

**ASSISTING T I AHMADIYYA JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS IMPROVE UPON
THEIR READING AND COMPREHENSION SKILLS USING THE PHONIC
METHOD**

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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Student Declaration

I declare that this research work is my own work undertaken in the T.I Ahmadiyya Junior High school in the Bolgatanga Municipality under Dr. Issaka Cecilia Alimatu. References cited in this work have been duly acknowledged.

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SIGNATURE

DATE

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that, the preparation of this dissertation was supervised in accordance with the guideline for the supervision of thesis laid down by the University for Development Studies.

DR. ISSAKA CECILIA ALIMATU

.....

.....

SIGNATURE

DATE



I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Almighty God for His protection and guidance. My sincere appreciation goes to the entire tutorial body of the University for Development Studies for their support and guidance most especially Dr. Issaka Cecilia Alimatu for her encouragement and spending her busy schedule to go through my work to ensure its quality.

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ABSTRACT

The study design was action research conducted to solve a classroom problem which was identified during teaching and learning in T I Ahmadiyya Junior High School Form One. The study lasted for a three weeks from pre-intervention, intervention and post intervention stages. The purpose of this study was to improve the reading and comprehension skills of the JHS 1 students of T I Ahmadiyya Junior High School. The population of the entire form one class was 25 students and they were made up of 10 boys and 15 girls. Data were collected from pre-test, observation and post-test and analyzed on tables for easy understanding. The pre-test results show that no student scored between 80-100 marks, and only one (1) student had a pass mark which falls between 50-79 representing 10% of the student sampled population. The post test results show that four (4) students scored marks between 80-100 representing 40% of the sampled students. The study concluded that teachers are do not always consider the appropriate aspects of the phonic method like systematic synthetic phonic and phonics instruction for teaching reading and comprehension skills. The findings show that students face various levels of difficulties in learning reading comprehension. These difficulties emanated from their homes, teachers, remediation, assessment, sex, teaching and learning recourses, government inability to provide adequate infrastructure. First of all, the school environment must be conducive for learning to take place. The teachers who facilitate the students learning must be trained and retrained to be equipped with adequate competences for their jobs. Students try to identify their weaker points in their process; this will help them learn to improve upon their weak sites. Proper assessment should be made before mainstreaming student into one learning environment to enable teacher handle their individual differences.



INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter concentrates on background of the study, perceived problem, diagnosis of evidence and causes, statement of the problem and purpose of the study. The rest would be objectives of the study, research questions and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading is fundamental to students in a variety of situations and professions. In Ghana, the official language is English and hence all the contents in our educational levels are structured with every material in English as a medium of communication. Reading has also therefore, becomes an important skill for success in the 21st global digital century. Reading development is an important element of a student's educational and academic career and a major component of high-stakes tests, which require higher order reading skills. As the Ghana Education Service (GES) puts it, "Success in education at all levels depends to a very large extent on the individual's proficiency in reading." Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of GES (2007:1). To be in the right frame of mind for reading and to know which letter combination create words, the CRDD of GES (2007), came out with a policy on reforms which states in part that "by the time a child left the primary level to the Junior Secondary School, he/she must have an appreciable level of reading competence to enable him/her perform quite easily any reading task," (CRDD syllabus, 2001:1). This statement is in line with Milan's (1995:1) assertion that "a good reader is the one who has the ability to read carefully, thoughtfully and





confidently.” A good reader www.udsspace.uds.edu.gh knows what to look for and is actively involved in the text by thinking, questioning and evaluating. Teachers have the responsibility of making sure that their students read efficiently. Lack of efficiency in reading and comprehension has contributed to the poor performance of students in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E) in many basic schools including T I Ahmadiyya Junior High School in Bolgatanga. Another problem is that, although, most pupils in the primary level are able to read, they lack the appropriate degree of speed for their age and grade and are not able to make meaning of what they read and they continue to the Junior High School (JHS) form one class. Reading is not as natural as breathing, talking or even walking; it is a complex activity which involves a number of skills Anyidoho (1999:9). It however has its roots in oral language proficiency and children must be able to express themselves in English before being taught to read for better comprehension. No one is born with the ability to read; rather it is acquired, taught and learnt.

English language is one of the core subjects in the curriculum of Ghana education service among others are Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Religious and Moral Education. However, before a student is able to study the rest he/she must be competent in the English language. In the JHS syllabus reading and comprehension is one of the aspects of the English as a subject, among others are the composition, grammar, listening and speaking and literature. There is no clear evidence which proved that there are insufficient reading materials available for Ghanaian’s children to read. Ghana is blessed with pro writers and researchers. The late Prof. Kofi Awunor, Ama Atta Aidu, Kofi Anyidoho and some other renowned authors’. Reading and comprehension as an aspect of English is considered as one of the most important for a student to read fluently and have command over the

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language. As a student being able to read is probably one of the greatest achievements in his/her academic life and this largely boost her ability to understand the other subjects under study. David, (2000) clearly stated that because reading with comprehension is the foundation of all content areas, it is vital that the diversity of needs relating comprehension be met. It must be assumed that it is not that we give the students the chance to read but that we instruct them on how to understand, how to comprehend and how to use strategies that will help them comprehend what they are reading. In the United States, the ability to read proficiently is significantly related to how much a person can achieve in his or her personal and professional life Block & Israel, (2005, p. 2). Reading is essential to success in school and lifelong learning. It is even more crucial in second language learning where students need to read to improve their vocabulary and communication skills Grabe & Stoller (2002).

Crossley, McCarthy and McNamara (2006) are of the opinion that second language reading texts must be simplified at the beginning and intermediate levels in order to make the text more comprehensible for second language learners and to help prepare them for more authentic texts. This may cause difficulty in learning. To avert this, it is crucial to determine the reading difficulty of the comprehension passages we provide for our learners, especially at the Junior High School level. Hence the urgent need for this study to help find immediate solutions to the reading problem of the form one students who just graduated from their various Primary schools with different backgrounds. Ta'limul Islam (T I) Ahmadiyya Junior High School is located opposite the Bolgatanga Sports Stadium in the Central 'A' Circuit of the Bolgatanga Municipality. The school has a student population of 170 with which girls are 100 and boys 70. Though the school is a Muslim school, the Muslim student's population is 40



representing only 20% of the entire student's population according to the School Enrolment 2016/2017 Academic Year (2017). www.udsspace.uds.edu.gh

1.2 Perceived Problem

This study aims at identifying the appropriate solutions to the problem of the form one student's inability to read fluently passages of their form one English book. This situation is negatively affecting their understanding of the other subjects and their academic pursuit. It may also affect their acquisition of job when they get out of school. The researcher therefore, perceived this as a problem worth solving.

1.3 Diagnosis

The researcher would investigate the problem and find an appropriate solution to it in the following areas:

- I. How to use the phonic method to teach reading and comprehension
- II. To consider the aspect of phonic method of teaching reading comprehension
- III. Activities/steps involved in using the phonic method
- IV. Importance/reasons for choosing the phonic method to teach reading and comprehension.

1.4 Evidence

The problem of reading and comprehension has always been a canker among many students in Bolgatanga municipality in the Upper East Region and T. I Ahmadiyya JHS is not in an exception. The researcher identified this problem in the first term of the 2016/2017 academic year in the form one class during a reading and comprehension lesson. The form one class comprised of Primary Six (6) students who graduated from their various schools with different backgrounds/experiences and reading abilities. Their inability to read fluently is not only affecting their learning of



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the other aspects of English language like; grammar, composition, literature, listening and speaking, but largely the other subjects like Mathematics, Science, Social Studies etc. Lawal (1995) has opined that “if a learner possesses poor reading habits, he suffers serious handicaps not only in school but also later in the world of work. The researcher realized that this could have a dire effect on their academic pursuit and hence conducting this research to find a solution to the problem. At the JHS level, the form one children are to be able to read their text books and comprehend individually without any assistance from their teacher. This was not the case with the form one students who were expecting their researcher/teacher to read for them to understand.

1.5 Statement of the problem

Reading is the gateway to education and it must be reiterated that a child’s ability to read and read well can make an enormous difference to both his/her school performance, career potential and personal success. It has been recognized as an important discipline and a child’s ability to read is the center of the educational process.

The time children and students use to read their books, learn and do the assignments given to them in school is used in Internet Cafes, watching TV, films and playing video and computer games all at the detriment of recreational reading Majid and Tan, (2007). Lawal (1995) has opined that “if a learner possesses poor reading habits, he suffers serious handicaps not only in school but also later in the world of work. This is even true when one considers the fact that education is now learner centered with the more effective techniques placing a far greater emphasis on the learner’s ability to read”. Alloway (1999) has asserted that “reading skills are essential to the achievement of lower and upper secondary students but after seven or eight years of elementary education, many students will lack sufficient proficiency as readers, and



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many adolescents continue to perform at an unacceptable level”. On the other hand, a research study conducted by the International Reading Association (Moore et al, 1999) that has been cited in Clark and Rumbold (2006), states that: “Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st Century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read can be crucial especially when looking for job. It will also lead the students to learn on their own and acquire the high order skills during the instructional period. The JHS one students in T I Ahmadiyya came from both the feed Primary school and other nearby primary schools with different learning backgrounds. Some of their parents are largely business men/woman who has little or no interest in education and thinks it is a waste of time and resources.

They also have little support from their homes in terms of learning to speaking and writing English language. T I Ahmadiyya is located directly opposite the Bolgatanga sports stadium and adjacent Azunsolum Guest house in Bukere. Though it is in Central ‘A’ Circuit of Bolgatanga, the people largely have little interest in education. The school was established by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Bolgatanga in 2006. Large numbers of the students come from nearby villages like Gambibgo, Yarigabisi, Kumbosigo, Zaare, Yorogo, Dulugu etc. The first barge graduated in 2009 with a 100% in the BECE results putting the school among the best schools in the Municipality. This record has been dwindling over the years to an extent that the 2016 BECE results the school had 44.25% indicating a drastic





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downturn in the school's academic performance. As indicated earlier on the importance of a student's ability to read and write and its bearing it has on the performance on other subjects, is it very clear that the researcher haven observed that the form one students cannot read and comprehend, clearly tells the importance of conducting this study. The researcher therefore, wants to carry out the study to help the students to sail smoothly through their academic ladder without any hindrances. The researcher has been the English teacher in T I Ahmadiyya Junior High School for seven years now and has gathered considerable experience in teaching the English language. He confidently handles all the aspects of the English language from the J H S 1 to J H S 3. However, in the first term of the 2015/2016 academic year, during an English comprehension lesson with the form one students who graduated from primary six (6) from their various schools, he observed that they had difficulties reading their English language text book. This situation could not help both the researcher and his learners to progress in the teaching and learning process, hence his reason for conducting this study to solve the problem immediately for teaching and learning to continue in the form 1 class. The problem to be investigated in this study is helping form 1 students in T I Ahmadiyya Junior High School solve their difficulties in reading comprehension and acquiring High Order skills like; language skills, writing skills, listening skills, communication skills, fluency skills, reading skills, skills of observation, using the phonic method etc.

1.6 Purpose of the Study

The study is to improve reading and comprehension abilities of form1 students of T I Ahmadiyya Junior High School in the Bolgatanga Municipality. The researcher would use the phonic method, follow the steps and procedures in teaching using the phonic method and its aspects and find out the difficulties students encounter when

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learning reading and comprehension. The study would focus on the form one students who had serious difficulties in reading and comprehension. This would help enhance the students learning capabilities in other subject areas like Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies and so on. The T I Ahmadiyya Junior High School is located at Bukere opposite the Bolgatanga Sports Stadium and adjacent Azunsolum Guest House in Bolgatanga.

1.7 Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the difficulties students encounter in reading and comprehension skills.
2. To examine the effectiveness of the phonic method in teaching reading and comprehension skills.
3. To find out the steps and aspects of the phonic method that is relevant for teaching reading and comprehension skills.

1.8 Research Questions

1. What difficulties does students encounter when learning reading and comprehension skills?
2. How could the phonic method be used to effectively teach the form one students reading and comprehension skills?
3. What are the steps and aspects of the phonic method that are relevant for teaching reading and comprehension skills?

1.9 Significance of the Study

The outcome of this study will go a long way to help solve the problem of the JHS 1 student's difficulty in reading and comprehending their English text book passages, and this will enable them progress steadily in their academic ladder. The



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result of this study will be useful in the school and other schools by teachers, students, future researchers, Non-Governmental Organizations, Ghana Education office, and other workers in the field of education. In the country Ghana, this study will contribute to the existing literature to enrich the field of academia.

1.10 Organization of the Study

The study is organized in to five chapters as follows; chapter one includes; the introduction/overview of the chapter, background, perceived problem, diagnosis, evidence, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research question, significance of the study, and organization of the study. The chapter two looks at review of relevant literature as follows; introduction to the chapter, conceptual analysis of phonic method of teaching reading and comprehension skills, the schema reading theory, aspects of the problem under investigation, factors that cause difficulties students encounter in reading and comprehension, effective use of the phonic method in teaching reading and comprehension skills, and steps to follow when using the phonic method in teaching reading and comprehension skills. Chapter three is methodology which starts with introduction, profile of the study, research design, population of the study, sample and sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and presentation, and data quality and ethical issues. Chapter four includes; introduction, demographic characteristics of respondents, pre-test results, post-test results, pre-observation results, and post-observation results. Chapter five includes; introduction, summary, conclusion, recommendation, and chapter summary and finally, references and appendices A, B, and C.



REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter would cover the review of conceptual analysis which includes the theoretical frame work relevant literature to this study, aspect of the problem under investigation and this would also deal with the research questions in detail and a training module.

2.1 Conceptual Analysis

The study would review theoretical framework on phonic method of teaching reading and comprehension skills. Phonics is the 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 (Adams, 1994). In other words, phonics refers to associating letters or letter groups with the sound they represent. Phonics involves teaching how to connect the sounds of spoken English with letters or groups of letters (e.g., that the sound /k/ can be represented by c, k, ck, or ch spellings) and teaching them to blend the sounds of letters together to produce approximate pronunciations of unknown words. Therefore, phonics is not necessarily a method for teaching English pronunciation; it is a method for teaching English speakers to read and write. Intensive phonics instruction (reading-like behavior) Intensive, Systematic Phonics are all major letter-sound correspondences taught in order:

(1) We learn to read by first learning the rules of phonics, that is, we learn to read by sounding out words and reading out-loud ("decoding to sound").



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(2) Knowledge of phonics must be deliberately taught and consciously learned. This is hard work. The major rules: "long and short vowels and vowel and consonant digraphs consisting of two letters representing one phoneme, such as oi, ea, sh, and th. Also, phonics instruction may include blends of letter sounds that represent larger subunits in words such as consonant pairs (e.g. st, bl), onsets, and rimes" Tompkins (2011 .107)) defines phonics as "the set of relationships between phonology (the sounds in speech) and orthography (the spelling system). It involves an understanding of the alphabetic principle (there is a relation between spoken words and letters or combinations of letters) on which the English language is based and a knowledge of the sounds associated with a particular letter or combination of letters Strickland, (2011).

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.

The theoretical framework used in the study is the Schema Reading Theory. The Schema Reading Theory (SRT) is an interactive approach to reading that taps into the prior or background knowledge of the learner and uses it to achieve a better meaning of what is read. According to Ajideh (2003:4), proponents of the SRT such as Bartlett (1932), and Rumelhart (1977), believe that there ought to be an instructional and interactive process by learners to process information. The SRT model dwells on the fact that information processing is a dual affair between the learner and the text in



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which case, what the reader comprehends must be in tune with his prior knowledge of the subject or text. These proponents of the theory and others have defined the Schema Theory in a number of influential ways. Li, Wu and Wang (2007:18) argue that some of the proponents of the schema theory like Bartlett (1932) defined Schema as ‘an active organization of past reactions of past experiences, which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organic response’. Rumelhart (1980:77-85) define the Schema theory simply as “a theory of how knowledge is mentally represented in the mind and used.” He believes that “all knowledge is packaged into units. These units are the schemata”. We are able to interpret what we read because of the context in which it is presented.

2.1.1 The Schema Reading Theory

Schema is the knowledge and experience stored in the brain throughout life that helps prepare a learner to understand new material and gives a model for coping with new tasks or experiences Dry (2013:1). The first language (L1) of the child dictates how he/she comprehends reading. The child already has prior knowledge of things and events in his environment which create patterns that he brings to any new event. In this case his mind is not blank or empty (tabula rasa). Contrary to the views of some psychologists, the child’s mind is active and full of experiences. Instead of viewing the mind as a clean slate, cognitive psychologists now see the child’s mind as a “set of empty shelves or slots” which are filled, modified, or expanded by learning. The child’s schema therefore may include values, culture, beliefs, expectations and systems of what he already possesses. The theory asserts that the ability to learn is based on the existence of a schemata framework which is patterns of background knowledge that a person brings to bear on these new ideas or events Savages (1998). Schema (plural schemata) is a hypothetical mental structure for representing generic



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concepts stored in memory, Ajideh (2003). Every learner, even children, have some knowledge about their home, environment or school, are modified or expanded by learning to make up the schemata by which information is organized. The schemata are thus, patterns of mental structures representing the reader's knowledge of ordinary events. When schema is activated it involves the relationship of how the different knowledge parts stored connects to make meaning of text. These parts are what they refer to as "nodes", "variables", or "slots". Every child comes into the classroom with different reading abilities and some come under- prepared for its reading demands. The schema theory therefore explains how the child reads and by identifying this, how to become a better reader. As a widely accepted theory for reading comprehension, the schema theory is based on the assumption that every reader's prior knowledge directly impacts on his new learning. French (2004:12) citing Kitao (1989) explains "that most linguists now see schema theory as a framework that organizes knowledge in memory by putting information into the correct slots".

The schema theory emphasizes the importance of prior knowledge in reading. Dry (2013:1), believes that "most of us do not realize how much we have already stored in our memories, or how we draw upon it when we deal with new situations or challenges. As we learn more, we add to our knowledge or develop our schema". The schema development net is a visual representation of the schema theory. In example 'A' in fig. 1, the net has wider gaps (less developed). So the tennis ball (information) can get right through. This represents a student who has little background knowledge about a text, so many of the unknown concepts may slip by. However, in example B, the net is much closer together (more developed), so the ball (information) is less likely to get through, representing a student who has more experience with the concept in the text, so the information is more likely to be understood and retained.



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The more experience and background knowledge a student has with the topic at hand, the easier it will be for him or her to comprehend the material. Dry (2013:1) explain Dry's Schema development net. Thus, making it clear that the more background knowledge a learner has, the more experience he/she will have in retaining and making use of text.

Figure 1: Illustration of schema theory



Source: Manzo, A.V. & Manzo, U. C. (1995:61)

Vaezi (2009) 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 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





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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 recognize 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 but also feel that this theory displays that knowledge of linguistic features which is also necessary for reading comprehension to take place. Nunan (1991) 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.

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 organizing goals and sub-goals, in allocating resources, and in guiding the flow of the processing system. Harris (2006) also stated that the top-down theories emphasize 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. Harris (2006) added that readers use

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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.

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.

According to Rockets (2011), reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation. Reading also means making meaning from print. 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. In investigating the possible mismatch between training in teaching reading comprehension 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 tenet 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 to teach reading comprehension they were taught in college, they would need to 'appropriate' (i.e. own) the methods in a constructivist





www.udsspace.uds.edu.gh 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. One of the main tasks of this investigation was to help the Basic school form two students in T I Ahmadiyya JHS solve the reading problem and continue learning. Other theoretical underpinnings of this study are presented in the rest of the literature review and the rest of the literature review is to clarify from literature in the field of study and from the knowledge of what other researchers have to say. The ability to read and understand a simple text is one of the most essential skills a child can learn. Yet in many countries, learners enrolled in school for as many as six years are unable to read and understand a simple text. Acquiring literacy becomes more difficult as learners grow older. Children who do not learn to read in the first few grades are more likely to repeat and eventually drop out of school. Worldwide efforts to expand access to education may be undermined if parents, faced with difficult economic choices and the knowledge that learners are not acquiring basic reading skills, remove their children from school.

Comprehension, a complex cognitive process, is central to acquiring a new linguistic system. Input must be decoded in some comprehensible fashion for second language acquisition to occur. In the case of a foreign language reading comprehension, the reader uses previous knowledge to construct and integrate meaning from text. During reading there is simultaneous cognitive processing involving pattern recognition, letter identification, lexical access, concept activation, syntactic analysis, propositional encoding, and sentence comprehension, activation of prior knowledge, information storage, and comprehension monitoring. Text base quality is affected by the individual's text processing efficiency (i.e., ability in lower-level processes, such as word recognition and syntactic parsing) and working memory. Generally, reading evokes curiosity and sensibility, helps the reader build

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good viewpoints and enhances personality, reading broadens the reader's experiences and strengthens the willingness to realize one's goals, reading makes the reader explore information and use it to create knowledge and finally, reading has therapeutic value (Lee, 2006). Students in Grades 4-12 spend the majority of their days in content-area classes. All content-area instruction (e.g., English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) utilizes literary or informational text in some manner, so students must comprehend specific texts and grasp the concepts being communicated in them. This is a particular concern as the texts students are asked to read become increasingly complex with unique linguistic and cognitive features that are not necessarily shared across disciplines.

We need knowledge of the world to understand new things, need to be familiar with various text structure encountered and need to be active in seeking meaning to rise up from the passage. Comprehension processes and second language acquisition processes, although somewhat overlapping, are also distinct. For example, comprehension involves constructing a mental representation from the propositional content for the purpose of understanding the message. However, in order for a linguistic system to be developed through comprehension activities, additional input processing must occur. Such processing entails making form-meaning connections from the input, or focusing attention on new forms and associating them with their functions or referents.

2.2 Aspects of the Problem under Investigation

The aspects of the problem under investigation under this includes; phonic method of teaching reading and comprehension, steps in using phonic method of teaching reading and comprehension, and aspects of phonics method of teaching reading and comprehension.



2.2.1 What are the difficulties students encounter in reading and comprehension?

There seems to be great controversy on what the causes of reading difficulties are. Some scholars relate reading difficulties to neurological factors while others relate them to environmental factors. These are disorientation and disorganization in the recognition of visual patterns due to brain damages, hereditary relationship of reading disability and the interrelationship between visual, auditory, temporal and kinesthetic disorientation and disorganization. Mando (2008) indicates that reading failure is mainly caused by failure to acquire phonological awareness and skills in alphabetical coding. Teachers have a lot of work in teaching literacy skills so that a lot of children would become fluent readers. Environmental factors also contribute to one having reading difficulties that is the home and school environments. If there is no one to motivate the child at home as well as in school, it will be very difficult for a student to develop interest in reading. Furthermore, teachers also have their own perceptions of what causes reading difficulties. The curriculum planners, government and all players in education all have a stake in the difficulties in students reading in the Ghanaian schools today and T I Ahmadiyya JHS is not in an exception.

Home factor

Many homes have turned out to be uncondusive for students to read, write and do other school works in Ghana today. According to Paananen, et. Al (2009), the home environment plays a role on pupil's reading ability. It can affect someone either positively or negatively. In the home environment, there are many factors which can cause students reading difficulties. These include; mother tongue interference, lack of motivation, lack of text books and reading materials, parents' literacy levels, effects of poverty (e. g poor nutrition, lack of proper furniture for studies), kind/nature of lighting system, lack of support by parents or guardians and the community at large.



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The home environment is very important for a child's growth in all aspects of life and this includes education. For one to thrive academically, a conducive home environment is very cardinal.

Sex factor

The process of child development on one hand, girls usually speak their first words earlier than boys. On the other hand, boys tend to have problems when it comes to reading and in most cases; their reading is below their grade level. These gender differences in reading literacy worldwide may also be as a result of broader societal and cultural contexts or of educational policies and practices. In most societies, parents tend to be gentle with the girl children as they are growing up. This could probably be due to the fact that girls are considered to be '**a weaker sex**'. Boys are usually engaged in rough games from an early age. There is no much talking done except actions where boys are generally taught to be strong and independent from the onset.

Because of this early emphasis on language ability for girls, it has been suggested that they are more likely to rely on verbal skills as they interact with others which will help them to further develop skills Rathus, (2006) in Carducci, (2009). One of the scientific explanations for linguistic oriented skills favoring girls may lie in biological forces. The left hemisphere of the brain, which is central to language, may mature more rapidly in girls than in boys and this could be the reason for girls doing better at reading than girls.

Methods

Whilst some pupils are good at reading others are poor readers. In this kind of situation, it all depends on the teacher to select those methods of teaching reading that will help the poor readers. Unfortunately, most of the teachers do not have adequate





www.udsspace.uds.edu.gh knowledge on how to help such learners with special needs. The kind of training that teachers get does not adequately prepare them to handle all pupils according to their needs. Most pupils require close supervision if they are to perform better in academic work. As a result, even when the teacher knows that a particular pupil is a poor reader, he/she is not in a position to help Kalindi, (2005). From this scenario, it can be said that, teachers use the same method of teaching for all pupils in a classroom despite one being a good or poor reader. All the necessary materials can be in place but this will not help improve the skills of poor readers as long as the teacher, who is the key person in this whole process, is not competent enough to help the poor readers Kalindi, (2005).

This means that the poor readers are not given a chance to improve themselves where reading is concerned. The good readers have an advantage in this case and the poor readers are left out of the learning process. Teaching normally starts with the smallest and easiest things and children learn to read and write longer and more complicated things as time goes by (Lyytinen, 2006). Today, a child will learn to read letters in the alphabet, the next day the child will be able to read words, then sentences and so on. It is important to note that most teachers in Ghana work under harsh conditions such as, attending to so many classes in a day, too many pupils in one classroom, inadequate reading materials and experiencing irregular attendance at school by pupils. Furthermore, there are no incentives to motivate the teachers especially those in remote areas. As a result, such teachers will have no drive to concentrate on poor readers. It is up to the pupil whether he/she has understood or not. The methods of classroom approaches to reading , such as the ‘look and say’ method, resulted in most pupils in primary schools’ level of reading in English to be inadequate for learning to take place (Kalindi, 2005). However, it has not been easy to

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attain this goal due to the high number of pupils in classrooms hence making it difficult for teachers to offer education on a one-to-one basis for those children with special needs (Matafwali, 2005). The classrooms are just too crowded hence stressing the teachers. These disadvantages that pupil with special needs/slow learners as teachers are too tired to concentrate on such pupils on an individual basis as earlier mentioned.

From this scenario, it can be said that, teachers use the same method of teaching for all pupil in a classroom despite one being a good or poor reader. All the necessary materials can be in place but this will not help improve the skills of poor readers as long as the teacher, who is the key person in this whole process is not competent enough to help the poor readers (Kalindi, 2005). This means that the poor readers are not given a chance to improve themselves where reading is concerned. The good readers have an advantage in this case and the poor readers are left out of the learning process. Teaching normally starts with the smallest and easiest things and children learn to read and write longer and more complicated things as time goes by (Lyytinen, 2006). Learning to read is a gradual process. Today, a child will learn to read letters in the alphabet, the next day the child will be able to read words, then sentences and so on.

Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment in reading is very important if children with reading difficulties are to be helped. In Ghana, the inclusive education policy places those children with reading problems in the same class with those who do not have reading problems without taking into consideration the extent of the problem. As a result, most of the children with reading difficulties may go unnoticed more especially in the early stages of their education. For this reason, it is cardinal that children having



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reading problems are identified using available assessment methods so that they get positive results from early intervention (Matafwali, 2005). A problem is better solved while it is still in its infant stage unlike waiting until it gets worse because it might require a lot of time and intensive effort.

Remediation

Learning how to read is a process which begins early in the life of a child, (Torgesen, Wagner and Roshotte, 1999). Even before a child reaches school going age, parents and other caregivers usually try to teach the child to master letters of the alphabet. From there, the child is taught how to read words and so on until he/she starts going to pre-school or primary school, for those children who might not have an opportunity to attend pre-school. As soon as parents or teachers notice that the child is having difficulties in reading, it is important to put the necessary measures in place. Interventions must be started as soon as possible before the problem gets out of hand. One remediation programme used in countries like Finland is the 'Ekapeli' which is a computer based learning game which helps the child to become fluent in letter sound connections. The Ekapeli was developed by Professor Lyytinen (2003). This game is now widely used and other language versions of the game have been tested (Kachenga, 2008).

According to research evidence, it is very difficult to catch up or become fluent readers once learners lag behind in the language-based skills of reading unless intensive measures are put in place (Matafwali, 2005). Early intervention is very important as it can help in ameliorating the problem rather than waiting until it is too late. There is need to know the causes of reading difficulties before intervening. It is very difficult for a problem to be solved without understanding its cause. For example, if it is found that the cause of the reading difficulty is lack of phonological



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awareness and skills in alphabetical coding, there is need for teachers to be trained on the letter-sound correspondence methods of teaching which are based on alphabetical codes (Mando, 2008). These teachers will in turn help the pupils with reading difficulties.

Teacher Factor

In virtually every class, there could be a learner with a reading difficulty. As such, during their career, every teacher meets several learners for whom reading is laborious, and even learners who think that they cannot read. Teaching these learners is a challenge for the teachers and the entire school (Paananen, et. al., 2009). Classroom effectiveness of teachers heavily depends on their knowledge of the subject matter and their pedagogical skills. Unfortunately, most teachers are not oriented towards helping poor readers in their classes (Paananen, et. al., 2009). In their training, they were not adequately prepared to teach all children according to their needs. Therefore, even in cases where reading materials are adequate, reading skills of poor readers are not improved the most important person, who is the teacher in this case does not know how to help the poor readers (Kalindi, 2005). It is also important to bear in mind that, teachers have been working under difficult circumstances such as, too many pupils in classes, erratic pupil attendance and others in some parts of Ghana. When there are too many pupils in a classroom, it becomes difficult for the teacher to give individual attention especially to those who may be lagging behind in reading.

Furthermore, serious shortages of teaching and learning materials, as well as poor staffing especially in remote areas also make it a challenge for teachers in teaching reading. A teacher may have the required skills in teaching reading, but it becomes difficult for him/her to teach effectively if the necessary teaching and learning





www.udsspace.uds.edu.gh materials are not in place. Poor staffing levels means teachers have to attend to more than one class hence being overburdened. In turn, they will not be able to pay particular attention to those learners who have difficulties in reading.

2.2.2 How can the phonic method be used to effectively teach students reading and comprehension?

Phonics proponents were led by Rudolph Flesch in his book “Why Johnny Can’t Read And What You Can Do About” in which he warned that American schools would produce a generation of illiterates, if they continued to rely on “faddish” techniques (namely the look-say, or whole-language approach) to teach reading. Phonic method is taken as appropriate for teaching reading and comprehension in the basic schools. A reading method is a set of teaching and learning materials and/or activities often given a label, such as phonics method, literature based method, or language experience method (International Reading Association, (1998).

Flesch (1955) also emphasized that the abandonment of phonics and other traditional approaches to reading would inevitably wreak havoc on the nation’s schools. Although the public accepted Flesch, American educators rejected his arguments. At the time, Chall was a professor at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education where she published her book after five years of research reviewing eighty-five 85 classroom and clinical studies (Flesch, 1981). The basis of the studies was to compare phonics-first programs to look-say methods of reading instruction. Specifically, four main elements considered effective to literacy (teacher competence, pacing, method, and content) were debated. Early in the twenty-first century, reading comprehension research was summarized by two “blue ribbon” groups: the National Reading Panel (2000) and the RAND Reading Study Group (2002). The National Reading Panel (NRP: (pp. 4–5) described reading comprehension as comprehension is



a complex process, often viewed as ‘the essence of reading.’ Reading comprehension is intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader.

The content of meaning is influenced by the text and by the reader’s prior knowledge and experience that are brought to bear on it. Similarly, the RAND Reading Study Group (2002) noted that reading comprehension involves four components: (1) the reader, (2) the text, (3) the activity, and (4) the situational context (p. 1). The first three essential components are; the reader, the text, and the task occur within the fourth component of reading comprehension the situational context. The reader is the one doing the comprehending, and the text is the reading material (e.g., stories, nonfiction selections, etc.). The activity refers to what kind of comprehension task, skill, strategy, or concept the reader is attempting to perform (e.g., discovering the author’s main idea, understanding a sequence of events, thinking about a character’s intent in a story, etc). The situational context of reading comprehension can be thought of in at least two ways. First, the actual setting where reading occurs at home, in a school classroom, the library, under a blanket at bedtime, and so on affects how well one comprehends while reading. There is little doubt that children’s reading comprehension is influenced by the setting in which they read. Second, there is a social context associated with reading comprehension. In some cases, reading comprehension occurs individually, in a very limited social setting. In other cases, however, reading comprehension can be part of a vibrant social activity in which people teachers, parents, and children read a text together and jointly construct meaning through discussion. Lively interaction about a text in the company of others seems to be the optimal situational context to enhance students’ reading comprehension McKeown, Beck, & Blake, (2009).



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The goal of phonics instruction is to help students develop the alphabetic principle. Students who understand the alphabetic principle know that the sounds of spoken words are mapped onto written words in systematic ways. As students develop understandings of this principle, they become adept at using letter-sound correspondences to figure out unrecognized words. Command of the alphabetic principle is the foundation for accurate word recognition and a prerequisite for fluency well-documented characteristics of skillful readers. Phonics-based approaches are designed to teach children to unlock or decode the sound/symbol relationships in our language and to begin reading instruction by teaching children to associate the graphemes (letters) with the phonemes (sounds) they represent Harp & Brewer, (2005). There are two competing views regarding the teaching of phonics. One approach is known as synthetic phonics instruction, and the other approach is known as analytic phonics instruction Reutzel & Cooter, (2005). Synthetic phonics is more traditional in that students learn how to change letters or letter combinations into speech sounds, and then blend them to form words (i.e., sounding out). In analytic phonics, children are first taught to read a word and then to analyze the individual sounds within the word. They are taught to decode unfamiliar words by looking to see if they can find a similar word (i.e., knowing the sounds in cake and I can help a child to use the /m/ sound in me and the /ake/ sound from cake to decode make) Harp & Brewer, (2005). Phonics advocates focus their efforts on the primary grades and emphasize the importance of students being able to sound out (read) words based on how they are spelled.

According to Aukerman (1984), the theory behind the phonic approach is based on two assumptions. These are:

- Most languages www.udsspace.uds.edu.gh 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 analytic method to reading begins with words (preferably nouns that can be easily illustrated), then breaks the words into parts. According to Grayling, (1997) one way to help pupil to improve upon their reading habits is by using the phonic technique. This technique places emphasis on the individual letter making up the word. It could be called reading by spelling. In this technique, the pupil pronounces by saying it. For instance, C-A-T = CAT, D-O-G = DOG, M-A-N = MAN etc. while this technique helps the pupil to embolden their efforts and to spell some words that may be completely new to them, it has some limitations.

However, modern phonic approaches to reading start whole words instead of sound. But each letter is considered equally important. Phonics can also be viewed as a systematic teaching of the sounds conveyed by letters and groups of letters, and includes teaching children to combine and blend these to read or write words. It is of crucial importance, for the following reasons: majority of the information conveyed by letters concerns sounds. Letters tell us more than any other source of information, even when we have to interpret the information they provide. We cannot read fluently until we read accurately, and this depends on accurate use of the information conveyed letters. Skilled, fluent readers do not guess. Once we have learned what the letters are telling us in a word, we can store it in our memory and retrieve it more quickly than if we had to work it out. Research over the past 30 years has contributed greatly to our understanding of the thinking processes involved in reading





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comprehension. Surprisingly, however, little research has focused on the development of young children's comprehension (Reutzel, Cooter 2005). Pressley (2000) describes the development of reading comprehension as a two stage process, beginning with "lower processes" focused at the word level such as word recognition (phonics, sight words), fluency (rate, accuracy, and expression), and vocabulary (word meanings). The second stage of reading comprehension development focuses on higher-order thinking relating prior knowledge to text content and consciously learning, selecting, and controlling the use of several cognitive strategies for remembering and learning from text.

Theory of reading comprehension research over the years has been profoundly influenced by **schema theory**; a hypothesis that explains how we have stored information in our minds helps us gain new knowledge. The term schema (the plural is schemata or schemas) can be defined as a kind of storage cabinet in our brains with file folders containing different information about (1) concepts (chairs, birds, ships), (2) events (weddings, birthdays, school experiences), (3) emotions (anger, frustration, joy, pleasure), and (4) roles (parent, judge, teacher) drawn from our life experiences (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Each schema is connected to other related schemas, forming a vast, interconnected network of knowledge and experiences. The size and content of an individual's schemas are influenced by personal experiences, both direct and vicarious. Therefore, younger children typically possess fewer, less well-developed schemas about a great many things than do mature adults.

2.2.3 What are the steps and aspects of the phonic method that are relevant for teaching reading and comprehension?

Alphabetic writing represents the sounds we hear in words by means of letters. For reading, learners reconstruct the word by blending the sounds represented by the letters. For spelling, they translate the sounds in words into letters. Although letters often give us more than sounds, their links with sounds are their most consistent and important feature, and there is some link with sound in every word. Children and adults who can use this connection fluently and accurately build up a store of words that they can read very quickly. Familiar words are scanned swiftly, as they contain information that has already been learned and stored in the memory, while learners have a valuable technique for working out new words, even when the sound connection does not tell the whole story. Almost all weak readers have difficulty in blending sounds from letters to make words. Almost all good readers do this well.

Reading proficiency is the most fundamental skill critical to most, if not all, academic learning and success in school. In the United States the ability to read proficiently is significantly related to how much a person can achieve in his or her personal and professional life (Block & Israel, 2005, p. 2). Unfortunately, in form 1 of T.I Ahmadiyya Junior High School form one few students could read fluently a comprehension passage during a lesson and this triggered this research work. Comprehension is the main goal when reading any text whether for the purposes of examination or for pleasure. For many readers, reading is a skill that eludes them for a variety of reasons. Cognitive processes such as working memory and phonological processing can account for some of the variability in reading comprehension. These processes allow the reader to not only decode words but access memory “stores” to



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understand written text. Readers also rely on lexical knowledge and reading strategies to comprehend the specific words they have read.

Securing Confidence in Reading (SCR).

French (2004:9), says “learning to read is a difficult gradual process that involves all the senses including cognitive and linguistic abilities already in place. It also involves identification of letters and mapping them onto sounds, as well as the recognition of words and syntax. To be able to read, one must learn to communicate with the writer and the text”. To be an effective reader, the learner must be able to generate from the text. As stated earlier, reading is a gradual process, a skill that is not learned all at once because there are numerous components that must come together to be learned and practiced. French (2004:9) outlined these components as follows:

1. “The child must know the language that he is going to learn to read.
2. The child must learn to dissect spoken words into component sounds.
3. The child must learn to recognize and discriminate the letters of the alphabet in their various forms (upper and lower case letters, printed and cursive).
4. The child must learn the left-to-right principle by which words are spelled and put in order in continuous text.
5. The child must learn that there are patterns of highly probable correspondence between letters and sounds, and he must learn those patterns of correspondence that will help him recognize words that he already knows in his spoken language, or that will help him determine the pronunciation of unfamiliar words.



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6. The child must learn to recognize printed words from whatever cues he can use, their total configuration, the letters composing them, the sounds represented by those letters, and or the meanings suggested by the context.
7. The child must learn that printed words are signals for spoken words, and that they have meanings analogous to those of spoken words. While decoding a printed message into its spoken equivalent, the child must be able to comprehend the meaning of the total message in the same way that he would comprehend the meaning of the corresponding spoken messages.
8. The child must learn to reason and think about what he reads, within the limits of his talents and experience”.

Using Multiple Comprehension Strategies (UMCS)

Teachers and researchers have known for many years that reading comprehension is positively affected when students are interested in the reading materials. Knowing how important student interest is in developing reading comprehension, many feel the first place to begin is assessing this factor. MC Keown et al. (2009), produced particularly strong results for improving children are reading achievement. Other research evidence points clearly to the need for teachers to help students apply comprehension strategies in a variety of text types (narrative and expository) and genres (fairy tales, realistic fiction, almanacs, encyclopedias, etc.) Thus, the key to successful instruction is delivering carefully structured learning activities that support children while they are developing the ability to use multiple comprehension strategies to understand what they read McKeown et al., (2009); Pressley, (2006), Reutzel et al. (2005).

Durkin (1978) reported findings from her studies of reading comprehension instruction as taught by teachers using commercial reading programs (i.e., basal or



core reading programs). www.udsspace.uds.edu.gh After observing in both reading and social studies classrooms, Durkin concluded that the teachers spent very little time actually teaching children how to understand what they read. In fact, less than 1% percent of total reading or social studies instructional time was devoted to the teaching of reading comprehension. Research has shown that reading comprehension improves most when teachers provide explicit comprehension instruction to children e.g., MCKeown et al., (2009); National Reading Panel, (2000) all support the following five strategies as the most critical keys for focused instruction:

1. Activating prior knowledge of learners before the commencement of the lesson.
2. Questioning learners before, during and after the lesson.
3. Analyzing text structure with the learners.
4. Creating mental or visual images during the lesson.
5. Summarizing the lesson with students.

The National Reading Panel, and other studies since, has also found that comprehension instruction is most effective when there is a great deal of text-focused dialogue among students Pressley, (2006).

Metacognition

Refers to two important concepts related to reading comprehension: (1) a reader's awareness of how well he or she is understanding the reading (such as when you have been 'reading' and realize your mind has wandered) and (2) a reader's ability to control his or her own thinking, including the use of comprehension strategies to improve or repair failing comprehension while reading (such as rereading a passage after realizing your mind had wandered). For many readers, problems in comprehension result from failures related to one or both of these two important concepts. The purpose of metacognitive assessment is to gain insight into how



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students select strategies for comprehending text and how well they regulate the status of their own comprehension as they read. One key to effective comprehension instruction lies in accurately identifying the genres or text structures students are able to read effectively as well as those that have more difficulty comprehending Reutzel & Cooter, (2011). Recently, researchers MCKeown, Beck, and Blake (2009) found support for methods they call **content approaches** as an important part of the instructional picture. They describe content approaches as focusing student attention on the content of the text through open, meaning-based questions about the text. In short, having structured, collaborative dialogue around the content and vocabulary found in assigned texts is a powerful tool for improving reading comprehension.

For example, the National Reading Panel (2000) recommends that teachers primarily focus on seven specific comprehension strategies supported by rigorous research (plus multiple-strategy instruction). But the curricula found in leading core reading programs today cover skills and strategies. Not only is this unnecessary and ineffective, but the large numbers of skills and strategies taught in core reading programs means all get superficial treatment, often at a rate of one skill in a week. The structure of the curricula is often incoherent so that students and teachers do not know how skills and strategies relate to one another or how acquiring these sets of skills lead to becoming a better reader.

Visualizing

Uses the mind's capacity to imagine what is being communicated within a text. For example, many who read the first Harry Potter books (before viewing the movies) no doubt formed vivid images in their "mind's eye" when learning about Harry and his new friends. Visualization helps to anchor new ideas in a reader's mind by connecting unfamiliar ideas and concepts to past experiences. Thus, students need



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to be encouraged to recall ideas in a visual way in appropriate reading contexts Pressley, (2000). Students working in pairs or small groups create a series of three pictures to retell events in a text using dramatic movement (without words—almost like pantomime). The following example from Mills shows how a small group of students introduced visualizing to their class, followed by some tips for teachers: After reading Aesop’s fable, “The Hare and Tortoise,” one student uses expressive postures and facial expressions to reenact the Hare running, falling asleep, and waking. At the same time, a second student could play the Tortoise who plods consistently three times. Other students in the group might be animals cheering as the Tortoise crosses the finish line. The students should use a range of heights—low, medium, and high—to create interest and should remember to face the audience when performing.

Divide the class members into groups to plan, rehearse, and present their freeze frames. When presenting each performance, the teacher and class signal for the group to change postures by clapping. Class members offer an interpretation of each freeze frame, and the performing group clarifies the depicted events. Educated citizens are expected to function well in more than one language. L2 reading ability, particularly with English as the L2, is already in great demand as English continues to spread, not only as a global language but also as the language of science, technology and advance research Grabe & Stoller (2002).

Reading for Pleasure (RP)

Reading is an essential competency in the 21st Century. The importance of reading undertaken in childhood cannot be underestimated, since it provides a foundation for the acquisition of knowledge as well as for a love of reading for pleasure. Reading for pleasure refers to “reading that is done out of the reader’s own



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freewill anticipating the satisfaction that he will get from the act of reading and it typically involves materials that reflect the reader's own choice, at a time and place that suits him" (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Cremin (2007) posit that reading for pleasure is "oriented towards finding personal meaning and purpose and related to human need to make sense of the world, the desire to understand, to make things work, to make connections, engage emotionally and feel deeply. Once decoding has been mastered, research evidence highlights the importance of fluency and comprehension for children to be proficient readers.

Clark and Rumbold (2006) argue that reading for pleasure could be one important way to help combat social exclusion and raise educational standards.

Aspect/Methods

There are three evidence-based or proven approaches for teaching English letter-sound patterns or phonics to children and adults. All are sequential, systematic, and use explicit instruction. All can be delivered in short, regular lessons that combine seeing, hearing, saying, reading, and spelling activities. Below are brief descriptions of each. Once learners know some sounds, they can use this knowledge to read words via decoding, or write words via encoding, as they can build up and break words down.

Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP)

This is a method of teaching reading and spelling through decoding and encoding with a systematic approach. It relies upon teaching the individual sounds of the 44 phonemes in the English language sequentially and the letters that correspond to them Ehri et al., (2001). This method of teaching is where words are broken up into the smallest units of sound (phonemes). Children learn to make connections between the letters of written texts (graphemes, or letter symbols) and the sounds of spoken





language. Synthetic phonics also teaches children how to identify all the phonemes in a word and match them to a letter in order to be able to spell correctly. In the word bat, children learn to identify three individual phonemes using the synthetic phonics method: /b/ /a/ /t/ that can be blended back together to produce a word. The ‘synthetic’ part of this particular phonics instruction derives from the process of synthesizing or blending sounds to create words. There is a great deal of evidence which suggests that Synthetic Phonics is the superior phonics approach and outperforms.

First of all, it creates phonemic awareness, which is an essential component for learning to read and write. According to Adams (1990), once phonemic awareness is established and some sound-letter correspondences are learned, the brain begins to recognize new patterns on its own. After demonstrating phonemic awareness, students begin to develop their phonological awareness, or their ability to rhyme, identify onset sounds, and recognize syllables. Synthetic Phonics also provides children with the ability to independently read unfamiliar words, without which they could not decipher enough words to make meaning from text in order to comprehend. Thus, this approach can be seen as an antidote to the rote learning of other methods like Analytical Phonics, giving children the methods to solve reading problems autonomously.

Synthetic (meaning combining different substances or components) teaches individual letter-sound patterns, blending, and segmenting of recognizable words. For example, a teacher researcher shows and says the *consonants m, l, s, t* and *short vowel a*. Students practice saying the sounds and the teacher researcher models how to blend (or combine) them into small words: *am, Sam, tam, Al, Sal, as, mat, at, sat*. Then he/she guides them in rereading and spelling the same words. New sounds are not



www.udsspace.uds.edu.gh introduced in alphabetical order, and they are introduced quickly. Synthetic phonics means that children are able to read a range of easily decodable words sooner. This means that if a child is introduced to the sounds /m/ /s/ /a/ /t/ they can quickly read the words at, mat, sat, am, Sam etc.

A systematic approach to teaching synthetic phonics means teachers take a planned, thorough approach, teaching children the simplest sounds first and progressing all the way through to the most complex combinations of letters. Using a systematic synthetic phonics approach, almost all children quickly become confident and independent readers. They soon move away from the mechanics of identifying and blending letter sounds (or ‘decoding’ words) and start reading fluently; even when they come across words they have never heard or seen before once the process of reading becomes automatic. Johnston and Watson (2005) carried out two experiments, one controlled trial and one randomized controlled trial (the gold standard of scientific research) to understand the effects of synthetic phonics teaching on reading and spelling attainment. In Clackmannanshire study of a deprived area of Scotland where many of the pupils came from extremely deprived homes and/or had significant educational difficulties were pupils tracked from pre-school to age 11 they achieved results in reading and spelling far beyond their expected for their ages. This analysis concluded that using systematic synthetic phonics instruction enabled the children to read and spell better than those taught by alternative approaches.

Torgerson, Hall and Brooks (2006) found that systematic phonics teaching “enables children to make better progress in reading accuracy than unsystematic or no phonics, and that this is true for both normally-developing children and those at risk of failure. Systematic phonics instruction is critical if children are to be taught to read well, whether or not they experience reading difficulties. Moreover, where there is

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unsystematic or no phonics instruction, children's literacy progress is significantly impeded, inhibiting their initial and subsequent growth in reading accuracy, fluency, writing, spelling and comprehension.”

In England, a model of reading which encourages switching between various strategies, particularly when phonic work is regarded as only one such strategy, all of equal worth, risks paying insufficient attention to the critical skills of word recognition which must first be secured by beginner readers, for example if beginner readers are encouraged to infer from pictures the word they have to decode. It may also lead to diluting the focused phonics teaching that is necessary for securing accurate word reading.” Opponents of synthetic phonics voice concern that it encourages a focus on the mechanics of reading words rather than understanding them. However, skilled readers are able to identify a word just from the combination of letters written on the page, regardless of context. Once they have accurately identified the word, they can use context to understand its meaning. Confident reading of a wide range of texts therefore only comes after a child is confident decoding every word. Children simply have more time to attend to comprehension because they are fluent decoders.

According to Abisamra, (2007:1) there are strategies for reading. These must be planned to achieve the ultimate purpose: to diagnose learner's prior knowledge and provide necessary background knowledge so they will be prepared to understand what they will be reading.

Rationale: A diagnostic and instructional procedure used when learners read informational books and content area textbook.

1. Introduce key concepts to learners using word, phrase or pictures to initiate a discussion.



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2. Have learners brainstorm words about the topic and record their ideas on a chart.

Help make connections about brainstormed ideas.

3. Present additional vocabulary and clarify misconceptions.

4. Have learners draw pictures and /or write a quick write about topic using words from brainstorm list.

5. Have learners share quickly writes and ask questions to help clarify and elaborate quick writes.

This procedure is in line with the Schema Reading plan for this study. This would be done a day before the actual lesson (drawing period for instance) because the time allotted for reading comprehension is not enough for all these activities. The advantage of this will be to help pupils learn about a subject before starting the reading and comprehension lesson. However, lessons may be disrupted as classroom management may become a problem with all the excitement of everyone trying to make their ideas known. Children learn through play and this time affords them the opportunity to feel relaxed to share in the activities planned for the day while bringing on board their own expressions of the topic under review.

Analytical Phonics (AP)

Analytic (meaning separating something into components or parts) teaches analysis of letter-sound patterns in known words and application to unknown words. For example, teacher researcher explains short vowel a, and long vowel a, silent e headers, which include phonetic spellings, example words, and sometimes pictures. He/she models how to sort (or separate) by headers a list 12-21 other words: mad, fast, page, name, same, hand, snap, came, grass, rake, made. Then he/she guides



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students in rereading, resorting, and spelling the same words. Analogy (meaning comparing things based on their similarities) teaches phonograms (or rimes) and their related word families (formed by adding onsets or consonant patterns at the front). For example, a teacher researcher shows and says the phonogram -ab. He/she models how to add the single consonants c, d, g, j, l, n, t at the front to form relatives: cab, dab, gab, jab, lab, nab, tab. Then he/she guides students in rereading and spelling the word family. Synthetic is the most common phonics approach and used in many published instructional materials. Analytic may be challenging for new readers with limited literacy experience or long-term reading difficulties, but can be a fun and interactive practice activity. The Analytical Phonics approach is often referred to as the Whole Word approach, which relies upon children learning to recognize words instantaneously, without requiring to ‘sound them out’ or decode them (Gunning, 2000). This is often referred to as “sight reading” or rote learning words from flash cards. Although there is support for the use of this approach, it can mostly be disproved, especially when considering the use of this method with second language learners.

Holmes (2009) argues that through Analytical Phonics, learners can effectively read words by sight via an analytical conversion process that can be achieved through continued practice in reading at both text and word level. He also hypothesizes that this method is in accordance with the ‘verbal- efficiency’ theory, where efficient instantaneous word recognition is imperative in a competent reader, as less energy is ‘wasted’ on decoding allowing more to be spent on higher order thinking skills and linguistic processes such as comprehension. However, the position of Holmes (2009) can be refuted by considering the exorbitant number of words in the English language that must be memorized by learners before the benefit of energy



www.udsspace.uds.edu.gh saving could be considered feasible, demonstrating that this approach would be unsuitable for second language learners. This is problematic given the likelihood of a second language learner forgetting words may be higher than that of a first language learner, as they will often converse in their native language as opposed to English. Given that it is even more likely that a second language learner will come across unknown words, it renders this approach invalid. As a result of the reasons discussed, it should not be the primary method of literacy instruction for second language learners. However, there is a great deal of support for the use of Analytical Phonics in the instance of irregular words, such as “was” or “are” which cannot be decoded (Cameron, 2001). This cannot be discounted given the obscure.



METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the approach the researcher used to conduct this research. The chapter contains research design, population and sample, setting, sampling technique, data collection instrument, data collection procedures as well as method of data analysis. Descriptive survey design was used to gather the data for the study. The descriptive survey design attempts to describe what prevails in a certain place.

3.1 Profile of the Study Area

The study was carried out in T I Ahmadiyya Junior High School in the Bolgatanga Municipality. The school has a student population of 150, 10 trained teachers, 4 Community Volunteer Teachers under the Youth Employment Agency and 1 night watchman. The students in this school are mostly Christians and Muslim with a few traditional believers. However, the students are mostly from low income earning parent's, who also care little about their ward's academic progress in the school. Most of the students do not come to school on market days and on Fridays. Parents hardly visit the school to report or enquire about their ward's progress and this has made the visitors book virtually empty with no parent's information. This may likely to be a factor that contributes to student poor attendance to school, lateness and truancy and poor academic record.



3.2 Research Design

Action research design is adopted for this study; it is an educational research that would help the researcher find solution to the form one students reading problem to enable them continue learning Sarantakos, (2005). Action research is more of a holistic approach to problem-solving, rather than a single method for collecting and analyzing data. Action research is a process of learning in which various actors, upon sensing a problem, decide to investigate and find solutions which are implemented and further investigated to determine whether the solutions work or not. Thus, it allows for several different research tools to be used as the project is conducted.

Also, the researcher adopted the design because the problem was identified in the classroom during teaching and learning and it needs to be solved in order to continue teaching and learning. An action research is the type of research that is suitable in finding a workable solution to school related problems. According to Bassey (1998, p, 93) action research is an enquiry which is carried out in order to understand, to evaluate, and then to change in order to improve educational practice. In action research, the researcher takes part and becomes involved in the problem of the people in question over a time in order to get solution to the problem Sarantakos (2005). Unlike the traditional research where an immediate solution is not the prime aim, action research produces results to solve the identified problem for teaching and learning to continue in the classroom. Research is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social (including educational) situation in order to improve the rationality and justice of:

- (a) Their own social or educational practices,
- (b) Their understanding of these practices, and



(c) The situation in which practices are carried out

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study includes all students in T I Ahmadiyya Junior High School form one. They are between the ages of 10-15 years in the form one class who has just graduated from their various Primary Schools. The table below gives a detailed description of the study population. According to Beins and McCarthy (2012), population of a study is the entire set of people or data that are of interest to a researcher.

Table 1 population of form one students in T I Ahmadiyya JHS

S/N	Boys	Girls	Total
T I JHS From 1	10	15	25
Total	10	15	25

From the above table, the total number of boys is 10 representing about 40 percent of the students population in the form one class and the total number of girls is 15 representing 60 percent of the student's population in the form one class.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size of the study is made up of 10 students in T I Ahmadiyya Junior High School form one and they includes 4 boys and 6 girls. Research sample, according to Beins and McCarthy (2012), refers to a subset of the population that is studied in a research work. The sampling procedure used was purposeful sampling technique aimed at selecting sample size of the study. Avoke (2000) citing Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003) sees purposeful sampling as hand picking the cases to



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be included in the sample on the basis of their judgments of the typicality of the issue identified for study. This means choosing a sample for a specific purpose. Purposeful sampling is the process of including whoever happens to be information rich and available in the sample Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009).

This is the process of selecting a sample using a technique that does not permit the researcher to specify the probability, or chance, that each member of a population has been selected for a sample (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2009). The advantages of this method are convenience, economy and the easy in obtaining a suitable sample size, and the disadvantage is that the readily available participants are most likely not a random sample of the overall population (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2009). The form one students are immediate graduates from the Primary six and are supposed to be able to read their English reader fluently without difficulties whatsoever. Since some have difficulties they form the appropriate persons to be included in this study. In purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the study on the basis of their judgment of the typicality or possessing of the particular characteristics being sought (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2008). This is the reason why the sample is deemed satisfactory to their specific need. On the basis of this, the sample size for this study was 10 out of the 25 students in the form one class.

The table below gives a detailed description of the sampled size for this study.



Table 2: Sampled population of form one students in T I Ahmadiyya JHS

Form	Boys	Girls	Total
T I JHS From 1	4	6	10
Total	4	6	10

From the table above, the total number of boys is 4 representing forty (40) percent of the sampled size and number of girls are 6 representing sixty (60) percent of the sampled population for the study.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The researcher relied on primary data, and this focused on the use of observation guide and test. With observation, the researcher used his sense of vision as a main source of gathering data. It may also be referred to as the act of watching the individual performs a task or show a character and a record of that act or task is then noted and analyzed. Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or a phenomenon as it takes place without asking the respondents. It helps in situations where accurate information cannot be elicited by asking/questioning. The researcher implored observation to collect a primary data for the study. Observation was conducted during his visit to the form one class for a primary data collection. The use of this tool started from this stage (pre-visit stage) to the end of the data collection process. The researcher used test as another instrument to help him gather data for the study. He conducted pre-test at the beginning to ascertain the veracity of the problem in order to launch and intervention, and a post-test after the intervention to again ascertain the effect of the intervention.



3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was undertaken after the researcher had asked for permission from the municipal education director and the assistant headmaster, other teachers of the schools and the students who were the participants. The research work covered three weeks, and two days within each week was used to conduct the research work to the end. In all, twelve working days; that is every Mondays and Thursdays in the week. The first two weeks were used for the pre-intervention, the second two weeks for the intervention and the last two weeks for the post-intervention.

3.6.1 Situational Analysis (Pre-Intervention)

Week One Day One and Two

The researcher is the head teacher of the school under study and sought for permission from the assistant head master, members of staff and the form one students to undertake the study. He showed an introductory letter from the faculty of education outlining the purpose of the study. The student participants were informed of the impending pre-test to be conducted and the rationale behind the test. The students were made aware of the intention and they were assured that the exercise was not to pose any problem to any of them in any way, but to help bring improvement in their learning. On the second day the researcher enters the classroom and observes the general reading interest of the students on their English reader. The researcher also observed the type of books the students read.

3.6.2 Intervention Strategies Week Two Day Three

The researchers at this stage prepared a lesson for the Junior High School form one class. The researcher on Monday at 8:00 am to 9:10 am taught the lesson and pictures were taken with the permission of the student's participants. All the steps in the lesson was followed and the phonic method of teaching reading and



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comprehension was used, he also used the appropriate teaching and learning materials to enable the students understand the lesson. During the lesson, the researcher asked the students through to the following:

- Identify the individual sounds of the alphabets.
- Blend short vowels with consonants.
- Blend and read one vowel word and short sentences.
- Introduce the long vowel sounds and blend long vowels with consonants.
- Begin blending and reading two vowels words and introduces five phonic rules.
- Introduce the phonic chart which also introduces the special sounds that are made when letters **stick** together.
- Ask students after this to read the passage on their own.
- Identify some unfamiliar words with irregular sounds.
- Use those words and form short sentences.

Week Two Day Four

The researcher conducted another lesson on Thursday morning between the hours of 8:00 am to 9:10 am with the same lesson but this time giving more time for the students to dominate the lesson with activities. The aim of this was to give the participants more time to learn the sounds and identify the individual sounds during reading to help the read fluently. This would also help them practice with more examples before the post test. Some of these questions were asked during the lesson:

- Identify unfamiliar words from the passage read
- Use the words to form correct simple sentences
- Read the passage individually with a giving time
- To ask the research question of any irregular sounds identified in the words



3.6.3 Post-Intervention: Week Three Day Five and Six

Post test was conducted to ascertain the understanding, fluency and comprehension of the intervention on the students of T I Ahmadiyya Junior High School. It was also to obtain data on the effectiveness of the intervention procedures put in place, make comparism with the pretest and draw a logical conclusion on intervention and success of the study.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data from both pre-test and post-test would be presented and analyzed on tables for easy understanding.

3.8 Data Quality and Ethical Issues

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005, p.181) stated that ethical behavior is important in research, as in any other field of human activity. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005, p.181) further explained that principles underlying ‘research ethics’ are universal and concern issues such as honesty and respect for the rights of individuals. In respect of this, the researcher observed ethics throughout this research. The autonomy of the participants and the information was respected and handled confidentially. No information collected was revealed to anybody and no names of participants were used in this research. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis. Informed consent was obtained from participants and it was explained to them that they could withdraw from the research any time they wished to. This requires that participants receive a full, non-technical and clear explanation of the tasks expected of them”. This was done by the researcher before every session.

The researcher being the head teacher of the school, always sought for permission from the immediate superior that is the Circuit Supervisor for central ‘A’ and the parents in times of usage of the teachers instructional time and the students



involvement. For example www.udsspace.uds.edu.gh using the student's pictures on the work the researcher had to visit and sought individual parent's permission. The researcher had to again educate them on the pre-test and post-test administered to the students before their full participation.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussions of the finding of the study in relation to the literature review. The result is presented according to the research questions. This finding also provides basis for appropriate conclusions.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1

This table discusses the demographic components of respondents on the following areas: age, sex, religious set/denominations

Table 3 Sex of Respondents

Variable/Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	4	40
Female	6	60
Total	10	100

4.1.1 Sex of Respondents

Table 3 results revealed that male population in the study stood at 4 representing 40 percent of the population while their female counterparts dominates with 6 representing 60 percent of the entire population of the study. This result is not surprising because the entire student population in T.I Ahmadiyya JHS is 70% female and 30% male. Also, the Ghana Statistical Service GSS (2012) puts the population of women ahead of their male counterparts with a 51/49 margin. T I Ahmadiyya JHS is located within the Bolgatanga Municipality where parents and guardians have access



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to information on issues of the importance of girl child education and this also contributes to the high enrolment figures for girls in the school. To add to that, some NGOs do not only advocate for female education, but also offer support like sponsorship/scholarship packages for the girl child who excels in her exams. All these have contributed to the greater percentage of female over male in the school and for that matter, the sampled population for this study.

Table 4: Age Distribution of Respondents

Variable/Age	Frequency	Percentage
10-11	6	60
12-13	3	30
14-15	1	10
Total	10	100

4.1.2 Age Distribution of Respondents

The analysis of table one on the ages of respondents revealed that majority of respondent's between 10-11 years are 6 representing about 60%. This is high because the JHS one students graduated from the Primary Six Class. Three (3) respondents representing 30% were aged between 12-13 years. One (1) respondent, in the age bracket of 14-15 representing 10% of the population and this shows that the form one, mostly are students of ages between 11-15 years.



Table 5: Religious Denomination of Respondents

Variable/Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Muslim	5	50
Christian	3	30
Traditional	2	20
Total	10	100

4.1.3 Religious Denomination

The table again shows that 5 students out of the 10 under study representing 50% were Muslims; this is not surprising because T.I Ahmadiyya JHS is a Muslim school and the students are largely Muslims. Three (3) students representing 30% were Christians and the remaining two (2) students representing 20% of the population were Traditional African Religious worshipers. The statistics above is in line with the location and the fact that the school was established by a Muslim organization first as a Makaranta/Madrassa to teach Muslim children, hence the name of the school-T.I Ahmadiyya the T-teaching and the I-Islam so teaching of Islam Junior High school. Because it is in the town, the traditionalist live mostly in the outskirts and this has made the Christians also dominate over them with a margin of 1 representing 10%.



Table 6: Previous Primary School of Respondents

Variable/Education	Frequency	Percentage
Feed School (T I Primary School)	5	50
Schools Within the Municipality	3	30
Schools Outside the Municipality	2	20
Total	10	100

Source: Field Data, June 2017 N= 10

4.1.4 Previous Primary School

This data was taken to ascertain information on the caliber of students and their past schools to help the researcher know how to handle the population. This part of the table showed that 5 students representing 50% were admitted from T I Ahmadiyya Primary school which is the feed school. Three (3) students representing 30% were admitted from other schools within the Bolgatanga Municipality and two (2) students representing 20% of the population were students who were admitted came from other parts of the country. This again showed clearly that the students in the form one class came from different backgrounds. Fifty (50%) of the study population did not come from the feed school. At the same time, it is just the first term of the 2016/2017 academic year and the students are not familiarized with the school for long.



Research Question 1:**What are the difficulties students in T I Ahmadiyya JHS one encounter in reading and comprehension?**

This question was answered by identifying some areas of difficulties that student's encounter which has affected their reading and comprehension. Some of these areas include; homes, teachers, remediation, assessment, sex, teaching and learning recourses etc. All these play a role in the students reading difficulties they face. This actually helped the researcher to understand the student's situations and carried the intervention process which includes all the students with their varying difficulties. The researcher conducted a pre-test and a pre-observation to confirm these revelations.

Pre-Test

The researcher also conducted pretest to the form one students (participants) in the class to ascertain the veracity of their challenge on reading and comprehension and how the phonic method can help them to solve the situation. The problems associated with the use of the phonic method of teaching reading and comprehension at the basic school level was also considered. In all, ten (10) pre-test questions were administered to each of the ten (10) participants. The pre-test questions were based on the phonics and aspect of phonic method under this study.

Fig 1: This picture indicates a pre-test exercise being conducted by the researcher to confirm the problem identified. This helped the researcher to initiate the intervention measures to achieve his set objectives. The students were given their free will to make their own choices.



Figure 1: Pre-Test Results Picture



Table: 8. Pre-test results

Number of Students	Marks passed	Percentage(%) of Marks Passed
0	80-100	0%
1	50-79	10%
3	39-49	30%
6	30	60%
Total 10	100 Marks	100%

Note: one (1) question represents 10% and pass mark is 50% and over.

The pre-test results show that no student scored between 80-100 marks, and only one (1) student had a pass mark which falls between 50-79 representing 10% of the



student population. Three (3) students scored marks between 39-49 representing 30% of the student population of ten (10). Finally, six (6) students scored thirty (30) marks each representing 60% of the entire student population under study. This shows that out of the ten (10) students, only one (1) student passed which represents 10% of the student leaving 80% with no or very low marks and this tells why the researcher had to embark on this study to put some intervention mechanisms to unravel the situation of the form one student.

English is a core subject and compulsory from the basic school through to the higher level and every student in the basic school must pass it at the BECE exams before gaining admission in to the Senior High School. It is also the official language of Ghana and any person who would be gainfully employed must have command in the English language in written and spoken. However, the form one students in T.I Ahmadiyya JHS are here battling all these serious challenges for effective learning of the subject. It must be assumed that it is not that we give the students the chance to read but that we instruct them on how to understand, how to comprehend and how to use strategies that will help them comprehend what they are reading. For instance, there are no text books for students in T.I Ahmadiyya JHS to use during reading and comprehension lessons the students cannot learn to read and comprehend in a vacuum. The student's woes were further compounded by the teacher's lack of adequate knowledge in the area of phonics and they have never attended any INSERT on the usage of phonic method to teach reading and comprehension. The role of the teacher in the classroom and the student's academic development for that matter is highly placed and when they lack competency it simply suggest doom for those students, and this really manifested in the reading and comprehension difficulties with the students of T.I Ahmadiyya JHS form one. Part of the problems is the time

allocation for the reading and comprehension aspect of the English language. In T.I Ahmadiyya JHS only seventy (70) minutes is located for reading and comprehension each week, which is woefully inadequate. The researcher however, sets to improvise some of these learning materials during the intervention stage of the study e.g magazines in the place of their English text books.

4.2 Pre-Observation

Table 7: Pre-Observation Guide on Student’s Fluency of Reading

Student Participants	Very Fluent (VF)	Fluent(F)	Not Fluent (NF)	Cannot Read (CR)
Participant A	()	()	(NF)	()
Participant B	()	()	()	(CR)
Participant C	()	(F)	()	()
Participant D	()	()	(NF)	()
Participant E	()	()	()	(CR)
Participant F	()	()	(NF)	()
Participant G	()	()	(NF)	()
Participant H	()	()	(NF)	()
Participant I	()	()	(NF)	()
Participant J	()	()	(NF)	()

From the observation guide, only participant ‘C’ could read form one English reader fluently representing 10% of the total participants. Seven (7) participants (A, D, F, G, H, I, and J) could not read fluently the form one English reader representing 70% of the participants. Finally, 2 participants (B and E) representing 20% could not read their form one English reader. The results from this observation show that there is a



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serious need for the researcher to intervene and look for the appropriate solution to this problem. The researcher would therefore use the phonic method to teach reading and comprehension to enable them read fluently their form one English reader.

Research Question 2:

What is the effect of the phonic method in teaching reading and comprehension?

The researcher in answering this question prepared a lesson plan and delivered in two instructional hours and on two separates days. This was to ascertain the effectiveness of the use of phonic method in teaching reading. During both lesson deliveries, the right steps were followed. This was demonstrated as follows;

Day 1:

The researcher having informed the Municipal Education Office, the assistant head teacher, staff and the student about his intention, he scheduled a day for the lesson delivery. This time the focus was on the following areas:

Observation of student's fluency in reading with a guide, Intensive phonics instruction (reading-like behavior) Intensive, Systematic Phonics all major letter-sound correspondences taught in order that is by knowing the following:

(1) We learn to read by first learning the rules of phonics, that is, we learn to read by sounding out words and reading out-loud ("decoding to sound") letter of the English alphabets.

(2) Knowledge of phonics must be deliberately taught and consciously learned. The major rules: "long and short vowels and vowel and consonant digraphs consisting of two letters representing one phoneme, such as oi, ea, sh, and th. Also, phonics



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instruction may include blends of letter sounds that represent larger subunits in words such as consonant pairs (e.g. st, b), onsets, and rimes"

- a. Introduction of the phonic method/to teaching reading and comprehension and indicated his main focus for the day.
- b. Introduction of the lesson by sounding out the letters of English alphabets.
- c. Introduction of morphemes/phonemes and creation of phonemic awareness etc.

After the researcher in day one going through all these, he closed for the day.

Day 2: lesson delivery on content/concept and core point

The researcher began the second day at exactly 8:00 am by reviewing the student's previous knowledge of what was discussed in the introduction lesson. The researcher continued to introduce new concepts developed from those that were made known to the students yesterday to ensure continuum and to help the students learn from the known to the unknown.

Research Question3:

What are the Steps/Aspects of the Phonic Method are Necessary for Teaching Reading Comprehension?

To answer this research question, some steps/aspects were followed to unravel the challenges. This will enable them continue to their various Senior High Schools with ease once they have control of reading and comprehension, and writing. The researcher prepares a lesson plan reading and comprehension using the phonic method. He considers other steps/aspects of phonics like; the systematic synthetics phonics, phonics instruction, analogy phonics during the training/teaching process.



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The researcher also took his time to follow the step-step procedure of teaching students to read using phonics method to get the required results. By so doing, the following aspects were used in this study during the intervention process:

Systematic Synthetic Phonics (meaning combining different substances or components) teaches individual letter-sound patterns, blending, and segmenting of recognizable words. For example, a teacher researcher would shows and says the consonants m, l, s, t and short vowel a. Students practice saying the sounds and the teacher models how to blend (or combine) them into small words: am, Sam, tam, Al, Sal, as, mat, at, sat.

Phonics instruction is a way of teaching reading that stresses the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences and their use in reading and spelling. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that letters make sounds and those sounds are systematically joined together to make words. once phonemic awareness is established and some sound-letter correspondences are learned, the brain begins to recognize new patterns on its own. After demonstrating phonemic awareness, students begin to develop their phonological awareness, or their ability to rhyme, identify onset sounds, and recognize syllables.

Day Three (3) Post-Intervention/Post-test

Post intervention is an important phase of the cycle of an action research. It assesses the extent of effectiveness of the intervention mechanisms used by the researcher. The researcher carried a post intervention test to obtain information on the effect of lesson delivered on their reading and comprehension skills. It also looked for the understanding of the students after the intervention procedures were administered. In



all, ten questions were given again to the participants. This process lasted for a period of one day and the results are presented below:

Figure 2 Picture of the researcher carrying out a post intervention to ascertain the understanding of the students after intervention process was completed.

Figure 2: Post –Test Results Picture



Table 9. Post-test results

Number of Students	Marks passed	Percentage(%) of Marks Passed
4	80-100	40%
3	50-79	30%
2	39-49	20%
1	30	10%
Total 10	100 Marks	100%

Note: one (1) question represents 10% and pass mark is 50% and above.

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Analysis of the post intervention test revealed that the intervention mechanism made was very successful and has helped the participants overcome their reading inabilities. This is because; the results revealed that students' fluency levels of reading text have increased. Students can now identify the individual sounds of letters in words and blend them to form a whole word. The vocabularies of students have increased and students can communicate fluently with their peers with ease. The acquisition of the skills after the intervention would lead to the improvement of the students. The post test results show that four (4) students scored marks between 80 -100 representing 40% of the students. Three (3) students passed between 50 –79 representing 30% of the total number of students. Two (2) students passed between 30-49 marks representing 20% of the students. Finally, one (1) student had 10 marks representing 10% of the students. In all, seven (7) students representing 70% of the population had a passed mark between 50-100 and this represents 70% of the total marks and 70% of population.

This shows that after the intervention seven students can now read any text by using the phonic method that is blending the sounds of the letters and form a word. This is a clear improvement over the pre-test results where only one (1) student representing 10% of the entire students had marks between 50-79% of the marks. This shows that the intervention measure was very successful because 70% of the students understood and scored marks from 50-100.



4.3 Post observation

Table 10. Post-Observation Guide on Student's Fluency of Reading

Student	Very Fluent (VF)	Fluent(F)	Not Fluent (NF)	Cannot Read (CR)
Student A	()	(F)	()	()
Student B	()	()	(NF)	()
Student C	(VF)	()	()	()
Student D	()	(F)	()	()
Student E	(VF)	()	()	()
Student F	()	(F)	()	()
Student G	(VF)	()	()	()
Student H	()	(F)	()	()
Student I	()	(F)	()	()
Student J	(VF)	()	()	()

The observation guide indicates that student **C, E, G** and **J** have improved upon their reading and can read **very fluently** their English text book representing forty percent of the student respondents.



Students **A, D, F, H,** and **I** can read **fluently** their English text book representing 50 percent of the student respondents.

Student **B** can read with little difficulties representing ten percent of the student respondents.

Finally, it can be observed from the above guide that after the implementation of the intervention strategies ninety percent of the student participants who form the sampled size have improved upon their reading abilities.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this study includes using the phonic method to help form one students learn reading and comprehension, helping the form one students learn following; short and long vowels, consonants, blending and reading one vowel word and short sentences and using the systematic synthetic phonics, phonics instruction, and to identify the regular and irregular language to help the form one students read and comprehend. In chapter four some findings were made by the researcher. Amongst the areas covered were how the phonic method was used to teach reading and comprehension in the form one class, the steps to follow when teaching reading using the phonic method and identifying the aspect of phonic method that are useful for teaching reading and comprehension in the form one class. In this chapter, the findings are discussed, summarized and conclusions made based on the results. The researcher then made his conclusions based on the findings. Finally, a number of recommendations are then put in place for the full realization of the program objectives in the near future.



5.1 Summary

Information sourced for this study is put together under this section. The summaries are categorized based on the objectives of this study. Results of using the phonic method to teach reading and comprehension are summarized in one section, results of the step by step procedure when using the phonic method of teaching reading and comprehension are summarized in another section and results from the aspects of the phonic method to facilitates the learning when teaching reading and comprehension are also summarized in a different section.

5.1.1 Summary of Findings on the Difficulties Students Face in Learning

Reading and Comprehension

The findings show that students face various levels of difficulties in learning reading comprehension. These difficulties emanated from their homes, teachers, remediation, assessment, sex, teaching and learning recourses, government inability to provide adequate infrastructure etc.

5.1.2 Summary of Findings on Using the Phonic Method to Teach Reading and Comprehension

The phonic method which is widely used for teaching reading at all levels was not used to teach the form one student during their previous grade. These students did no learn to read by first identifying the sounds of the vowels and consonants, short and long vowels and reading by identifying the sounds of letters in the words. Students are taught by teachers who do not have the phonemic awareness and ability to sound out letters themselves rendering them helpless.



5.1.3 Summary of Findings on the Steps/Aspects to follow in teaching using

Phonic method

Teachers who attempt teaching using the phonic method lack skills of steps and procedures in teaching reading and comprehension.

In addition, the teachers do not always have a comprehension lesson plan indicating the mode of delivery of their reading and comprehension lesson.

Finally, teachers should follow the necessary steps when using the phonic method of teaching reading and comprehension to facilitate students understanding.

The study also revealed that Systematic Synthetic Phonics (meaning combining different substances or components) teaches individual letter-sound patterns, blending, and segmenting of recognizable words was totally ignored by previous teacher. Phonics instruction is a way of teaching reading that stresses the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences and their use in reading and spelling was also not considered by primary six teachers. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that letters make sounds and those sounds are systematically joined together to make words. According to Adams (1990), once phonemic awareness is established and some sound-letter correspondences are learned, the brain begins to recognize new patterns on its own

5.2 Conclusions

From the analysis of the findings gathered on teaching reading and comprehension with phonic method, steps in teaching using phonic method and aspect to consider using phonic method several considerations were made.



5.2.1 Conclusion on the difficulties Students Face when Learning Reading and Comprehension

The researcher makes the following conclusions from the pre and post test results:

- Parents should help their wards at home by reading with them and making correction on both their pronunciation.
- Teachers must be taken through on-the-job training to enhance their teaching skills in order to handle reading and comprehension using the phonic method.
- Teachers and parents should all students giving them the same commitment, concentration and attention.

5.2.2 Conclusion on the use of Phonic Method in Teaching Reading and Comprehension

During the intervention, students were ready and they enthusiastically participated in the lesson delivery. The study also revealed some inadequacies that compounded the students inability to read and some were; text books, chalk, inability of their previous teachers to use the phonic method to teach reading and comprehension at their early stages of learning. Another problem was the time allocated for the comprehension lesson. Students had poor experience in vowel and consonant sounds

Finally, from the study the phonic method is most effective in teaching students reading and comprehension especially at the basic schools.

5.2.2 Conclusion on the Steps to follow in teaching using Phonic method

The investigation has gathered that the appropriate procedures and steps are not always followed during teaching and learning of reading and comprehension at the various levels of our basic schools. In some circumstances that students are taught reading and comprehension where teacher cannot himself identify and differentiate



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long vowel from short vowel, the right content of what is taught and learned is affected. Many times the right Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) are readily not available for teachers to use Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs). In teaching a reading and comprehension lesson there has to be a readily available English text books which is not also the case of the students in T.I Ahmadiyya Junior High School. Many teachers totally ignore teaching the listening and speaking aspect of the English language which is a toll on the students' progress in reading and comprehension and speaking.

5.2.3 Conclusion on Aspect of Phonic Method used

The research results revealed that teachers are do not always consider the appropriate aspects of the phonic method like systematic synthetic phonic and phonics instruction for teaching reading and this has an untold effect on learners understanding. Also, from the pre-test, only one (1) students representing 10% of the respondents could read with little difficulties. This was not the case during the post-test where seven (7) students representing 70% of the respondents could now read with little difficulties or assistance from the researcher. Therefore, a conclusion is made that the study find solution to the reading and difficulties of the form one students in T.I Ahmadiyya Junior High school in the Bolgatanga Municipality was successful.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations on the Difficulties Students Face when Learning

Reading and Comprehension

The study findings show that some important considerations were not made in the assessment of student's difficulties in reading. First of all, the school environment must be conducive for learning to take place. The teachers who facilitate the students



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learning must be trained and retrained to be equipped with adequate competences for their jobs. Students try to identify their weaker points in their process; this will help them learn to improve upon their weak sites. Proper assessment should be made before mainstreaming student into one learning environment to enable teacher handle their individual differences.

5.3.2 Recommendations on the use of Phonic Method to teach Reading and Comprehension

We learn to read by first learning the rules of phonics, that is, we learn to read by sounding out words and reading out-loud (decoding to sound). This means that the knowledge of phonics must be deliberately taught and consciously learned.

The study findings show that some basic considerations were not followed in the teaching of reading and comprehension lessons in the form one class. They include the following;

First of all, phonic method is not considered as a very important method in teaching reading and comprehension at all levels by teachers at their previous schools. Considering the importance of phonic method in teaching reading, I will recommend it to the Bolgatanga Municipal Education Directorate as a stage holder and a curriculum planner to adopt the use of the phonic method in the teaching of reading and comprehension. I will also recommend the use of phonic method to all stage holders in education for its adoption in the quest for the promotion of teaching reading and comprehension in the basic schools. The Bolgatanga Municipal Education Directorate should try and organize on the job training programs for all English teachers of the basic schools in the Municipality on regular basis. When teachers are equipped with the skills of using the phonic method they can facilitate their students



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learning during teaching reading and comprehension. Information gathered from the research also indicated that teachers should start teaching reading using the phonic method at an early stage of the learners' development.

5.3.3 Recommendations on the Steps/Aspects to follow in teaching using Phonic

Method

Teaching English language at the Junior High school especially reading comprehension, steps must be followed where the phonic method is implored.

The following are guideline steps to follow:

1. The child must know the language that he is going to learn to read.
2. The child must learn to dissect spoken words into component sounds.
3. The child must learn to recognize and discriminate the letters of the alphabet in their various forms (upper and lower case letters, printed and cursive).
4. The child must learn the left-to-right principle by which words are spelled and put in order in continuous text.
5. The child must learn that there are patterns of highly probable correspondence between letters and sounds, and he must learn those patterns of correspondence that will help him recognize words that he already knows in his spoken language, or that will help him determine the pronunciation of unfamiliar words.



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6. The child must learn to recognize printed words from whatever cues he can use, their total configuration, the letters composing them, the sounds represented by those letters, and or the meanings suggested by the context.

7. The child must learn that printed words are signals for spoken words, and that they have meanings analogous to those of spoken words. While decoding a printed message into its spoken equivalent, the child must be able to comprehend the meaning of the total message in the same way that he would comprehend the meaning of the corresponding spoken messages.

8. The child must learn to reason and think about what he reads, within the limits of his talents and experience”.

Teachers of English must always try to follow these steps when teaching reading comprehension as the findings from this study results show.

1. Activating prior knowledge of learners before the commencement of the lesson;
2. Questioning learners before, during and after the lesson.
3. Analyzing text structure with the learners.
4. Creating mental or visual images during the lesson.
5. Summarizing the lesson with students.

The reasons for all this are that students are actively involved in the teaching and learning process and this leads to understanding.

Finally, the students should have the higher participation in the learning process.

In teaching reading comprehension some aspects are considered to facilitate the students’ understanding. There are three evidence-based or proven approaches for teaching English letter-sound patterns or phonics to children and adults. All are sequential, systematic, and use explicit instruction. All can be delivered in short, regular lessons that combine seeing, hearing, saying, reading, and spelling activities.



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Once learners know some sounds, they can use this knowledge to read words via decoding, or write words via encoding, as they can build up and break words down.

Systematic Synthetic Phonics helps the teacher create phonemic awareness, which is an essential component for learning to read and write. Analytical Phonics Analytic (meaning separating something into components or parts) teaches analysis of letter-sound patterns in known words and application to unknown words. For example, teacher researcher explains short vowel a, and long vowel a, silent e headers, which include phonetic spellings, example words, and sometimes pictures. He/she models how to sort (or separate) by headers a list 12-21 other words: mad, fast, page, name, same, hand, snap, came, grass, rake, made. Then he/she guides students in rereading, resorting, and spelling the same words.

In following all these, the objective set for the instructional period must be considered in order to achieve it.

This study therefore, is recommended to help improve the aspects of teaching reading and comprehension skills when using the phonic method.





5.4 Chapter Summary

The chapter started with the work summary where findings on the difficulties students face when learning reading comprehension, use of phonic method in teaching reading comprehension, considering the steps in teaching reading and comprehension and aspects of phonics to teach students to enable them learn reading and comprehension. This is followed by conclusions on using phonic method, steps in teaching reading comprehension and aspects of phonics to consider in teaching reading and comprehension. The researcher then proceeded and put some recommendations forward.

First on the difficulties students face when learning reading comprehension the study recommend the identification of individual difficulties and competence, use of phonic method to teach reading and comprehension, the researcher concluded that in teaching reading and comprehension to students at the basic schools, it is appropriate to use the phonic method.

To add to that, when teaching reading comprehension, all the steps should be followed to enable the learners actively participates and contribute in the learning process or else students would just be partial learners who may just observe the learning process during instructional hours.

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Finally, teachers do not know some aspects of phonics like the systematic synthetic phonics and analytical phonics that are must be considered when teaching phonics. These help teachers create the phonemic awareness in learners to boost their learning of phonics.

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A LESSON PLAN ON TEACHING READING AND COMPREHENSION USING THE RUBRICS

week ending subject.....English.....reference materials s...syllabus, text book, internet, handouts, resource persons.....class/form.....one (1)...no. of students in class 25...week...5th...average age of students...11-15years duration70 minutes

UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES



DAY/DATE/ DURATION	TOPIC/SUB-TOPIC / ASPECTS	OBJECTIVE(S)/RELEVANT PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE(RPK)	TEACHER-LEARNER ACTIVITIES (TLAs)/ TEACHING LEARNING MATERIALS(TLMs)	CORE POINTS/HIGH ORDER SKILLS	EVALUATION /REMARKS
Monday 07/17 9:10 AM 70 minutes	ASPECT Reading and Comprehension TOPIC:	By the end of the lesson, the pupil /students will be able to: (1) Identify the consonants / vowels and auditorily discriminate the sounds of the English alphabets. (2) Identify short and long vowels and consonants and blend them (phonemes). (3) Blend and read one vowel word with short sentences	Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) Vowels, consonants, short and long vowels and letters of the English alphabets Introduction: Introduce the lesson by telling the students the aspect and topic for the day and the concentration area e.i letters of the English alphabets and their sounds Pre-Presentation Stage Assist students to identify the vowels and consonants in the alphabets and sound out	Listening skills and recall Acquisition of vocabulary Listening Sills	EVALUATION The students were made to complete a worksheet on the following areas: What have you learned today? How will you apply this



Thursday
minutes
10-9:10

Day two
Reading a
giving
passage

(4) Introduce the long vowel sounds and blend long vowels with consonants
(5) Begin blending and reading two vowel words and introduces two special rules.
(6) Introduce the phonic chart which also introduces the special sounds that are made when letters **stick** together.
(7) Read a given passage
(8) identify five 5 unfamiliar words and use them to form correct simple sentences

their individual sounds
Presentation Stage
Assist students to identify long and short vowels and begin to blend short vowels with consonants
Post Presentation Stage
Assist students to read two vowel words and note irregular words by introduction the two special rules.
Pre-Presentation Stage
Introduce the phonic chart and continue to introduce to introduce the special sounds that are made when letters stick together.
Introduction
Allow students to practice reading whole words all by themselves to become competent in reading individually.
Give students a passage
Presentation Stage
Read the passage while students follow silently

Vocabulary and language acquisition
Fluency skills
Skill of :
Identification
Vocabulary Language
Fluency skills
Fluency kills
Silent reading skills
Fluency, silent reading skills and

method of reading and comprehension when you are reading a given passage?
How can you read by identifying the individual sounds in the letter?
REMARKS



		<p>RELEVANT PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE (RPK)</p> <p>The students can read the English alphabets and can identify vowels and consonants</p>	<p>Allow student to read the passage for a giving time say 5 minutes silently and note unfamiliar/words they could not call out.</p> <p>Post Presentation Stage</p> <p>Allow students to read the passage aloud in the class for the researcher and fellow students to follow till they all read the passage.</p> <p>Guide students to call out the identified words and use them to form correct simple sentences</p> <p>Conduct a posttest to ascertain level of understanding and effectiveness of the intervention</p>	<p>vocabulary</p> <p>Vocabulary</p> <p>Listening</p> <p>Fluency</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Vocabulary and language acquisition skills</p> <p>Skill of recall</p>	
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T I AHMADIYYA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL BOLGATANGA

FORM ONE (1)

PRE-TEST QUESTIONS

1. Underline vowels in the following; a,u,b,f,z,d,p,e,w,s.
2. State one difference between vowels and consonants.
3. Underline the consonants in the following; s,w,e,p,d,z,f,b,u,a.

Answer questions 4 -10 by indicating whether the vowels in the sentences are long or short vowels

4. () a—(be pronounced as a “short” vowel/“long” vowel) examples; cat, dad, gas, rat, at, as, ad
5. () ae—(be pronounced as a “long” vowel/“short” vowel) examples; date, case, late, sake, page, ate, age
6. () ai—(be pronounced as a “long” vowel/“short” vowel) examples; wait, rain, jail, paid fail, aid, aim, said
7. () ay () —(be pronounced as a “long” vowel/“short” vowel) examples; say, day, pay, way, days, pays, gays, says
8. () al_—(be pronounced as “long” vowel/“short” vowel) examples; all, call, salt, tall, mall, ball, wall
9. () u— (be pronounced as a “short” vowel/“long” vowel) examples; cup, cut, bug, hut, but, luck, hug
10. () o—(be pronounced as a long vowel/“short” vowel) examples; so, no, go, Jo, to, do



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5. When a syllable ends in a consonant and has only one vowel, that vowel is short. Examples: tap, bed, wish, lock, bug.
6. When a syllable ends in a silent "e," the vowel that comes before the silent "e" is long. Examples: Take gene, bite, hope, and fuse.
7. When a syllable has two vowels together, the first vowel is usually long and the second vowel is silent. Example: stain.
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