are equally important in eliminating comprehension errors. Ricket, List and Lerner (1989) indicated teachers need knowledge about the assessment and treatment of reading difficulties. According to Moore (1999), to enhance reading comprehension difficulties in the class, strategies such as: (1) given direct explicit instructions, (2) encouraged cognitive collaborations, (3) Connect Reading to Students' Lives and their out-of-School literacies, (4) Show, Don't Tell, (5) Promote Transfer Across Genres and (6) Focused Instruction could be used. In respect to the above literature, only one out of the suggested by Moore (1999) was used by the teachers in the school. The percentage of use was also even very little as only 10% was recorded.

4.3.2 Strategies used by students to improve their own reading comprehension difficulties.

In the interview conducted among the sampled students, the below were the responses as to how they answer and improve their own reading comprehension difficulties

Table 8: Strategies used by students to improve their own reading comprehension difficulties.

Strategy used	Frequency	Percentage
Activating and Using Background Knowledge	10	45.50
Generating and Asking Questions	5	22.70
Making Inferences	2	9.10
Predicting	3	13.60
Summarizing	1	4.55
Visualizing	1	4.55
Total	22	100

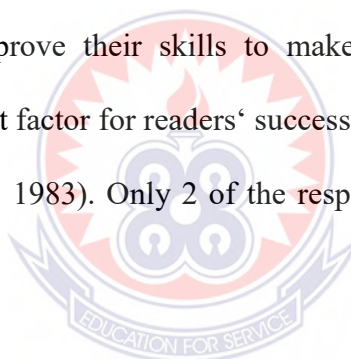


Out of the total 22 students 10 of the students representing 45.50% said they use this Activating and Using Background Knowledge. Majority of the students used this method. In this strategy, readers activate their background knowledge and apply it to aid them comprehend what they are reading. This knowledge consists of individuals' experiences with the world together with their concepts for how written text work, involving word recognition, print concepts, word meaning, and how the text is formed (Anderson & Pearson, 1984).

Five (5) of the respondents representing 22.7% used generating and asking questions. In this strategy, readers ask themselves pertinent questions in reading the text. This strategy assists readers to combine information, recognize main ideas, and

summarize information. Asking appropriate questions permits successful readers to concentrate on the most important information of a text (Wood, Woloshyn, & Willoughby, 1995). Creating relevant questions helps good readers to concentrate on difficulties with comprehension and to take the necessary actions to solve those problems (Pressley, Symons, McGoldrick, & Snyder, 1995).

Making inferences was also used by the students. In this strategy readers assess or draw conclusions from information in a text. In this strategy, writers do not always provide full information about a topic, place, personality, or happening. Instead, they provide information that readers can use to read by making inferences that integrate information of the text with their previous knowledge. Through this process, readers can improve their skills to make meaning. Being able to make inferences is an important factor for readers' successful reading (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Hansen & Pearson, 1983). Only 2 of the respondents representing 9.10% used this method.



Predicting was also used. In this strategy, readers are able to gain meaning from a text by making educated guesses. Successful readers apply forecasting to make their existing knowledge to new information from a text to obtain meaning from what they read. Before reading, readers may apply what they know about a writer to forecast what a text will be about. The title of a text can operate memories of texts with the same content, permitting them to guess the content of a new text. During reading, successful readers can make predictions about what will occur next, or what opinions the writer will offer to support a discussion. Readers try to assess these predictions ceaselessly and change any prediction that is not approved by the reading (Gillet, & Temple, 1994). Three (3) respondents representing 13.10% said they used

this method One (1) respondent representing 4.55% used Summarizing. In this regard, readers combine information in a text to elaborate in their own words what the text is about. Summarizing is a significant strategy that allows readers to remember text rapidly. In this strategy, readers can be aware of text structure, of what is significant in a text, and of how opinions are related to each other. Effective summarizing of explanatory text includes things like condensing the steps in a scientific process, the steps of development of an art movement, or the episodes that result in certain important historical happenings. Effective summarizing of narrative text includes things such as connecting happenings in a story line or recognizing the elements that stimulate a character's activities and conduct (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2000).

Visualizing also was also used. Readers can make mental picture of a text to comprehend processes they face during reading. This skill shows that a reader perceives a text. Readers who form a mental image as they read are better able to remember what they have read than those who do not image (Pressley, 976). Visualizing is very important when it is used for narrative texts. When readers read narrative texts, they can easily understand what is happening by visualizing the place, personalities, or operations of a plan. It can also be used for the reading of expository texts. Readers visualizing steps in a process or stages in a happening or forming an image that help them to recall some abstract ideas or significant names (Gambrell & Bales, 1986). In this category as well one (1) respondent representing 4.55% used this method.

Literature suggests that successful readers try to use different strategies to make meaning as they read. They do not use similar strategies; instead, they like to expand and practice those strategies that are beneficial to them. Moreover, they are

very flexible in the application of their strategies, they change from strategy to strategy, and they apply various strategies with different types of texts (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). The important point here is that successful readers can make good decisions about which strategies to apply and when to use them. A lot of students can gain from explicit instruction that teaches them to apply particular strategies for understanding a text. The other point is that particular comprehension strategies can be taught and learned and that their conscious use can help readers to ameliorate their comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The purpose of this paper is to identify the underlying factors for the weakness of English reading comprehension and address the practical problems faced by the students of Koforidua Presby JHS one students.

The first objective of this research was concerned with comprehension errors that affect student's academic performance. Words misformation was the most common error made by the JHS One pupils in Koforidua Presbyterian

The second research question sought to find out the effects of poor reading comprehension on students' academic performances (First term exams; 2019/2020 academic year), for JHS One pupils in Koforidua Presbyterian JHS was analysed. 22 students who were identified to have problem with reading comprehension's scores in the various subjects studied at JHS were analysed to see if their difficulty had any effect on their performances in the various subjects. The results was consistent with previous researches and suggested that reading comprehension has a negative effect on academic performances.

In the third research question, in which the researchers sought to find out what could be done to improve and make students with poor reading comprehension comfortable in the school, it was found out that Activating and Using Background Knowledge was the most recommended method to use.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the researcher made the following conclusion:

1. Majority of teachers said that reading difficulties was the main cause of poor academic performance in Koforidua Presbyterian JHS One
2. Words misformation was the most common error made by the Koforidua Presbyterian JHS One students.
3. Pupils' inability to read and comprehend in English language have a great effect on almost all the other subjects except French
4. The students do not only make mistakes in written English but also in their speech.
5. There was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the performance of male and female students in all the subjects.
6. Reading comprehension is a complex process in itself, but it also depends upon other important lower-level processes. It is a critical foundation for later academic learning, many employment skills, and life satisfaction. It is an important skill to target, but we should not forget about the skills on which it depends. To improve the reading comprehension skills of poor performers, we need to understand that there is no "magic wand" and no secret weapon that will quickly improve reading competencies for all poor readers.
7. Careful assessment is required to determine individual children's strengths and weaknesses, and programs need to be tailored accordingly; most poor readers will need continued support in many areas. The roots of most reading comprehension problems lie in the early elementary years. Waiting to address them in later elementary or even secondary school is a high-risk strategy.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are suggested by the researchers to improve the students' ability in reading comprehension.

1. Language teachers and language teaching materials need to focus on the areas in which learners are likely to face difficulties in mastering reading comprehension.
2. For the teacher, the researcher suggests to creatively find some interesting method which can motivate students in learning such as: (1) giving direct explicit instructions, (2) encouraging cognitive collaborations,
3. The researcher also suggests to the English teacher to encourage the students to use English Language in their daily communications to enable them improve their comprehension abilities.

5.4 Suggestions for further studies

1. The researcher suggests that other next researchers can use this research as a reference to conduct their research on the same field. It is really possible that there are other effective methods to teach reading comprehension
2. The researcher also suggests that an action research be conducted at the school where an intervention process would be carried out to improve the student's reading comprehension difficulties

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