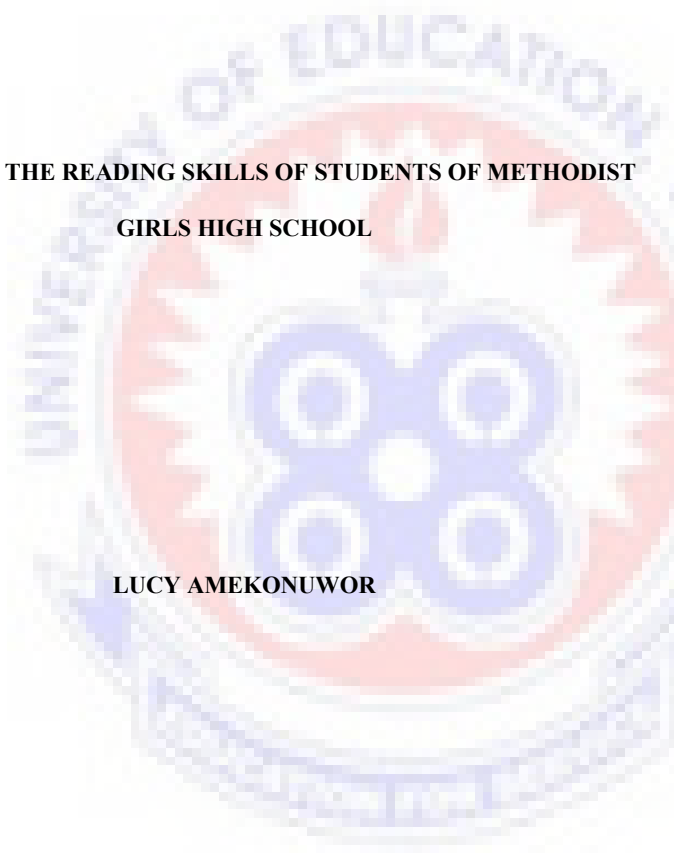


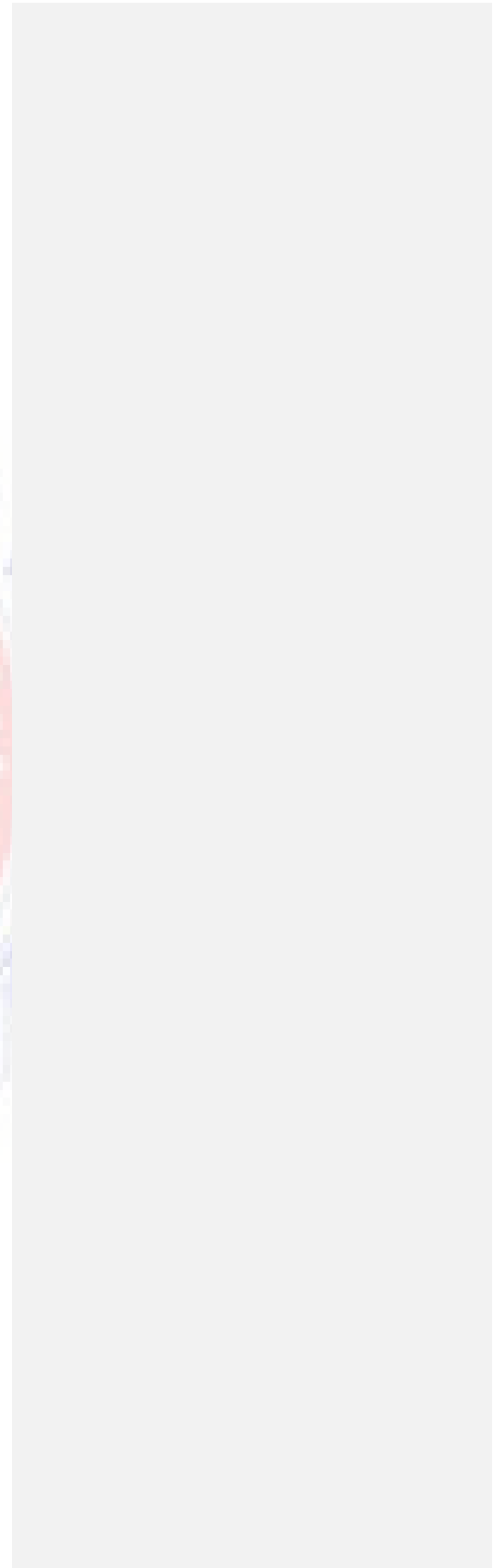
**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**IMPROVING THE READING SKILLS OF STUDENTS OF METHODIST  
GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL**

**LUCY AMEKONUWOR**



**2019**



**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**IMPROVING THE READING SKILLS OF STUDENTS OF METHODIST  
GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL**

**LUCY AMEKONUWOR**

**(7170080020)**

**A thesis in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Foreign Languages  
Education and Communication, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, in  
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of**

**Master of Education  
(Teaching English as a Second Language)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**SEPTEMBER, 2019**

## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

Signature:.....

Date: .....

### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

**NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. CHARLOTTE FOFO LOMOTEY**

Signature:.....

Date:.....

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my dearest children, Esther Ayebea and Dorcas Odi whose sacrifice and endurance have made me to come to this soothe.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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

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

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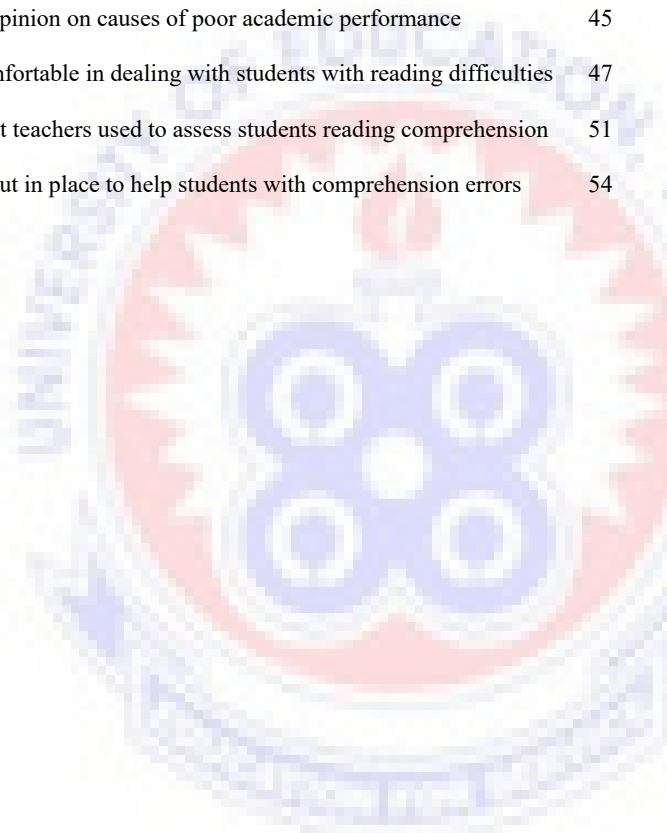


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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which reading difficulties affect academic performance of secondary school students. The study was to establish comprehension errors that affect students' academic performance. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches for data collection and analyzes both teachers and students. The research design was a descriptive survey design. Data was collected by use of questionnaire for teachers of English and student's cloze test and reading passage. Data from questionnaire, cloze test and reading passages were compiled, edited and coded according to the themes of the study. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS). The target population comprised 12 teachers of English language and 120 students from Methodist Girls Senior High School. The sample of the study included 10 teachers of English and 100 form three students from the sampled school. Purposive sampling was used to select schools, teachers of English, and stratified and random sampling for students from forms two class. Findings from the reading test indicated that students who had less problems with word substitution, omission, addition, and mispronunciation are likely to perform academically well. Cloze test performance where 67 per cent of the students performed below average was an indicators of poor academic performance as a result of reading difficulties. It was established that ninety percent of the teachers of English experienced problems in teaching reading. Sixty per cent of the teachers did not conduct library lessons at all due to lack of library resources. The study recommends that teachers of English should be in-serviced regularly and that the school administration should ensure availability of library resource and reference materials through the Ministry of Education.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the study

Reading plays a central role in our educational, working, recreational, and social lives. The ability to read is highly valued and important for social and economic advancement. Reading is the most important skill among the four language skills as it can improve the overall language proficiency (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 2013; McDonough & Shaw, 2013; Krashen & Brown, 2010). Even though one may have reading difficulties in his or her mother tongue, the problems get worse when reading is applied to a second language, as students might be lagging behind in a number of reading components, including accuracy, comprehension, and speed. Lagging behind is a cognitive difficulty associated with the process of reading in another language (Alsamadani, 2012). In other words, these difficulties are more likely to be associated with the nature of the language pragma linguistic or even sociocultural aspects.

According to Wixon, Peters, Weber & Roeber (2010), reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader, the text and the context of the reading situation. Reading process involves visual motor skills and perception of the symbols by the brain. It is generally broken down into two components: “reading” the words, or decoding and understanding what is read, or comprehension (Cooper et al, 2012; Samuels, 2011). This study intended to use the definition according to Manzo and Manzo (2013) who define reading as the act of simultaneously reading the lines, reading between the lines, and reading beyond the lines. Reading the lines” is the process of decoding the words in order to reconstruct the author’s basic message. Reading between the lines is the process of making inferences in order to reconstruct the author’s implied messages. This requires an

understanding of the integral logic of facts presented as well as an understanding of connotative and figurative language. “Reading beyond the lines” is the process of judging the significance of the author’s message and constructively applying it to other areas of knowledge and experience.

In today’s world, reading is not a luxury. It is a necessity, an important tool and skill every child needs in order to progress in all subjects and to fit well in society. An efficient reading habit leads to understanding, retention, recall and general development. Reading is essential since it leads to the ability to decipher meaning and information from text to facilitate progress in all academic work. Reading also broadens a reader’s horizon through the gathering of information. As Anyidoho (2010) rightly puts it, the printed matter still remains the most convenient and it is cheaper, contains a wide range of information, deals with more problems and a reader can read and re-read at his or her convenience, and can reflect on the issue discussed and return to it at will.

Typical reading difficulties of adolescents includes problems with vocabulary, word recognition, reading comprehension and reading rate. Reading appears to affect performance in all other academic subjects as well as to impact vocational needs and options (Feagans, 2013). Mercer (2017) denotes several types of reading problems that are typically found among students such as reading habits, word recognition errors, comprehension errors and miscellaneous symptoms. Smith et al (2015) also lists several common problems experienced by some students who suffer from reading disabilities. These include omitting letters, syllables or words; inserting extra letters, words or sound; substituting words that look or sound similar; mispronouncing words; repeating words and using improper inflection during oral reading. Reading disability is a deliberating problem for many children, adolescents and adults in North America and throughout the world. Educators, parents, physicians, as well as society in general share

a common concern about individuals who do not learn to read. All teachers have the responsibility of understanding and helping their failing and frustrated students. Elementary classroom teachers, reading teachers, special education teachers and secondary school teachers need knowledge about the assessment and treatment of reading difficulties (Richet, List & Lerner, 2012).

Studies show that almost 80 per cent of children with learning disabilities have their primary educational problem in the area of reading. The reading problems of all these students have a substantial impact on their ability to master other subjects in school. Richet et al, (2010) indicate that as a primary cause of school failure, poor reading ability leads to lowered self-esteem and serious emotional overlays. Moreover, reading problems prevent individuals from reaching desired career goals and robs them of the opportunity to read for pleasure and enjoyment. Reading difficulties are the principal causes of failure in school (Carmine, Silbert & Kameenui, 2014). They further affirm that reading failure could lead to misbehaviour, anxiety and lack of motivation. According to Lerner (2016), reading experiences strongly influence self-image and feelings.

Secondary students must use basic skills as for learning tools. There are substantial reading demands in all content areas, with texts often at high readability level (Silverman, Zigmond & Sansone, 2013). Reading problems for students with learning disabilities frequently continue into high school (Algozzine et al, 2012). In the world conference on special needs education at Salamanca in which Kenya was represented, the government was called upon and urged to ensure that, SNE is included in teacher education programmes both pre service and in service to enhance inclusive education. According to Kirigia (2011), a large number of Ghanaian graduates lack sufficient knowledge in English reading comprehension and also have difficulty

comprehending English words. Furthermore, when they are promoted to secondary school level, such students meet teachers who are not ready to teach reading due to the negative attitude of teachers of English. They believe that teaching reading should be done in primary level by primary school teachers.

Again, in most secondary schools, library resources are not well-established. The available reading materials and class readers are often ignored due to the wrong attitude of teachers towards teaching reading. Finally, library lessons are used in teaching literature in pursuit of good scores. The concern for the national mean grade makes the teachers forego teaching reading which in turn affects the performance of all the other examinable subjects. Therefore, the researcher sought to identify and establish the effects of students' reading difficulties on academic performance in Methodist Girls Senior High School in Akuapim North District located in the Eastern part of Ghana.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

According to Lerner (2016), a number of learners, for unexplained reasons, are unable to use reading as a tool for learning, getting new information, ideas, attitudes, and values from standard upwards. Even after they have been taught, it is quite unfortunate that a large number (17.5 per cent) of them are unable to read efficiently at higher class levels (Lerner, 2016). According to Mercer and Mercer (2011), between 10% and 15% of school-going learners have reading difficulties. Lerner (2016) notes that, more than 17.5 per cent of learners have reading difficulties. The government of Ghana planned to achieve education for all (EFA) by 2020 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2030 through provision of quality education that is accessible and relevant to the lives of all children including those with special Needs (MOEST, 2009) as many children experience learning difficulties and thus have special educational needs at some time during their schooling pre-service training programmes



should provide a positive orientation towards special needs to all teachers (Salamanca, 2014). Possessing this knowledge, the researcher found out what happens to such learners after they were promoted to secondary school level into various district in the country.

In recent years there have been debates and discussions about the falling standards of academic performance in general and English in particular in Ghana ([myjoyonline.com](http://myjoyonline.com)). Immediately the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) releases the W.A.S.S.C.E results and academic assessment programmes, the media and other stakeholders come alive with analyses of the results and debate extensively on what might have gone right or wrong. This is due to the progressive decline in examination results. Although this problem does not necessarily stem from an inability to read on the part of the students, it may be as a result of lack of comprehension of what is read. Reports indicate that apart from English Language, performance in other subjects that require more reading is on the decline despite occasional surprises where students do better. This situation is negatively affecting understanding of the other subjects and their academic pursuit.

The researcher, therefore, wished to establish whether reading difficulties could be a major contributing factor to the poor performance since reading skill is needed in order to interpret examination questions and even to comprehend what the questions require for an answer. Word recognition, reading comprehension and application are the reading skills assessed most often (Kerr, Nel som & Lambert,

2015). According to studies conducted in Kenya by Chege (2012), Kirigia (2011) and Njoroge (2011), learners with reading problem in English have problems in school performance in general.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The study is principally aimed at assessing the reading skills and comprehension of Students in Methodist Girls Senior High School. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. Examine comprehension errors that affect students' academic performance in Methodist Girls Senior High School.
- ii. Identify challenges faced by English language teachers in dealing with reading difficulties regarding comprehension errors in Methodist Girls Senior High School.
- iii. Explore appropriate strategies that would enhance reading comprehension in Methodist Girls Senior High School.

### **1.4 Research questions**

The following research questions were formulated for the study:

- i. What comprehension errors affect students' academic performance in Methodist Girls Senior High School?
- ii. How do English language teachers handle reading difficulties in relation to comprehension errors in Methodist Girls Senior High School.?
- iii. What strategies can be used to minimize comprehension errors amongst students in Methodist Girls Senior High School?

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

Language teaching is a special skill that can be very challenging especially when dealing with learners of a second language. Many teachers resort to methods that they are comfortable with and which they think will impact positively on their students. The approaches available to language teachers afford them the opportunity to decide which will make teaching and learning interesting and fun. Each of these approaches is

designed to tackle or solve a particular problem in reading and finding the appropriate approach is therefore every language teacher's desire. The outcome of this study will go a long way to help solve the problem of the student's difficulty in reading and comprehending with all kinds of educational books, and this will enable them progress steadily in their academic ladder. The 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.

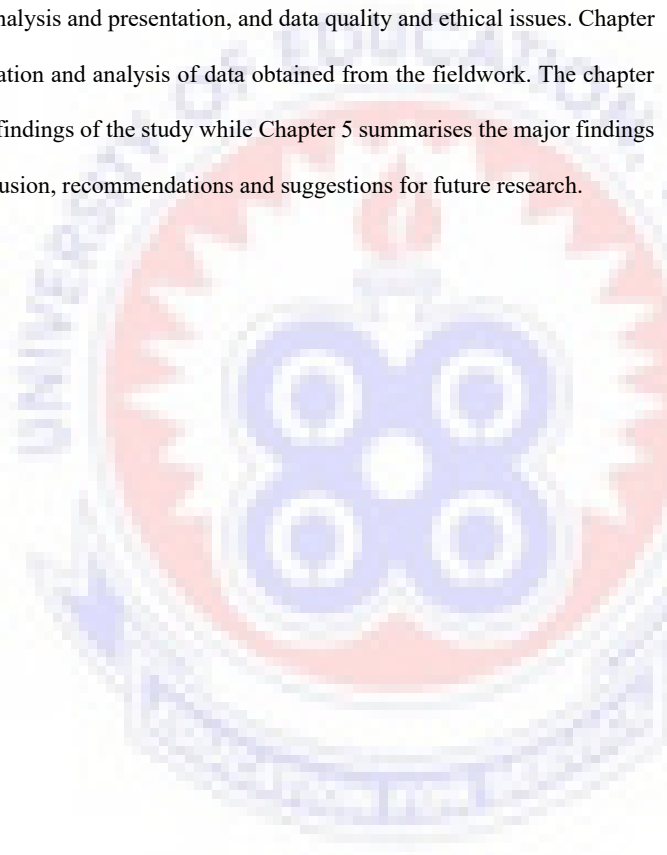
#### **1.6 Scope and limitations of the study**

A study of this nature could have involved all the key stakeholders such as curriculum planners of the Ghanaian Core English Language, WAEC, heads of Senior High Schools, teachers of Core English Language and students alike. However, since the study sought to investigate the teaching of reading and comprehension skills in the Methodist Girls Senior High School, the study focused on English Language teachers and students of the schools. The researcher is of strong conviction that relevant and well-balanced data were sourced to address the subject under consideration.

The researcher was faced with several limitations, namely; negative attitudes of the respondents towards filling in the questionnaires; getting time with teachers at schools; low response rate since the respondents are expected to fill in the questionnaires while they attend to the school timetable; and finally, limited interactions between the researcher, teachers and students since they work under fixed schedule at school. However, the researcher found convenient time like lunch break and other breaks and also made use of introductory letter to mitigate for the negative attitude.

### **1.7 Organization of the study**

The rest of the study is organised as follows: Chapter 2 deals with relevant studies reading and other related concepts and theories Chapter 3 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 4 contains presentation and analysis of data obtained from the fieldwork. The chapter also discusses the findings of the study while Chapter 5 summarises the major findings and presents conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for future research.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Relevant literature to the study is discussed in this chapter. The review was presented under the following sub-headings: reading and reading difficulties, kinds of reading, theories of reading, reading difficulties and academic performance, poor academic performance and social/emotional adjustment, prevalence of reading difficulties, effects of reading difficulties on students' performance, strategies for dealing with the difficulties and finally reading difficulties and learning disabilities.

#### **2.1 Reading and reading importance**

Reading is a basic life skill. It is a cornerstone for a child's success in school, and indeed throughout life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success inevitably will be lost. According to Anyidoho (2017), the term *reading* may have different meanings for various people. For some, it is the act of running the eyes across and down the page, recognizing and understanding the words. For others, it is the act of turning a page into speech that is, turning the visual images into their spoken form. Anyidoho, however, believes that reading must go beyond word recognition and understanding. Linguists, especially Grabe & Stoller (2014), agree that reading is the most important academic language skill, pointing out the special focus that it receives in foreign language teaching.

French (2014) defines reading as the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately. This brings to the fore the assertion that reading is a decoding process involving the breaking down of visual and auditory codes by assigning sounds to printed words, and reading as a comprehension process, making meaning out of printed matter through interplay of the reader's background

knowledge and the printed text (French, 2014). This assertion makes it imperative the need for beginners or students in the foundational classes to get it right, right from the start. My perspective on teaching reading in Basic two is to make a plea for teachers in Ghana to begin teaching reading comprehension with methods or approaches that will benefit learners to enable them do well in their academic pursuits.

Among the many definitions that have arisen in recent decades, three prominent ideas emerge as the most critical for understanding what “learning to read” means. These are:

1. Reading is a process undertaken to reduce uncertainty about meanings a text conveys.
2. The process results from a negotiation of meaning between the text and its reader.
3. The knowledge, expectations and strategies a reader uses to uncover textual meaning all play decisive roles in ways the reader negotiates with the text’s meaning.

In my opinion reading engages the mind to bring out the meaning embedded in the written text. This brings to the fore the hidden and expected results of the texts and recall to memory past experiences and interactions about a text. Skilled reading therefore becomes constructive, bringing about the meaning of the written material using knowledge about the environment and everyday life and from disciplined fields of study. Being able to read clears doubt, while dispelling uncertainty and bringing joy through negotiated meaning between the text and its reader. When young learners are able to read with meaning, there is a sense of accomplishment that show on their faces, giving them a feeling of self-worth and motivation to explore more.

Anderson et al (2015) define reading as the process of making meaning from written texts. It needs the harmony of a lot of related sources of information. According to Wixson, Peters, Weber, and Roeber (2017), reading is the process of creating meaning that involves: (a) the reader's existing knowledge; (b) the text information; and (c) the reading context. Alyousef (2015) defined reading as an interactive process between readers and texts that result in reading fluency. Readers interact with texts as they try to extract meaning and there are different types of knowledge: linguistic or systemic knowledge (bottom-up processing) and schematic knowledge (top-down processing). Pourhosein Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2015) stated that the main goal of reading is to gain the correct message from a text that the writer intended for the reader to receive.

Reading is defined as the ability to read text for understanding purposes (Spooner, Gathercole, & Baddeley, 2016). It involves using prior knowledge, making predictions, and drawing out valuable information, among other factors. Also, comprehension is the ability to read and be in a position to learn and remember the content read (RIC Publications, 2016). Comprehension can be achieved by coupling novels/readings with movies so as to enable students to learn difficult texts and obtain more profound comprehension. Thus, comprehension monitoring, question generation and answering, and summarization can all help improve reading comprehension (Bolos, 2012). Because reading comprehension is a complex and difficult process, some readers cannot develop the ability to comprehend passages quickly and easily. Reading comprehension is sometimes assessed by asking students to orally retell the meaning of the read texts (Dewitz, & Dewitz, 2013). Often, the students need assistance and support with difficult texts in order to understand them. Teachers might prepare readers for a challenging passage by connecting it with ideas presented earlier and they may also

explain the new ideas that students will read about to enable them to reach the higher level of comprehension (Holte, 2018). Challenging readers through using complex texts makes them able to develop comprehension skills for future reading.

Educational research shows the importance of reading to enrich the educational process in general. Also, other research on elementary school students shows that children who had the opportunity to read on a daily basis were performing at a higher level when compared to children who have never had that opportunity (McCormick, 2017). Jubani et al (2012) report that students who know how to read and understand what they read often perform better when compared to less reading proficient peers in the same school. Also, they have stated that many studies have focused on the reading comprehension ability of students. Moreover, Buyuktasapu (2012) and Bolos (2012) stated that those who read stories about young people tend to perform at a higher level of comprehension than others, and are able to read and write much better. Spooner et al. (2016) said that the goal of reading comprehension is to understand the information contained in texts. Regrettably, some students find reading comprehension extremely difficult.

In some cases, delayed comprehension of reading reflects weaknesses in decoding skills (Spooner et al, 2016). Reading is a highly complicated act that everyone ought to learn; in fact, it is classified as an important language skill. Students who enjoy reading and spend a lot of time reading will be more proficient in reading, will achieve better in school, and will have good grades. According to Benton and Fox (1995), “stories provide the possibility of educating the feelings and can offer their readers potential growth points for the development of a more subtle awareness of human behavior” (p. 15). Reading can also help students improve in spelling because when students learn how to sound out letters and words, spelling comes easier. In addition,



reading helps students get exposure to vocabulary and language patterns that are not common in everyday speech (Foster, 2008). As a result, students understand the structures of the book they are reading when they are reading independently.

## **2.2 Types of reading**

There are two different types of reading. They are extensive reading and intensive reading. Extensive reading, first introduced by Harold Palmer and Michael West after a pilot study in India (Loh, 2013), is defined as reading large quantities of easy language materials for comprehension without performing any tasks after reading. Extensive reading, which is considered as an effective way to enhance language proficiency (Maley, 2005), focuses on meaning rather than the language, therefore reading is done for general understanding (Carrell & Carson, 2012). Extensive reading enables learners to develop into independent and confident readers (Day & Bamford, 2011). Learners stand a better chance of promoting their reading fluency and speed (Walker, 2015), which leads them to become better readers (Camiciottoli, 2011). Extensive reading helps learners to improve a good writing style (Tsang, 2006), acquire sufficient knowledge of word and structure (Day & Swan, 2013), and grow into good spellers (Krashen, 2013).

The main goal of a reading development program is to enable students to enjoy (for at least feel comfortable with) reading in the foreign language, and to read independently unfamiliar authentic texts, at an appropriate speed, silently, and with adequate understanding. The measure of the teacher's success is how much the student learns to do without her help. According to Nuttall, (2012) extensive reading has two positive sides. First, extensive reading improves reader's reading skills. Second, if extensive reading is source of enjoyment; it is easy to teach people to read better.

Nuttall, (2012) describes extensive reading as an activity that students can do for themselves.

Nation (2014) examines the goals of extensive reading and separates language, ideas, and skills. Language goals include learning language issues such as vocabulary, grammar or discourse features. Ideas can involve subject matter knowledge, culture or general knowledge. Skills can comprise all four skills, in addition to fluency and accuracy. According to Grabe, (2009) reading extensively usually requires that a reader knows 98-99% of the words in a text, some level of fluency processing words and sentences, the knowledge about text structure, applying of particular strategies and skills as monitoring and evaluation. An extensive reading program may be combined with writing or combined with speaking practice in a meaningful way (such as when students discuss with each other the books they have been reading). Broughton (2014) suggests that it is by pursuing the activity of extensive reading that the volume of practice necessary to achieve rapid and efficient reading can be achieved. Krashen (2013) is of the view that the benefits of free voluntary reading included enhanced language acquisition and literacy development, more ideas and information, greater success in life, loss of verbal memory, and more fun.

Grabe (2009) was of the opinion that, extensive reading if faced with various challenges such as the program of extensive reading may be costly and time-consuming to set up if materials are not already available. It may be difficult to get support from administration. Students need to have easy access to texts within their language proficiency level. An extensive reading program is easiest to establish when the students have a high level of second language proficiency. For intermediate levels, students require a specialized library within their language proficiency range. They need texts they can read without great use of a dictionary.

It may be difficult to keep students challenged to read more difficult texts as the program continues. Some established programmes use a “weighing scale” for students to record materials read, giving more “marks” for materials read at a higher level. Although this has proven to be a motivating or competitive factor in some cases, in others, it becomes counter-productive if students try to read texts that are more difficult than they can manage and consequently become discouraged. Aeberscold (2015) reported that feedback from students in an extensive reading program indicated that they liked the “choice” but not the “load”. Some people feel that if graded readers are used, they can give a false impression of the level of reading that has been achieved. They feel materials too soon and may revert to using a dictionary to translate.

Brown (2016) explains that intensive reading calls attention to grammatical forms, discourse makers, and other surface structure details for the purpose of understanding literal meaning, implications, rhetorical relationships, and the like. He draws an analogy to intensive reading as a “zoom lens” strategy. Long and Richards (2017) say it is a “detailed in-class” analysis, led by the teacher, of vocabulary and grammar points, in a short passage. Intensive reading, sometimes called “narrow reading” may involve students reading selections by the same author or several texts about the same topic. When this occurs, content and grammatical structures repeat themselves and students get many opportunities to understand the meanings of the text.

The success of “narrow reading” on improving reading comprehension is based on the premise that the more familiar the reader is with the text, either due to the subject matter or having read other works by the same writer, the more comprehension is promoted. According to Brown (2016) some characteristics of intensive reading are that, it is usually classroom based, reader is intensely involved in looking inside the text, and students focus on linguistic or semantic details of reading. He suggested that

students focus on surface structure details such as grammar and discourse markers, students identify key vocabulary and aims to build more language knowledge rather than simply practice the skills of reading. Munby (2010) suggests four categories of questions that may be used in intensive reading. These include:

- i. Plain sense – to understand the factual, exact surface meanings in the text.
- ii. Implications – to make inferences and become sensitive to emotional tone and figurative language.
- iii. Relationships of thought – between sentences or paragraphs.
- iv. Projective – requiring the integration of information from the text to one's own background information.

### **2.3 Problems/difficulties of reading comprehension**

Teachers face a lot of challenges while handling students with reading difficulties. The purpose of reading is comprehension and many students with reading difficulties lack that aspect of comprehension which poses a big problem to teachers trying to teach them. Learners with reading disabilities have problems with reading and spelling and find comprehension a challenge. They also find it difficult to transfer their thoughts to paper when answering comprehension questions. According to Runo (2016), teachers faced such challenges as teaching sounds, inadequate materials, and inadequate time to teach reading and mother tongue interference. Lerner (2016) argues that problems of low self-esteem and poor social relationships are carried forward into adolescence where they can develop into learned helplessness, a significant drop in their confidence to learn and succeed, low motivation to achieve, attention problems and maladaptive behavior which can affect secondary school student's performance negatively. Many of the students end up dropping out of school before the due time and others portray chronic absenteeism.

According to Runo (2016), about 80 per cent of all learners with learning disabilities experience reading difficulties. It is estimated that among all learners who have any sort of disability, 51 per cent of them have learning disabilities. Inability to learn to read has been called “word blindness”, “alexia” or dyslexia. Reid et al, (2009) maintain that dyslexia is conventionally defined as difficulty in the ability to identify printed words and letters in learners who have at least normal average intelligence and who are not impaired by general learning difficulties. Estimates of the prevalence of learning disabilities vary widely ranging from 19 per cent to 30 per cent of the school population. Majority of learners with learning disabilities are found in regular schools. This means that there are many learners in Kenyan school population who have reading difficulties. This study used the terms learning disabilities, reading disability and dyslexia to mean reading difficulties as teachers in secondary schools were not aware of their meanings or their differences.

## **2.4 Effects of reading difficulties**

### **2.4.1 Gender difference**

According to recent research by Lerner (2016), there is a significance gender effect on ability to read. Clinics and schools in USA identify four times as many boys as girls who have learning disabilities (Lerner, 2016). Reid et al., (2009), study on gender differences in reading have also confirmed that reading disability is higher in males than in females with the average ratio being four males to one female. Maletsha and Aaron (2012) claim that more male brains are prone to excessive balance in information processing strategies than female brains. These gender differences in literacy can also be the result of broader social and cultural contexts or educational policies and practices. In most societies, parents tend to be nice to girls as they grow up. This could probably be due to the fact that girls are considered "a weaker sex".

Children often participate in rough games from an early age. There is not much talk, except actions where they are usually taught to be strong and independent from the start. Because of this initial 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 that will help them develop skills (Carducci, 2009)

### **2.4.3 Methods**

While some students are good at reading, others are not. In this situation, everything depends on the teacher selecting the teaching methods that will help poor readers. Unfortunately, most teachers do not know the right method to use to teach for students with reading problems to improve upon reading. In a situation where the teacher has the skill and uses the right methodology, it might not be suitable for all the students. The teacher therefore has to vary her teaching methods for the benefit of her students. This becomes a problem when the class size is large. Most students require close supervision in order to perform better in academic work. As a result, even when the teacher knows that a particular student is a poor reader, he is not able to help (Kalindi, 2005). All the necessary materials may be in place, but this will not help improve the skills of some poor readers.

Thus, poor readers do not have the opportunity to improve themselves when it comes to reading. Good readers have an advantage in this case and poor readers are left out of the learning process. Teaching usually begins 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 of alphabet, the next day the child can read words, then prayers, and so on. . It is important to note that the majority of teachers in Ghana work in difficult conditions, such as attending so many classes in one day, having too many students in a classroom, inadequate reading

materials and irregular attendance at school by students. In addition, there are no incentives to motivate teachers, especially those in remote areas. As a result, such teachers will have no impulse to focus on poor readers. It depends on the student whether he has understood or not.

#### **2.4.4 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, including those 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 are usually 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.

It is also important to bear in mind that, teachers have been working under difficult circumstances such as, large class size, 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, a serious shortage 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 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.

## **2.5 Strategies to enhance reading comprehension**

According to Lerner (2016), the National Reading Panel of 2000 recognized several strategies that had a solid scientific basis of instruction for improving reading comprehension including:

### **2.5.1 Activating and using background knowledge**

In this strategy, readers activate their background knowledge and apply it to aid them comprehend what they are reading. This knowledge consists of individuals' experiences together with the world and their concepts for how written text works, involving word recognition, print concepts, word meaning, and how the text is formed (Anderson & Pearson, 2014). According to Anderson & Pearson, (2014) Schema theory is very important in comprehension process. This theory is based on how people form and activate their previous knowledge. This theory explains that as persons learn about the world, they create a series of knowledge structures or schemas.

These schemas develop and shift as the persons learn new information through experience and reading. For instance, a child's schema for dog can involve her or his comprehension of the family pet such as white, furry, and fun. When the child gets more experiences with a lot of dogs in different environments, the dog schema develop and can be improved. It can relate to other schema-kinds of dogs like colours of dogs; foods that dogs eat; places where they stay when the family is on holiday; and dangerous dogs. Cognitive scientists argue that successful readers permanently relate their prior knowledge to the new knowledge they meet in texts. Good readers activate their schema when they start reading. The first schema impacts how readers comprehend and react to a text (Pichert & Anderson, 2007). Schemas is particularly



significant to reading comprehension. When learners have knowledge of a text's organization, this can help them to understand better that text (Armbruster et al, 2012).

### **2.5.2 Summarizing**

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

### **2.5.3 Visualizing**

Readers can make a mental picture of a text to comprehend processes they undergo during reading, showing that the reader perceives a text. Readers who form a mental image as they read are better able to remember what they have read than those who do not image (Pressley, 2016). Visualizing is very important when it is used for narrative texts. When readers read narrative texts, they can easily understand what is happening by visualizing the place, personalities, or operations of a plan. It can also be used for the reading of expository texts. Readers visualizing steps in a process or stages in a happening or forming an image that help them to recall some abstract ideas or significant names (Gambrell & Bales, 2016).

### **2.5.4 Comprehension monitoring**

In this strategy, readers have the ability to know when they comprehend what they read, when they do not perceive, and to apply suitable strategies to make better

their understanding. Successful readers know and check their thought processes as they read. Strategies that successful readers use to improve their understanding are called “fix-up” strategies. Particular repair strategies involve rereading, reading ahead, explaining the words by looking them up in a dictionary, or asking someone for assistance (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 2011). Successful readers try to use different strategies to make meaning as they read. They do not use similar strategies; instead, they like to expand and practice those strategies that are beneficial to them. Moreover, they are very flexible in the application of their strategies, they change from strategy to strategy, and they apply various strategies with different types of texts (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 2011). The important point here is that successful readers can make good decisions about which strategies to apply and when to use them. A lot of students can gain from explicit instruction that teaches them to apply particular strategies for understanding a text. The other point is that particular comprehension strategies can be taught and learned and that their conscious use can help readers to ameliorate their comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).

#### **2.5.5 Making inferences**

Readers assess or draw conclusions from information in a text. In this strategy, writers do not always provide full information about a topic, place, personality, or happening. Instead, they provide information that readers can use to read by making inferences that integrate information of the text with their previous knowledge. Through this process, readers can improve their skills to make meaning. Being able to make inferences is an important factor for readers’ successful reading (Anderson & Pearson, 2014; Hansen & Pearson, 2013). Williams (2008) suggest that students with learning disabilities require a different type of comprehension instruction than typical learners and that just as students with learning disabilities need explicit structure instruction to

learn word-recognition skills, they need explicit, highly structured instruction to learn reading comprehension skills. Williams (2008) emphasizes a *Themes Instruction Program*, which consists of a series of twelve 40-minute lessons and each lesson is organized around a single story and is composed of five parts namely: pre-reading discussion on the purpose of the lesson and the topic of the story that will be read, reading the story, discussion of important story information using organized (schema) questions as a guide, identification of a theme for the story, stating it in general terms so that it is relevant to a variety of stories and situations and finally practice in applying the generalized theme to real-life experiences.

## **2.6 Related studies**

There are various theories regarding reading comprehension. These are mental representations, content literacy, and cognitive processes. In the sections that follow, each of them is discussed. Oostendorp and Goldman (2008) expressed that when a reader reads a text, he can create a mental representation of the text that explains how the reader understands the text. Many investigations supported the many levels of representation that are included in the construction of meaning. According to Kintsch (2008), when a reader reads a text, three different levels of mental representation are created. These are the surface component, the text base and the situation model. Kintsch (2008) continued that when words and phrases are coded in mental representation but not the meaning of word and phrases, this is defined as the surface component of mental representation and the text is based on the meaning of the text and is composed of those parts and connections that emerge from the text itself without increasing anything that is not clearly identified in it.

According to Kintsch (2008), the situation model is a structure that combines the text base and the related characteristics of the reader's knowledge. To create a text

base, some prior knowledge is required, but this knowledge is more general than is necessary to decode texts in general, while prior knowledge in the formation of a situation model is more specific with respect to the content of the text. Content literacy is the ability to read, understand and learn from texts on a particular topic. There are three types of content literacy: general literacy skills, content-specific literacy skills, and prior knowledge of the content. General literacy and content-specific skills indicate a more general type of knowledge that does not depend on the detailed content of a particular text. This knowledge is applied to make a text base in the mental representation (McKenna & Robinson, 2015). The prior knowledge of the content is the knowledge that is related to the content of a particular text and is applied to make a situation model in the mental representation.

The application of syntactic and semantic rules together with the activation of more particular prior knowledge occurs automatically and unconsciously. Perception is defined as highly automatic and unconscious processes. Problem solving is related to active thinking when we want to remember the name of a person we see and know. Consequently, when we read a text without difficulties to understand what we read, the process is related to perception rather than problem solving because the process of understanding is unconscious. This is the understanding found somewhere between perception and problem solving (Kintsch, 2012). Ahmadi and Pourhossein (2012) state that learners who learn reading strategies try to recognize the main point of a paragraph, to elaborate unclear words, phrases, or sentences, and to summarize their reading. These strategies aid readers to solve their problems when reading texts and assess their planning and its result. Cziko (2015) stated that ESL/EFL lower proficiency learners hinge on orthographic qualities of the text words while advanced proficiency learners

depend on syntactic, semantic, and discourse cues. According to Gu (2014), good and weak learners were different in using strategies in reading comprehension.

Chia (2015) said that readers intended to use more local reading strategies than global strategies. Parry (2016) expressed that her learners strongly applied bottom-up strategies than top-down strategies because it was related to their traditional approaches. The impact of reading strategies on the learners' reading proficiency was investigated by Su (2001). The results obtained from this study represented that readers' reading strategies are very useful to make better their reading skill. A study was done about reading strategy training by Song (2018). The findings indicated that reading strategy is one of the powerful factors in improving reading comprehension skill. The findings also revealed that foreign language reading should incorporate explicit strategy training.

## **2.7 Comprehension errors and students' academic performance**

Reading difficulties are the principal causes of failure in school (Carmin, Silbet & Kameenui, 2012). According to Mercer and Mercer (2011), between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of school-going learners have reading difficulties. Teachers should be in a position to identify a learner's problem including those related to reading from a holistic point of view in order to help such a learner manage academically in school (Dreikrurs, Gronwall & Peper, 2012). Lerner (2016) also notes that teachers should identify children with reading problems early and provide them with appropriate early interventions rather than practicing the policy of wait - and - fail method (Lerner, 2006).

Research conducted in Kenya highlights that learners with problems in reading English have problems in school performance in general (Njoroge, 2015). According to Kenya Institute of curriculum development, secondary education syllabus volume one (2002), the ability to read fluently is vital both in school and for life. Good reading

skills will improve performance in all school subjects. Reading helps in information gathering and learning of concepts. Through reading, the learner is exposed to new vocabulary, new sentence structures and different registers. Reading also acquaints the learner with good models of language use. A good foundation of reading should be laid in Form 1. This is because reading is a very important component of language learning. It will also help in the study of all other subjects.

A study done by Runo (2016) on identification of reading disabilities and teacher oriented challenges in teaching reading to standard five in Kenya concludes that the learners who scored poorly in the wordlist and reading passage were equally poor performers academically in primary schools. This was in line with her conceptual framework which indicated that both internal and external factors cause reading difficulties, hence poor academic performance. She further concludes that there is need to train the primary school teachers on the methods of identifying reading difficulties in learners to avoid learners' continued failure in school subjects.

## **2.8 Reading interventions**

Based on the "Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading", Carrell, et al (1988) mention three interventions to assist reading deficiencies in learners. These are: Top-Down Approach, Bottom Up Approach, and Interactive Approach. The ability to read the written language at a reasonable rate with good comprehension has long been recognized to be as important as oral skills, if not more important (Eskey, 1988). Goodman's (2018) psycholinguistic model of reading (or top-down or concept driven model) shows that the reader is active, makes predictions, processes information and constructs a message encoded by a writer. This was viewed as a substitute for the bottom-up perspective, but the schema theory makes clear, efficient and effective reading (in L1 and L2) and requires both top-down and bottom-up strategies operating

interactively, thus, the interactive model (Rumelhart, 2017). Both the top-down and bottom-up processes, functioning interactively, are necessary to an adequate understanding of L2 reading and reading comprehension (Carrell, 2015).

### **2.8.1 Top-down (concept-driven) approach**

The “top-down” approach includes searching for meaning, selectively reacting to print, confirming or rejecting predictions made and emphasizes readers bringing meaning to text based on their experiential background and interpreting text based on their prior knowledge (whole language). Top refers to higher order mental concept such as the knowledge and expectation of the reader. Bottom-up refers to the physical text on the page. The top-down model of reading therefore focuses on what the readers bring to the process. The readers sample the text for information and contrast it with their world knowledge, helping to make sense of what is written. The focus here is on the readers as they interact with the text.

### **2.8.2 The bottom-up (serial) approach**

The bottom-up approach operates on the principle that the written text is hierarchically organized (that is on the graphophonic, phonemic, syllabic, morphemic word and sentence levels) and that the reader first processes the smallest linguistic input (for example, gradually compiling the smallest units to decipher and comprehend higher units such as sentence syntax. The emphasis in this approach is on text processing. It stipulates that the meaning of any text must be “decoded” by the reader and that students are reading when they can “sound out” words on a page (phonics). It emphasizes the ability to de-code or put into sound what is seen in a text. It ignores helping emerging readers to recognize what they, as readers, bring to the information on the page. This model starts with the printed stimuli and works its way up to the

higher level stages. The sequence of processing proceeds from the in-coming data to higher level encodings.

### **2.8.3 The interactive approach**

The Interactive Approach essentially emphasizes parallel processing of the print. It is an amalgamation of the two processes (top-down and bottom-up). Interactive model (Stanovich, 2010), stresses both what is on the written page and what a reader brings to it using both top-down and bottom-up skills. It views reading as the interaction between reader and text. This emphasizes the Schema theory that is the basis of this study. The interactive approach incorporates the written text and the reader's prior knowledge about the text, thus according to Carrell (2015), the overreliance on either mode of processing to the neglect of the other mode has been found to cause reading difficulties for the learner. The interactive model of reading assumes that skills at all levels are interactively available to process and interpret the text (Grabe, 2015). In this model, good readers are good decoders and good interpreters of text, their decoding skills becoming more automatic but no less important as their reading skills develop (Eskey, 2018).

### **2.9 Summary of literature review**

Reading comprehension or understanding of what is read while reading (West, 2008) is the goal of any reading exercise and a prerequisite for the other components of reading: perception, interpretation, integration and reading rhythm. Teachers initially guide students towards understanding with questions posed by the teacher, often at the literal, inferential, interpretive and evaluative levels. They can also ask students questions that can only be answered by taking advantage of prior knowledge. Nevertheless, if the students must develop independence in the learning of texts, either narrative or expository, the teacher should transfer the responsibility to the students



making them establish their own objectives, awaken their own curiosity, formulate their own questions, control their progress to the goal and evaluate your achievements. For instance, teachers can promote independent reading of students by asking where they might find information, how the information may be related to what they already know why the facts in the text are meaningful. How can they be used and how would they know they have achieved their goal. In this way, teachers can convert students into active readers who read in class, answer their self-generated questions and, in doing so, direct, supervise and evaluate their cognitive processes and their affective reaction to the text and to themselves. Students read to learn and need understanding in the reading-to-learn experience to help them operate more efficiently in the English school curriculum.

Extensive reading enables learners to develop into independent and confident readers (Day & Bamford, 2011). Learners stand a better chance of promoting their reading fluency and speed (Walker, 2015), which leads them to become better readers (Camiciottoli, 2011) yet it may be difficult to keep students challenged to read more difficult texts as the program continues. Some established programs use a “weighing scale” for students to record materials read, giving more “marks” for materials read at a higher level. Intensive reading, sometimes called “narrow reading” may involve students reading selections by the same author or several texts about the same topic. When this occurs, content and grammatical structures repeat themselves and students get many opportunities to understand the meanings of the text. All the above literature present the importance of reading and hence it challenges faced by both teachers and students.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter describes the approach the researcher used to conduct this research.

The chapter contains research design, study variable, 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 Research design**

A research design refers to the procedural framework within which a research is conducted (Malhotra, 2017). This framework involves bringing together claims being made about what constitutes knowledge, a strategy of inquiry and specific methods (Creswell, 2013). In order to draw meaningful conclusion from any piece of research, the procedural framework of data collection must be appropriate and relevant. Additionally, Hair et al., (2012) argue that not only does a research design facilitate the collection and analysis of data, but also it helps to specify the details of the procedures necessary for obtaining the information needed to structure or solve marketing research problems. Ideally, it is a plan that is adopted by the researcher to answer questions validly, objectively, accurately and economically (Kumar, 2015).

This study adopted a mix of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. According to Creswell (2017), such an approach provides complementarities between the research approaches whereby the strengths of one approach complement the weakness of the other. Thus, the statistical approach of quantitative research will be supported with the narrative approach of qualitative research in this study. This allowed for generalizability and inferences to be made in the same study. In that respect, the study design was a cross-sectional design, which refers to the type of study which involves a one-time interaction with a group or groups of people (Babbie, 2015). The choice for this research design therefore became necessary not only due to the exploratory nature of the study but also because it has been found to be suitable for

analyzing a phenomenon, situation, problem, attitude or issues by considering a cross-section of the population at one point in time.

### **3.2 Population**

The population for this study was English Language teachers and students of the Methodist Girls Senior High School. Specifically, the population consisted of teachers and students in S.H.S. Form 2. The school has twelve (12) English Language teachers and a student population of six hundred and fifty (650).

### **3.3 Description of the study area – Methodist Girls Senior High School**

Methodist Girls Senior High School is an all-female second cycle institute in the Akuapem North in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The school was established in 1984 as a private institution called Mamfe State College. However, due to financial, administrative and staffing problems, in 1988 the school was handed over to the Methodist Church Ghana, and as a result, was renamed Methodist High School. Government absorbed the school into the public system in January 1993 as a day school with hostel facilities. By 2010/2011 the school had the following infrastructure/facilities such as dormitory blocks, classroom blocks, 3-Unit Pavilions used as classrooms, Model Computer Centre, an Administration Block, Storey Science Block, Bungalows, Dinning Hall. The school offered Home Economics, General Science, General Arts, Visual Arts, Business Accounting, and Agricultural Science as courses.

### **3.4 Sample and sampling technique**

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals selected represent the larger group from which they are selected hence representing the characteristics found in the entire group in this study, the technique used was multi-stage sampling technique (Orodha & Kombo, 2017). In

this study, the techniques used were the simple random technique, stratified and purposive sampling technique. The random sampling technique was used in the selection of the school since all the schools within the municipality cannot be surveyed. Stratified sampling was used to group the students into strata (strata) since the school is made up of various departments and respondents were randomly selected from each stratum to get the sample size. The purposive sampling was used in selecting the teachers on the basis of English subject specialization to select the number of students from the Form 2 class. The researcher involved Form 2 only since they have a long stay in school and their performance in reading and comprehension skills within the two year period will have a reflection on their performance. The sample of the study consisted of 20% of the target population as Gay (2017) stipulates that the minimum sample size should be at least 20% of the target population. A total sample size of 120 students with a distribution of 20 students from a department and 10 English language teachers were also selected, making a total of 130.

### **3.5 Research instruments**

The main research instruments employed for the data collection were questionnaire, interview, and cloze test for students.

#### **3.5.1 Questionnaire**

According to Yin (2014), questionnaires are the most appropriate method for case study. For the purpose of this study, a questionnaire was used because it helps to collect data from large number of respondents in different locations. There were questionnaires for teachers which were semi-structured; consisting of both open and closed-ended questions. Teachers' questionnaire had three sections. Section A required the teacher to give general information about him/herself. Section B dealt with information on reading difficulties where they were assessed on the ability to handle

learners with reading difficulties and the strategies they put in place to enhance reading comprehension.

### **3.5.2 Interview**

The researcher used this method to obtain data from English teachers of the selected school. Structured interview questions were arranged with the teachers specialised in English language. This enabled the researchers to collect the relevant data.

### **3.5.3 Cloze test for students**

The cloze procedure was used on students as an informal method to measure reading levels and comprehension. A cloze passage contained a minimum of 250 words. The first and the last paragraphs were left intact. After the first sentence every ninth word was deleted and replaced with a line space of equal length. Students filled the blanks with words (synonyms) they thought were in the original passage. The scores were computed by calculating the percentage of the correct answers and then tabulated accordingly. The cloze procedure was administered in groups of four. The reading passage came from the teachers completed cloze passage. Two students (from each group) read orally as the researcher computed the scores accordingly.

### **3.6 Pilot study**

Pilot study was done in New Juabeng Senior High School. The school was purposively selected because it was in the same geographical area with the schools for the main study. The sample of the pilot study comprised 2 teachers and 20 students from form two a total of 22 respondents. The pilot study enabled the researcher to be familiar with research instruments and its administration procedure as well as identifying items that required modification. It was during the pilot study that the objective concerning social/ emotional maladjustment was deleted and replaced by

reading difficulties on students' academic performance and thus changed the questions on the same. The institution and individuals sampled for pilot study that the objective concerning social/emotional maladjustment was dropped thus did away with the questions on the same. The institutions and individuals sampled for pilot study were not included in the main study.

### **3.7 Validity of the instruments**

Validity is the degree by which the sample of test items represents the content the test is designed to measure (Kombo & Tromp, 2016). Tools were constructed by the researcher as per the requirements of the study. They were tested on the respondents with the help of the supervisors during pilot study and correction done as required to increase the content validity and language clarity.

### **3.8 Reliability of the instruments**

Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement and frequently assessed using the test - retest reliability method (Shanghverzy, 2017). It is a measure of how consistent the result of a test should be. The researcher used test - retest method in which case, same instrument(s) were administered twice to the same group of sampled subjects with a time lapse between the first test and the second test of 3 weeks (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). This was to estimate the degree to which the same results could be obtained with a repeat measure. Scores were correlated and a correlation coefficient of 0.856 which is greater than 0.8 and thus was considered high enough to judge the instruments as reliable for the study.

### **3.9 Data collection procedure**

The researcher delivered copies of research authorization from her school to the school to inform the headmaster and the teachers the purpose of the study. The researcher conducted the research by administering questionnaires and collecting them

from the respondents herself the same day. Cloze tests were administered in a separate day with the help of English teachers and collected the same day. They were given as a group test in a specified time schedule. After filling in the cloze test in groups of four where two students read the reading orally as the teacher computed the score respectively.

### **3.10 Data analysis**

The completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency before processing the responses. Questionnaires were sorted out from cloze tests for coding purpose. The codes on the questionnaire were categorized on the basis of similarities of information provided by the respondents and those on cloze tests were according to the scores. Those with average scores (50 %) and above average (more than 50 %) scores were coded together and those with below average scores together. The organization of data was done according to research questions from which the conclusions were drawn. The information was tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely; frequency tallies and percentages. The statistics were generated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. The information was later presented using tables and figures for ease of understanding and analysis.

### **3.11 Ethical consideration**

A written informed consent for the study was also obtained from the authorities of Methodist Girls Senior High School, Akuapim - Mamfe. The research assistants were trained to assess client's ability to comprehend in plain language information about the study and to participate in the study. Informed consent was obtained after comprehensive explanation of the purpose and procedure of the study from the participants. Participants were informed about their right to withdraw or refuse to be part of the study at any point in the course of the interview and that would not affect



them negatively and were assured of confidentiality of all information that were to be obtained.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a summary of the whole process from the research design, study area and selection of population. It also described data collection tools and process and how the data analysis processes and procedures. Research methods are generalised and established ways of approaching research questions. The research method employed in this study was the mixed method that is the qualitative and quantitative approaches and involve the specific study activities of collecting and analyzing research data in order to answer the particular research question.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

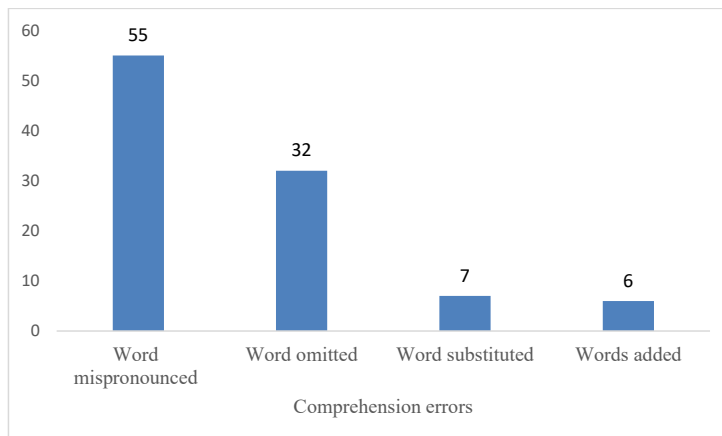
This chapter presents the results obtained from the field and discusses the findings revealed by the study. The chapter begins with an analysis of data obtained from the teachers and that of the students. The study analysed and discussed the results covering the specific research objectives.

#### **4.1 Reading comprehension errors that affect students' reading skills**

Objective one concerned reading errors that affect student's academic performance. Among the typical reading difficulties; problems with vocabulary, word recognition, reading comprehension and reading rate (Feagans, 2017), the researcher singled out reading comprehension as a major contributor to poor academic performance and sought to investigate the main reading errors identified. This agree with Smith (2015), who lists several common problems experienced by some students who suffer from reading disabilities. These include; omitting letters, syllables or words; inserting extra letters, words or sounds; substituting words that look or sound similar; mispronouncing words; reversing word or syllables; transposing letters or words; repeating words or using improper inflection during oral reading. Bond, Tinkel and Wasson (2017) provide the following general classifications of the more prevalent reading difficulties: faulty word identification and recognition, inappropriate directional habits, deficiencies in basic comprehension abilities, limited special comprehension abilities (such as inability to locate and retain specific facts), deficiencies in ability to adapt to reading needs of content fields, deficiencies in rate of comprehension and poor oral reading.

##### **4.1.1 Common comprehension errors as per students' data**

This section of the study seeks to find out the common comprehension errors that affects students' performance in reading. Figure 4.1.1 presents the result on common comprehension errors committed by students.



**Figure 4.1.1. Common comprehension errors**

A reading passage using cloze tests was administered to 100 students from the selected school where each class (department) produced 20 students. 5 students (from each group) read individually as the researcher noted the errors and scored accordingly. The reading passage came from the teachers completed cloze test. From the cloze test read by the students selected the following words were mispronounced:

Mispronounced words	Correct pronunciation
1. Heinous /hɪ:nəs/	/heɪnəs/
2. Crime /kraɪm/	/kraɪm/
3. Aloof /əlu:f/	/əlu:f/
4. Prostrated /prostrated/	/prostreitɪd/
5. Bursar /bu:sə/	/bɜ:sə/

Analysis on the common comprehension errors was done. This revealed that words mispronunciations was the most common error which accounts 55.0%. Word omission was also a common comprehension error with 32.0% words omitted. Other common comprehension errors included words added with 7.0% and words substituted with 6.0%. Comprehension error could lead to an altered meaning of the passage read.

These indicate that the students did not understand what they were reading. A study done by Runo (2016) on identification of reading disabilities and teacher oriented challenges in teaching reading to Standard 5 in Kenya concludes that the learners who scored poorly in the wordlist and reading passage were equally poor performers academically in primary schools. This was in line with her conceptual framework which indicated that both internal and external factors cause reading difficulties, hence poor academic performance. She further concludes that there is need to train the primary school teachers on the methods of identifying reading difficulties in learners to avoid learners' continued failure in school subjects.

#### **4.1.2 Effect of reading difficulties (comprehension errors) on academic performance**

The researcher sought to find out the effects of reading difficulties on academic performance. In order to achieve this objective, the comparative analysis was used by the researcher to test the association between various errors committed in reading comprehension and the likelihood of student having difficulty in reading. Typical reading difficulties of adolescents with mild disabilities include problems with vocabulary, word recognition, reading comprehension and reading rate (Hallahan et al, 2015). Reading problems stem from many causes, and it is a complex process as many reading difficulties can exist (Kaluger & Kolson, 2012). Bond, Tinkel and Wasson (2017) provide the following general classifications of the more prevalent reading difficulties: faulty word identification and recognition, inappropriate directional habits, deficiencies in basic comprehension abilities, limited special comprehension abilities (such as inability to locate and retain specific facts), deficiencies in ability to adapt to reading needs of content fields, deficiencies in rate of comprehension and poor oral reading.

The study indicates that students who had omitted least words in reading tests performed better than their counterparts who omitted many words. The researcher sought to determine whether there was any relationship between words omission error and being able to read thus, have effect on the academic performance. The result shows that 58% of respondents pointed out that word omission can result in reading difficulty hence affect the academic performance of the student. This implies that once a word or two are omitted during reading, getting the understanding of what is read cannot be assured hence no meaning can be made from it. Omitted word results to a distorted writer's intended meaning. It also leads to distorted interpretation of questions in an exam. These findings agree with studies conducted in Kenya by Chege (2017), Kirigi (2015) and Njoroge (2015) who all conducted that, students with problems in reading English have problems in school performance in general.

Words substituted and reading difficulty was also correlated and the results show the relationship between words substitution errors and being able to read well and this reflecting the academic performance of students in their end of term exam. The result shows that students who had not substituted words in the reading test performed better than their counterparts who substituted several words. Words substitutions have the same effect with words omission. The reader ends up with a different or distorted meaning from the one the writer intended and fails to answer the exam questions correctly. This finding agreed with Reid et al (2015) who maintain that dyslexia is difficulty in the ability to identify printed words and letters in students who have at least average intelligence and who are not impaired by general learning difficulties.

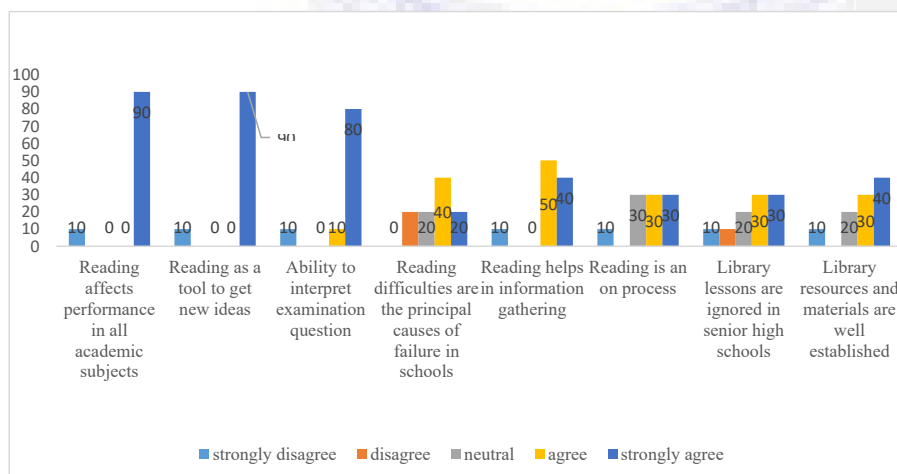
The researcher also sought to establish the effect of words mispronounced and performance and the results indicated that students who had mispronounced least words in the reading test performed better than their counterparts who mispronounced several

words. Most students scored average marks, of these some students had mispronounced none or one word. The study found that majority of the teachers of English (90%) agreed that poor reading skills affected academic performance in all the examinable subjects. They also agreed that library lessons were often ignored and that library resources and reference materials were not well established in public boarding and day secondary schools. The researcher sought to determine whether there is a relationship between words mispronunciation errors and academic performance. The study illustrates that there is significant relationship between word mispronunciation errors and academic performance of students. Words mispronunciation would also result to distorted meaning. Therefore, the learner could not perform well in an exam. The results presented confirms Smith's (2016) list of common problem experiences of some students who suffer from reading difficulties as; inserting extra words or sounds; substituting words that look or sound similar, mispronouncing words, repeating words or using improper inflection during oral reading among others.

The researcher sought to find out the effects of words added and academic performance (mean grade). Results from Table 7 show those students who did not have words addition errors performed better than their counterparts who added several words. Words omission, substitution, mispronunciation and addition all lead to distortion of writers intended meaning. These findings are in line with the findings of Carmine et al (2017) who found reading difficulties to be the principal cause of failure in school. Kerr et al (2017) also found word recognition, reading comprehension and application to be the reading skills mostly assessed in an exam. The above results were confirmed by teachers' perception about effects of comprehension errors on academic performance.

Reading difficulties are the principal causes of failure in school (Carmine et al, 2017). According to Mercer and Mercer (2015), between 10 % and 15% of school-going students have reading difficulties. Thus, teachers should be in a position to identify a student's problem including those related to reading from a holistic point of view in order to help such a learner manage academically in school (Dreikrurs et al, 2016). Lerner (2016) also notes that teachers should identify children with reading problems early and provide them with appropriate early interventions rather than practicing the policy of wait - and - fail method. Research conducted in Kenya highlights that students with problems in reading English have problems in school performance in general (Njoroge, 2015).

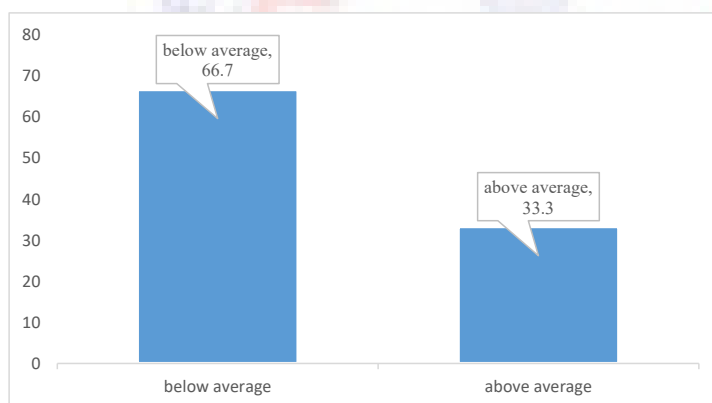
Furthermore, teachers' opinion on the extent to which they agree with various statements about effects of reading difficulties (comprehension errors) on academic performance. Ninety percent of the teachers strongly agreed that reading appeared to affect performance in all other academic subjects. The study found that majority of the teachers of English from the sampled school agreed that poor reading skills affected academic performance in all the examinable subjects. They also agreed that library lessons were often ignored and that library resources and reading materials were not well established in senior high schools.



**Figure 4.1.2. Teachers' perception towards effects of reading difficulties on academic performance**

#### 4.2 General students' performance in English

The study sought to examine the students reading levels and comprehension by use a reading passage and the same was used for cloze test. The cloze test had 179 words and twenty blank spaces. The students were to provide the original word or a synonym in the blanks as the researcher instructed them. This was administered in groups of five (all girls). 10 students out of the 100 sampled did not participate in the cloze tests due to fear and other reasons.

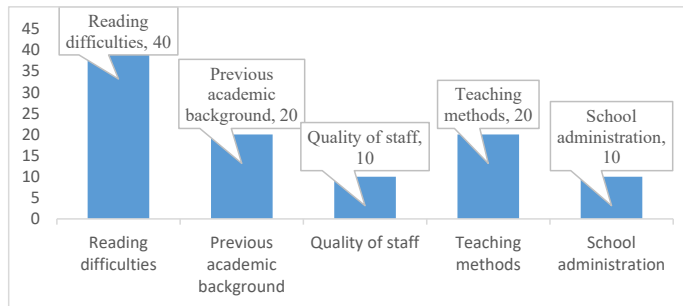


**4.2.1. General students' performance in English**

The study shows how students performed in a cloze procedure test administered by the researcher. Majority, 67%, scored below the average mark while 23% scored above the average mark. This performance tend to agree with teachers opinion where 90% of the teachers strongly agreed that reading appeared to affect performance in all other academic subjects. A cloze test was an appropriate tool to test the overall experience of a reader with the writer, the content and application as it concurs with Manzo and



Manzo's (2016) view of reading as the act of simultaneously "reading the lines", "reading between the lines" and "reading beyond the lines"



**Figure 4.2.2. Teachers' opinion on causes of poor academic performance**

The data concludes that the implementation of the reading aloud strategy has positive impacts on the students' performance, and it helps the reading process amongst the students (Gray, 2010). McCormick (2017) showed that students who read aloud regularly during the period of several months, achieved significant gains in reading comprehension, decoding skills, and vocabulary. Often the students need assistance and support with difficult texts in order to understand them (Dewitz, & Dewitz, 2015). The study was compatible with Vygotsky's social learning theory. This theory confirmed that the reading strategy builds reading comprehension. Therefore, this theory is evident when the students re-tell a familiar story which matches the texts, and indicates an emphasis on reading comprehension (Loysen, 2017).

#### **4.2.2 Effects of absenteeism and repeating class on reading.**

The researcher sought the teachers' opinions to this effect on indicators such as presence of dropouts, presence of repeaters and absenteeism among others. The study shows the presence of dropouts. Forty percent of teachers said that there were dropouts, other 40% absenteeism and 20% said students repeated classes. The presence of

repeaters is an indication of poor performance which could lead to low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence (Reid et al, 2017). The researcher also sought to determine the trend of absenteeism in the sampled school for the two consecutive weeks. Conceptually, the result shows the presence of dropouts. Sixty percent of teachers said that there were repeaters, other 40% absenteeism and none of the student was reported to be a dropout for the past two years.

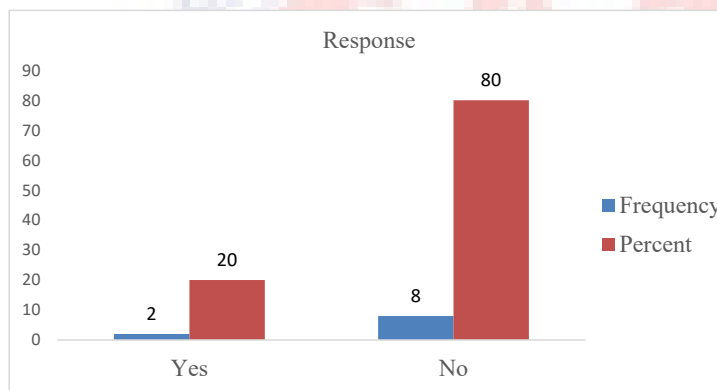
A study done by Runo (2017) on identification of reading disabilities and teacher oriented challenges in teaching reading to standard five in Kenya concludes that the students who scored poorly in the wordlist and reading passage were equally poor performers academically in primary schools. This was in line with her conceptual framework which indicated that both internal and external factors cause reading difficulties, hence poor academic performance. She further concludes that there is need to train the primary school teachers on the methods of identifying reading difficulties in students to avoid students' continued failure in school subjects.

Again, the researcher asked teachers about their opinion on certain statements in accordance with the reviewed Literature, teachers' responses were also reported. The study indicates that teachers' opinion on the extent to which they agree with various statement about poor academic performance effects on students' learning consistence. According to the findings, majority of the teachers (70%) agreed with the statement that adolescent poor students have low self-esteem and perceive themselves less valued members of their classes. From these results it can be observed that teachers of English from the sampled school unanimously agreed that poor academic performance as a result of poor reading abilities results to negative effects on students' learning consistence. This is in line with Reid et al., (2015) who also found that adolescents who had reading difficulty had low self-esteem and feel themselves less valued members of

their class. This posed challenges to education administrators, teachers and parents of low academically performing students. It seemed that teachers were aware that teaching reading effectively could improve academic performance hence learning consistency for the students.

#### 4.3 Challenges faced by secondary school English language teachers

The study sought to establish challenges faced by teachers supporting students with reading difficulties. Teachers were asked to indicate whether they were comfortable or not in dealing with those students in regular classes. The results were presented in Figure 4.3.5.



**Figure 4.3. Teachers' comfortable in dealing with students with reading difficulties**

The results show responses to the question of teachers' ability in dealing with students who have reading difficulties in regular classes. Eighty percent of teachers said they were not comfortable in dealing with them in regular classes while ten percent were of the contrary opinion. Lack of comfort in handling students with reading difficulties in regular classes was an indication of teachers' frustrations as they tried to deliver the learning activities in their classes. Teachers are frustrated and cannot cover the syllabus as intended due to students' low responses. This could mean poor relationship between the teachers and the students.

Teachers face a lot of challenges while handling students with reading difficulties. The purpose of reading is comprehension and many students with reading difficulties lack that aspect of comprehension which poses a big problem to teachers trying to teach them. Students with reading disabilities have problems with reading and spelling and find comprehension a challenge. They also find it difficult to transfer their thoughts to paper when answering comprehension questions. According to Runo (2017) teachers faced such challenges as teaching sounds, inadequate materials, and inadequate time to teach reading and mother tongue interference. Lerner (2016) argues that problems of low self-esteem and poor social relationships are carried forward into adolescence where they can develop into learned helplessness, a significant drop in their confidence to learn and succeed, low motivation to achieve, attention problems and maladaptive behavior which can affect secondary school students' performance negatively.

Again, the researcher asked respondents to give suggestions on what should be done in order to enhance students' with reading difficulties. Suggestions provided are reported in the result obtained from respondents. Sixty percent of teachers said that extra time should be created to attend to students separately while forty percent said that they should undergo special training. The study findings revealed the level of teachers' devastation in working with students who are academically poor. It was also noted that the teachers felt inadequate and professionally unqualified to work with such students. These findings agree with a study done by Runo (2018). She found that there was a need to introduce special needs education in all teacher training colleges to prepare them in working with students with mild disabilities in regular schools and recommended the same to the Ministry of Education.

Lack of special needs education (SNE) in teacher education could lead to low motivation among senior high school teachers and learned helplessness as they project to primary school teachers. The researcher also found that the senior high school teachers felt that reading should be taught in primary schools, a fact that could cause a strained relationship between teachers and the poor readers as teachers felt overburdened. Students who are not academically oriented but have no social/emotional maladjustment tend to excel in co-curricular activities. This would give them the reason for attending school. Also, the teacher should ask their students about any difficulties they may have with comprehension and understanding, and help them both inside and/or outside of the classroom environment. Teachers should give students a reading rubric and review their weaknesses in reading skills, then offer guidance and ways to improve reading comprehension. In some cases, delayed comprehension of reading reflects weaknesses in decoding skills (Spooner et al, 2016). The teachers need to be advocates for the needs of students by working with the literacy specialist teachers through one-on-one instruction in order to help the students improve their skills.

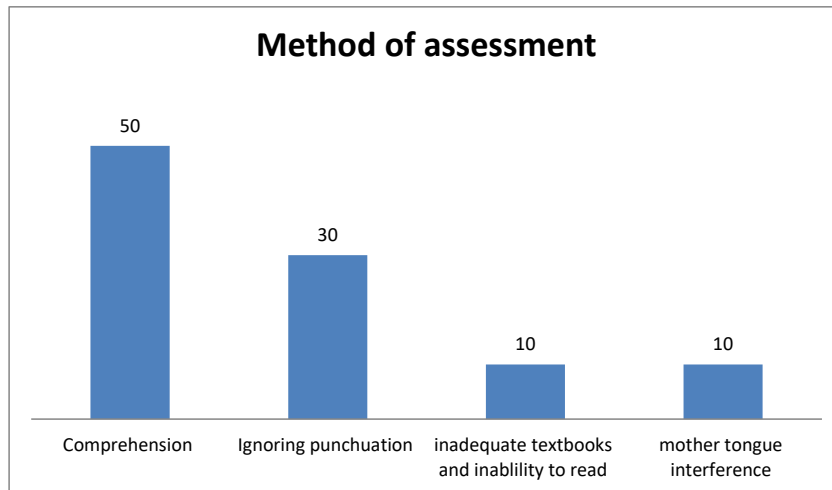
In addition, teachers might consider providing additional individual sessions for the weaker readers, so literacy specialists can help to improve and increase the students' skills. Therefore, teachers in senior high schools can help students with a challenging passage by connecting it with ideas presented earlier and they may also explain the new ideas that students will read about to enable them to reach the higher level of comprehension (Holte, 2018). Also, the weaker readers need to focus on practices and exercises to improve and increase their reading and understanding abilities. Ahmadi and Pourhossein (2015) stated that students who learn reading strategies try to recognize the main point of a paragraph, to elaborate unclear words, phrases, or

sentences, and to summarize their reading. These strategies aid readers to solve their problems when reading texts and assess their planning and its result. Furthermore, students tend to adapt to the environment in which they are studying, be it at home, in the library, or anywhere else other than classrooms. From here, the teachers should provide all aspects most beneficial for the students in the classrooms, such as a comfortable place for reading, which creates an appropriate environment for all. Also, the Ministry of Education intends to promote reading for pleasure, using tools such as the classroom environment, to support education in order to achieve the goals (Ministry of Education, 2014).

#### **4.3.1 Problems in teaching reading comprehension**

On this item the researcher asked the English teachers whether they had problems in teaching reading comprehension, state the methods they used to teach the same, how often they conducted library lessons, and most common problems experienced by teachers as they dealt with reading difficulties in their lessons. The study shows whether teachers experience problems in teaching reading comprehension. Majority of teachers (80%) experienced such problems while a few did not. The presence of a high number of teachers experiencing problems in teaching reading comprehension was an indication that this is an area that required a lot of effort. This findings concurs with the studies conducted by Chege (2015), Kirigia (2017) and Njoroge (2017) which indicated that students with problem in reading English have problems in school performance in general. Conceptually, the researcher further asked the teachers to state the methods they used in assessing students reading comprehension. The result indicates that comprehension test was the most widely used method, at 50%. After every reading comprehension passage there are comprehension questions which test the comprehension abilities of each student. These results

confirmed that the teachers were aware of challenges and were using the right method to remediate it.



**Figure 4.3.1. Methods that teachers used to assess students reading comprehension**

The researcher further sought to investigate the common problems faced by the teachers in teaching reading comprehension. From the analysis, the result shows the various problems faced by teachers in teaching comprehension. Ignoring punctuation came out clearly in this study to be the major reading comprehension errors (30%), inadequate text books and inability to read (20.0%) each, poor concentration during reading, mother tongue interference and copying directly from passage accounts for 10.0% each. This implies that most students who read and ignored punctuation are likely to face difficulties through their reading process and sometimes make the content they read meaningless.

Mando (2018) 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 students 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 Methodist Girls Senior High School is not an exception.

Also, many homes have turned out to be un conducive for students to read, write and do other schools work in Ghana today. According to Paananen et al (2016), 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, effect 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. Whilst some students 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 knowledge on how to help such students 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 (2015). From this scenario, it can be said that, teachers use the same method of teaching for all students 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 (2015).

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, 2016). Today, a student 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 students.

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, 2015). In virtually every class, there could be a student with a reading difficulty. As such, during their career, every teacher meets several students for whom reading is laborious, and even students who think that they cannot read. Teaching these students is a challenge for the teachers and the entire school (Paananen, et. al., 2017). 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., 2017).

#### 4.3.2 Strategies that enhance reading comprehension

Teachers were asked to state the strategies they use to enhance reading comprehension in their schools.



**Figure 4.3.2. Strategies put in place to help students with comprehension errors**

The study illustrates the strategies put in place to help students with comprehension errors. The use of comprehension lessons was the most common strategy, at sixty percent. It seemed that teachers readily followed the layout of English text books where reading comprehension should be conducted every week but forsook library lessons which are equally important in eliminating comprehension errors. Ricket et al (2017) indicate that secondary school teachers among other teachers need knowledge about the assessment and treatment of reading difficulties. Adequate literary and non-literary materials should be provided since reading is an important skill that not only helps the students in the mastery of English but also enhances their performance in other subjects in the school curriculum (Carmin et al, 2017).

#### **4.3.3 Teachers' agreement with various statements on strategies to enhance reading**

The researcher sought to establish whether the school administrators had put in place any of the strategies. From the study, it was clear the strategies used by principals to enhance reading comprehension abilities in secondary schools. Majority of the teachers agreed that schools should offer library services. Forty percent (40%) of the respondents agreed that information technology and quality staff who can differentiate instruction in a school can enhance reading comprehension. A few teachers (30%) agreed with the statement that provision of vocational training resources, social skills training programmes, guidance and counseling services and staff who can offer teaching and academic skills can enhance reading comprehension. Effective summarizing of narrative text includes things such as connecting happenings in a story line or recognizing the elements that stimulate a character's activities and conduct.

The important point here is that successful readers can make good decisions about which strategies to apply and when to use them. A lot of students can gain from explicit instruction that teaches them to apply particular strategies for understanding a text. This is similar to the findings of MacGinitie (2016) who stated that the teacher could direct reading activity by explaining the purpose for reading the text, relating the text to students' previous knowledge, teaching the technical terms, guiding the students through the text, explaining and demonstrating how to read and interpret it, how to make use of the rhetorical devices in the text, how to evaluate whether the objective has been reached; that is, whether an answer to a question has been found and how to check whether the answer is correct. Teachers usually explain the content when students have difficulty in comprehending the text but that is not enough. They should have students

go back to the text to perceive the way the text explains the content. This way, teachers can teach students how to learn from texts.

The opinion of the respondents indicated a wish and not a reality in the background since the researcher found that the selected school has not maintained a well-stocked library. Curriculum materials and equipment were also found inadequate. As stated by Carmine Silbert and Kameenui (2017), reading problems prevent individuals from reaching desired career goals and rob them of the opportunity to read for pleasure and enjoyment. Integration of English grammar and literature expose students as well as helping them improve their language skills. Williams (2016) suggests that students with learning disabilities require a different type of comprehension instruction than typical students and that just as students with learning disabilities need explicit structure instruction to learn word-recognition skills, they need explicit, highly structured instruction to learn reading comprehension skills.

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 (2015), produced particularly strong results for improving students 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 teaching 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 (2015).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

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The chapter depicts the results from the analysis and as well as the interpretation of the data and subsequent discussion. It highlights the various errors committed by students in reading comprehension which includes words omission errors, word substituted, words added, and word mispronounced. These errors in reading were identified after the cloze test conducted among the selected students where students were allowed to read a comprehension passage to the listening of the researcher. The analysis also brought into light the effects of these errors on the reading of comprehension. It was deduced that consistent committing of these errors by students have a negative effects on academic performance.

Secondly, the chapter also demonstrates poor library systems, inadequate instructional materials to enhance smooth teaching and increase in class size just to mention a few were some of the challenges faced by teachers in teaching and learning of reading.

It was illustrated in the chapter that various strategies were are agreed by teachers as a countermeasures to these challenges faced and this includes; provision of instructional materials, putting up a modern computerized library and dealing the with class size for by dividing large class into two or more to the enhance the standard teacher to student ratio of 1:4 to enhance smooth teaching periods.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

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

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter concludes the study. It provides a brief over view of the study. Based on the data analysis and subsequent discussion of the results, this chapter

provides a summary of the research findings, pedagogical implications and suggestions for future studies.

### **5.1 Summary of findings**

The study sought to improve the reading comprehension skills of students of Methodist Girls High School. In pursuance to achieve this aim, the study collected data from 10 teachers and 100 students of Methodist Girls High School. After critical analysis and evaluation of the data collected through self-administered questionnaire, the following findings were made. Analysis on the common comprehension errors from the reading passage revealed that words mispronunciation was the most common error. Comprehension errors and ignored or misinterpreted punctuations were the most common reading difficulty errors that the students committed implied that the students have a problem with interpretation of literary materials and examination questions. Findings from the study also shows that there was a significant relationship between words omitted, words substituted, words mispronounced, words added and academic performance of students end of term one examination. This means that comprehension errors contributed a lot to the students not comprehending what they read and therefore failed to answer the examination questions correctly. The study found that majority of the teachers of English (90%) agreed that poor reading skills affected academic performance in all the examinable subjects. They also agreed that library lessons were often ignored and that library resources and reference materials were not established in public secondary schools. A cloze test performance indicated that majority of the students scored below average hence reflecting in their end of term examination. Majority of teachers agreed with Ricket, List and Lerner (2009) that reading difficulties are principle cause of failure in schools.

Sixty percent of respondents said they were repeaters, while forty percent indicated a chronic absenteeism of over 10-14 students being out of school each day of the week in school that the research was carried out. On inquiry, the researcher found that those students had been sent home for school fees which implied that the parents were not motivated to pay school fees in the selected school under study. Findings on teachers' opinion on effects of poor academic performance on students' learning consistency revealed that majority of the teachers agreed with the statement that adolescent poor readers have low self-esteem and perceived themselves less valued members of their classes. This was an indication that poor academic performance affected students' throughout the week, term and year.

The study also reported that majority of the teachers said they were not comfortable in dealing with students with reading difficulties in regular classes. More than half of the teachers indicated that extra time should be created to attend to students separately, an indication that they felt professionally unqualified to handle students. This has been confirmed by Runo (2010) who recommended to the ministry of education that special education should be included in all teachers' education. Half of the teachers said that there were students in their classes who lacked interest in all school activities. This was due to negative attitude towards school. The study disclosed that majority of the teachers indicated that they had problem in teaching reading comprehension. Majority of them followed the coursebook layout of answering comprehension questions after reading the comprehension passage. Asked how often they conducted library lessons, majority said they do not conduct at all while a few conducted once in a week. As a result students lacked comprehension skills and awareness of contemporary issue.

Findings from the study show that the strategies put in place to enhance comprehension abilities, majority of teachers indicated that they used comprehension lessons. A need for teachers to be in-serviced was indicated by them saying that they had not been in-serviced since their initial training. Majority of the teachers agreed with the statement that providing guidance and counselling services would be a strategy to enhance reading comprehension. Other suggested strategies were; supply of adequate curriculum materials and equipment, offer library resource and have quality staff who can differentiate instruction among others. These findings complemented Carmine et al (2007) who cited that reading problems prevent individuals from reaching desired goals and rob them of the opportunity to read for pleasure and enjoyment.

## **5.2 The importance of reading in the teaching and learning of English**

The following highlights the importance of reading in enhancing teaching and learning of English language.

### **5.2.1 To improve pronunciation**

Reading aloud helps students learn better, especially pronunciation. Whisper reading can help students understand the conceptual information and inspire their imagination as well as guessing. Both types of reading are very useful for students. Determining when to use intensive and extensive or combination of both is really important. According to Critchely (2017), reading on vocabulary acquisition is of importance in the classroom. He also showed the disadvantages of detextualizing the wordlists. A number of educational researchers admitted that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic performance. In fact, through reading, readers gain a vast vocabulary and essential knowledge, structures of individuals sentences as well as a piece of writing. Therefore, developing reading competence is essential for academic achievement.



### **5.2.2 Spelling improvement**

There are numbers of research about the correlation between reading and spelling. Obviously, the more students have chance to interact and see the language, the better they remember the words. According to Jones (2017), the correlation between spelling and reading comprehension is because both depend on common denominator proficiency with language. The more deeply and thoroughly a student knows a word, the more likely he or she is to recognize it, spell it, define it, and use it appropriately in speech and writing. Reading is a kind of relaxation, reading on the bus, while waiting, etc. therefore, it is necessary but not very easy to get in the habit of reading. Miller (2014) carried a small research about reading and relaxation and found out that it is helpful for students to read just for relaxation in a student coffee shop. There are a lot of positive responses to this program.

### **5.2.3 Enhancement of writing skill**

It is no wonder that reading and writing are the mutual interactive skills. There is a close relationship between reading and writing format. The more students read, the better their writing ability is and the more skillful in using words in writing is. Rini (2001) conducted a research on the role of reading in language learning. He used three Indonesian children and himself as the subjects and came out with the following results; from the four people's experience in the essay, it can be deduced that reading, even done in the first language, plays an important role in language learning and have some common points.

### **5.3 Pedagogical implications**

The results obtained from the two questionnaires have actually emphasized a great importance of reading skill in literary course. In spite of the fact that most teachers lack the necessary requirements for efficient and successful progress of reading

instruction in general and literary reading instruction in particular as assumed by theorists, literary reading is regarded as a difficult performance in a foreign language because of its archaic words, chaotic syntax and mostly its deviation from ordinary language. Since the knowledge of norms of correct language is not enough for students to understand and appreciate the various literary genres, students as well as teachers need to know the methods and techniques used in reading and interpreting literary texts. In this chapter we shall suggest some key pedagogical implications to help students comprehend and process literary texts and help teachers have successful and efficient literary reading course.

From the findings of this research, it can be deduced that neither the reading skill nor the literary text reading is such an easy task to be left to chance and improvisation. Hence, the job of the teacher seems to be so crucial to make the task more accessible and efficient. Accordingly, teachers need to reconsider the reading skill and understand how it works in advanced educational situations, so as to distinguish it from reading that takes place preliminary or non-educational environment. It is also the responsibility of teachers to impart the necessary knowledge about how students should read, comprehend and process literary texts. Furthermore, teachers should shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered approach to teaching literature to help students explore their own responses of literary texts. In response to the claim that reading is too complex and challenging, it is suggested that teachers should involve students in text selection and include all types of reading. It is clear that not all literary texts are processed in the same way. Sometimes, one skims or scans the text and others resort to intensive or extensive reading. In addition, teachers have to know that a literary text can never be digested unless factors like time available for the course, motivation for reading, and the linguistic and cultural accessibility of the text itself.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for future research**

The researcher makes the following recommendations for further research; the study only covered one district, therefore, a similar study should be carried out in other districts since Akuapem North is just one district amongst other districts within the eastern region. A study on in depth cause of social and emotional problems affecting students reading abilities in Ghana is recommended where students are involved in giving out their views; a research on how guidance and counselling department can be improved in order to alleviate socio-emotional problems among students is highly recommended and finally a study on effects of students' reading difficulties on socio-emotional adjustments whereby students are involved in answering questionnaires and interviews is recommended.

#### **5.5 Conclusion**

The findings of this study showed that reading strategies have great impact on the students' reading comprehension ability. Students are not just passive receivers of information but they are active makers of meaning. Successful readers try to apply numerous skills to grasp meaning from texts. Readers should be involved in the reading process by using different strategies to monitor their meaning. This study emphasized the idea that comprehension processes are influenced by a lot of strategies. All of these strategies work together to construct the meaning process effectively. Based on the findings of this study, it is included that reading materials and activities should be very attractive to students in order to understand a text easily and they be related to the students' proficiency levels. Teachers have a big responsibility to motivate their students in reading these materials and to be very sensitive to students' comprehension difficulties. Furthermore teachers should further help their students to modify their

views towards reading and have positive attitudes towards reading activities so that they can better understand the different texts.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Teachers Questionnaire

University of Education, Winneba

Please, kindly spend some 30 minutes of your time to respond to the questionnaire items to assess the reading skills and comprehension. Provide answers to all questions by giving appropriate information in the spaces provided. All information provided is for an academic exercise and would be treated confidentially.

**Instruction:** Kindly tick [✓] or provide brief answers where necessary. Accuracy will be highly appreciated. Thank you.

**Section A: Information on reading difficulties**

6. Do you think students are faced with difficulties in reading and comprehension?

- a. Yes       b. No

7. Among the following reading difficulties which one(s) is commonly found among your

- (a) Comprehension errors   
 (b) Word recognition errors   
 (c) Problems relating to reading habits   
 (d) Inappropriate word grouping   
 (e) Ignored or misinterpreted punctuations learners

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statement about effects of reading difficulties (comprehension errors) on academic performance? Use a scale of 1-5 where: 1 strongly disagree; 2- disagree; 3- neutral; 4- agree 5- strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
Reading appears to affect performance in all other academic subjects					
Reading comprehension is very important in secondary schools as students use it as a tool to get new information, ideas, attitudes and values from all content areas and especially in literary texts					

Reading comprehension is needed in order to interpret examination question and even to comprehend what the question require for an answer.					
Reading difficulties are the principle causes of failure in school					
Reading on comprehension helps in information gathering and learning of concepts					
Reading is an ongoing process and should also be taught in secondary schools					
Library lessons are often ignored in public senior high schools					
Library resources and reading material are not well established in public senior high schools					

9. (a) Do you ever assess students reading comprehension? Yes  No

(b) If yes, what method do you use?.....

10. (a) Do you experience problems in teaching reading comprehension?

Yes  No

(b) If yes, list some of the challenges?

- i. ....
- ii. ....
- iii. ....
- iv. ....

(c). What strategies have you put in place to help students with comprehension errors?  
 .....  
 .....

11. (a) Are there areas you need assistance in your teaching reading comprehension?

Yes  No

(b) If yes, specify.....

12. (a) Have you ever undergone any in-service training in reading instructions since you completed your initial teachers training? Yes  No

(b) If not in which area of reading difficulties would you like to be in-serviced?  
.....

13. How often do you conduct library lesson?

Once a week  once a month  fortnightly

Not at all

To what extent do you agree with the following statement about causes of poor academic performance in Methodist Senior High School. Use a scale of 1-5 where: 1- strongly disagree; 2- disagree; 3- neutral; 4- agree; 5- strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Reading difficulties ( comprehension errors)					
School administration					
Quality of the staff					
Learner's previous academic background					
Teaching methods					
School community and environment					

**SECTION B: Information students' social/ emotional adjustment**

15. (a) Are there dropout in the year 2018?

Yes  No

(b) If yes how many are they?.....

16. Are there repeaters in your class this year? Yes  No

17. Please indicate the number of absentees in your class accordingly.

	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	Over 20
<b>This week</b>					
<b>Last week</b>					

(b) If there are any absentees in your class, state the underlying reasons?

.....

18. (a) Do you think most teachers of students with reading difficulties are comfortable

in handling them in regular classes? Yes  No

19. (a) Have you come across learners in your English classes who lack interest in all

school activities? Yes  No

(b) If yes, in your opinion what could have caused the situation indicated above?

.....

20. (a) Have you encountered students with behaviour problems in your English classes?

Yes  No

(b) If  specify briefly.....  .....

	1	2	3	4	5
Poor reading ability leads to lowered self-esteem					
Reading problems prevents individuals from reaching desired career goals					

Reading problems rob individuals of the opportunity to read for pleasure and enjoyment					
Reading experience strongly influenced a learner's self-image and feeling of competency					
Reading failure can lead to; (a) Misbehavior (b) Anxiety (c) Lack of motivation					
Continuing feelings of failure whilst at school can have lifelong delectating effects on individual's ability to cope with stress.					
Adolescent poor leaders have low self-esteem and perceive themselves less valued members of their classes					
Under achievement makes adolescents develop (a) Learned helplessness (b) A significant drop in their confidence to learn and succeed (c) Attention problems					

21. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the effects of poor academic performance on students' social/emotional adjustment? Use a scale of 1-5 where: 1-strongly disagree; 2-disagree; 3 – neutral; 4- agree; 5-strongly agree

22. What would you recommend to the school administration in order to improve social/emotional problems in your school?

- i. ....
- ii. ....
- iii. ....
- iv. ....

23. To what extent do you agree with the following statement about strategies used by principles to enhance reading comprehension abilities in secondary schools use a scale of 1-5 where: 1-strongly disagree; 2- disagree; 3- neutral; 4- agree; 5- strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
Supply adequate curriculum materials and equipment					
Offer library resources					
Offer information technology					
Provide vocational training resources					
Provide social skills training programmes					
Provide guidance and counseling services					
Have quality staff who can differentiate instructions					
Have staff who can offer study and academic skills					

*Thank You for Your Participation*

## APPENDIX B

### READING PASSAGE

Section. Read the following passage **carefully** and answer the following question on it.

Five decades ago, my classmates lured me into a trap that taught me the lesson of a lifetime. As the class monitor, I was informed that the class has decided not to do the homework given to us by the Geography teacher. The decision was based on the three grounds. First, she had not taught us anything substantial since her arrival in the school. Second, he must let her know that in this all-male institution, a female should not push as around Also, she seemed forever inaudible when teaching us.

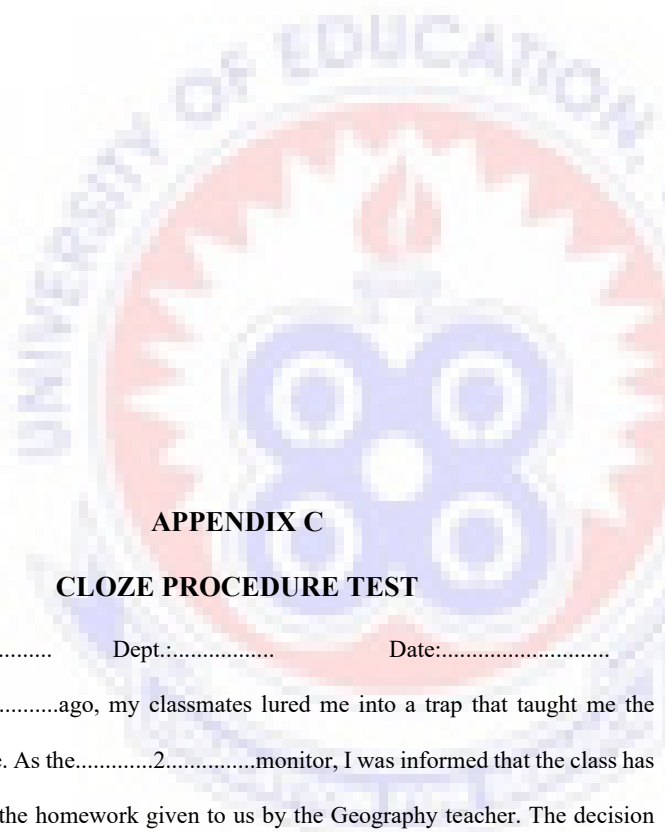
So, my mates mandated me to convey the decision to her. Thus sent, I confronted her with our decision. All she said was 'Noted'. I assumed we had won the day. Alas, how wrong I was. When she came to class the following Monday, she demanded the homework. As I stood up to restate our stand, behold all my mates took out their notebooks and submitted them. I was the odd one out in the class of thirty-five boys. This act of betrayal left me speechless. Any protest now was out of the question.

The teacher led me to the overgrown part of the football field, measured out a large portion, and ordered me to clear it before returning to either the class or the dormitory. I realised I had been stabbed in the back, as I heard my mates laugh sarcastically in the classroom. I bent down with my sharpened cutlass, determined to finish the work within the day and regain my freedom in good time. How wrong was I?

My father had chosen that day of all days to pay a visit. He rarely did so, as the school in Tamale was far from Accra, his base. Not finding me in class, he asked after my whereabouts. My mates described to him my heinous crime and directed him to my punishment post. When he arrived, he took the cutlass from me, cut a big cane and gave a flogging of my life. He then to the bursar's office, paid the balance of my fees, and returned to Accra with all the provisions he had brought for me.

I finished the task just before the last school hour, went to the lady teacher, prostrated myself, and tearfully apologized to her. But for the rest of the week, and indeed many more days, I stayed aloof from my mates.





**APPENDIX C**

**CLOZE PROCEDURE TEST**

Group number:..... Dept.:..... Date:.....

Five .....1.....ago, my classmates lured me into a trap that taught me the lesson of a lifetime. As the.....2.....monitor, I was informed that the class has decided not to do the homework given to us by the Geography teacher. The decision .....3.....on the three grounds. First, she had not taught us anything.....4.....since her arrival in the school. Second, he must let her know that in this all-male institution, a female should not push as around Also, she seemed forever .....5.....when teaching us.

So, my mates.....6.....me to convey the decision to her. Thus sent, I confronted her with our decision. All she said was 'Noted'. I assumed we had won the day. Alas, how wrong I was. When she came to class the.....7.....Monday, she demanded the homework. As I stood up to.....8.....our stand, behold all my mates took out their notebooks and submitted them. I was the odd one out in the class of thirty-five boys. This act of .....9.....left me speechless. Any protest now was out of the question.

The teacher led me to the overgrown part of the football field, measured out a large portion, and ordered me to clear it before.....10.....to either the class or the dormitory. I realised I had been.....11.....in the back, as I heard my mates laugh sarcastically in the classroom. I bent down with my sharpened cutlass, determined to finish the work within the day and regain my freedom in good time. How.....12.....was I?

My father had chosen that day of all days to pay a visit. He.....13.....did so, as the school in Tamale was far from Accra, his base. Not finding me in class, he asked after my whereabouts. My mates described to him my.....14.....crime and directed him to my punishment post. When he arrived, he took the.....15.....from me, cut a big cane and gave a.....16.....of my life. He then to the bursar's office, paid the balance of my fees, and returned to Accra with all the provisions he had brought for me.

I.....17.....the task just before the last school hour, went to the lady teacher, prostrated myself, and.....18.....apologized to her. But for the rest of the week, and indeed many more days, I stayed aloof from my mates.

### Comprehension questions

1. How did the class betray their monitor?

2. State two forms of punishment the monitor received?
3. What coincidence is there in the narration?
4. In what two ways did the monitor show remorse?
5. What was the reaction of the monitor to his mates after the incidents?
6. *My mates....*
  - i. What grammatical name is given to this expression as it used in the passage?
  - ii. What is its function?
7. *I had been stabbed in the back....*
  - i. What figure of speech is used in this expression?
  - ii. What does it mean?
8. For each of the following words, find another word or phrase which means the same and which can replace it as it is used in the passage:
  - i. Mandated –
  - ii. Assumed –
  - iii. Betrayal –
  - iv. Sarcastically –
  - v. Heinous –
  - vi. Tearfully –

**Group Score**

**Department:**.....

Group	Reading habit (20 mks)	Word recognition error/ pronunciation (20mks)	Comprehension error (20mks)	Inappropriate word grouping (20mks)	Ignored or misinterpreted punctuations (20mks)
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1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

