



USING PHONIC METHOD TO IMPROVE POOR READING ABILITY OF PUPILS AT TECHIMAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL FORM ONE

Gabriel Kwame Ankrah¹ⁱ,

Doris Nyanta²,

Kwasi Opoku³

^{1,3}Valley View University,

Techiman Campus, Techiman, Ghana

²University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

Abstract:

The study was undertaken to unearth and implore the necessary strategies to blend five and six letters to form a meaningful word. The research instrument used was test items. All the pupils in the class took the same test thus, pre-test. It was used to gather data baseline information before the research was carried out on them. Biographic data of their responses were analyzed, discussed and the findings brought to the face. The study revealed the areas in which the pupils falter when reading and the appropriate techniques and strategies were used to control its occurrence. Based on the findings, the researcher gave some recommendations. Teachers should have mastery over the subject matter and also use the appropriate methods in the teaching of the topic. Again, they should make their lessons child centered to avoid scaring the pupils off. The study further opens the door for more research into pupil's inability to blend five and six letters to form meaningful words.

Keywords: phonic method, poor reading ability, Techiman, form one

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1. Introduction

This chapter comprises the background of the study, which gives an insight into the study, statement of the problem, highlighting the existed and newly found problems about the study, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, which

ⁱ Correspondence: email gabisjesus@yahoo.co.uk, nana_akos@yahoo.com, mrparady@yahoo.com

identifies the people and organization that will benefit from this scope of the study, limitations of the study, the definition of key terms used in this chapter and how the study is organized. This chapter provided the reader with an overview of the research.

Modern society deems the ability to read as one of the most requisite skills to succeed at school and in the workplace. According to Pretorius & Machet (2004) as cited in Klapwijk (2011), all academic attainment depends to a greater degree on reading literacy.

Parris, Gambrell and Schleicher (2008, p10) argue that the capacity to read is the primary need for full participation in one's society and economy. However, developing the skills to read happily is not a simple process. Reading is more than the ability to recognize letters and decode words. Reading is ultimately about composing meaning from written text (Juel & Graves, 1998). In other words, the aim of reading is to understand what is being read. Reading comprehension requires the integration of meaning across words, sentences and passages (Paris & Hamilton, 2009, p40). Reading literacy has been defined as *"the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual"* (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture 'MBESC', 2004, p20). It involves the interpretation of printed words and finding meaning in them (Wario, 1989).

Reading is a very important skill and it contributes to the success of a learner's school career as well as being important later in life (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998). Heckman (2002) as cited in Statkus, Rivalland & Rohl (2005) described reading as a communication skill that produces many other skills and is a key part of our capacity to increase our performance. If learners struggle to read, it will be difficult for them to cope in other subjects as learning involves the understanding of concepts, the enhancement of thinking skills and the overall academic development of the learners. The key to success, national growth and development greatly depends on Education. It is an undisputable fact that English Language is the Lingua Franca of Ghana. Recently, there has been a drastic reduction in the performance of English Language at all levels of education in Ghana. This has made the ministry of Education, teachers, stakeholders and other concerned people anxious. In view of these concerns and for us to help our future leaders; serious attention must be taken to address the poor reading ability in English of pupils in the secondary schools.

It was realized that, it is a problem of phonetic understanding among Techiman Senior High School form one 'Art 2' pupils; during my teaching practice. The pupils performance in English language was nothing to write home about in several evaluation tests conducted after a lesson taught by my mentor.

1.1 Statement of the problem

In the course of teaching at Techiman Senior High School, It was discovered that the pupils of form one 'Art 2' have problems in reading five and six letter words during English reading lesson. The observation was that most of the pupils could not identify some of the letters of the alphabet and pronounce simple words.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Generally, this research work aims at building the reading skills, involving the use of the phonic method. The reasons to undertake this research among others include the under-mentioned. The reason of the study is to help pupils blend sounds to help them develop words attack skills.

1.3 Research Questions

In an attempt to find out why pupils at Techiman Senior High School form One 'Art 2' Pupil inability to read, the following research hypotheses were raised.

- Will the use of phonics help pupils overcome their difficulties in reading?
- Will pupils respond well to the use of the chosen activities?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to bring out the benefits pupils, teachers and the community will derive. The use of phonetic method in teaching English reading at Techiman Senior High School form one 'Art2' pupils is to help them overcome their reading difficulties and sustain their interest in reading. Pupils' interest in reading helps them to be more fluent.

The study will help teachers to use the appropriate methods and materials which will help make teaching English language especially reading easy for them. Pupils' ability to read well is of good benefit to the community at large.

1.5 Limitation

Throughout the research, there were a lot of setbacks which made the work of the researcher a difficult one.

One of the problems that limited this project is that, much time was not at the disposal of the researcher to carry out a comprehensive study on the problem since she had to combine teaching practice together with the research work and also studying of manuals.

Secondly, some pupils were not regular in school for the researcher to determine the validity of the result. This made the work very difficult for the researcher.

Finally, the researcher faced the problem of financial constraints since she had to visit the internet frequently to obtain information that will benefit her work.

1.6 Delimitation

The research study concentrated mainly on reading instead of any other aspect of the English language. The research was undertaken in Techiman Senior High School form one 'Art 2'. It should have covered the entire form two pupils but it was limited to some pupils in the class who lack the ability to read under the subject English language.

1.7 Organization of the study

The project work consists of five chapters which are follows:

Chapter one: Introduction to the study, statement of problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study.

Chapter two: Review of related literature. It talks about what other researchers, educationalists and other scholars have discussed on similar works, and also serve as a guide to research questions hence creating a literature review summary.

Chapter three: Methodology of the project work which involves sample size, action research design, interventions using observation questionnaire tests and interview. On the other hand, to obtain correct data for presentation, research design and methods are employed in the work.

Chapter four is the presentation of data and analysis. The data collected are based on the researcher's questions, discussions in chapter one of the project work.

Chapter five: Summary, conclusion and recommendations. A general overview of phonetic problems and methodology are included here for future study.

1.8 Definitions of Terms

The terms that follow are defined to clarify the concepts of reading and writing on which this study is focused.

Reading – is the cognitive process of understanding a written linguistic message. It can also be defined as a simple, passive process that involves reading words in a linear fashion and internalising their meaning one at a time (Harris, 2000).

Reading literacy: Refers to understanding, using and reflecting on written texts in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential and to participate in society (Programme for International Student Assessment PISA, 2006).

Cognitive skills: These are any mental skills that are used in the process of acquiring knowledge. These skills include reasoning, perception, and intuition. Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (1998) describes the importance of

cognitive skills in acquiring literacy skills as follows: *"Reading and writing rely on a specific set of cognitive skills such as attention, memory, symbolic thinking, and self-regulation"*.

Reading methods: A reading method is a set of teaching and learning materials and/or activities often given a label, such as phonics method, and syllabic method. (International Reading Association, 1998).

Phonic: a method of teaching reading and spelling based upon the phonic interpretation of ordinary spelling. It is related to speech sounds.

Syllable: one or more letters representing a unit of spoken language consisting of a single uninterrupted sound.

Syllabic method: it is a method of breaking words into syllabus. For instance, individual- in-di-vi-dual, etc.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2. The History of the English Language in Ghana

The Europeans who colonized Ghana came as conquerors and invaders. The purpose of their journey was very specific, as such; they would employ almost any means to make their excursion more expedient, no matter what the cost to the indigenous people.

Training in literacy of the English language in Ghana was historically been targeted to select groups of Ghanaians. The earliest recorded teaching of the English language to Ghanaians was to train them as interpreters to assist the British colonists in trade. It is also documented that the colonists went so far as to send a small number of Ghanaians to Britain to receive this training. (J. A. Sackey 1997) pp129

The second major purpose of educating Ghanaians was to make them literate so that they could read the bible. European missionaries came to Ghana with the purpose of imparting religion and morality upon the 'pagan' African. According to writer K.A. Sey, *"English in (Ghana) has from the very beginning been associated with Christianity...all schools were run by Christian missionaries."* (K. A. Sey, 1973), 5

However, other schools opened to train people for jobs. Also, *"...the main objective of promoting the European languages was to train cheap manpower for the administration of the colonies."* K. A. Sey, (1973), 5

Based on this policy, it can be inferred that the goal of the colonial administration was not to provide nationwide literacy to give people the tools they need to participate in development, but to train as many people as were needed to satisfy their personal needs.

2.0.1 The Importance of English Language to Ghanaian

The importance of English language in Ghana cannot be overemphasized. English is the official language of the country. It is the language of the government. It is use to perform all official function of the government. It is the language of Parliament, Judiciary and the Offices, Jackson college education. "Practical English Methodology for diploma in basic education" (by distance)

English is the unifying force in the country. Ghana is a small country, it can boast of over thirty ethnic groups with each group speaking different dialects, M.E. Kropp Dakubu. "Languages and Community" (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1996). No ethnic group would like a particular language from another group to be imposed on it. The use of English binds the people together.

English makes communication in the country very easy. This is because people from different ethnic groups use English easily to communicate with others from other groups.

English being an international language enables citizens of Ghana to interact freely with people all over the world. It is an undeniable fact that English is the most widely spoken language of the world and the ability to speak this language is a great asset to the people of Ghana.

2.0.2 Language policies and advantages of using English Language in the Ghanaian schools

English is the medium of instruction from basic to the highest level of education in the country. Apart from being the medium of instruction, it is also studied as a subject from basic one to the university. The English courses are intended to develop pupils' language competence.

English lay a solid foundation for the students in their studies. All most all the textbooks used from Primary one to the university are written in English. For this reason, it makes continuity of education very easy.

English enables students of the country to pursue far the studies overseas without any constrains. It enables students to achieve their intended careers easily.

2.0.3 Background of Techiman

Techiman is a town and is the capital of Techiman municipal of the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana. It is the leading market town in south Ghana. It is together with Sunyani, one of the two major cities and settlements of Brong Ahafo region. Techiman has a settlement population of 104,212 people in 2013. Techiman is located at a historical

crossroads of trade routes and the Tano River and serves as capital of the Techiman Municipal Districts.

2.0.4 History of Techiman

The Akan's, according to their oral tradition migrated from Techiman to find the coastal plan Kessim kingdom and present central region in 1252. After Bono Manso, capital of the Bono State, were taken by the Asante Empire in 1723, then the Bono- Techiman state was founded in 1740 under Ashanti Sovereignty.

2.0.5 Culture

Techiman has started the construction of a modern culture Centre. The purpose of the Centre is the preservation of the traditions of the Bono Nation. Techiman celebrates the annual Apoo in April/May- a kind of Mardi Grass. Before 2009, the celebration of Apoo has been suspended for several years due to the decease of the Bonoman King. The climax of the Apoo is the durbar of the king (Omanhene) through Techiman. In August, an annual yam ceremony takes place and it marks the end of the yam production in the Brong Ahafo Region.

2.1 Definition of Literature Review

Collis and Hussey (2003) state that literature refers to all sources of published data and is a written summary from literature research. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) stated that literature review describes theoretical perspectives and previous research findings regarding the problem at hand. The purpose of literature review is described by Akpo (2006) as that of providing the context for the research by looking at the work of what has already been done in the subject area. In this case, literature review is a way of exploring the existing literature to ascertain what has been written and published on methods of teaching reading at Senior High School. The literature review in this chapter focuses on theories of reading and learning.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework, according to Maxwell (2005), assists the researcher in understanding what problems have been encountered with existing research and theory, what contradictions the researcher has found in existing views, and how the study can make an original contribution to understanding.

In this study, I used a theoretical framework for understanding teaching methods of reading not based purely on a theoretical point of view, but also by taking

existing practice into account, or at least acknowledging the constraints caused by the gap between theory and practice.

In investigating the possible mismatch between training in teaching methods at college and the teachers' application of the methods in the classroom, the constructivist theoretical framework was used in this study. The constructivist theory is based on the belief that people construct their understanding of phenomena by actively interacting with other people and 'objects' in the world around them (Mertens, 2010). The view in this study was that in order for teachers to appropriately use teaching methods they were taught in college, they would need to 'appropriate' (i.e. own) the methods in a constructivist way. This is that they would not only need to understand them theoretically but also learn how to use them in practice in the classrooms.

2.3 Defining Reading

In order to assess the manner in which the Teachers applied the teaching methods of reading, we need to understand what reading is. According to Rockets (2011), reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation. Reading also means making meaning from print. In addition, reading is also about decoding, comprehension, narrative, familiarity with books and other printed material and a culture of wanting to and enjoying reading (House of Commons, 20045). This goes hand in hand with (Derchant, 1993) who stated that reading involves the recording of the printed words in the brain by the visual and perceptual processes, converting the written symbols into language, and through cognitive and comprehension processes creating meaning by relating the symbols to the readers' prior knowledge. Moreover, Harris (2006) stated that reading could be defined as the understanding of the written text. This simply means that the end result of any act of engagement should be comprehension of a text. She emphasized four principles of effective readers.

These are that:

- Effective readers do a lot of predicting.
- Effective readers use certain strategies to help them with reading difficulties and blockages. These include sounding out letters in words and breaking words into parts.
- Effective readers draw heavily on their background knowledge. This includes past experience with reading, knowledge of sounds and words, most importantly knowledge about the content being written in the text.
- Effective readers are typically confident enough to read difficult text.

Learners and teachers often have the wrong perception of what reading is and most of the time their misunderstanding is as a result of the training they have been given. Since the focus of my study was to find out what reading methods primary teachers used to teach reading, these definitions clarify what reading is and how it is important to understand all the components in order to teach reading effectively.

2.3.1 Theories of Reading

The study needed to benefit from the theoretical ways in which the teaching of reading was understood. Vaezi (2006) identified three main theories of reading. These are the traditional view, the cognitive view and the metacognitive view of reading. The traditional view focuses on the printed form of a text while the cognitive view looks at the role of background knowledge in addition to what appears on the printed page and the metacognitive view is based on the control and manipulation that a reader can have on the act of comprehending a text.

According to Dole, Duffy, Roehler and Pearson (1991), in the traditional view of reading, novice readers acquire a set of hierarchically ordered sub-skills that sequentially build toward comprehension ability. Having mastered these skills, readers are viewed as experts who comprehend what they read. According to Nunan (1991), the traditional view is the 'bottom-up' (language-based process) view of reading which involves the decoding of a series of written symbols into their aural equivalents in the quest of making sense of the text. According to Harris (2006), the bottom-up theories argue that meaning is embedded in the text and that meaning travels from the 'bottom' (the page) 'up' to the eyes. This theory defines reading as beginning from letters that form the printed words, and then form sentences, sentences form texts. The steps here explain that the combining of small parts will eventually form a whole text from which meaning will emerge.

According to this theory the reading process consists of a number of skills and that children need to be taught to be able to hear and identify sounds in words (phonemic awareness), match sounds and letters (phonics), and recognise words in isolation with automaticity (Moller, 2013).

Smith (1978) cited in Nunan (1991) stated that reading works in the reverse order from that proposed by the bottom-up theory. He believed that in order to identify words we need to comprehend meaning. I partly agree with Nunan but also feel that this theory displays that knowledge of linguistic features is also necessary for reading comprehension to take place. Nunan stated that it was time consuming to teach reading in chunks, whereas the teacher should just teach the top down theory of getting the learners to understand the content before they are taught the sounds. Learners should

be able to identify sound in order to correctly understand words. It is the over dependence on this theory that might limit learning to read with understanding. If learners are taught reading focusing mostly on the bottom up theory/process they would only know how to decode letters and not understand the words that they are decoding.

The cognitive view is the 'top-down' (knowledge-based process) model which directly opposes the 'bottom-up' model. According to Goodman (1967) cited in Paran (1996) reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game, a process in which readers sample the text, make hypotheses, confirm or reject them, make new hypotheses, and so forth. The cognitive view encompasses the schema theory of reading which is used in the process of interpreting sensory data, in retrieving information from memory, in organising goals and sub-goals, in allocating resources, and in guiding the flow of the processing system. The schema is necessary to make connections before reading, while reading and after reading (Dilbeck, undated). Harris (2006) stated that the top-down theories emphasise that reading begins in the head of the reader-claiming that the reader moves from the 'top'- the brain – down to the text on the page. Readers use their prior knowledge stored in their memories to unlock the text. According to this theory, without background knowledge meaning cannot be made from the text. This theory proposes that the objective of reading is making meaning of the text by using the readers' background knowledge. Vialle (2000) cited in Harris, Turbill, Fitzsimmons, & McKenzie (2006) stated that the top-down theory adopts a constructivist stance and links reading comprehension to factors both inside and outside the reader.

The metacognitive view according to Block (1992) defines the control readers execute on their ability to understand a text. Metacognition involves thinking about what one is doing while reading (Klein, Peterson and Simington, 1991). Sloan and Whitehead (1986), Ruddell and Speaker (1985), and Rumelhart (1994) cited in Harris (2006) suggest that while reading is predominantly a meaning – making process that is embedded in the top-down view also requires that readers focus on skills – a position more aligned to a bottom up view. This model of reading has taken a more social view of reading. Readers in this view can be taught to adjust their reading strategies in a flexible manner to choose the best strategy to meet the purpose of the current text and their purpose for reading it.

Each view of reading can help to develop the reading capacity of learners differently if approached correctly. All these theories are integrated and used in the training of teachers.

2.3.2 Methods of Reading

In this section, various methods of how to teach reading are presented with the intention of showing what they are and how they relate to this study. According to the International Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) (1999), various methods of teaching reading begin by:

- teaching learners to get meaning from whole chunks of text,
- teaching whole words and going on to larger chunks of text,
- teaching whole words and breaking them down into smaller parts,
- teaching parts of words and putting them together into whole words, or
- teaching meaning, whole words, and parts of words from the very beginning.

Common methods of teaching reading are identified by SIL International (1999) as the analytic method, the eclectic method, the global method, the phonic method, the sight word method, the syllable method and the synthetic method. But this study reviews the type of reading under: Phonic Method, Syllabic method and look and say method.

2.3.2.1 The Phonic Method

A phonic method of teaching reading relates letters (graphemes) to sounds (phonemes) they represent (Halvorson 1992). According to Aukerman (1984), the theory behind the phonic approach is based on two assumptions. These are:

- Most languages have consistent phoneme (sound) to grapheme (letter) correlation
- Once learners have learned the relationships of the letters to the sounds, they can pronounce printed words by blending the sounds together (Aukerman, 1984).

An alphabetic, phonic approach to teaching reading has been used for centuries and since then it has been further developed and modified in such a way that it is used today in varying degrees in most methods of teaching reading (SIL International, 1999). An analytic method to reading begins with words (preferably nouns that can be easily illustrated), then breaks the words into parts. *“By the use of [meaningful] words the learner can better see the relationship between reading and their own language”* (Gudschinsky, 1973).

2.3.2.2 Syllable Method (combination of phonic and syllable methods)

A syllable method to teaching reading is a method which uses syllable recognition as the primary word attack skill and is characterized by use of the syllable as the basic building block or unit for decoding words whereby learners learn syllables before reading words and text (SIL International, 1999).

2.3.3 Teaching Methods of Reading in the Techiman SHS

In this section, the teaching methods that were used in the Namibian BETD teacher preparation program are presented. These are the phonics, whole language, look and say, the language experience and the shared reading methods. These methods are covered in this section to show the types of methods that were expected to be known and used by teachers who graduated from the BETD programme.

2.3.3.1 Phonics Method

According to the phonics method, reading is a matter of learning letter-sound relationships, and reading and memorising words in isolation (Ekwall & Shanker, 1993:1, 7; Clay, 1991b; Weaver, 1994, Adams, 1990). Phonics, as described by Adams (1990:50), refers to *“a system of teaching reading that builds on the alphabetic principle, a system of which a central component is the teaching of correspondences between letters or groups of letters and their pronunciations”*. In this method, small units like letters and short words, along with spelling and punctuation rules, are taught in isolation, devoid of meaning. Behaviourist scholars argue that when children learn to pronounce words correctly, meaning will follow automatically (Weaver, 1994). Kidd (2011) felt that the phonics approach tended to ignore the valuable information, language patterns and reading strategies children bring to the reading experience, as well as reading and writing simultaneously. When this method is used, children struggle to learn how to use their acquired knowledge when approaching texts during reading because they are forced to focus on lists of phonics, words and rules they have memorised instead of applying strategies focused on the process behind reading. This might hamper the ability to read in some cases. Taking Kidd’s view and what is taking place in schools at present where most learners cannot read, I tend to agree with her. The phonic method advocates the teaching of isolated skills such as letter names which is based on a belief that knowing all the letter names and sounds will help learners understand and read fluently but this is not really the case.

2.3.3.2 The Look and Say Method

The look-and-say method is used to teach reading. The basic feature of this method is explained by Campbell (1995, p. 161) as being based on the view that *“language is indeed whole and it is best learnt as a whole with meaningful and relevant texts”*. This method can also be divided into two approaches; the look-and-say whole word and the look-and-say whole sentence approach.

When teaching via the look-and-say word method, a teacher introduces words with the help of pictures or real objects. The words are then presented on flash cards. In

this method, as explained by Hann (1984, p. 31), “*children are taught to respond to whole words rather than separate parts of words*”. The teacher shows a picture to the learners to identify (e.g. a chair). When they identify the picture as a chair, the teacher then flashes the word or writes it on the chalkboard, and tells the learners that the word is pronounced, ‘chair’. Learners are encouraged to say the word as a whole after the teacher. They repeat this with all the words. Once learners become confident in reading the words, the pictures are removed. The focus of this study is to find out if teachers used these effective approaches.

There is, however no one correct or best method/approach for teaching reading. Findings from the research done by the Australian government found that, “*all pupils learn best when teachers adopt an integrated approach to learning to read that explicitly teaches phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension*” (Australia. Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), 2005, p.11). From this, it appears that the use of multiple methods to accommodate the diversity of learners in their classrooms is encouraged because “*What works for one student or for one teacher may not work for another. What works for one type of content may not work in another situation*” (Wood & Algozzine, 1994, p. 6). Having said this, my study intended to establish how teachers used phonic, syllabic and look and say reading methods when teaching reading amongst diverse learners.

2.4 Causes of Pupils Inability to Read

A variety of reasons has been suggested for reading weaknesses. Scholars and reading specialist classify pupils with serious difficulties as ‘retarded readers.

Katanga Irene (2005) has it to say that, the common problem associated with the teaching and learning of language that is making it difficult for pupils to identify words so as to pronounce the words correctly are due to the wrong method of teaching and inadequate use of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) by some teachers.

The same author continues to say that, if one wants to induce children to read, one must teach them to read. This means that one can only make children read by providing them with necessary materials needed for reading.

The World Book Encyclopedia (1995) sees poor reading disabilities to be caused by failure to concentrate. To get meaning from reading materials, a person must focus the mind on the text. Almost all readers occasionally fail to understand the text their eye movement perceives. Some readers, particularly young ones dealing with assigned materials often try to read that way as though the process were so automatic as to require no thought. But for comprehension to occur, readers must bring their knowledge and experience to the act of gaining meaning from words. The same book

adds to it that disability occurs as a result of insufficient experience. All readers bring their experiences to the comprehension process.

2.5 Possible Solutions to Poor Reading

Fromkirk V., and Podman R., (1988), the teacher could help their pupils to improve upon their reading competence by drilling the child through the following reading process:

- Teaching the child how to break simple words into pieces and pronounce.
- Teaching the child to read mono-syllabic, (one syllable) word. Examples: oft, bid, vile, slew, glove, tongue, yelled, rhythm, etc.
- Teaching the child to read other simple words. E.g. dumb, rage, cheeks, etc.
- Teaching the child to read single and simple sentences.

2.6 Summary of the Review

This chapter has been discussing what other authors or researchers think of reading, the types of reading, signs of reading difficulties, causes of pupil inability to read, activities to improve pupils' skills and the early intervention in reading.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Methodology is the theoretical analysis of the method applied to a field study. This chapter deals with the process used in conducting the research. It has been divided into five sections. These are research design population and sample selection, research instruments and the intervention processes as well as data collection procedures and data analysis plan.

3.1 Research Design

Research design refers to the strategy used to integrate the different components of the research project in a cohesive and coherent way. Rather than a "cookbook" from which one chooses the best recipe, it is a means to structure a research project in order to address a defined set of questions (Trochim and Land, 1982)

This work is an experiment that seeks to expose a sample group to a chosen intervention (phonic method) to find out if the people will response to it. The use of the action research was appropriate because it offers the teacher a practical experience in dealing with a classroom problem.

3.2 Population and Sample Selection

The population was focused on Techiman Senior High School form One 'Art 2' Pupils. The number of the pupils used for the research was thirty-five (35). Out of these thirty-five (35) pupils, eleven are (15) boys and the rest twenty (20) were girls. The samples selection was done using the whole class of Techiman Senior High School form One 'Art 2' pupils.

3.3 Research Instruments

In addressing the problem under-study, the investigator applied the use of a certain techniques to enable the acquisition of substantive data on the problem identified. The instrument adopted was test.

3.3.1 Test

Tests were conducted to gather data for the study. There were two tests; pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was used to gather data baseline while the post-test was used to gather data after the intervention to make it possible for comparison between pre-test and post-test intervention performances.

A. Pre-Intervention

A pre-test was conducted to diagnose the level of pupil's ability blend five and six letters to form a word. The test was written on the board and pupils were asked to provide the answers on sheet of paper. The letters of the alphabet were written on the board in the lower case and pupils were instructed to any five or six of the alphabet to form a word. The pupils were given thirty minutes to form any ten (10) words. After writing the questions on the board for the pupils, they were monitored to avoid copying. When the allocated time was due, the answer sheets were collected from the pupils.

After marking it, it was realized that, most of them performed below average and this revealed that the pupils were unable to blend five and six letters form a words.

B. Intervention

An intervention is a planned, often unannounced, meeting with a person with a serious personal problem, in order to persuade the person to seek treatment. This process consists of a set of concrete measures put in place to help solve a problem. In an attempt to solve this problem, various activities were planned in a table form to help solve the problem.

C. Implementation of the Intervention

All the plans of the actions were carried out one after the other. Five weeks were used to carry out the whole intervention and in each week, there were two meetings. The following are the account for each week.

a) Week one: Objectives

- 1) Pupils will be able to recognize the alphabet and their sounds.
- 2) Pupils will be able to combine letters to form simple words.

Activities

Objective 1: The letters of the alphabet were written on the board. Pupils were instructed to listen attentively while a passage was read. After reading, pupils were told to read after the teacher. This was done twice and the pupils were allowed to read as a whole before individual reading.

Objective 2: The letters of the alphabet were written on seven-by-seven manila cards. The cards were displayed on a table and pupils were shown how the combination of letters to form words will be done. Pupils were put into groups and each group was asked to combine letters to form words.

b) Week two and three: Objectives

Pupils will be able to:

- Associate letters with their sounds.
- Identify the vowels and consonants from the alphabet.
- Recognize and pronounce at least eight sight words.

Activities

Pupils were taken through a revision of the alphabet before we proceeded to the next activity. This was done by asking the pupils them to recite the alphabet one after the other.

For the association of words with their sounds, pictures drawn were pasted on the board and a set of cards on which initial consonants which goes with the picture were displayed on a table. The teacher named a fruit and a pupil came and found the consonant that went with the picture. Example: Mango.....M, Orange....O etc. The next activity was identification of the vowels and consonant, here the letters of the alphabet were written on the board, it was explain to the pupil that, there are five (5) vowels (letters) in the alphabet and the rest that is, twenty-one (21) are consonant sounds. The vowel sounds (letters) are: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/ and the remaining ones are the consonant. The pupils were taken through some sight words like: night, right, sight, word, etc

these words was written on the board, the teacher pronounce the words and the pupils repeated after her.

c) Week three: Objectives

Pupils will be able to;

- blend sounds to form meaning words
- recognize and pronounce at least eight sight words.

Activities

There was a revision on association of words and sight words and vowels and consonant. The letters of the alphabet was written on the board and the pupils were asked to write all the vowel sound from it. The next activity was blending of the sound to form meaningful words. Here, the teachers use the phonic slide and phonic wheel to reinforce the blending of the sound. A short description was given on both the phonic slide and phonic wheel. Afterwards, a manila card on which the phonic wheel and the phonic slide are drawn on was pasted on the board for pupil to observe it for some time. The letters or the sound in each cell was blend to form a meaning words. Examples; /g/+l/+o/+v/+e/ =glove, /m/+o/+b/+i/+l/+e/ =mobile, /b/+r/+o/+o/+m/ =broom, etc. the diagram for the phonic slide used for this activity can found in appendix B. pupils were taking through some sight words; what, went, two, whose, those, etc. after a successful lesson taught, an assignment was given on phonic wheel to blend each letter (sound) to form a meaningful word.

d) Week four: Objectives

Pupils will be able to;

- Sing a short rhyme.
- Identify the words that rhyme in the poem.
- Identify and pronounce at least five sight words.

Activities

A revision was carried out on phonic wheel and phonic slide. After the assignment given on phonic wheel was collected and mark there was a clear indication that pupils excel tremendously. The next activity was written on a manila card and it was pasted on the board for pupils to have a look. The rhyme was recited for pupils line by line with correct pronunciation. It was done three times to their hearing. After that, the pupils were permitted to read after the teacher. It took almost thirty (30) minutes for them to capture the words.

On our next meeting, thus, on the identification of the rhyming words, pupils were taken through phonemic awareness activity, to identify rhyming words from the

passage. Here, words written on the Manila cards were hold out and pupils were asked to tell the sound that begins the name of that words. Pupils' attention was drawn to onset and rime in phonograms e.g: hand, sand, band, land, etc.

Sound identification was the next activity. The teacher performed three examples by clapping to the number of sounds (words) in his name.

Afterwards, pupils were given the chance to do so. But for them their names were written on the board to know the number of the sound (words).

The rhyming words written on the manila cards, thus, a list of words with the same ending was drop in one strange one for pupils to pick out. Examples: hat, mat, fat, ham/sun, nun, bun, put, etc. pupils were given the opportunity to put their thumbs up when words rhyme. Sometimes, it short from series and pupils were asked to finish.

On the next meeting, pupils were taken to the rhyme passage again after the phonemic awareness and they were asked to identify the rhyming words from the passage. The rhyme used for this activity can be found in appendix C.

Pupils were taken through some sight words e.g. the, next, five, shoe, down, etc. these words was written on the board, the teacher pronounce the words and pupils pronounce after the teacher.

e) Week five

There was only one meeting which lasted 60 minutes. This week was used for the post-test.

Post-test

The teacher selected a short passage from the pupils textbook and asked the pupils to read it aloud after the teacher have read it to the class two times. This was done to test whether there have been an improvement in the pupils' reading ability. After the passage, there were questions which the pupils were allowed to answer. This was also done to see if the pupils were able to comprehend the passage they read. The passage used for the post-test can be found in appendix D.

IV DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines and discusses the results of the study. A test was used in gathering information from the entire class. The statistical tool was the frequency distributive table alongside percentage.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

4.1.1 Pre-test Results

All the pupils wrote the pre-test conducted on 26th February, 2016. The outcome of the sample is shown below. The results of the pre-test and post-test are organized in table 1 and table 2.

Table 1: Analysis of the pre-test outcome

Marks (x)	Frequency (f)	fx	Number of Pupils marks (%)
0	5	0	20
1	4	4	15
2	5	10	20
3	4	12	16
4	5	20	20
5	5	20	8
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
£f = 25		£fx = 56	100

Mean = $\frac{£fx}{£f}$ Mean = $\frac{56}{25}$ Mean = 2.24

Discussion: from the table 1 above, the mean marks of the pupil was 2.24 which is approximately 2-5 marks out of the total 10 marks. Out of twenty-five pupils, only two (2) were able to score marks from 5-10 which represent 8% of the sample. This gives a clear indication that most of the pupils could not blend five (5) and six (6) letters of the alphabet to form a word.

4.1.2 Post-test Results

After a successful implementation of the intervention, another test was conducted to find out if pupils have understood the phonic method. All the pupils in the class took part in the test. The outcome of the results is shown below.

Table 2: Analysis of the Results

Marks (x)	Frequency (f)	fx	Number of Pupils marks (%)
0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0

5	0	0	0
6	1	6	4
7	2	14	8
8	6	48	24
9	8	12	32
10	8	80	32
	£f = 25	£fx = 220	100
Mean = $\frac{£fx}{£f}$	Mean = 220/25	Mean = 8.8 marks	

Discussion: from the table 2 above, the mean mark of the pupils is 8.8 which is approximately 9 out of 10 marks. All the twenty-five pupils scored more than the average mark 5 forming 0%. Base on the analysis, there is an implication that, there has been a great reduction in the pupils' inability to blend five (5) or six (6) letters of the alphabet to form a word. This is own to the fact that, the pupils were able to score an average mark of the mean that is 8.8.

Also, the analysis of the two results and their discussion, it is obvious that the materials employed has assisted to reduce the pupils inability to blend five (5) or six (6) letters of the alphabet to form a word.

4.1.3 Pre-test and Post-test Analysis

Table 3: The table below shows the pupils pre-test results

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Frequency	5	4	5	4	5	2	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 1: Bar graph on Pre-test Analysis

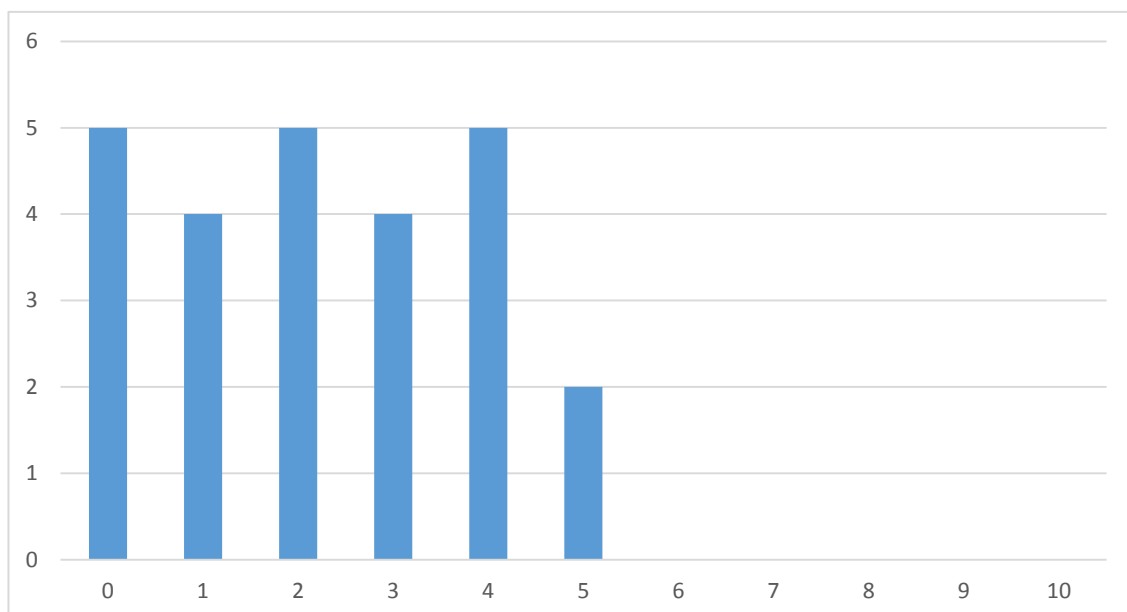
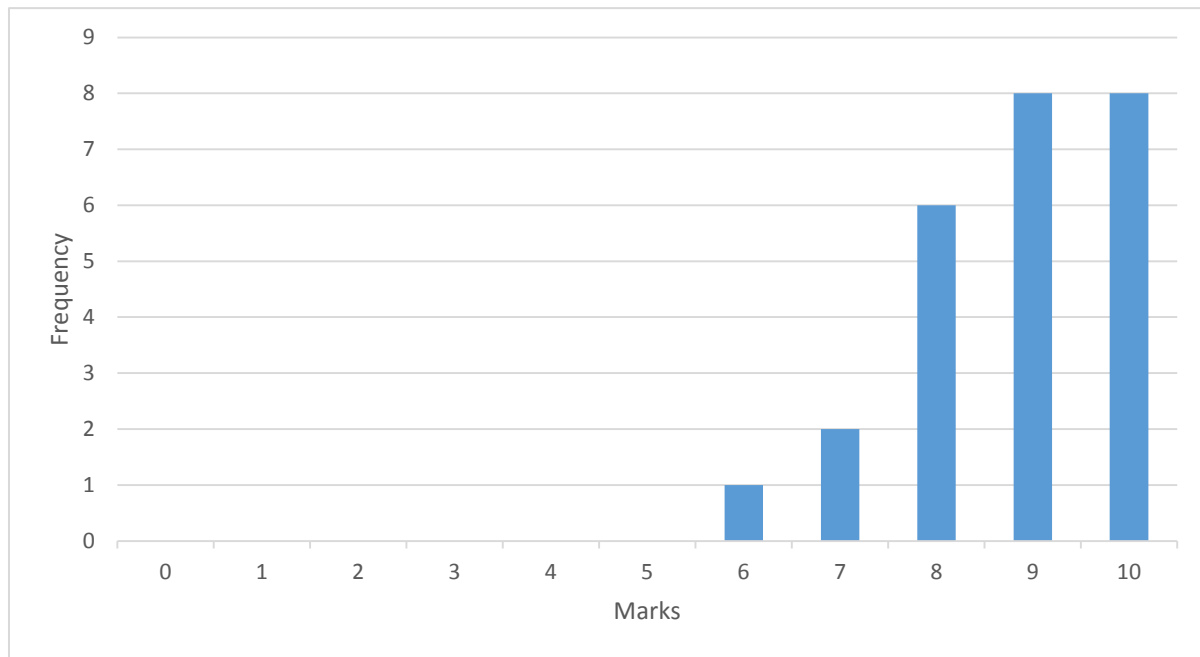


Table 4: The table below shows the pupils post-test results

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Frequency	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	6	8	8

Figure 2: Bar graph on post-test analysis



V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a summary of the study. It includes where the study was conducted, the sample used, how the data was collected and the instrument used for the analysis of the data. The chapter finally concludes with a conclusion and recommendations of the research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The research looked at teaching reading in secondary school form one 'Art 2' using the phonic method. It involved twenty-five pupils in form one from Techiman Senior High School in the Techiman District in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana.

The twenty-five pupils were taken through a series of activities involving the teaching of blending five and six letters to form a word. A pre-test in blending five and six letters was done through. The pupils were given exercises base on which they were scored.

Then came the intervention after the marking of the pre-test. It took about four weeks. This was done individually and then in groups.

A pre-test exercise was done after teaching the process to check whether there was an improvement. Although, the improvement was very limited. Post-test was conducted to find out how individuals had fared during the intervention process and it was also scored.

The study portrayed a significant difference in the overall exercise. The differences were not due to chances on a silver platter. The research literature recommends the type of teaching techniques used in the intervention. In totality these lend credence to the researcher's use of phonics method as an effective intervention and very worthwhile. The scores for the post-test showed an immense improvement and a step in the right direction.

5.2 Conclusion

The study, which sought to teach blending five and six letters to form a word (phonic method), was conducted at Techiman Senior High School 'Art 2' in the Techiman District. The study tried to intervene by instituting strategies to enhance it through various activities organized to arrive at this point, the researcher is of the firm conviction that the study was worth time spent and timely too.

5.3 Recommendations

It is the researcher's heart desires that the following under listed recommendations and suggestions are given a second thought to help improve the standard of pupils' phonics at the secondary level.

Future researchers can use this research as a stepping stone to conduct further researches to help the Ghana Education Service.

The following are the recommendations made:

- Teachers as role models should develop a positive attitude to the teaching and learning of English language especially phonics in the Secondary school so that pupils will emulate them.
- A different approach or technique and use of varied models should be adopted by teachers in the teaching and handling of phonic especially at the secondary level.
- Teachers should always bear the pain and anxieties of attending to each pupil and give him or her the needed assistance when appropriate so that they can all benefit from lessons.
- In conclusion, parents should not make the education of their wards the sole responsibility of teachers. But see themselves as partners who have a role to play for the successful development and the attainment of their children's potentials.

They should continually be encouraged to provide basic materials like exercise books, pencils, textbooks and others to enable their children to enjoy composition writing and the entire educational process as a whole.

References

1. Akpo, S. (2006). Research Methodology: Module RMA411S. Polytechnic of Namibia. Windhoek.
2. Australia. Department of Education, Science and Training. (2005). Teaching reading: Report and recommendations. National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy. Commonwealth of Australia.
3. Australian journal of language and literacy, 28(3). Special monograph edition.
4. Block, E. L. (1992). See how they read: comprehension monitoring of L1 and Collis, J. and Hussey, R. (2003). Business Research: A Practical Guide for Undergraduate Students. (2nd Edition). New York, USA: Pelgrave-Mcmillan Publishers.
5. Dilbeck, D. (undated). Journey to Reading Theories. Retrieved October 30, Dole, J. A. Duffy, G. G., Roehler, L. R., and Pearson, D. D. (1991). Moving from the old to the new: research on reading comprehension instruction. Edition). Pearson Education International. New Jersey
6. Harris, P., Turbill, J., Fitzsimmons, P., & Mckenzie, B. (2006). Reading in Primary School Years. (2nd ed.). Australia: Ligare Book Printers.
7. Harris, P., Turbill, J., Fitzsimmons, P., & Mckenzie, B. (2006). Reading in Primary School Years. (2nd ed.). Australia: Ligare Book Printers
<http://msit.gsu.edu/Readingconsortium/Literacylens/html/Dilbeck%20Journey%20to%20Reading.pdf>
8. http://www.ehow.com/info_8040040_factors-english-language-teaching
9. http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/literacy/referencematerials/glossaryofliteracyterms/wh_atisareadingapproach.htm
10. J.A. Sackey. "The English Language in Ghana. A History Perspective" in English in Ghana, ed. M.E. Kropp Dakubu (Accra: Black Mask Publishers. 1997), 126 K.A. Sey, Ghanaian English (London; Macmillan Education Limited, 1973), 5
11. Klein, M. L., Peterson, S., and Simington, L. (1991). Teaching Reading in the Elementary Grades. Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon. L2 readers. TESOL Quarterly 26(2)

12. Leedy, P. D. and Ormrod, J. E. (2010). *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. (9th London, J. (2013). *Factors Affecting the Quality of English Language Teaching and Learning*.
13. Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
14. Mertens, D. A. (2010). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
15. National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1998). *In young children. Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children*. 53 (4): 30-46. 1509 16th street, N.W., Washington, DC.
16. Nunan, D. (1991). *Language Teaching Methodology*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall International.
17. Paran, A. (1996). Reading in EFL: facts and fiction. *ELT Journal* 50.
18. Roskos, K. and Neuman, S. (2010). *Whatever Happened to Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Literacy? Review of Educational Research*.
19. Shared reading. (n.d.). Retrieved May, 2011, from www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/literacy/em-litr.html
20. SIL International (1999). *What is a reading approach?* Retrieved October 30, Statkus, S., Rivalland, J., & Rohl, M. (2005). *In teachers' hands: Effective literacy teaching practices in the early years of schooling*.
21. The World Bank (2008). Retrieved May, 2013, from <http://go.worldbank.org/l41DLBA8CO>
22. *The World Book Encyclopedia* (1998). The World Book Encyclopedia. New York Press
23. Trochim, W. M. K. and Land, D. A. (1982). *Designing designs for research. The Researcher*, 1(1), pp. 1-6.
24. Vaezi, S. (2006). *Metacognitive reading strategies across language and techniques*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Allameh Tabataba'I University, Tehran, Iran.
25. Wood, D. K., & Algozzine, B. (Eds.). (1994). *Teaching reading to high-risk learners: A unified perspective*. USA: Boston.

Appendices

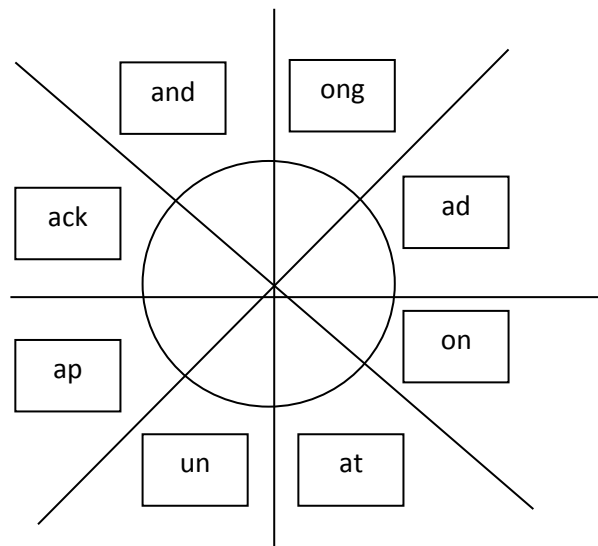
Appendix A: Phonic Slide

F		N
S		X
D	I	P
B		G
S		T
P		N



Movable Slide

Appendix B: Phonic Wheel



APPENDIX C

The Rhyme

A man in a hat,
Saw a ram in a cap.
So he took an axe,
From a mat,
And ran after the ram.
The ram ran and ran
And the man ran and ran!

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).