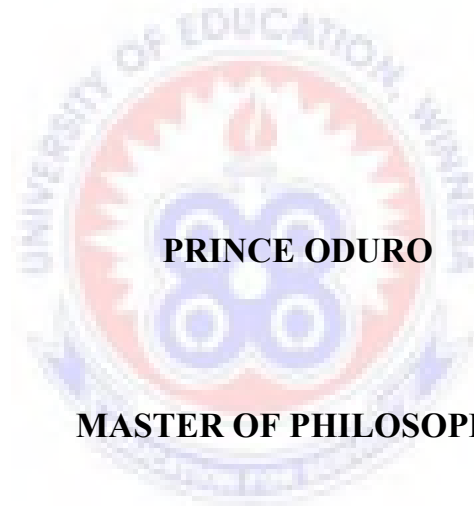


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**TEACHER APPROACHES IN REMEDIATING READING
DIFFICULTIES AMONG STRUGGLING READERS AT UNIPRA
SOUTH CLUSTER OF SCHOOLS IN WINNEBA**



PRINCE ODURO

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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SCHOOLS IN WINNEBA**



PRINCE ODURO

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**A thesis in the Department of Special Education
Faculty of Educational Studies, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment**

**of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Special Education)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

MAY, 2020

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Prince Oduro, 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 as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Dr. Samuel K. Amoako-Gyimah (**Supervisor**)

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dear parents, Mr. and Mrs. Oduro, my cousin, Grace Animar Osei and my siblings.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Page
DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
ABSTRACT	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	5
1.3 Purpose of the Study	6
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 Significance of the Study	7
1.6 Delimitation of the Study	8
1.7 Limitation of the Study	8
1.8 Operational Definition of Terms	8
1.9 Organization of the Study	9
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.0 Introduction	10
2.1 Theoretical Framework	10
2.2 Approaches Teachers Use in Remediating Phonics Difficulties among Struggling Readers	12
2.3 The Strategies Teachers Adopt in Improving Phonemic Awareness for Struggling Readers	29

2.4	Strategies Teachers use in Improving Reading Fluency among Struggling Readers	43
2.5	The Methods Teachers use in Remediating Vocabulary Difficulties among Struggling Readers	50
2.6	Techniques Teachers Employ in Enhancing Reading Comprehension among Struggling Readers	61
2.7	Summary of Literature Review and Research Gaps	68
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY		70
3.0	Introduction	70
3.1	Research Approach	70
3.2	Research Design	70
3.3	Population	71
3.4	Sample	71
3.5	Sampling Technique	73
3.6	Instrumentation	73
3.7	Confirmability of Instrument	74
3.8	Accuracy of the Instrument	75
3.9	Trustworthiness	75
3.10	Transferability	75
3.11	Procedure for Data Collection	76
3.12	Data Analysis	77
3.13	Ethical Considerations	78

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	79
4.0 Introduction	79
4.1 Research Question 1: What approaches do teachers use in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers in the school?	79
4.2 Research Question 2: What strategies do teachers use in improving phonemic awareness for struggling readers?	86
4.3 Research Question 3: What strategies do teachers use in improving reading fluency among struggling readers in the school?	93
4.4 Research Question 4: What methods do teachers adopt in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers in the school?	99
4.5 Research Question 5: What techniques do teachers employ in enhancing reading comprehension skills among struggling readers in the school?	104
 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	 110
5.0 Introduction	110
5.1 Approaches Teachers use in Remediating Phonics Difficulties among Struggling Reader in the School	110
5.2 Strategies Teachers Adopt in Improving Phonemic Awareness in Struggling Readers	115
5.3 Strategies Teachers Use in Improving Reading Fluency among Struggling Readers in the School	119
5.4 Methods Teachers Adopt in Remediating Vocabulary Difficulties among Struggling Readers in the School	121
5.5 Techniques Teachers Employ in Enhancing Reading Comprehension among Struggling Readers in the School	124

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	129
6.0 Introduction	129
6.1 Summary of Major Findings	130
6.2 Conclusion	134
6.3 Recommendations	135
6.4 Suggestions for Further Research	136
REFERENCES	137
APPENDICES	160
APPENDIX A: Letter of Introduction	160
APPENDIX B: Semi- Structured Interview Guide	161



LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1:	Respondents Demographic Characteristics by number of years worked	72
2:	Respondents Demographic Characteristics by Gender	72
3:	Respondents Demographic Characteristics by Academic Qualification	72



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1: A Semantic Map of Dinosaur	55
2: A Semantic Map of a Mammal	56



ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the approaches teachers use to remediate reading difficulties among struggling readers at Unipra South Cluster of Schools at Winneba. Five research questions were raised on the five essential components of reading, namely; phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. The bottom-up theory was used to guide the study. A case study design was used for four basic four English teachers who were purposively sampled. A semi-structured interview with an interview guide was used to collect data through focus group. Data were analysed using thematic approach. Results of the study showed that identification of letter names before letter sounds yields greater results in learning to read. Results of the study found onset and rime and consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) methods as effective approaches in improving skills in phonemic awareness for struggling readers. The study further revealed model and unison reading as effective strategies in fluency instruction. Writing keywords and picture description were found to improve vocabulary among struggling readers. Also, the use of mnemonics, and graphic organizers were instructional methods used to improve comprehension skills among struggling readers. Lastly, the study recommended that teachers should embark on professional development programmes to be equipped with current strategies on the five basic components of reading.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Reading instruction begins early in one's life. Washington-Nortey (2013) explained that children need lots of opportunities to build spoken language by talking and listening, learn about prints, books, sounds of spoken language, identify the letters of the alphabet, and listen to books read aloud. Reading is needed for many developmental achievements such as attention, language, memory, and motivation. Children who cannot read proficiently stand the risk of academic, behavioural, social, and emotional challenges (Hamilton, 2012). This is to say that mastering reading is a basic tool for success for every child. Reutzel and Cooter Jr (2013) opined that learning to read is not a simple task and can be a struggle for many children, not to mention adults who must relearn the skill.

According to Naafan (2018) there has been public outcry over the declining interest in reading among school children in many parts of the world. In the United States, the National Assessment of Educational Progress Report (NAEP) (2011) indicated that 33% of fourth graders and 24% of eight graders in the nation's largest urban areas could not read at the basic level, and unable to demonstrate even partial mastery of fundamental knowledge and skills in reading (Hempenstall & Buckingham, 2016). One out of every four students in fourth grade through form three was found to be a struggling reader, and less than one-third of public-school form two students were found to read at or below grade level (Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman & Scammaca, 2008). Reading, as has been suggested, is not as natural as breathing, talking or even walking; it is a complex activity which involves a number of skills (Anyidoho, 1999 as cited in Washington-Nortey, 2013).

However, there is a broad scientific consensus on what is needed to become a good reader based on clear empirical evidence on the high-priority skills that all children including those with reading difficulties must acquire, as they learn to read. These involve skills in phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension (Dehaene, 2009; Hamilton, 2012, National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000).

According to Hamilton (2012), skills in phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency are essential components of reading necessary for improving reading instruction for beginning readers and struggling readers. In light of the aforementioned, most educators agree that skills in the various components of reading are taught based on accumulated scientific evidence which is a requirement for developing reading proficiency (NRP, 2000). Moats (2000) maintained that, for many struggling adolescent readers, deficits in phonics and fluency skills contribute to poor comprehension, and these must be addressed through remediation. In this regard, developing skills in the various components of reading among children, as observed by Dehaene (2009), must invariably be the focal point when reading remediation programme is to be carried out among struggling readers. Dehaene added further that all children, especially those who struggle with reading, need to acquire all these combined essential components in a balanced and comprehensive reading programme to become successful readers.

Soiferman (2016) indicated that if reading is seen as a skill based process, then there will be more emphasis on the sound-symbol patterns, otherwise known as phonics where children are taught the names of the letters and the sounds of those letters. Phonics, which has been cited as one of the essential components of reading

(Dehaene, 2009; NRP, 2000), is beneficial for children from all sociolinguistic and ability groups, especially when it is accompanied by memory aids such as key words for sounds, pictures, and articulatory gestures (McCardle, Chhabra, & Kapinus, 2008). The NRP meta-analysis confirmed that phonemic awareness, along with knowing the names and shapes of both lower-and uppercase letters is a key component that contributes significantly to the effectiveness of beginning reading instruction for readers with varied abilities (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). Phonemic awareness instruction has proven to be effective for improving children's reading skills and it is best introduced early in kindergarten and first grade, which leads to accurately recognizing familiar words and decoding unfamiliar words (Partnership for Reading, 2001). Subsequent to the NRP Report in 2000, researchers have found that although children differ in their need for instruction, but phonemic awareness benefits every child, especially those who struggle with reading and older students when taught systematically (Connor, Morrison, & Underwood, 2007).

As children are taught the names and sound patterns of letters, they also need to acquire skills in knowing word meaning, which is a major contributor to their ability to communicate and comprehend text (Dehaene, 2009). It has been rightly said that knowing the meaning of words in vocabulary instruction is the glue that holds stories, ideas, and content together, making comprehension accessible for children (Rupley, Logan & Nicholas, 2009). Lervag and Auhurst (2010) indicated that children who come to school with thousands of words in their heads, words they can hear, understand and use in their daily lives are already on the path to reading success whether they speak English as their native language or are English learners. Cooter (2010) explained that vocabulary knowledge in reading is a great predictor of school

success and must be incorporated in a reading remediation programme when ensuring future reading success for struggling readers.

Moreover, as children master skills in phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension, how they become fluent has also been the focus of research for many years and development of theories on reading (Rasinski, Reutzel, Chard, & Linan-Thompson, 2010). According to Rasinski (2012), for many years, reading fluency has been acknowledged as an important goal in becoming a proficient reader. Research has indicated that fluency practice and instruction are essential components of high-quality reading instruction in the elementary years (Stahl, 2004) and has been used as a routine indicator for identifying struggling readers in the classrooms over the past decade (Reutzel & Cooter Jr, 2013). Some educators believe that fluency is the key that unlocks the door to comprehension for all categories of readers, and cannot be overlooked when planning a reading remediation programme for struggling readers in schools (Pressley, 2003, 2006).

Research has indicated that children who struggle to read and others who have not yet mastered decoding skills need not wait until they become fluent readers or know word meaning to begin addressing comprehension (Centre for Effective Reading Instruction, 2016). Nation (2019) asserted that everything we do in reading whether remediation, instruction or assessment should be aimed at helping children comprehend written material. In other words, it matters not whether children who are learning to read and can instantly recognize every word on a page if they cannot understand the message those words are conveying.

Also, studies have found that about 15 percent of the variations in reading achievement among children at the end of the school year are attributable to factors that relate to the skills and effectiveness of a teacher's approach (Connor, Alberto, Compton, & O'Connor, 2014). Therefore, it is based on this premise that the researcher, in this study, intends to explore the approaches teachers use in remediating phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension difficulties among struggling readers at the Unipra South cluster of schools in Winneba.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

By the end of third grade, a pupil is expected to read proficiently in order to succeed in upper grades (Fiester, 2010). Reutzel and Cooter Jr (2013) posited that the most expensive burden we place on society is those pupils we have failed to teach to read well. Therefore, in order to assist struggling readers attain proficiency in reading, a teacher's approach cannot be underestimated. An informal interaction between the researcher, the head and some teachers of Unipra South cluster of schools indicated that most of the pupils struggle to read proficiently at the various grade levels. In the course of the interaction, it was further revealed that more than one third of the pupils in upper and lower primary in the three classes struggle with reading, hence they were unable to read materials that were considered to be consistent with their age and grade levels. Nonetheless, no investigation or study had been done to establish specifically the approaches teachers use in remediating difficulties in reading among struggling readers in the school. Meanwhile, success at all levels, to a very large extent, depends on an individual's level of proficiency as demonstrated in the various components of reading (Curriculum Research & Development Division, 2007). It is in response to this problem that the researcher found it worthwhile to find out approaches teachers use in remediating difficulties in reading among struggling readers in the schools.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out approaches teachers use to remediate reading difficulties among struggling readers in the schools. The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To find out approaches teachers use in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers in the schools.
- To find out strategies teachers adopt in improving skills in phonemic awareness for struggling readers in the schools.
- To determine strategies teachers use in improving reading fluency among struggling readers in the schools.
- To explore methods teachers adopt in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers in the schools.
- To identify techniques teachers use in enhancing reading comprehension among struggling readers in the schools.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What approaches do teachers use in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers in the schools?
2. What strategies do teachers adopt in improving phonemic awareness for struggling readers in the schools?
3. What strategies do teachers use in improving reading fluency among struggling readers in the schools?
4. What methods do teachers adopt in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers in the schools?

5. What techniques do teachers employ in enhancing reading comprehension among struggling readers in the schools?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of the study would reveal the approaches teachers use in remediating difficulties in the various components of reading. Specifically, the results will reveal teachers methods in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers in the school. This will help ascertain whether struggling readers are best supported to associate letter and sound patterns of letters with the word they read so they make greater gains in reading and spelling activities. The result of the study will throw light on methods used by teachers in remediating difficulties in vocabulary and comprehension difficulties among struggling readers in the school. This will also help to make certain critical decisions for pupils who struggle to read which includes, diagnostic decisions, universal screening decisions, progress monitoring decisions, and outcome decisions and to determine quickly if struggling readers are performing adequately or are at risk for future reading failure.

Also, the results of the study will help to reveal strategies teachers use to remediate fluency difficulties among struggling readers in the classroom. This will inform other teachers and parents from different schools with pupils who struggle to read on how to differentiate instruction and plan effective reading instruction for the pupils unlike the routine one-size-fits-all strategies. Lastly, the results of the study would also contribute to literature which would serve as a valuable material for those who would engage in a similar study.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

Even though there are a lot of basic schools in Winneba, the study focused only on Unipra South cluster of schools. Also, the study focused on the approaches teachers use in remediating reading difficulties among struggling readers in the schools.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

The researcher encountered some difficulty scheduling appointments with the teachers for the focus group discussions since they had different schedules for academic and social activities. The researcher overcame this challenge by consulting participants to schedule the focus group discussion on a weekend where they had some leisure time.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Struggling Reader: A reader who is unable to read a text written in English consistent with his/her grade and age level.

Phonics: The relationship between letter names and letter sound patterns of the English alphabets.

Phonemic awareness: The ability to notice, think about and work with the individual sounds in words.

Vocabulary: This involves knowing the meaning of a word and the ability to use it in both written and spoken language.

Fluency: The ability to read a text quickly and accurately.

Comprehension: The ability to understand a written text.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This thesis is organized and presented in six chapters. Chapter One comprised of the background to the study, statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations, operational definition of terms and general layout of the study. Chapter Two focused on the literature review taking into account the research objectives and the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter Three dealt with the methodology including sample and sampling techniques, research design, population, instruments used in data collection and analysis, description and distribution of instruments. Chapter Four covered the presentation and analysis of data collected and Chapter Five focused on interpretation and discussion of results. Finally, the summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research formed the concluding chapter of the report.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review of the study. The review first covered the theoretical framework followed by review on the various sub-headings derived from the variables raised as the key themes in the research questions which are:

1. Theoretical framework.
2. The approaches teachers use in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers.
3. The strategies teachers adopt in improving skills in phonemic awareness for struggling readers.
4. The strategies teachers use in improving reading fluency among struggling readers.
5. The methods teachers use in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers.
6. The techniques teachers employ in enhancing reading comprehension skills among struggling readers.
7. Summary of literature review and research gaps

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The bottom-up theory of teaching reading underpinned the study. This theory was put forward by Gough in 1985. According to the proponent, the bottom-up theory operates on the principle that the best way to develop reading for children who are beginning to read and children with reading difficulties is by directly and systematically teaching them to decode letters and sounds, and then blending the sounds to form mono-syllabic word, bi-syllabic words and poly-syllabic words into

phrases and then sentences. The emphasis of the bottom-up theory, especially for a second language (L2) learner is that reading should be acquired through extensive drill and practice.

Implications of the bottom-up theory to the teaching of reading is that, once a pupil masters decoding skills or can decode a text very well, using the knowledge in phonics, will make children derive meaning of the text automatically. According to the theory, a reader processes text by first recognizing the lower level of units of language; the letters and their corresponding sounds and by blending these lower level units into more complex units. This means that the reader first perceives and reads letters, and then continues to combine the letters into words, then blends several words to form phrases, clauses, sentences and then finally, decodes a text. Again, the bottom-up theory view reading as a matter of decoding single letters, words or focusing on areas such as eye-voice span speed of reading and lip movement during silent reading (Hebert, Bohaty, Nelson & Brown, 2016). This theory is relevant to the study because it emphasizes the use of phonics and comprehension in reading development. For example, the theory's emphasis on developing reading through series of repeated skills in letter and sound relationships are attributable to phonics and phonemic awareness instruction.

Again, the emphasis of the theory and the basis of the study on the five components of reading accept the notion that, to learn to read, children must work through and develop series of repeated skills in letter and sound relationship as in phonics, and text knowledge in reading comprehension, thereby making the theory relevant for this study. Also, as the study seeks to find out approaches teachers use to remediate reading difficulties among struggling readers, the bottom-up theory is applicable. This

is because the theory embraces the saying, “teach children to read and they will be able to read” and this is the foundation upon which this study is based.

2.2 Approaches Teachers Use in Remediating Phonics Difficulties among Struggling Readers

Phonics is one of the components of reading, and it refers to the sounds of the letters of the alphabets in words (NRP, 2000). Phonics is the relationship between a specific letter and its sound and the letter combinations and the sound they represent (Adams, 2000). According to Wood and McLemore (2001), when a pupil comes across an unknown word, with the knowledge of phonics, the pupil can try to read the word by focusing on the specific sound of each letter or combination of letters. For example, if a pupil does not recognize the word, “chant” the pupil might break the word apart into pieces such as /ch/ /a/ /n/ /t/ or /ch/ /ant/, assigning an appropriate sound to each separate letter or combination of letters.

Although phonics instruction is the same for all children (Allen, 2007; Badian, 2001), Forman and Torgesen (2001) argued that some students will only become literate when the instruction is more intense, more explicit (clearer), more comprehensive, and more supportive. Forman and Torgesen further contended that, the same effective pedagogy for all students is required including those with reading difficulties, but increased repetitions, greater clarification of concepts, and additional re-teaching of letters, letter names and sounds, usage of flashcards and manila cards are necessary for struggling readers in order for them to reach the same level of proficiency that others reach with less intensity, practice, re-teaching, and support (NICHD, 2000).

A study conducted by Adomah (2016) at Afienya D/A primary school in Ghana employed the action research design and the qualitative method of data collection. Nineteen basic four (4) pupils with reading difficulties were purposively sampled using the Mountain Shadows Phonetic Awareness Scale (*MS-PAS*) approach of teaching reading to assess and improve reading skills of the pupils. The results revealed that, 75% of the pupils performed very well in the post-intervention test when they were taught using the (*MS-PAS*) phonics method of teaching reading. The results also revealed that, the pupils were able to identify English phonemes and read simple English texts with little support. However, 68% of the pupils performed below average in the pre-intervention reading test which was due to the initial difficulties they faced in reading. The study further indicated that practices such as dictation, alphabet identification, written exercise and oral reading are good assessment strategies needed in a phonic remediation. The study concluded that phonics instruction has positive effect on pupils reading ability. Among the recommendations of the study were, techniques such as 'look and say', as well as the 'eclectic methods', and use of varied models should be adopted by teachers in the teaching and handling of phonics and reading skills, especially at the lower primary level.

From the Adoma (2016) study, it can be deduced that reading assessment is not only about measuring performance of learners in reading, but also considering how the reading process has improved upon reading for struggling readers. According to Stahl, Flanigan, and McKenna (2020), there cannot be effective reading instruction without effective assessment and motivation. Therefore, phonics instruction must be coupled with making meaning out of the learners' behaviours with a view to finding appropriate ways of reducing or removing their reading challenges (Berninger, Abbott, Vermeulen, Ogier, Brooksher & Zook, 2002). Chuunga (2013) further

recommended the following number of questions for teachers to reflect on when beginning reading instruction for readers with varied abilities, and hence, a realistic answer to each of these questions is one of the keys to alleviating children's reading difficulties:

- Do I have children with reading difficulties in my class?
- How do I identify them?
- How can I effectively assess and motivate my learners in reading in order to bring about positive change?
- Why should I assess them and how often should this be?
- What assessment instruments and tools are effective for identifying children's real problems?
- And above all, how do I interpret the assessment results in order to benefit the learners?

Additionally, Vadasy and Sanders (2010) studied several salient factors that a teacher should take into consideration in the classroom for effective phonics instruction. These include taking time to assess learners' reading strengths and needs through exercises, identifying learning patterns, repetitions, rehearsals, monitoring learners' reading patterns not only as a group but as individual learners, organizing instruction based on group needs of the learners; recording how learners are responding to assessment and teaching; and the teacher reflecting on instructional practices and motivation in view of the learners' performance.

Armbruster (2010) pointed out that there is a need to assess the strengths and needs of learners through exercise, letter identification; using information gathered to inform instructional decision and monitoring learners' individual reading through assessment.

Reid (2019) added that organizing instruction based on group needs of the learners; recording how learners are responding to assessment and teaching; and the teacher reflecting on instructional practices are also part of assessment methods used in phonics instructions. It has been established that assessment of a struggling reader's letter knowledge will tell us what letters and sounds he/she knows and what letters and sounds will need to be practiced.

Chuunga (2013) conducted a study in Zambia to investigate how teachers remediate phonics difficulties for pupils with reading difficulties at the lower primary level. A case study design was used to investigate the phenomenon in detail to understand the meaning from the perspective of the respondents. Semi-structured interview and observation were used for data collection to understand the respondents' backgrounds, realities and knowledge of teaching phonics, and to see how teachers implement instructional planning of phonics in the classroom. Purposeful sampling was used to select six English Language teachers of fourth graders from 6 schools: two from urban schools; the other two from semi-urban while the last two were from rural schools. This was done to understand the phenomenon in a broad context. The results of the study revealed that:

- i. Strategies such as extra teaching outside normal lessons in form of remedial work, homework, planning of independent learning activities according to each group's ability, display of learners' work on the walls for them to revise and use of verbal encouragement to learners during lessons are examples of best practices for improving phonics skills for struggling readers.
- ii. Direct group-based teaching, small groups, question and answer, one-on-one teaching, paired reading, chorus reading, role sharing and sharing/presenting

tasks as groups and individuals are teaching strategies needed for an effective phonics instruction.

- iii. Phonics instruction is helpful to all children especially those who are learning to read when it is focused on letter names acquisition. With this, children will be able to use words, and even, the letters in order to construct sentences.
- iv. Motivational practices including giving gifts to struggling readers and appraisal make learners active and participate fully in phonics activities.

The study further concluded that, lack of confidence in teachers may be contributing to further falling standards in teaching phonics and supporting learners with reading difficulties. This is compounded by other socio-economic factors such as the type of learner population that these teachers are handling. The findings from the study correspond to Cole (2006) who argued that, the rate at which a pupil acquires letter knowledge predicts how quickly the pupil will learn to read words. Similarly, Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, and Ciullo (2010) had said that phonics instruction helps pupils develop proficiency in decoding, read novels, spell and understand words. The NRP (2000) further contended that failure to master phonics is the number one reason that pupils have difficulty learning to read. Ehri (2015) indicated that, letter-name knowledge helps students read novels and identify unfamiliar words. He added that, the phonemes represented by graphemes (letters or letter clusters) are often embedded within the letter names.

Wolf, O'Brien, Adams, Joffe, Jeffrey, Lovett and Morris (2003) equally noted that the sound /m/ is found within the letter name m, adding that, all vowels represent sounds that are identical to their name. Most importantly, a letter's name is its only stable property as the shape may change (e.g., upper and lower case forms, cursive and

printed forms, differing vowel fonts), and the speech sounds represented by letters may change (e.g., long and short vowel sounds). This means that letter names unlike letter sounds, anchor the other properties of letters.

In view of the above, Plaza and Cohen (2003) also indicated that, letter recognition in phonics instruction is necessary for word reading but alone is not sufficient for good word reading. Automatic word reading cannot occur without a complete understanding of the correspondences between every letter and its phonological reality. Hence, a reader must understand that the t in time represents the sound /t/ and that the sound /t/ is different from /d/ the initial sound in dime (Day, 1993). This corresponds to an assertion by Plaza and Cohen (2003) who indicated that, a pupil must first learn that letters carry sounds and that which sound or sounds are associated with each letter and letter clusters. Hence, when pupils have reliable knowledge of the sounds in letters, they understand the alphabetic principle, knowing that phonemes of language correspond to the letters that they represent (Henbest, 2017).

According to Cole (2006), when entering kindergarten, struggling readers like any other children, can develop or consolidate letter identification with uppercase letters before lower case letters are formally introduced. The same principle is seen in the recommendation that struggling readers know letter names well before instruction in sound-symbol association begins (Adams, 2000; NICHD, 2000). In the same way, Curtis (2004) noted that, names of letters may be learned early, and pupils who know them have greater advantage. From the above statements, it can be assumed that in phonics instruction, it is appropriate to teach names of letters before learners are introduced to the sounds patterns that represent them. Therefore, it will be worthwhile

to find out approaches teachers adopt in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers in this study.

2.2.1 Developing phonics skills for struggling readers

Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, and Willows (2001) noted that, teaching phonics (and related phonics skills, such as phonemic awareness) is a more effective way to teach children early reading skills than is embedded phonics or no phonics instruction. Over the years, surveys conducted by the International Reading Association (IRA) have found that phonics instruction is one of the most contentiously debated issues in the field of reading education (Leu, Kinzer, Wilson & Hall, 2006). The NRP (2000) found that phonics instruction is an effective approach of teaching reading for children from kindergarten through 6th grade, and for all children who are having difficulty in learning to read. In other words, phonics teaching is a means to an end (Goouch & Lambirth, 2007), and the goal of phonics instruction is to help pupils develop the alphabetic principle (American Federation of Teachers, 2007).

Pupils who understand the alphabetic principle know that the sounds of spoken words are mapped onto written words in systematic ways (Cox, 2001). As pupils develop understanding of this principle, they become adept at using letter-sound correspondences to figure out unrecognized words. Command of the alphabetic principle is the foundation for accurate word recognition and a prerequisite for fluency well-documented characteristics of skillful readers (Berninger, 2000). Phonics-based approaches are designed to teach children to unlock or decode the sound/symbol relationships in our language and to begin reading instruction by teaching children to associate the graphemes (letters) with the phonemes (sounds) they represent (Brewer & Harp, 2005). According to Wolf, Bowers and Biddle

(2000), each word must be sounded out by the child in order to achieve the highest level outcome.

For children to learn the phonics approach, Carreker, Neuhaus, Swank, Johnson, Monfils and Montemayor, (2007) have asserted that, they need phonetically written books, flashcards and illustrations using regular words that are interesting to young children. Learning the sounds and their blends in phonics instruction may be disinteresting for young children. Therefore, the lesson should be very short and entertaining using a lot of different teaching and learning materials (Allington, 2002; National Right to Read Foundation, 2001). Similarly, Kemizano (2007) found that a variety of flash cards, picture books, shapes of objects, word and rhyme games must be emphasised in phonics acquisition because playing with language apparently helps young children focus their attention on the sounds of words as well as their meaning.

There are two competing views regarding the teaching of phonics to struggling readers. One approach is known as synthetic phonics instruction, and the other approach is known as analytic phonics instruction (Goouch & Lambirth, 2016). Synthetic phonics is more traditional in that pupils learn how to change letters or letter combinations into speech sounds, and then blend them to form words (that is, sounding out) (Brewer & Harp, 2005). In analytic phonics, children are first taught to read a word and then to analyse the individual sounds within the word (Hill, 2016). Brewer and Harp indicated that struggling readers must be taught to decode unfamiliar words by looking to see if they can find a similar word (i.e., knowing the sounds in cake and it can help a child to use the /m/ sound in me and the /ake/ sound from cake to decode make). Hempenstall and Buckingham (2016) and Morris (2015) noted that, phonics advocates focus on the efforts of struggling readers in their

primary grades, and emphasize the importance of being able to sound out (read) words based on how they are spelled. According to Aukerman, Belfatti and Santori (2008) the theory behind the phonic approach is based on two assumptions. These are:

1. Most languages have consistent phoneme (sound) to grapheme (letter) correlation.
2. Once learners have learned the relationships of the letters to the sounds, they can pronounce printed words by blending the sounds together (Aukerman, Belfatti & Santori, 2008).

Wyse and Goswami (2008) noted that, the synthetic approaches begin with learning letter-sound relationships and blending them to create words. Bald (2007) added that, the synthetic phonics approach is where the learner must sound out and blend letters to form words. According to Wyse and Goswami analytic approaches have children analyze sounds in words, that is, they start with a word and take it apart. Then after the children say each sound, they blend the three sounds together. Bald (2007) concluded that one type of approach is not superior to the other. The analytic approach is where the learner has to break words into letter-sound segments, and the spelling-based approach is where the learner must sort words by spelling patterns (Jansen, 2017).

The NRP (2000) concluded that, one type of the phonics approach is not superior to the other. Furthermore, the NRP report suggested that phonics instruction is most effective in first grade with effective assessment, motivation and materials. In considering the most effective way to teach phonics to struggling readers, the NRP proposed the following principles:

- a) Good phonics instructions should develop phonological awareness.
- b) Good phonics instruction must have assessment practices including oral spelling and word identification.
- c) Good phonics instruction should provide a thorough grounding letters.
- d) Good phonics instruction should not teach rules, need not use worksheets, should not dominate instruction, and does not have to be boring.
- e) Good phonics instruction provides sufficient practice in reading words.
- f) Good phonics instruction leads to automatic word recognition.
- g) Good phonics instruction is one part of reading.

An analytic method to reading begins with words (preferably nouns that can be easily illustrated), then breaks the words into parts (Comaskey, Savage & Abrami, 2009). This technique places emphasis on the individual letter making up the word. It could be called reading by spelling and word identification assessment (Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003). In this technique, the pupil pronounces by saying it (National Research Council, 2000). For instance, C-A-T = CAT, D-O-G = DOG, M-A-N = MAN etc. While this technique helps the pupil to embolden their efforts and to spell some words that may be completely new to them (Glazzard, 2017) it has some limitations (Torgerson, Brooks & Hall, 2006).

2.2.2 Systematic-Synthetic Phonics (SSP) Instruction

This is a method of teaching reading and spelling through decoding and encoding with a systematic approach (White, 2005). It relies upon teaching the individual sounds of the 44 phonemes in the English language sequentially and the letters that correspond to them (Ehri, 2004). This method of teaching is where words are broken into the smallest units of sound (phonemes) (White, 2005). Chall (2000) indicated

that, in synthetic phonics, children learn to make connections between the letters of written texts (graphemes, or letter symbols) and the sounds of spoken language.

A study by Johnston, Darnell, Solity, and Wall in 2017 revealed that, synthetic phonics teaches children how to identify all the phonemes in a word and match them to a letter in order to be able to spell correctly. For instance, in the word "bat", children learn to identify three individual phonemes using the synthetic phonics method: /b/ /a/ /t/ that can be blended back together to produce a word 'bat'. The authors added that, the 'synthetic' part of this phonics instruction derives from the process of synthesizing or blending sounds helps to create words.

Johnston and Watson (2005) carried out two experiments in Scotland, one controlled trial and one randomized controlled trial (the gold standard of scientific research) to understand the effects of synthetic phonics teaching on reading and spelling attainment. Eleven fourth graders who were between the ages of 8 to 11 were purposively sampled. The demographic characteristics of the participants were that, the controlled group came from extremely deprived homes and/or had significant educational difficulties, while the randomized group was from relatively average homes. The controlled group and the randomized group were all put under synthetic phonics instruction and other phonics strategies respectively for three consecutive weeks. The results of the study revealed that using systematic synthetic phonics instruction enabled the children to read and spell better than those taught by alternative approaches (randomized group). Although, the randomized group was able to develop accurate and rapid associations of letter symbols with names and sounds through a variety of instructional activities, the controlled group on the other hand, was able to associate a letter name with the letter symbol, map sounds onto symbols,

recognize an orthographic pattern as a whole word, and recognize uppercase block letters accurately and speedily during the alphabet segment and lowercase printed letters. The study concluded that synthetic phonics is a superior phonics approach which is an essential component for learning to read and write for readers with varied abilities.

In a small scale qualitative study, Harm and Seidenberg (2004) also reported that synthetic phonics provides struggling readers with the ability to independently read unfamiliar words, without which they could not decipher enough words to make meaning from text in order to comprehend. The respondents in the study further expressed that, this synthetic phonics could be seen as an antidote to the rote learning unlike other methods like analytical phonics, giving children the methods to solve reading problems autonomously.

According to Adams (1998), once phonemic awareness is established, and some sound-letter correspondences are learned, the brain begins to recognize new patterns on its own. This explains an assertion by Juel (2010) that, after demonstrating phonemic awareness, pupils begin to develop their phonological awareness, or their ability to rhyme, identify onset sounds, and recognize syllables.

There is enough literature to suggest that synthetic phonics (meaning combining different substances or components) teaches individual letter-sound patterns, blending, and segmenting of recognizable words (Berninger, 2000; Berninger, Abbott, Vermeulen, Ogier, Brokksher, & Zook, 2002). For example, a teacher shows and says the *consonants m, l, s, t* and *short vowels (a, e,i, o, u)* pupils can practice by pronouncing the sounds. In this case, teachers can model how to blend (or combine) them into small words: *am sam, tam, al, sal, as, mat, at, sat, etc.* Then he/she guides

them in rereading and spelling the same words (Carreker, et al., 2007). In spite of the documented benefits of synthetic phonics instruction to struggling readers, Rasinski (2003) argued that, in synthetic phonics, new sounds are not introduced in alphabetical order, and they are introduced quickly with a lot of teacher motivation. This can be in the form of appraisal from the teacher and encouraging pupils to do more.

Jolliffe, Waugh, and Gill (2019) noted that synthetic phonics means, children can read a range of easily decodable words sooner. They explained that if a child is introduced to the sounds /m/ /s/ /a/ /t/ they can quickly read the words (at, mat, sat, am, sam) etc. Rasinski (2012) also found among others that a systematic approach to teaching synthetic phonics means teachers take a planned, thorough approach, teaching children the simplest sounds first and progressing all the way through to the most complex combinations of letters. Using a systematic synthetic phonics approach, almost all children quickly become confident and independent readers (Armbruster, 2010). They soon move away from the mechanics of identifying and blending letter sounds (or 'decoding' words) and start reading fluently; even when they come across words they have never heard or seen before once the process of reading becomes automatic (Walczyk, 2000).

Jolliffe, Waugh and Gill (2019) found that systematic phonics teaching enables children to make better progress in reading accuracy than unsystematic or no phonics and that this is true for both normally developing children and those at risk of failure. Systematic phonics instruction is critical if children are to be taught to read well, whether they experience reading difficulties. Moreover, where there is unsystematic or no phonics instruction, children's literacy progress is significantly impeded,

inhibiting their initial and subsequent growth in reading accuracy, fluency, writing, spelling, and comprehension (Ehri, 2004; NICHD, 2000).

2.2.3 Analytical Phonics (AP)

Analytic (meaning separating something into components or parts) teaches analysis of letter-sound patterns in known words and application to unknown words (White, 2005). For example, teacher-researcher explains short vowel a, and long vowel a, silent the headers, which include phonetic spellings, example words, and sometimes pictures (Torgerson, Brooks & Hall, 2006).

According to Almasi and Fullerton (2012) in analytic phonics, the teacher models how to sort (or separate) words. For example: mad, fast, page, name, same, hand, snap, came, grass, rake, made. Then he/she guides pupils in rereading, resorting, and spelling the same words (Allington & McGill- Franzen, 2004). Analogy (meaning comparing things based on their similarities) (Anderson & Cheng, 2004) teaches phonograms (or rimes) and their related word families (formed by adding onsets or consonant patterns at the front) (Borgwaldt, Hellwig & De Groot, 2005). For example, a teacher shows and says the phonogram -ab. He/she models how to add the single consonants c, d, g, j, l, n, t at the front to form relatives: cab, dab, gab, jab, lab, nab, tab, then guides pupils in rereading and spelling the word family (Gough, Juel & Griffith, 2017). Analytic phonics may be challenging for new readers with limited literacy experience or long-term reading difficulties (Brady, 2011) but can be a fun and interactive practice activity (Gunning, 1996). The analytical phonics approach is often referred to as the "Whole Word approach" (Ingram & Ingram, 2001) which relies upon children learning to recognize words instantaneously, without requiring to sound them out or decode them (Gunning, 1996). This is often referred to as –sight

reading” or rote learning words from flash cards (Priadersini, 2016). Although there is support for the use of this approach, Bradly (2011) disproved that it can mostly be difficult, especially when considering the use of this method with second language learners and struggling readers.

Jolliffe, Waugh, and Gill (2019) argued that through analytical phonics, learners can effectively read words by sight via an analytical conversion process that can be achieved through continued practice in reading at both text and word level. He further hypothesized that this method is in accordance with the ‘_verbal- efficiency’ theory, where efficient instantaneous word recognition is imperative in a competent reader, as less energy is ‘_wasted’ on decoding allowing more to be spent on higher order thinking skills and linguistic processes such as comprehension. However, the position of Holmes (2009) can be refuted by considering the exorbitant number of words in the English language that must be memorized by learners before the benefit of energy saving could be considered feasible, demonstrating that this approach would be unsuitable for second language learners (Holmes, 2009). This is problematic given the likelihood of a second language learner forgetting words may be higher than that of a first language learner, as they will often converse in their native language as opposed to English (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012).

Yeldham (2016) noted that it is even more likely that a second language learner will come across unknown words, it renders this approach invalid. As a result of the reasons discussed, it should not be the primary method of literacy instruction for second language learners and struggling readers. However, there is a great deal of support for the use of analytical phonics in the instance of irregular words, such as “-was” or “-are” which cannot be decoded (Cameron, Connor, Morrison & Jewkes,

2008). However, modern phonic approaches to reading start whole words instead of sound (Buckingham, Wheldall & Wheldall, 2019). Each letter is considered equally important (Duke & Mesmer, 2019). Phonics can also be viewed as a systematic teaching of the sounds conveyed by letters and groups of letters and includes teaching children to combine and blend these to read or write words. It is of crucial importance, for the following reasons: majority of the information conveyed by letters concerns sounds (Campbell, 2016).

According to Hiebert and Martin (2004) basal reading textbooks combine step-by-step instruction in phonics, alphabet reading with interesting pictures, age-appropriate stories, motivation proper assessment are effective practices to phonics skills. The phonetic methods concentrate on developing two main abilities: phonemic awareness and decoding (Partnership for Reading, 2001). Phonemic awareness is the understanding that spoken language is made up of individual sounds (phonemes), and decoding is the ability to turn spellings into sounds or sound words out (Honig, 2001). Children who have developed basic phonemic awareness are capable of isolating, identifying, categorizing, segmenting, blending, and manipulating phonemes in spoken words (Kardaleska & Karovska-Ristovska, 2018).

Lyon and Chhabra (2004) indicated that the ability to decode single words accurately and fluently is dependent upon the ability to segment words and syllables into abstract constituent sound units (phonemes). Thus, these important reading skills are mutually dependent and must be taught simultaneously (Partnership for Reading, 2001). Calderon and Slakk (2018) added that phonetic instruction generally proceeds through a developmental sequence that explicitly teaches each of the components of phonemic awareness and decoding. In addition, phonetic instruction also includes mastering the

recognition of sight words - high-frequency words (Miles, Rubin & Gonzalez- Frey, 2018). Phonics instruction teaches children that there is a relationship between the letters of written language (graphemes) and the individual sounds of spoken language (phonemes) (Blake & Gardner, 2007).

Woolley (2011) found that, regardless of what some critics say, the goal of phonics instruction is to make children including those who struggle to read understand that there is a systematic and predictable relationship between written letters and spoken sounds. Knowing these relationships will help children recognize familiar words accurately and automatically, and to decode new words (Alliance, 2008). Harvey, Moriarty, Friedman, White, Parrella, Mohs and Davis (2000) postulated that a child must learn phonic information to the point of becoming automatic. This contributes to children's ability to read words in isolation and in connected text. But the phonics instruction is a means to an end, not an end in itself (Alliance, 2008).

According to Heiner, Beck and Mostow (2004) children who struggle to read entering first grade with minimal reading skills appear to have greatest success when teachers model word-recognition strategies by chunking words into syllables or onset/rime units, identifying little words in big words, as well as actively modeling the blending of individual letters and phonemes into word chunks that make sense.

The purpose of phonics instruction according to NRP (2000) is to develop accurate word-identification to support the main reason for reading-comprehension of text. Also, phonics instruction is only one part of a larger, well balanced reading programme necessary for all children learning to read and must be simple, short and exciting (Johnston, McGeown & Watson, 2012). This confirms an assertion by the

National Right to Read Foundation (2001) that teaching and learning materials used in phonics instruction should not be disinteresting to the children.

2.3 The Strategies Teachers Adopt in Improving Phonemic Awareness for

Struggling Readers

Although phonemic awareness is a widely used term in reading, there is no single definition of phonemic awareness (Shaywitz, 2017). Craig (2006) believes that, many authors have developed their own definitions, but basically, phonemic awareness is literally sound awareness. A succinct definition of phonemic awareness is provided by Gersten and Dimino (2006), who described phonemic awareness as the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in words. Murray (1998) explained that, phoneme awareness denotes the ability to identify phonemes, the vocal gestures from which words are constructed, when they are found in their natural context as spoken words. Perfetti (2013) classified that, it is within the sounds that the words are called phonemes, so awareness of these sounds is phonemic awareness.

The NRP (NRP) (2000) explained that, phonological awareness is actually a broader concept, and phonemic awareness is part of this larger idea. Therefore, phonemes are the smallest parts of sound in spoken words that make a difference in the word's meaning. The NRP further indicated that, changing the first phoneme in the word "hat" from /h/ to /p/ changes the word from hat to pat, and so changes the meaning. This means, individuals who are phonemically aware recognize that the speech stream is a sequence of these small sounds.

According to Wasik (2001), phonemic awareness is not about how sounds and letters match or how to sound out letters to form words; it is only about hearing and thinking about or manipulating the individual sounds within words. Therefore, Yopp and Yopp

(2000) is of the view that without phonemic awareness, phonics is hard to learn. This means that phonemic awareness is something that should be taught before phonics or at least early in the phonics sequence- so children receive maximum benefit from their phonics instruction. Also, phonemic awareness is not the same as phonics (Catts, 2003, Ehri, 1995, NRP, 2000). Similarly, Ashby (2010) underscored that a child who has mastered this aspect of phonology will be able to perform tasks such as dividing the pronunciation of names into syllables (rhyming): Mum-my, Tom-my; or to blend these syllables back into proper pronunciation of the names. Ashby (2010) explained that rhyming ability is another aspect of phonological awareness, and it includes the ability to recognize that words rhyme, to identify which words rhyme, and to provide rhymes.

Anku (2017) conducted an action research which was aimed at using several strategies in phonemic awareness instruction to help a child to identify and blend the sounds of the letters of the English alphabet. The study was conducted at the Special Education Reading Resource Centre, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. Two basic four (4) pupils with reading difficulties were purposively sampled for the study. In order to triangulate the findings, observation, informal conversational interview and pupil work samples were the instruments used. The results of the study revealed that, phonemic awareness instruction is a powerful therapy that can improve pronunciation skills, which is a basic reading skill for future reading success, and that, every individual can learn how to read and spell unknown words. The findings further revealed that, phonemic awareness can be taught and learnt, and so, using various activities under phoneme segmentation, deletion, isolation, blending and phoneme identification are foundational skills needed in phonemic awareness instruction. The study finally recommended that:

1. Teachers should introduce struggling readers to phoneme identification using cut-out cards, in that, knowledge of letter names is strongly related to the ability to remember and develop the association of letters with their corresponding sounds.
2. Struggling readers must be taught to become familiar with the sounds of the letters. This will help them put the sounds together and read words or separate the sounds to spell spoken words.
3. Teachers should use various activities under phoneme blending and phoneme segmentation as strategies in building solid phonemic awareness for struggling readers.
4. Above all, teachers should ensure that phonemic awareness is the first thread in the tapestry of reading instruction because it plays a vital role in forming the foundation of reading development for struggling readers.

The results of the study are consistent with an assertion by Ukrainetz (2006) that a child who possesses phonemic awareness can segment sounds in words and blend strings of isolated sounds together to form recognizable word forms. Phonological awareness includes identifying and manipulating units of oral language – parts such as words, syllables, and onsets and rimes (Wood, Wade-Woolley, & Holliman, 2009). Similarly, Ehri (2015) postulated that, awareness of syllables within words is an important aspect of phonological awareness.

Stahl and Heubach (2006) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the issue of task sophistication versus structural complexity in phonemic instruction. One hundred and thirteen kindergarten and first grade struggling readers were sampled. The measure they designed for this study used four levels of structural complexity, namely; onsets

and rimes, vowels and codas within rimes, onset consonant clusters, and consonants clusters within codas. Each of the four-word structures was tested on each of the four tasks, blending, beginning and ending phoneme isolation, segmenting all phonemes and deleting phonemes. They found that, task difficulty in their study was similar to Adams' (1990) levels, but deleting / manipulating phonemes was easier for the pupils than full segmentation. They also found that materials like audio-visuals and flashcards were more important to later reading than differences in task types. Their results are consistent with a model of phonological awareness and reading with reciprocal causation; letter knowledge precedes and supports onset segmentation, which precedes and support word reading (Muter, 2004). This mutual casualty model is similar to one proposed by Morris, Bloodgood, Lomax, and Perney (2003) that phonemic awareness supports concepts of word, which in turn, letter sounds knowledge, which supports word reading. These authors proposed that pupils who are learning this skill must be motivated by teachers by giving token and other educational materials.

Hatcher, Hulm, and Snowling (2004) estimated that roughly 25% of beginning and average readers fail to grasp the alphabetic principle without direct instruction in phonemic and phonics awareness. The authors added that, the percentage is even higher for children from low socioeconomic areas. Results of a longitudinal study that has followed average readers for more than 20 years indicated that about 20% of all struggling readers eventually develop symptoms of dyslexia, or word-level reading disability. This can be likened to the report by the NICHD (2000) that phonemic awareness is only one element in initial reading and writing instruction. They added that most phonemic awareness programmes must be supplemented with picture books, read-alouds, rhyming, initial sound matching, invented spellings, finger-point

spelling and direct phonemic awareness instruction to assist struggling readers. According to the NICHD instruction in phonemic awareness will always have a positive effect on young children such as; pre-K through Grade 1, young children at risk, children speaking English as a second language, and older students with reading disabilities when pupils are motivated with gifts. Among the findings were that effects on spelling were significant for most but not all of these children. Older children with reading disabilities did not improve in spelling following phonemic awareness training without effective motivation and assessment.

The NICHD (2000) reported that phonemic awareness instruction involving letters is more effective than phonemic awareness instruction using the sounds alone. In their report, two factors were considered important in any phonemic awareness instruction. This includes, time spent teaching phonemic awareness and instructional grouping. The report suggested that phonemic awareness can be taught to young children including those with reading difficulties in roughly 25-30 minutes session involving asking activities where children are asked to form words with sounds. For instructional grouping, they recommended the advantage of small groups over either whole class or one-to-one tutoring. This is surprising considering the long tradition of providing tutoring to children who struggle to read.

The NRP (2000) explained that instruction in phonemic awareness involves helping children examine and manipulate phonemes in spoken syllables and words. Synthesis of studies of the effects of phonemic awareness interventions on phonemic awareness development, reading, and spelling acquisition of normally achieving students and diverse students indicate that phonemic awareness is teachable (Ukrainetz, Cooney, Dyer, Kysar, & Harris, 2000). The ability to recognize that words are made up of

discrete sounds and that these sounds can be changed is essential to success in learning to read (Cunningham, Cunningham, Hoffman, & Yopp, 1998). Also, beginning readers must be able to make the connection that words are made up of sounds and that sounds are made up of letters and letter combinations (Gunning, 1996).

Truxler and O'Keefe (2007) believed that this understanding is the foundation on which to build solid reading skills. It is therefore important that phonemic awareness is included in early reading or pre-reading instruction. Ukrainetz, Nuspl, Wilkerson and Beddes (2011) also explained numerous tasks requiring phonemic awareness mastery and these have ranged from the simple such as rhyming, phoneme blending, segmenting and ultimately to the more complex skill of isolating and deleting phonemes within words. Although phonemic awareness instruction is teachable (Bursuck & Damer, 2007), phonemes are not consciously articulated as they are spoken (Chard & Osborn, 1999). Rather they are subconsciously blended from one phoneme to another and pronounced as one word (Abshire, 2006). Block and Israel (2005) indicated that effective phonemic awareness instruction teaches children to recognize, understand, and manipulate sounds in their spoken language. An effective instructional programme according to (Block & Israel 2005) must contain the eight types of phonemic awareness instruction.

They include:

1. **Phonemic Isolation** (children learn to recognize individual sounds in a word);
2. **Phonemic Identity** (children recognize the same sounds in different words);
3. **Phonemic Categorization** (children recognize a word, in a set of three, that has an odd sound);

4. **Phonemic Blending** (children listen to a sequence of separately spoken sounds and then combine the sounds to form a word);
5. **Phonemic Segmentation** (children break a word into separate sounds and count how many sounds they hear);
6. **Phonemic Deletion** (children recognize the word that remains when a phoneme is removed);
7. **Phonemic Addition** (children make a new word by adding a phoneme to an existing word); and
8. **Phonemic Substitution** (children substitute one phoneme for another to make a new word).

However, the phonemic awareness skills found to give the greatest reading advantage to students are segmenting and blending (NRP, 2000). Boison (2013) supports the argument that various activities in blending and segmenting sounds are the most effective methods of teaching phonemic awareness. For Boison, blending and segmenting sounds prevent pupils from becoming confused about which type of phonemic awareness instruction to apply. Tankersley (2003) opined that good readers parse letter strings to extract the meaning. Unlike a poor reader, the good reader does not say, “-e-a-t” as separate phoneme sounds, but instead pronounces the entire one syllable of cat, one parsed sound.

Cain, Oakhill, and Bryant (2004) argued that although word recognition per se is not the goal of reading, comprehension does depend on having ready recognition of words so that short-term memory can extract meaning. In view of that, Athans and Devine (2010) stated that information the reader obtains from the print interacts at every level with stored knowledge to form the basis of comprehension. The authors

explained that unless children have a strong awareness of the phonemic structure of the English language firmly in place, asking the child the first letter or sounds of a word is to no avail. For this reason, the wise teacher begins with oral word play, ask struggling readers to identify sounds, and word games rather than worksheets that ask students to “ring the sound” they hear (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). Knowledge of segmenting words is also a predictor of success in reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2015; Kroese, Hynd, Knight, Hiemenz, & Hall, 2000). Concentrating on developing segmenting and blending skills is more effective than a multi-skilled approach to phonemic instruction (NICHD, 2000).

2.3.1 Strategies in phonemic awareness instruction

Despite its importance to early reading, students’ acquisition of phonemic awareness skills alone does not guarantee reading achievement especially among those with reading difficulties (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). The report of the NRP (2000) indicated that the effectiveness of phonemic awareness instruction is significantly enhanced if, at some point during the instruction, children who are facing difficulties in reading are helped to apply phonological awareness skills directly to simple reading task. Some of the researched activities in phonemic awareness instruction include the following:

- **Clapping and Tapping**

One of the easiest ways to help children realize that words are made up of several sounds and syllables is to allow them to “break up” words is by clapping or tapping out their syllables (Goswami, 2008). Tapping can be performed with fingers, hands or an object such as a stick (Ukrainetz, 2006). The NRP (2000) explained that when first introducing this concept, adults should model clapping or tapping. For example, a

teacher can show a child that the word “balloon” has two syllables by clapping twice while reciting the word (/ba/ -clap- /loon/ -clap) (Roberts & Neal, 2004). Once children understand the activity they should be encouraged to perform it independently on a regular basis. Ukrainetz believes that this kinesthetic connection allows children to become actively engaged with words.

- **Alphabet Wheel**

In using an alphabet wheel, Trites and McGroarty (2005) stated that the instructor should show students ending phonemes and demonstrate that changing the initial consonant can change the entire meaning of the word. This suggests that a teacher can construct and demonstrate how to use an alphabet wheel with the letters from A to Z to “match” new initial consonants to the given phonemes to see if a new word they recognize can be made. For example: bat, cat, mat, fat, hat, rat or ox, fox, box or day, hay, may, pay, ray, say, way, etc. In a more advanced version of the game, ask students to identify words with blended phonemes to develop their skills: “br” as in break, breakfast, bridge, brother, etc. Students can later take similar words and make books about the words such as “I went for a walk and I saw something funny. By so doing, Trites and McGroarty concluded that children can be assessed by identifying the sounds on a cardboard individually.

- **Sorting Sounds**

In sorting sounds, Newby (2010) indicated that teachers can give struggling readers a set of pictures that have two initial consonant sounds such as “e” and “r.” According to Newby, teachers must ask students to group the picture cards into the appropriate stack according to the initial consonant sound. Picture cards can also be sorted by

medial or final sounds and ask students to pick from each group as a way of assessment.

- **Keyword Substitution**

According to the National Research Council (2000) keyword substitution is an activity that aids struggling readers to develop an understanding of the role that phonemes play in the meaning of words. This was explained by Kiparsky (2016) that when a phoneme is changed in a word, often, the meaning changes. Keyword substitution activities use familiar songs as a basis for “playing” with words. Adults can take the lyrics of a familiar song and create new lyrics that substitute words with small phonemic variations (Kiparsky, 2016). For instance, the chorus of “Pop Goes the Weasel” could be changed to “Hop Goes the Weasel”. After singing the song with the new lyrics adults should discuss how changing a phoneme shifted the meaning of the song (Vaughn, et al., 2003).

- **Matching Sounds**

In this activity, Bursuck and Damer (2007) indicated that teachers can ask students to find something in the classroom that begins with the same sound as their own name. The students say the sound that their own names begin with and then name the corresponding item that matches their initial sound. Bursuck, Smith, Munk, Damer, Mehlig and Perry (2004) believe that this is a good dismissal activity as students return to their seats from circle time. The authors added that a more advanced version of this game is to have children match verbs with their names. An example is “Mary can march,” or “Tommy can tumble.”

- **Picture Flashcards**

Picture flashcards are excellent tools for helping children who do not have strong phonics skills work on their phonemic awareness (Ou, Tarn, & Chen, 2020). Heric, McLaughlin, Derby, Weber, and Everson (2016) similarly indicated that teachers should create a series of flashcards, featuring pictures that are familiar to the child. When using the flashcards the teachers should ask the child to name the picture featured on each card. After saying the word, the child should be asked to identify the first and second sounds (or phonemes) in the word. This activity helps children realize that words are made up of a series of independent sounds or phonemes (Yang, 2012).

- **Creating New Words Consonant Vowel Consonant (CVC)**

In a way of creating new words to assist struggling readers, Bernstein and Treiman (2001) asserted that teachers should write a phoneme grouping such as **-at** on an index card, flashcard, manila card or a cut-out card. The authors added that teachers can adopt the Consonant Vowel Consonant (CVC) strategy. Give the student consonant letter pieces to place at the beginning of the word, a vowel and another consonant to create new words such as bat, cat, sat, and so forth. The same technique can also be used with initial phonemes such as **-th** or **-br** with students adding the endings to the words. The CVC method in phonemic awareness is effective and beneficial in learning to read. However, teachers must be sure to point out beginning, middle, and end sound positions to students as the various components are manipulated (Sun, Zhu, Chen, & Zhou, 2015).

- **Developing the Concepts of Print**

During the early stages of phonemic awareness, it is also desirable to help students begin to understand the concepts of print (Fisher, 2008). Students need to understand

that print conveys meaning (Fisher, 2008). They also need to understand how print is processed (Applegate, Quinn & Applegate, 2008), how we interpret the symbols on the page and how a book is read by the reader with extensive assessment (August & Shanahan, 2006). To help students develop these associations, point out and model the various components for the students as they listen to a book being read (Fisher, 2008). According to Clay (1993), some understandings that we would want students to develop at this stage include the following:

- i. Readers begin reading at the left of the line of print and progress across the page to the right.
- ii. A return sweep of the eyes is made to the next line of print at the left side of the page.
- iii. Readers begin reading at the top of the page and work downward on the page.
- iv. Readers begin at the front of the book and read to the back of the book.

• **Developing a Sense of Rhythm and Rhyme**

National Right to Read Foundation (2001) believes that another way to foster a child's fascination with print is by extensive assessment and reading of books that have a strong sense of rhythm, pattern, and predictability. Developing a sense of rhythm and identify onset sounds is beneficial to learning to read. (Goswami & Bryant, 2016) found that children who read very well for their age had a strong ability to spot rhythms and beats. These researchers concluded that an awareness of beat and rhythm could influence the way children process speech patterns. This in turn, can affect their reading and writing skills. Training in rhyme and beat can help develop this distinction in young children as their reading skills emerge (Obama, 2005).

- **Writing**

According to Richgels (2001) writing is important to developing strong phonemic awareness skills. Inventive spelling provides us with much insight into the development of a child's phonemic understanding. Morris, Tyner and Perney (2000) have identified four stages of spelling development in children: pre-phonemic, phonemic, transitional, and correct spelling. Children begin their writing attempts as pre-phonemic spellers (Ford & Opitz, 2008). In this stage, spellers perceive and represent initial and final consonants by one-syllable words, often using letter names to represent phonemes. For example, the child might write *j*, *js*, or *jc* for the word *dress* (Beasley, 2011).

Children who advance to the phonemic stage begin to use short vowels as phonologically appropriate substitutions. For example, the child might write *sek* for *sink* or *fet* for *feet*. Spellers in the transitional stage begin to represent short vowels correctly, but the vowel markers may be incorrectly placed such as *sied* for *side*. Correct spelling is when the child nearly always spells the words in the conventional manner when writing. As children become more proficient writers, they often go through a period of time when they reject inventive spelling and insist on writing a word the “right way” (Richgels, 2001) This too is a characteristic of children who are about to move from the transitional stage to the correct spelling stage. Richgels observed that, writing as much as possible, even when students are still at the “scribble” stage, assess students to identify both the vowel and consonant sounds to build a strong sound pattern.

- **Weaving the Thread**

According to Tankersley (2003), weaving the thread enables struggling readers to understand the connection between the sounds they hear in everyday language and the letters that they see on a page. Donovan and Smolkin (2002) found that when children have phonemic awareness, they understand that the sounds of spoken language fit together to make words and that those words convey meaning. Beginning readers must learn that reading is the process of acquiring meaning from text. There are many skills that children must learn as they begin to make sense of the various symbols and arrangements of words and letters (Pearman, 2008). They added that it helps them to understand how sounds fit together to form words. Once struggling readers have been able to manipulate the various parts of words, and syllables, they will be able to create new words (Pearman, 2008). Moats (2000) believes that struggling readers need to understand how print is processed and that books and writing can be wonderful sources of knowledge and entertainment in their lives.

Richgels (2001) found that with solid phonemic awareness skills, students are then ready to begin formal instruction in phonics. Phonemic awareness is critical to early reading acquisition for children with different reading abilities when it is associated with effective assessment, materials and motivation. There is a vast set of research articles indicating the important foundation role that phonemic awareness plays in learning to read. Together, phonemic awareness and letter-name knowledge, identification of sounds and forming words with the sounds provide predictive information valuable in planning early interventions for children at risk for word-reading failures (Drucker, 2003).

2.4 Strategies Teachers use in Improving Reading Fluency among Struggling

Readers

Cooter Jr, Flynt, and Cooter (2013) defined fluency as the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. They group words quickly to help them gain meaning from what they read. Fluent readers read aloud effortlessly and with expression (Samuels, 1997). Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking. Readers who have not yet developed fluency, read slowly, word by word. Their oral reading is choppy and plodding. The NRP (2000) indicated that fluency is important because it provides a bridge between comprehension and word recognition. Because fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding the words they can focus their attention on what the text means. They make connections among the ideas in the text and between the text and their background time. Students who struggle to read, however, must be taught to focus their attention to figure out the words leaving them attention for understanding the text (Wolf & Katzir-Cohen, 2001).

Klecker (2005) indicated that a large scale study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2000 in the United States found that 44% of a representative sample of the nation's fourth graders was low in fluency after weeks of enough encouraging and motivation to do so. The study also found that fluency and teacher motivation have no close link. It also revealed close relationship between fluency and reading comprehension. Students who scored lower on measures of fluency also scored lower on measures of comprehension, suggesting that fluency is a neglected reading skill in many classrooms, affecting many pupils reading comprehension (Simons & Kame'ennui, 2001).

Kruidenier (2002) reported investigations of the effects of fluency-oriented reading instruction (FORI). Based on repeated reading research, FORI is an integrated lesson framework for providing differentiated instruction and practice in fluency (Rasinski, 2000). In his study, two variations of reading practice, thus, wide silent reading practice with monitoring was compared to oral repeated readings with feedback (model reading). A control group involving struggling readers was also used in these studies to determine the results of each approach compared to a baseline of second-grade readers. Rasinski found that both model reading and wide silent readings with monitoring produced results that were superior to the control group performance. Moreover, the two variations, repeated oral reading with feedback and wide silent readings with monitoring were roughly equivalent to one another, suggesting that the increased amount of reading fluency and the support given during the reading are what underlie the success of the two approaches. This finding has been confirmed in other studies (Kuhn & Woo, 2008; Wood, Wade-Woolley, & Holliman, 2009).

Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006) conducted a study of oral fluency reading rates that spanned grades 1 to 8. Reading rate norms were adjusted for accuracy using the metric words correct per minute (wcpm). Their results revealed that, struggling readers ought to be able to read about 56 wcpm words by the end of first grade as the same rate when with teachers' assistance. Among their findings was that fluency is not a stage of development at which readers can read all words quickly and easily even with suitable motivation, but fluency changes, depending on what readers are reading, their familiarity with the words, and the amount of their practice with reading text. Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006) added that even very skilled readers may read in a slow, labored manner when reading text with many unfamiliar words or topics.

Cooter (2010) noted that fluency, much like reading comprehension, needs to be developed across all text types, such as poetry, narrative, and expository texts. An ability to read narrative or poetry texts fluently does not necessarily imply an ability to read information or expository text within similar ability. Most research indicates that fluency practice and instruction are essential components of high-quality reading instruction in the elementary years when accompanied with reading short passages from different genres and teaching materials (Stahl, 2004). Cooter (2006) believes that it can be overdone when the timing is too lengthy.

In a study, Anderson, Wilkinson, and Mason (1991) reported that too much attention and time spent on developing fluency, especially when the emphasis is largely focused on accurate and rate, may detract from pupils' ability to comprehend text. The NRP (2000) found in its review of fluency instruction that lessons ranging in length from 15 to 30 minutes show positive effects on pupils' fluency development. Research on fluency has generally demonstrated a strong relationship between fluency development in early grades and pupils' later reading comprehension with numerous assessments in reading which incorporates appropriate teaching materials such as storybooks and students textbooks (Paris, Carpenter, Paris & Hamilton, 2005). Recent study show, however, that, this relationship between fluency and comprehension is transitory, diminishing over time (Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2010). Some educators believe that may unlock the door to comprehension but this is partially true.

Fluency may unlock the door, but it does not open the door to reading comprehension unless it is associated with a lot of assessment like questioning and reading assignment unlike motivation (Good & Kaminski, 2002).

A researched method of working with struggling readers who need to increase reading fluency is called the Neurological Impress Method (NIM), which involves a struggling reader and a slightly more fluent reader or a trained reading tutor in reading the same text aloud simultaneously (Cooter, 2010). By employing unison reading, unlike the partner reading, NIM fosters gradual improvement in which, with time and practice, the model's voice fades as the struggling reader becomes more confident and reads louder than the model (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005).

2.4.1 Developing reading fluency for struggling readers

According to Menon and Hiebert (2005) fluency develops because of many opportunities to practice reading with high degree of success. Therefore, pupils should practice orally rereading text that is reasonably easy for them. According to Armbruster (2010) there are several evidence-based teaching strategies that struggling readers can practice to develop reading fluency. Some of the evidence-based approaches to fluency development have been explained below.

- **Repeated Reading**

According to Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006), repeated reading is a simple but powerful set of frequency-building procedures first developed by Samuels (1997). Research has confirmed that repeated reading is effective and has delineated procedures that can make it more so. Meyer and Felton (1999) reviewed repeated reading studies and concluded that the method increases reading speed for a wide range of readers. From their findings, they recommended that instructions:

1. Engage students in multiple readings (three to four times) in short, but frequent, fluency, practice sessions.

2. Make use of instructional-level text (or decodable text with struggling readers).
3. Provide differentiated teacher support (ie, modelling and practicing words between instructional sessions for students with weak skills).

Chard, Vaughn and Tyler (2002) highlighted researched findings from studies of repeated reading that he considered particularly useful for students with reading /learning disabilities:

- a. Work on phrasing to promote automaticity.
- b. Include skills models that enhance comprehension effects such as modelling, recording and computer based programs.

- **Pupil-Adult Reading**

In pupil-adult reading, the pupil reads one-on-one with an adult. The adult can be a parent, a classroom aide, or a tutor. The adult reads the text first, providing the pupil with a model of fluent reading (Reutzel, Jones, Fawson & Smith, 2008). Then the pupil reads the same passage to the adult providing assistance and encouragement. The pupil rereads the passage until the reading becomes quite fluent. This should take approximately three to four re-readings (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006).

- **Choral/ Unison Reading**

In choral, or unison reading, pupils read along as a group with you (or another fluent adult reader). The pupils must be able to see the same text that you are reading (Brewer, 2016). They might follow along as you read from a big book, or they might read from their own copy of the book you are reading. For choral reading, choose a book that is not too long and that you think is at the independent reading level (a level a pupil can read without any support and scores high grade according to a benchmark)

of most pupils (Kieft & Armson, 2008). Kuhn and Woo (2008) added that patterned or predictable books are particularly useful for choral reading, because their repetitious style invites students to join in. Begin by reading the book aloud as you model fluent reading. Then reread the book and invite pupils to join in as they recognize the words you are reading. Continue reading the book, encouraging pupils to read along as they are able. Pupils should read the book with you three to five times total (though not necessarily on the same day). At this time, pupils should be able to read the text independently (Evans & Hulak, 2020).

- **Tape-Assisted Reading**

According to Rasinski and Young (2014) in tape-assisted reading, pupils read along in their books as they hear a fluent reader read the book in an audiotape. For tape-assisted reading, you need a book at a student's independent reading level and a tape recording of the book read by a fluent reader at about 80-100 words per minute. Esteves and Whitten (2011) suggested that the tape should not have sound effects or music. For the first reading, the pupil should follow along with the tape, pointing to each word in his or her book as the reader reads it. Next, the pupil should try to read aloud along with the tape. Reading along with the tape should continue until the pupil is able to read the book independently, without the support of the tape (Greaney, 2012).

- **Partner Reading**

In partner reading, paired pupils should take turns reading aloud to each other from their textbooks. For partner reading, more fluent readers can be paired with struggling readers or less fluent readers. The good reader reads a paragraph or page first, providing a model of fluent reading. Then the struggling reader or less fluent reader

reads the same text aloud (Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2010). The good reader gives help with word recognition and provides feedback and encouragement to the struggling reader or less fluent partner (Birsh, 2005; Greene, 1999). The struggling reader rereads the passage until he or she can read it independently. Partner reading need not be done with a more and less fluent reader. In another form of partner reading, teachers must select materials such as age appropriate textbooks and storybooks while children who read at the same level are paired to reread a storybook that they have received instruction on during a teacher-guided part of the lesson. Two struggling readers of equal ability can be guided to practice rereading after hearing the teacher read the passage (Birsh, 2005).

- **Readers' Theatre**

In readers' theatre, Nisa (2019) asserted that pupils rehearse and perform a play with peers. They read from scripts that have been derived from books that are rich in dialogue. Teachers provide pupils with legitimate reason to reread text and to practice fluency which promotes cooperative interaction with peers, and makes the reading appealing (Jenkins, Jackson, Abdella, & Henderson 2020).

- **Scaffolded Silent Reading (ScSR)**

According to Walker (2013) scaffolded silent reading approach ensures that pupils are reading widely. Pupils self-select an independent-level book of interest to them from a collection of grade appropriate books displayed by genre in the classroom library. The goal of this approach is to assist pupils who struggle to read to make appropriate selection using a strategy known as "Rule-of-Thumb" (ROT) (Partnership for Reading, 2003). This is to make sure pupils read a total of 15 to 20 minutes per day in their self-selected books chosen from various genres including age appropriate

textbooks and storybooks. As the pupils read, the teacher circulates among them, randomly stopping and asking pupils to read aloud the book they have chosen (Walker, 2013). The teacher then discusses how pupils can share their reading with others, including posters, oral or written book reports, read-aloud performances of favourite passages, or other forms of expression and gives prompts as part of their scaffolding (Walker, 2013).

- **Radio Reading**

In radio reading, each pupil is given a script to read aloud. Selections can be drawn from any print media, such as newspapers, magazines, or any print source that can be converted into a news story, such as a short selection from an article or sections in information books (Cecil, 2017). This should be done in upper grades. One pupil who reads fluently acts as the news anchor, while a less reader acts in the roles of various reporters presenting the weather, sports, breaking news, and so on (Young & Rasinski, 2017). Only the radio readers and the teacher have copies of the scripts. Because other students have no scripts to follow, minor word recognition errors will go unnoticed if the text is well presented. Struggling readers enjoy radio reading from know Your World since its content and level of difficulty make it possible for them to read with ease and enjoyment (Temple, Ogle, Crawford & Freppon, 2017).

2.5 The Methods Teachers use in Remediating Vocabulary Difficulties among Struggling Readers

According to Snow, Burns, and Griffin (2004) vocabulary plays an important role in learning to read. In general, vocabulary can be described as oral vocabulary or reading vocabulary. Research Building Blocks of Reading Instruction (RBBRI) (2003) cited in First (2003) defined oral vocabulary refers to words that we can use in speaking or

recognize in listening, and reading vocabulary as words we recognize or use in print. McCardel and Chhaabra (2004) explained that vocabulary refers to words in a particular language, books or branch of science. As beginning readers, children use the words they have heard to make sense of the words they see in print (Dole, 2004). Consider, for example, what happens when a beginning reader comes to the word *dig* in a book. As she begins to figure out the sounds represented by the letters *d, i, g*, the reader recognizes that the sound make up a very familiar word that she has heard and said many times (Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003).

To determine how vocabulary can best be taught and related to the reading comprehension process, the NRP (2000), examined more than 20,000 research studies identified through electronic and manual literature searches. The studies reviewed suggested that vocabulary instruction does not necessarily lead to gains in comprehension unless the methods used are appropriate to the age and ability to the reader with a lot of word spelling assessment strategies (Hintz & Tribunella, 2019; Pikulski & Chard, 2005). Beginning readers have a much more difficult time reading words that are not already part of their oral vocabulary (Partnership for Reading, 2003). Readers cannot understand what they are reading without knowing most of the words they mean. As children learn to read more advanced texts, they must learn the meaning of new words that are not part of their oral vocabulary (Juel, 2010).

Vocabulary development in humans goes on throughout life and can be enhanced in the classroom through explicit, direct, and incidental instruction (Betts & Tang, 2016). Except for economically deprived or children with learning disabilities, most children acquire a vocabulary of over 10,000 words during the first five years of their lives (Betts & Tang, 2016). Most school children will learn between 2000 and 3600

words per year, though estimates vary from 1,500 to more than 8,000 (Johnson, 2001; Leybaert, Marschark, & Clark, 1993). Reading and being read to, also increases vocabulary learning (Bletwitt, Rump, Shealy & Cook, 2009). Children who come to school with limited vocabularies because of either second language learning or the effects of poverty, struggle to take even their first steps in reading and understanding texts (Cooter, 2010). Teachers must make sure that every child is offered many educational opportunities to develop a rich and useful vocabulary (Cooter, Flynt & Cooter, 2013).

The NRP (2000) findings regarding vocabulary instruction provided perspectives for instructional decision making. Their meta-analysis of effective practices yielded the following recommendations for vocabulary instruction for kids learning to read (Kamil, 2004):

- i. Repetitions, usage of keywords, usage of reference aids, and provision of rich support for learning are good practices which foster vocabulary acquisition for all pupils.
- ii. Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly
- iii. Vocabulary learning should entail active engagement in learning tasks.
- iv. How vocabulary is assessed and evaluated can have a differential effect on instruction.

Similarly, Graves (2006) found comprehensive approach to vocabulary instruction when thinking about organizing instruction that is focused on long-term growth for struggling readers. They include:

- a) Provide rich and varied language experiences
- b) Teach individual words
- c) Teach word-learning strategies

- d) Foster word consciousness
- e) Motivate struggling readers which will encourage them to engage in vocabulary reading opportunities.

Although terminology may differ, there is consensus for an organizational framework comprised of these four components (Burkins, 2009). Baumann and Kame'ennui (2004) found that teaching vocabulary explicitly and systematically takes time and efforts, both in planning and teaching. Because of the time and efforts involved, the number of words that can be taught directly is limited (Palmer & Brooks, 2004). It is estimated that teachers can realistically teach 300 words per year, which translate to about 8 to 10 per week. Therefore, teachers should teach three kinds of words (Green, 2014).

This includes:

1. **Important words:** Words students need to know to understand the text they are reading.
2. **Useful words:** They are high frequency words that the students are likely to see repeatedly in their reading.
3. **Difficult words:** Words that are hard for students to understand like words with multiple meaning. For example, invalid (not true), or invalid (ill or weak), or are spelled and pronounced the same, but have different meanings.

According to Klingner and Eppollito (2014) figurative language can be problematic for many children, especially students who are English language learners and have language learning disabilities. Teachers need to demystify meaning; hence, the need for on purposive incidental instruction (Chall & Squire, 1991). Chall (2000) suggested

that educators identify more transparent examples of these expressions in speech and print as a starting point by considering the following instructional tips:

- A. Recognize figurative language in text or in conversation—explain it directly.
- B. Connect it to context and provide an additional example.
- C. Ask students to explain meaning in their own words.
- D. Ask students to use the expression and provide more assessments.
- E. Create visuals (poster, picture walls) of meaning.

2.5.1 Developing vocabulary for struggling readers

In its summary of a research on vocabulary instruction, the NRP (2000) found that dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning. Struggling readers need to be introduced to some words directly, others indirectly (McKeown, Deane, & Lawless, 2017). According to the panel, in the classroom, struggling readers should be taught between 5 to 10 words a week through modelling, synonyms, definitions, keywords and semantic maps. They need to learn to use the dictionary to use context clues, and to learn common morphemes. The NRP (2000) stressed that there are number of activities and assessment techniques teachers can use in the classroom to help build students vocabulary which includes assisting struggling readers to find the meaning of words from the dictionary and other genres. NRP (2000) added that the more children see, hear, and work with specific words, the better they seem to learn them. According to Bursuck and Damer (2007), pupils can be assisted to acquire skills in vocabulary development. Some researched strategies/approaches in vocabulary instruction in the classroom include the following:

- **Using semantic/concept maps**

Dilek and Yürük (2013) posited that a semantic map is essentially a kind of blueprint in which students sketch out or map what they know about a topic. Semantic maps help struggling readers relate concepts to schemata and vocabulary already in the brain as they integrate new information and restructure existing information for greater clarity (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Dilek and Yürük (2013) added that students who struggle with reading can use semantic maps prior to the act of reading to promote better recall. According to Kong and Fitch (2002) there are many ways to introduce semantic mapping to pupils, but the first time around it is best to use direct instruction followed up with a lot of teacher modelling and guided and independent practice. The actual map is a type of graphic organizer in which a topic under discussion forms the centre of a network of descriptors, concepts, and related categories (Al-Ghazo, 2015). A diagrammatic illustration of semantic map by is given below.

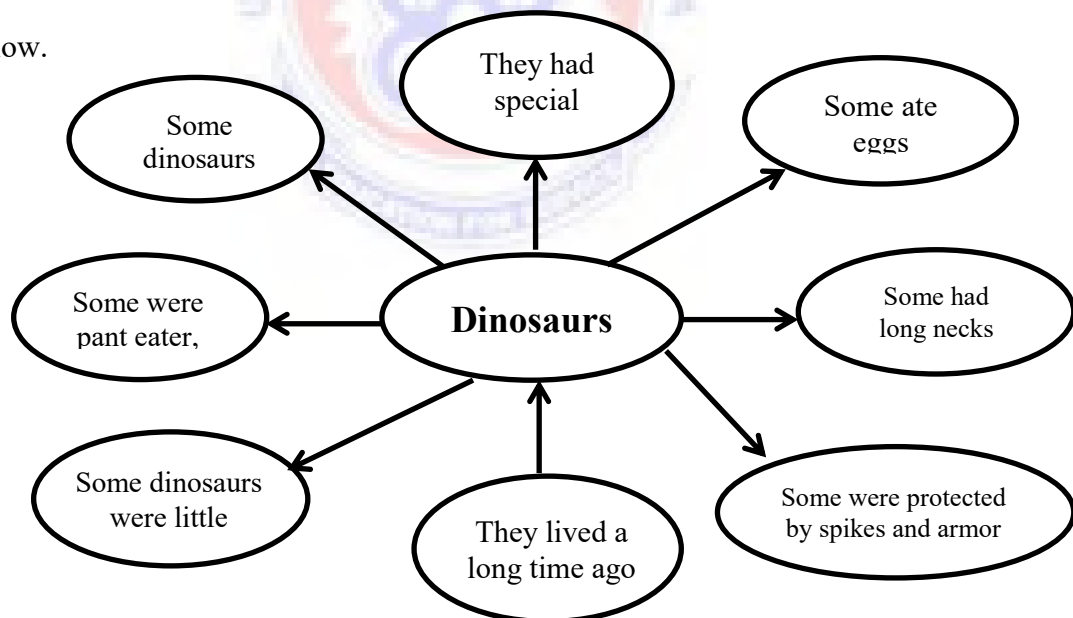


Figure 1: A Semantic Map of Dinosaur

Source: Birsh (2005).

In introducing the process of mapping, begin with a topic familiar to the entire class, such as your town. Write the topic on the board. Have pupils brainstorm categories of

descriptors and concepts related to the topic and record their ideas. Connect these categories to the topic visually using bold or double lines. Students then brainstorm details that relate to these major categories. Connect details to categories with single lines (Reutzel & Cooter Jr, 2013).

Concept maps are like semantic maps and are generally used to teach new words for new concepts. The procedure for the original Frayer Model includes seven steps (Allen, 2007):

Define the new concept, discriminate the attributes relevant to all instances of it.

1. Discriminate the relevant from irrelevant properties of instances of the concept.
2. Provide an example of the concept
3. Provide a non-example of the concept.
4. Relate the concept to a subordinate concept.
5. Relate the concept to a superordinate concept
6. Relate the concept to a coordinate term.

A diagrammatic representation of concept map is given below.

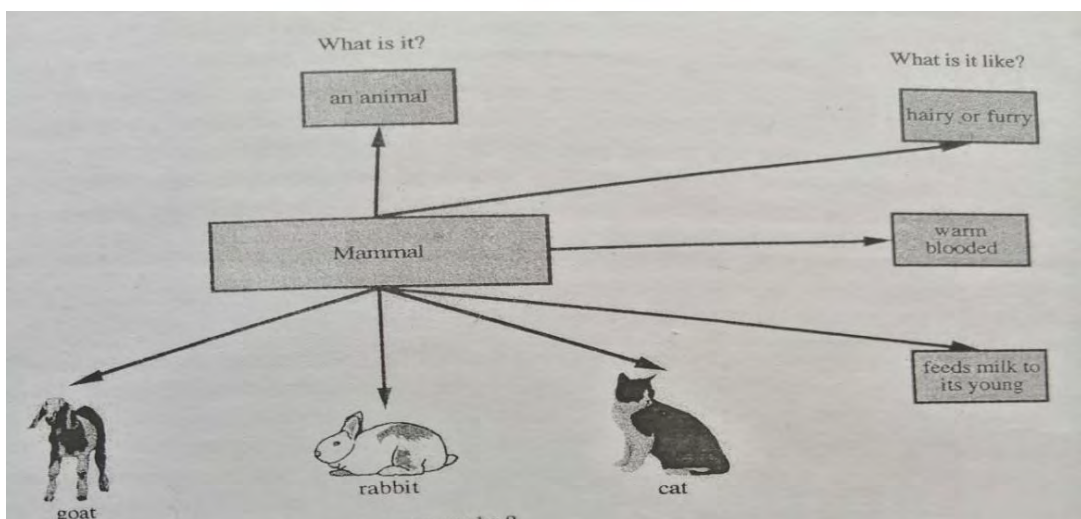


Figure 2: A Semantic Map of a Mammal

Source: Birsh (2005).

- **Using word parts**

Walpole and McKenna (2017) explained that knowing some common prefixes (letter or word used before another word to make a new word), suffixes (letter used at the end of a word to make a new word) and affixes (letter added to the beginning or end of a word to make a new word), base words, and root words can help students learn the meanings of many new words. If struggling readers learn just the four most common prefixes in English (un-, re-, in-, dis-) they will have important clues about the meaning of about two thirds of all English words that have prefixes (Fry, Kress & Fountoukidis, 2006). Prefixes are relatively easy to learn because they have clear meanings (for example, un- means not and re-means again); they are usually spelled the same way from word to word; and, of course, they always occur at the beginnings of words (Bursuck & Damer, 2007).

St. Clair, Monaghan and Ramscar (2009) added that learning suffixes can be more challenging than learning prefixes. This is because some suffixes have more abstract meanings than prefixes (Fisher, 2008). For example, learning that the suffix –ness means “the state or quality of” might not help students figure out the meaning of kindness. For example, -less which means “without” (hopeless, thoughtless); and “ful”, which means “full of” (hopeful, thoughtful). Teachers should teach the new word roots as they occur in the texts students read (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton & Johnson, 2007). Furthermore, teachers should teach primarily those roots words that students are likely to see often (National Research Council, 2000). Examples of prefix, suffix and affix are given by (Bangs & Binder, 2016):

Word	suffix	Word	prefix	Word	affix
sad ly	less	unless	care	careless

- **Using context clues**

Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn (2001) posited that context clues are hints about the meaning of an unknown word that are provided in the words, phrase, and sentences that surround the word. Context clues include definitions, restatements, examples, or descriptions. Because struggling readers need to learn most word meanings indirectly, or from context, it is important that they learn to use context clues effectively (Shneyderman & Froman, 2012). Not all contexts are helpful, however some give little information about a word's meaning. Instruction in using context clues as a word-learning strategy should include the idea that some contexts are more helpful than others (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).

- **Using dictionary and reference aids**

According to Bursuck and Damer (2007), struggling readers must learn how to use dictionaries, glossaries, and thesauruses to help broaden and deepen their knowledge of words, even though these resources can be difficult to use.

The most helpful dictionaries include sentences providing clear examples of word meanings in context (Rasinski et al., 2010). Hamilton (2012) added that using dictionary is an effective mechanism that helps readers across all grade levels.

- **Fostering word consciousness**

Another way teachers can help pupils who struggle to read to develop vocabulary is to foster word consciousness—an awareness of, and interest in words, their meaning, and their power (NRP, 2000). Word-conscious students know many words and use them well (Rasinski et al., 2010). They enjoy words and are eager to learn new words and they know how to learn them. Pupils with reading difficulties can be helped to develop word consciousness in many ways. Call their attention to the way authors

choose words to convey meanings. Motivate pupils to play with words by engaging word play, such as puns or palindromes. Help them research a word's origin or history. You can also motivate them by giving them gifts to enable them search for examples of words they use in their everyday lives (Sinclair, 2003).

- **Vocabulary cluster**

Chou (2011) indicated that it is especially important that students who struggle with reading use the context of the passage, their background knowledge, and the vocabulary they know to understand new words in print. This is true whether English is their second language or their first (as with those from language deprived backgrounds). Karakoç and Köse (2017) found that with the vocabulary cluster strategy, students are helped to read a passage, gather context clues, and then, predict the meaning of a new word targeted for learning. A teacher will need multiple copies of the text students are to read, an overhead transparency and projector, and erasable marking pens for transparencies. The teacher must select vocabulary they want to teach from the reading, which could be a poem, song, book excerpts (novel), or nonfiction passage (Drucker, 2003). The teacher must prepare a transparency containing an excerpt from this text with sufficient context to help students predict what the unknown word might be. Delete the target words and replace them with blank lines, much the same as you would with a cloze passage (McKeown, Deane & Lawless, 2017).

- **Using synonyms**

In this strategy, Baumann, Edwards, Boland, Olejnik and Kame'enui (2003) posited that teachers can use a known word to teach students an unknown word having the same meaning. For example, if struggling readers do not know the meaning of the

word "residence", but know the meaning of "home", then "home" can be used to teach the meaning of "residence".

- **Using Class-wide Peer Tutoring**

Another way to provide extra vocabulary practice is through structured peer tutoring (Celce-Murcia & Yoo, 2014). In this approach, the teacher provides each pupil with a folder that has two pockets attached on the inside. The teacher prints go on one pocket and stop on another pocket. The teacher also provides index cards on which a vocabulary word is written on one side, and its definition on another. The pupils work in pairs in which they take turns being the tutor. The tutor shows each vocabulary word to the partner and asks the partner to restate the definition. Praise and gifts are given for correct answer and corrective feedback in a form of a My Turn-Your Turn is provided for incorrect answers. Words mastered are put in stop pocket. Words yet to be mastered are put in the go pocket (Ng, 2019).

- **Using Word walls and Word banks**

According to Fisher (2008) many teachers use word walls to direct struggling readers' attention to words of all kinds including high-frequency words, important words in a content unit of study, or useful words for books. Word wall is a chart having a lot of words usually used within the school environment and posted on the classroom walls. Teachers post important words on a section of wall, usually on butcher paper or a pocket chart, and categorize them according to their purpose (Reutzel & Cooter, 2011). Johnson (2001) defined word bank as a box in which struggling readers keep new words they are learning. The words are usually written in isolation on one side of the card, and in a sentence on back of the card usually with a picture clue. A word bank can be either a student's constructed box to a file or notebook in which the

newly learned words are stored. Alphabetic dividers can be used at all levels to facilitate the quick location of word bank words (Cooter, 2010).

2.6 Techniques Teachers Employ in Enhancing Reading Comprehension among Struggling Readers

Comprehension is the reason for reading (Beck & McKeown, 2006). Ersely (2010) indicated that if readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading. Ersely also put forward that if readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading. Research over 30 years has shown that effective questioning and exercises in comprehension instruction can help struggling readers understand what they are reading, remember what they read, and communicate with others about what they read (Al-Ghazo, 2015; Kelly, Clausen-Grace, 2007). Comprehension is making sense of what we read and depends on good word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and verbal reasoning. Good instruction calls for attention to comprehension when children listen to books they love to read as soon as they begin reading text and not dependent on how well they are motivated or encouraged (Malloy, Marinak & Gambrell, 2010).

Washington-Nortey (2013) conducted a study at the University of Ghana basic school. The aim was to find out whether Basal Reading Approach (which is commonly used in the University basic school) compared to the Schema Reading Approach will develop comprehension skills among basic two pupils. 18 teachers who teach English and parents/guardians of the pupils were purposively sampled. The study used questionnaires, interviews, lesson observations pre-intervention lessons and test and a post-intervention lessons and end-of-year examination (post-test). There were 18 questionnaires for teachers and 164 for the pupils as well as their parents/guardians.

The questionnaires enquired about teachers' academic background, mode of teaching and experience in teaching comprehension. The findings revealed that their reading comprehension abilities were comparable with the control group. More than 80% of the respondents from both the control and experimental groups scored above average before the intervention. It was also revealed that regardless of the approach used to teach reading comprehension, some factors such as the circumstances under which respondents are assessed after the introduction of the intervention, questioning, and helping struggling readers to understand passages using their local dialect can affect the impact of an intervention in reading comprehension (especially with very young struggling learners). The study concluded that:

1. The interactive approach offered by the Schema Theory can be a helpful tool if adopted by teachers in teaching reading comprehension at the basic level. This is because there was significant improvement in the reading comprehension skills of some of the respondents in the experimental group that had earlier on scored low in reading comprehension before encountering the schema intervention.
2. Teachers teaching reading comprehension at the primary levels should break their passages into segments and bits. This is because each of the teachers teaching the adopted primary class used different approach for the teaching of reading comprehension. Therefore for uniformity, teachers teaching reading comprehension must not stick to only one approach in order for the pupils to derive its full benefits.

In another study, Anggraeni (2019) sought to find out the result of implementing semantics mapping and mnemonics strategy in improving students' reading comprehension for 28 second grade pupils. The research design of the study was an

Action Research. The study included two cycles; each cycle consisted of planning, action, observation and reflection. While using semantics mapping and mnemonics strategy the pupils mean score of post-test in cycle I and II were 75.714 and 82.321. The mean of post-test in cycle II (75.714) were higher than the mean of post-test in cycle I (82.321). The mean of post-test in cycle II was higher than the mean of post-test in cycle I. It means that by using semantics mapping and mnemonics strategy, pupils reading comprehension was improved. This research therefore revealed a significant improvement in pupils reading comprehension when teachers used semantics mapping and mnemonics strategies. The passing grade is 75, and the target of the passing grade was 80%. The result of the post-test of cycle 2 was 89% from students. This indicates that by applying semantics mapping and mnemonics strategy, reading comprehension of pupils can be improved. At the same time, Icht and Mama (2015) indicated that mnemonics and picture reading help all categories of readers to overcome difficulties in reading comprehension.

Research over the past 30 years has contributed greatly to our understanding of the thinking processes are involved in reading comprehension (Dewitz, Leahy, Jones & Sullivian, 2010). Surprisingly, however, little research has focused on the development of young children's comprehension ability using basal readers and text materials, although they play significant role in comprehension learning (Zwiers, 2004). Pressely (2000) described the development of reading comprehension skills for struggling readers as a two stage process, beginning with "lower processes" focused at the word level such as the word recognition (phonics, sight words), fluency (rate, accuracy, and expression), and vocabulary (word meanings). Pressely added that whenever possible, teachers could break passage into stages or bits.

The second stage of reading comprehension development focuses on higher-order thinking, relating prior knowledge to text content and consciously learning, selecting, and controlling the use of several cognitive strategies from remembering and learning from text (Leu, 2010). Research has shown that reading comprehension improves most when teachers provide explicit instruction and appropriate motivation and encouragement to children (Manyak & Bauer, 2008; Nicholson & Dymock, 2010; NRP, 200). Research also indicates that teaching children how to use a combination of comprehension strategies as they read, or multiple comprehension strategies and assessments yield particularly strong results for improving struggling readers reading comprehension (McKeown & Beck, 2009). Other research evidence points clearly to the need for teachers to use comprehension strategies in a variety of text types such as narrative and expository and genres (fairy tales, realistic fiction, almanacs, encyclopedias) (Nicholson & Dymock, 2010). Teachers and researchers have known for many years that reading comprehension is positively affected when struggling readers are interested in the reading materials (Day & Park, 2005).

2.6.1 Developing comprehension skills for struggling readers

According to Oczkus (2018) comprehension strategies are conscious plans and sets of steps that good readers make sense of text. Comprehension strategy instruction helps struggling readers become purposeful, active readers who are in control of their own reading comprehension (Oczkus, 2018). Descriptive research by El-Dinary (2002) showed that it can take up to 3 years for struggling readers to effectively use multiple comprehension strategies even with strong motivation and assessment. It is important for teachers to understand that and convey to pupils that learning reading and comprehension strategies is a means to an end and of itself (El-Dinary, 2002; Palincsar, 2003). The following six strategies appear to have a firm scientific basis for

improving text comprehension particularly for struggling readers (National Reading Panel, 2000; Palincsar, 2003).

- **Monitoring comprehension**

According to Kinnunen and Vauras (2010) less fluent readers and struggling readers can be guided to monitor their comprehension when they are assisted to understand what they read and what they do not. They have strategies to “fix up” problems in their understanding as the problems arise. Research showed that instruction, even in the early grades, can help pupils become better at monitoring their comprehension (Kinnunen & Vauras, 2010). According to Brozo (2010) comprehension monitoring instruction teaches struggling readers to:

- i. be aware of what they do not understand
- ii. identify what they do not understand, and
- iii. use appropriate “fix-up” strategies to resolve problems in comprehension.

- **Using graphic semantic organizers**

Graphic organizers illustrate concepts and interrelationships among concepts in a text, using diagrams or other pictorial devices (Marcell, DeCleene & Juettner, 2010). Graphic organizers are known by different names, such as maps, graphs, webs, charts, frames, or clusters. Semantic organizers (also called semantic maps or semantic webs) are graphic organizers that look somewhat like a spider web. In a semantic organizer, lines connect a central concept to a variety of related ideas and events. Regardless of the label, graphic organizers can help readers focus on concepts and how they are related to another concept (Mills, 2009). According to Mills graphic organizers help struggling readers read to learn from informational text in the content areas, such as science and social studies textbooks and trade books. Used with informational text,

graphic organizers can help struggling readers see how concepts fit common text structures (Marcell et al., 2010). Graphic organizers are also used with narrative text, or stories, as story maps which help struggling readers to focus on text structure as they read, provide them with tools they can use to examine and visually represent relationships in a text, and help them write well-organized summaries of a text (Mills, 2009).

- **Answering questions**

Zwiers (2004) indicated that teachers have long used questions to guide and monitor pupils learning. Research shows that teacher questioning strongly supports and advances struggling readers learning from reading because they give struggling readers a purpose for reading, focus their attention on what they are to learn, help struggling readers to think actively as they read, encourage them to monitor their comprehension, and help them to review content and relate what they have learned to what they already know (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002). Dillon (2006) explained that question-answering instruction and encouragement make struggling readers to learn to answer questions and, therefore, to learn more as they read. One type of question-answering instruction teaches struggling readers to look back in the text to find answers to questions that they cannot answer after the initial reading. Another type helps struggling readers understand question-answer relationships (Lapp, Fisher, & Johnson, 2010). In this instruction, struggling readers learn to answer questions that require an understanding of information that is text explicit (stated clearly in a single sentence), text implicit (implied by information presented in two or more sentences); or scriptal (not found in the text at all, but part of the readers prior knowledge or experience) (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003).

- **Generating questions**

Teaching struggling readers to ask their own questions improves their active processing of text and their comprehension. By generating questions, struggling readers become aware of whether they can answer the questions and if they understand what they are reading. Struggling readers learn to ask themselves that require them to integrate information from different segments of text (Ness, 2016). For example, struggling readers can be taught to ask main idea questions that relate to important information in a text (Paris, & Stahl, 2005).

- **Recognizing story structure**

Stetter and Hughes (2010) explained story structure as the way the content and events of a story are organized into a plot. Pupils who can organize story structure have greater appreciation, understanding, and memory for stories, in story structure instruction, struggling readers learn to identify the categories of content (setting, initiating events, internal reactions, goals, attempts, and outcomes) and how this content is organized into a plot (Kintsch, 2004). Often, pupils learn to recognize story structure through the use of maps (Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006). Story maps, a type of graphic organizers, show the sequence of events in simple stories. Instruction in the content and organization of stories improves struggling readers' comprehension and memory of stories (Stetter & Hughes, 2010).

- **Summarizing**

Nelson and Manset-Williamson (2006) noted that a summary is a synthesis of the important ideas in a text. Summarizing requires readers to determine what is important in what they are reading, to condense this information and to put it into their own words. The authors further added that instruction in summarizing may not

help struggling readers to, identify or generate main ideas, connect the main or central ideas. It only helps struggling readers to eliminate redundant and unnecessary information, and remember what they read.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review and Research Gaps

This chapter has provided a review of the relevant literature, including empirical evidence supporting the use of phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension methods of instruction in developing reading to struggling readers. The approaches or methods teachers use in remediating reading difficulties among struggling readers towards the development of reading skills has also been highlighted in relation to the components of reading as mentioned mainly in the references.

The evidence provided by literature together with the empirical evidence revealed the importance of the five main components of reading in improving reading skills for struggling readers. For example, letter recognition and phoneme segmentation were effective methods for improving skills in phonics and phonemic awareness for struggling readers. Also, assessing the strengths of struggling readers through exercises, letter identification and motivation play a critical role in making instructional decisions and help to monitor students reading achievement.

Most of the empirical studies on developing reading for struggling students such as Adoma (2016), Anku (2017), Kemizano (2007), and Vadasy and Sanders (2010), which were reviewed did not consider all the five components of reading except recommendations by the NRP (2000) and the NICHHD (2000). Therefore, details about five essential components of reading were not ascertained. However, the current study considered reading difficulties among struggling readers using all the five essential components of reading in order to give a more detailed and balance

description of the phenomenon. Again, most of the studies were conducted in different countries across the world which focused on foreign-based practices such as tape assisted reading and readers theatre to improve reading among struggling readers particularly in developing fluency skills for children but this current study was conducted in Winneba, Effutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana which revealed some local practices to improve reading. This current study is therefore appropriate in filling the gap created by studies into teacher approaches in remediating reading difficulties among struggling readers in the Effutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology for the study. The areas covered were research approach, research design, population, sample, sampling techniques, instrumentation, validity and reliability, procedure for data collection, method of data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Approach

The study employed the qualitative research approach to explore the approaches teachers use in remediating reading difficulties among struggling readers. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretative/theoretical frameworks that informs the study of research problems, addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Creswell (2013) opined that qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, collect data in a natural setting which is sensitive to the people and the places under study, and analyse data both inductively and deductively to establish patterns or themes. This approach was useful for this study because, it allowed the researcher the opportunity to collect data from the field where the participants experience the problem being studied. Also, it aided the researcher to collect data through interview in a very convenient manner.

3.2 Research Design

Research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific directions for procedures in a research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Similarly, Van Wyk (2012) indicated that a research

design is the overall plan for collecting data in order to answer the research questions. The case study research design was used for the study. According to Ary, Sorensen and Razavieh (2010) the case study is in many ways the most appropriate format and orientation for school-based research. Since reading difficulties is a school-based issue, a case study design was deemed appropriate. The case study design was appropriate for the study because it allowed the researcher the opportunity to record the voice of participants through interview in a flexible manner.

3.3 Population

Hayford (2013) defined population as a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we tend to generalize the results of the research. The population for this study was 17 upper primary English language teachers of Unipra South cluster of schools. This population comprised of six teachers from Unipra South AB school, six (6) from Unipra South Basic C school and five from Unipra South inclusive school.

3.4 Sample

The sample for the study was 4 respondents (2 basic four English language teachers of Unipra AB school, one basic four English teacher from Unipra basic C school and one basic four English teacher from Unipra inclusive school). Again, the researcher selected four English language teachers because, Unipra AB school has two English language teachers at basic four, Unipra South basic C school has one English language teacher for basic four and Unipra South inclusive school has one English teacher for basic four. Also, basic four was chosen because children at this level had transited from the stages of learning to read to reading to learn and have gone

received instruction in reading development and are expected to read proficiently unlike lower primary where learners are taught to read.

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Characteristics by number of years worked

Number of Years Taught	Number of Respondents	School
1-5	1	Unipra South basic C school
5-10	3	Unipra South inclusive and AB schools.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of teachers by number of years taught. In the distribution, 1 teacher from Unipra South basic C school has taught between 1-5 years, and 3 teachers from Unipra South inclusive and AB schools have taught between 5-10 years.

Table 2: Respondents Demographic Characteristics by Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	School
Male	1	Unipra South basic C school
Female	3	Unipra South inclusive and AB schools

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents by gender (one male teacher from Unipra basic C school and three female teachers from Unipra South inclusive and AB schools).

Table 3: Respondents Demographic Characteristics by Academic Qualification

Qualification	Number of Respondents	School
Master's Degree (M.PHIL)	1	Unipra South inclusive school
Bachelor's Degree (B.ED)	3	Unipra South basic C and AB schools.

Table three above describes the demographic characteristics of respondents by professional's qualification. It indicates that, 1 teacher from Unipra South inclusive school had their master's degree while 3 teachers had bachelor's degree. None of the teachers had a doctorate degree.

3.5 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. A small sample of teachers was selected because they are English language teachers responsible for remediating reading difficulties among struggling readers in the school, and were in the best position to provide relevant information regarding the research questions. Avoke (2005) contended that in purposive sampling technique, the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample based on their judgment of typicality. Similarly, Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) explained that in purposive sampling technique, the researcher uses their judgment to select a sample that they believe, based on prior information, will provide the data they need. It is for the above reasons that purposeful sampling was chosen to guide the selection of participants for this study.

3.6 Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data from the respondents. The interview items probed into the four key themes in the research questions on teacher approaches in remediating reading difficulties among struggling readers at Unipra cluster of schools in Winneba. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) postulated that semi structured interview is appropriate for a qualitative study because it can be conducted on phone, through the internet, face-to-face, and allows the interviewer the

opportunity to probe questions for respondents to express their true feelings using an interview guide based on the research questions.

Macmillan and Schumacher (2001) added that a semi-structured interview guide allows the researcher the opportunity to work out some questions (aide memoire) in advance, free to modify them based upon his/her perception of what seems most appropriate. Since an aide memoire or guide is allowed in this type of interview, the questions were phrased, and allowed for probing and clarification of answers, on the key issues raised in the research questions. Focus group interview was used to gather data from teachers. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) defined focus groups as a form of group interviews which relies on the interaction among participants who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher. Focus group interview allows for merging the views of participants and stimulus to teachers who can express their comments or opinions in a less threatening and a more flexible way (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, it is for the above reasons that semi structured interview guide was chosen to guide the study.

3.7 Confirmability of Instrument

To deal with issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research, Guba and Lincoln (1994) proposed the following concepts: credibility; confirmability, accuracy, dependability and transferability. To ensure confirmability of the instrument, the interview items were given for peer review. The items were further presented to the researcher's supervisor, a professional in reading for expert judgment, suggestions, and approval.

3.8 Accuracy of the Instrument

Creswell and Poth (2018) posited that researchers consider validation in qualitative research to be an attempt to assess the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings. Creswell and Poth explained further that accuracy is a distinct strength of qualitative research in an account made through extensive time spent in the field, the closeness of the researcher to the participants in the study (creation of relationship), and a thick description of participants. The researcher in this case had a prolonged engagement with the teachers (about 6 months). This prolonged stay in the research field opened up multiple opportunities for trust building and establishment of cordial and lasting relationship with the research participants. By virtue of the good rapport with the participants, the researcher could collect reliable data through in-depth interview with the participants, hence, ensuring trustworthiness.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Again, the supervisor of the researcher for the study critically analysed the interview guide before it was administered, hence, a great deal of technical proficiency was employed. After each interview session, the researcher played the audio recording for the respondents to listen to and agreed that what they heard was exactly what they said during the interview.

3.10 Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is synonymous to generalizability, or external validity in quantitative research. Transferability is established by providing evidence that the research findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and populations (Statistics Solutions, 2020). Therefore, the findings of the study could be applicable in institutions of different environment, experiences and educational

opportunities with older students who struggle to read or those without reading difficulties to improve their reading skills.

3.11 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Head of Special Education Department of the University of Education, Winneba in Ghana which stated the purpose of the study. Since Unipra South School is within the Effutu Municipality, the researcher, with the introductory letter in hand, obtained permission from the Effutu Municipal Education Office. A pre-visit was paid to the school to book appointment with the school authorities and teachers. The purpose was to establish rapport and to explain the details of the study to the teachers involved in the study. Having read the introductory and permission letters from the Head of Special Education Department and Municipal Education office respectively, the school head agreed, and gave the green light for the commencement of the interview. An appointment was then made for a second visit such that it was possible to meet all teachers involved in the study.

On the second visit, and with the help of the school head, the researcher was introduced to the teachers involved in the interview. The researcher then sought the teachers consent. Having agreed to participate in the interview, the teachers agreed with the researcher, a suitable date, time and venue for the interview.

On the day of the interview, participants could select a convenient place within the school for the interview to be carried out. The interview began with greetings from the researcher and a self-introduction. The researcher encouraged the participants to feel free to express themselves since there were no correct or wrong answers. During the interview, participants were tape-recorded with their permission. The format for

the interview was focus group. The teachers were interviewed together. The interview questions were asked from an interview guide and lasted for one hour. The interview ended by assuring the participants that their identity in the study would remain anonymous and would not be disclosed without their consent. Finally, the researcher thanked the participants and the school head for their support and assured them that copies of the findings would be made available to them upon their request.

3.12 Data Analysis

The data were analysed qualitatively using narrative themes from the interview data which was audio recorded and transcribed. Analysis of the interview data was guided by key themes that emerged from the data. The process started with transcribing all interviews and highlighting words and sentences that served as units for more detailed themes. The transcripts of the audio recording were sent to the participants of the interview to determine whether the transcripts corresponded with what the participants said during the interview. After this, responses from each participant were played back several times. This was done to identify the various points of view reflected in the major themes in the research questions. In order to categorize each view expressed, each major theme was written down individually on pieces of paper and as the responses were played several times, the key words and phrases expressed were jotted down under each theme. The various views gathered were then compared according to the themes to reveal the concept map for connections. The various words, phrases and opinions that reflected on the research questions were finally categorized in relation to the themes that emerged. Lastly, verbatim expressions of the respondents were used in reporting the data with inferences from literature where necessary.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

A qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis dissemination of qualitative reports (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Some of the ethical issues to consider normally when undertaking a study include; privacy, confidentiality, sensitivity to cultural differences, gender, religious and anonymity (McCosker, Barnard & Gerber, 2001). Therefore, the researcher debriefed the participants where the general and specific objectives, physical and emotional risk associated with the study were explained. In an easy-to-understand language, participants were assured that if they choose not to participate in the study, for whatever reason, they will suffer no negative consequences for withdrawal, or being forced to do so. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and were free to withdraw from the study if they felt so. Besides, they were not to use their own names as a way of ensuring anonymity. Also, the respondents were assured that the researcher will not report or discuss any confidential information obtained from them without their permission, and that their names and any trace that will lead to the revelation of their identities be made anonymous. Lastly, guiding principles of research such as acknowledgement of sources of published information to avoid plagiarism were duly observed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the findings. The chapter presented the data generated from focused group interviews conducted with English teachers of pupils with reading difficulties. The findings reflect themes that emerged from the data under the main variables of the research questions.

4.1 Research Question 1: What approaches do teachers use in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers in the school?

Research Question One explored the approaches teachers use in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers in the school. To analyse this research question, four themes emerged from the data. These were: instructional approaches, teaching and learning materials, assessment strategies and motivation.

Instructional approaches

Teachers indicated that the use of jolly phonics, and rhyming are effective for remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers. Three of the teachers indicated that they first teach struggling readers to identify letter names before letter sounds and teach vowel and consonant sounds separately. Teachers expressed these in the following comments:

A teacher opined:

What I normally do to help struggling readers in phonics instruction is that I first of all write the names of the letters of the alphabet on a marker board. Then, we go through identification of the letters' names before the sounds. We do this in groups. In identifying the names of the letters I pick five letters of the alphabet and then constantly pronounce them to the children. Afterwards, I take them through the sounds of the letters let's say ' a' stands for /a/, 'b' stands for /b/. If I take all of the

alphabets at once it will be a difficult task, so I pick them five, five, five. Right away, I introduce jolly phonics that is where we I incorporate actions in the activity and later, we identify them on the chalkboard.

A second teacher stated:

First if all, I start with identification of the letter names and later the sounds. We look at the vowels, the consonants and then how to blend them. We start with two letter words, three letter words then we move on. And we have this jolly phonics approach which is also helping a lot. We do how to act the letters with our fingers. I ask them to come and stand in front of the class and then you the teacher pronounce the word and the child will do the action for it. We have been asked to do give extra tuition for such pupils so I do it sometimes early in the morning or after school.

Another teacher remarked:

In the first place we have the jolly phonics approach. In this instruction, struggling readers are taught a lot of actions together with the letter names and sounds. As they act the actions for the letters, they also identify them on the board. This gradually helps them overcome their phonic difficulties. Later, they are taught the names of the letters of the alphabet and then the sounds. I separate the vowels from the consonant sounds. Then after knowing the names and the sounds of the letters they will be taught how to blend them in forming a word.

A teacher said:

I write all the letter sounds on the board and rehearse it several times with them. I say and they repeat after me. So, once they are able to master it, then we move on to the letter names. Then I take the letters one after the other for the pupils to see the differences between the individual letters and learn the sounds in the consonants and the vowels. Later, I take them through rhyming of letter sounds where similar letters and words are selected and pronounced. I sometimes do this by putting them in groups to discuss it among themselves. Each group is tasked to form words with the vowels and consonants letters that rhyme.

From the above comments, there were mixed opinions about how teachers remediate phonics difficulties among struggling readers. Most of the teachers emphasized on introducing letter names before the sounds. Knowledge of letter names, according to the teachers provides solid foundation in learning to read among struggling readers

and beginning readers. The comments from the teachers indicate that, mastery in letter names provides a solid ground for automatic reading, knowing word at sight and becoming a proficient reader. However, another teacher stressed the need to introduce letter sounds before letter names. This teacher believes that knowledge in letter sounds lead to accurately recognizing familiar words and decoding unfamiliar words, and subsequently help struggling readers to master speech sounds unlike letter names. Again, the teachers emphasized the use of jolly phonics and rhyming as major contributory factors in remediating phonics difficulties in struggling readers. The teachers further noted that breaking words into bits makes phonics learning easy and simple. The teachers further added that vowel sounds are taught separately from consonants sounds in all forms of phonics remediation activity. For example, teachers model the activity, and learners learn from them. Throughout the remediation activity, teachers provide ample opportunity and support struggling readers in their steps to becoming independent readers. It can be said that the utility of remediating phonics has been established by how teachers approach phonics difficulties. These teachers believe that knowledge in letter names is prerequisite to knowing letter sounds and effective for improving children`s reading.

Teaching and learning materials

Teachers indicated that as part of their phonics remediation activity was the use of certain teaching and learning materials such as flashcards, manila cards, chalkboard and textbooks in their phonics instruction. The teachers further revealed that these materials make phonics instruction very easy and simple for them as teachers and the pupils with reading difficulties. Teachers said these in the following comments:

One teacher said:

When we are having instruction, I use some learning materials. Although we have challenges having these materials but sometimes I do chalkboard illustrations and use flashcards, and picture reading. I show them a picture of /a/ as in 'ant' and so on but they are inadequate.

A second teacher remarked:

Anytime I am teaching phonics whether letter names or sounds, I use flashcards and manila cards. I make sure I write the letters on it for those who struggle to read to see how it is written, and it is helping a lot. At times, I include some writing tools such as crayons and pencils for them to write words on manila cards and the chalkboard.

Another teacher stated:

Flashcards is helping a lot. I write letters on these cards. Sometimes the pupils will bring cut out materials and I will ask them to write on either the chalkboard or the marker board.

It can be deduced from the comments of teachers that the use of teaching and learning materials such as flashcards, manila cards and chalkboard is vital especially when the instruction is centred on remediating phonics difficulties. With the help of the manila card and a chalkboard, struggling readers see how letters and words are written, how they are pronounced and enhances their understanding that letters carry sounds. Also, it was revealed that since some letters are learned more easily than others, the cards are displayed on the walls in the classroom for struggling readers to use it so that they will be able to recall the letters easily and accurately with ease and with less difficulty.

It is clear that these teaching and learning materials keep struggling readers more engaged, increase their participation in the reading activity and improves their reading skills unlike not using any of such materials. Lastly, considering the importance of the teaching and learning materials in learning phonics, teachers indicated that such

materials were inadequate and for that matter, they always have to improvise to aid their instruction.

Assessment strategies

All the teachers indicated that they incorporate various forms of assessment procedures in remediating difficulties in phonics among struggling readers. Teachers added that assessment forms an integral part in learning to read and becoming a proficient reader. The teachers affirmed these in the following comments:

One of the teachers said:

So when I finish then I do dictation to make sure that whatever I did they were able to understand or something like that. We do oral reading too at times, or may be word identification, and letter knowledge.

A second teacher added:

After I have undergone several methods in the phonics instruction, I assess them. Sometimes I give them paper and pen exercise on letter naming in their exercise books and identification of letters on the board. In some cases too we do oral text and signing of the letters while they stand in front of their peers. This is done to ensure the effectiveness of the entire phonics instruction.

Another teacher noted:

For the assessment I write the words for the pupils to write their rhyming words or I mention it to them through dictation then they write. So with that you see whether a child is good at the phonics or is not good at the phonics. That is what I normally do.

Another teacher indicated:

In the course of the teaching, I have to assess the children for me to know that they are truly following the activity. I assess them during and after the instruction. Sometimes I give them written exercises. I call them individually and ask them to use a pointer to point a particular letter and to tell me its sound. Sometimes too I do word identification assessment. I will ask that particular child to give me a word that I will get that sound. For example, a child can mention word like 'cat' then I ask, where can we locate the /a/ sound?

It is apparent from the comments of teachers that, ongoing assessments are important aspects of determining how well struggling readers are progressing in overcoming phonics difficulties. The teachers indicated that assessing struggling readers in remediating phonics difficulties is helpful in ascertaining its effectiveness. Again, oral reading, paper and pen exercises, dictation, letter-sound identification, rhyming and signing of letters some of the assessment methods used by teachers in phonics instruction. The teachers indicated that oral reading and letter-sound identification help them to know how clearly and accurately struggling readers pronounce letters and words. Paper and pen exercise enables them to ascertain the level of mastery of the phonics activity for struggling readers. It is to be noted that the assessment strategies as used by these teachers does not only ascertain the effectiveness of their instruction, but also, help them to determine who needs additional assistance, the kind of assistance that would be most helpful and to decide whether or not to modify their instructional approach. Lastly, it is necessary for a teacher to use a wide range of assessment strategies to accurately assess each child's current skill level and provides an easy platform for providing corrective feedback.

Motivation

According to the teachers, struggling readers are motivated to participate fully in the entire phonics remediation activity. They contended that motivation creates a conducive environment for the various activities embedded in phonics instruction. They added that when the pupils are motivated, it arouses and stimulates their interest and to create a sense of warmth for a successful reading outcome. Teachers affirmed these in the following comments:

A teacher noted:

I also motivate them during the phonics instruction. Sometimes I shin for them or give them some fans. Anytime I do that the children are encouraged to do more and they also feel that they are also important not necessarily giving them toffees. But I give them pencil, erase and chalk for them to be regular in school when the need arises.

A second teacher added

Struggling readers need a lot of motivation so I don't forget to applaud them anytime they give out correct responses as a way of motivating them. I sometimes give them stickers, gifts so that the child will be able to be happy and do more. For the results we paste it on the board or we appraise them by awarding them with stickers so that the child will have confidence.

In the view of a third teacher:

I applaud them and encourage them to do more as a form of motivation. If I have to give them money I do so. Sometimes I have to mention their names several times, hug them, tell them interesting stories before we continue. One may not understand why a class four pupil needs to be encouraged in that way but I have to do it everyday. So that is what I do to maintain their interest in the phonics instruction.

Another teacher contended:

Pupils who struggle to read are interesting to be with. I have managed to create a good rapport with them so that they can feel free to come around me at any time for assistance. However, there are times that they become too bored with class activities especially when they don't perform well in activities that precede phonics instruction. When that happens, I motivate and encourage them by singing songs, praising, shake hands with them and give them a high-five. When I do that they become interested.

Comments made by teachers indicated that, some children struggle to read due to lack of motivation. It was revealed that struggling readers are motivated and encouraged by their teachers in the remediation of phonics difficulties. The views in these statements suggest that motivation is vital in becoming a proficient reader especially among struggling readers. The main methods of motivating struggling readers were

both intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic packages included teacher applauding learners, giving the learners high-five, hugging the learners, telling them stories and rapport creation. The extrinsic method was by giving of gifts such as money, stickers, chalks erasers and pens. Again, the teachers indicated that children with reading difficulties often lack self-confidence and esteem when they compare themselves to their classmates. Therefore, motivation helps struggling readers in developing self-confidence towards reading, increases their participation in reading, and helps them to appreciate the rewards and benefits of overcoming their phonics difficulties. Similarly, as learners' participation is enhanced, it is easy to realize their strengths and weaknesses and to stimulate their interest in the entire reading process.

4.2 Research Question 2: What strategies do teachers use in improving phonemic awareness for struggling readers?

Research question two explored the strategies teachers use in improving skills in phonemic awareness among struggling readers in the school. The themes identified by the teachers in the focused group interactions were: instructional methods, teaching and learning materials, mode of assessment and motivation.

Instructional methods

About how to improve skills in phonemic awareness among struggling readers in the classrooms, instructional methods emerged as a theme. Teachers indicated that struggling readers undergo instructions which include dividing a syllable into two parts, thus, initial and final consonant (onset and rimes), isolate a single sound from a word (phoneme isolation), delete some sounds in a word (phoneme deletion), identify some sounds in words or letters (phoneme identification), break words into individual

sounds (phoneme segmentation) and word games. Teachers noted these in the following comments:

A teacher remarked:

For phonemic awareness it is almost as the phonics. But the difference is that in phonemic awareness instruction, I help the pupils in identification of each phoneme (sound). After that I write the sounds each on a cut-out card or on a manila card and give it to each of them. Each of them would go to the board with a particular card in hand, point to the sound in the card that corresponds to the sound on the board. I sometimes do onset segmentation and word reading. After that, I delete and add some of the phonemes and ask them to arrange them in order. Lastly, I assist them in forming two letter words and three letter words.

Another teacher opined:

I first of all I put them in small groups and write all the sounds (phonemes) on the chalkboard. I continue with /a/ and end with /z/. It sometimes takes about two weeks for them to master all so I have to break them into segments, let say four or five in a day. After that, I add another phoneme up to about four phonemes put together. Then I assist children in different phoneme segmentation activities. Sometimes too I put them in large groups so that those who have mastered will assist those with difficulties. We learn words that have 'ion' then a word that ends with the sound 'th' a word that has /oa/ at the middle the sounds.

A third teacher added:

I first use familiar songs as a basis for “playing” with words. I ask the pupil to ask students to find a letter in the classroom that begins with the same sound as their own name. This activity is called word games. Then I ask the pupil to say the sound that their own names begin with and then name the corresponding item that matches their initial sound. In so doing, I write in both upper and lower cases sounds. For example /A/ /a/. Then I blend two phonemes and guide them to pronounce it. Later, I ask them to arrange a set of pictures that have two initial consonant sounds. I guide the pupil to distinguish between the consonant sounds from the vowel sound with rhythms.

A fourth teacher posited:

I let the pupil listen to a sequence of individual sounds. I guide the pupils to blend the sounds and pronounce them quickly in a rapid succession by clapping or tapping once. I guide the pupils to break some of the CVC words into individual sounds by clapping and tapping out their sounds. I let the pupil's count the number of sounds that follow CVC pattern and spell them. The pupils write words after pronouncing and spelling them.

It is obvious that almost all the teachers used similar approaches in phonemic awareness remediation and instruction. The approaches stated by teachers included, onset and rime, breaking words into individual sounds or component sound (phoneme segmentation), adding an extra phoneme to a letter or word (phoneme addition), identifying different or odd phonemes (phoneme categorisation), putting sounds together (phoneme blending), word games and rhyming. While some teachers indicated that the main strategy for remediating difficulties in phonemic awareness was by using the approaches mentioned above, another teacher emphasised the need to compliment it with consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) method. According to this teacher, the medial sound in words are particularly hard for struggling readers to segment, perhaps because of their co-articulated phenomenon. For example, the short vowel sound in /mop/ is co-articulated with initial /m/ and final /p/, making it hard to segment. Therefore, the CVC method allows struggling readers to segment initial consonant, medial vowel and final consonant to pronounce a word. The understanding drawn from the above approaches is that when struggling readers receive such an instruction they begin to learn to read and their reading tends to be more skilful.

Teaching and learning materials

Most of the teachers indicated that the teaching and learning materials which were used in phonics instruction were the same teaching and learning materials used in phonemic awareness instruction for pupils with reading difficulties. Although teaching and learning materials are necessary in improving phonemic awareness among struggling readers, however, teaching and learning materials are inadequate.

Teachers indicated these in the following comments:

A teacher said:

I use materials like manila cards, flash cards, pictures, and cut-out materials in phonemic awareness instruction. I use the same materials as in phonics instruction because we do not have adequate teaching and learning materials here in the school. These materials are available even though as time goes on the pupils tear and spoil them because we share to them. They use that same cards to form words on their table when the words are been mentioned.

Another teacher remarked:

Materials in teaching phonics are the same ones in enhancing phonemic awareness. The school actually don't have enough teaching and learning materials so we always have to improvise. There cannot be a remediation activity without materials so I always use teaching and learning materials even if they are not readily available in school. Materials like manila cards, flash cards, 100 frequency word chart and so on are used to help remediate phonemic awareness difficulties.

A third teacher stated:

One thing that helps me a lot is the use of audio-visuals. Anytime we have to treat phonemic skills, I bring an audio-visual device to the classroom. Sometimes I use my laptop which contains recorded audios of phoneme sounds. As they listen to the sounds on the laptop, I show them their corresponding letters as well. Also, if a word contains picture, I show it to them. We do this within 20 minutes daily.

From the above responses, it is evident that teachers use teaching and learning materials in enhancing skills in phonemic awareness for pupils who struggle to read although teachers indicated that the teaching and learning materials are not inadequate.

It can be deduced that the use of audio-visuals, manila cards, pictures and cut-out materials are very useful in remediating phonemic awareness difficulties. Teachers noted that, pictures and audio-visuals are kinds of teaching and learning materials that make sounds clearer to struggling readers unlike teachers having to pronounce the sounds themselves. According to the teachers, it is only in such reading activities that struggling readers are allowed to choose the kind of teaching and learning materials from many options provided by them making it the most common support for reading instruction. The teachers added that when these teaching and learning materials are provided struggling readers begin to initiate their own activities for reading and construct something that is interesting to them. It was also why teaching and learning materials forms part of the important means of becoming a proficient reader for every child.

Mode of assessment

According to the teachers, assessment in phonemic awareness instruction is very important because it helps them to monitor the progress made by struggling readers and also determine their current level of proficiency in reading. Teachers indicated that struggling readers are given sample words to identify their sounds on the chalkboard. Other teachers also indicated that they ask struggling readers to identify onset sounds from storybooks and other reading materials. Teachers verbatim responses are shared as follows:

A teacher indicated:

I also assess them in phonemic awareness. I always write a lot of words on the chalkboard for them to identify their sounds. I do this by first asking them to identify the vowels sounds then after that they are asked to do that of the consonant sounds. When I do that I am able to find out which aspect they have mastered and which aspect that must be learnt again.

Another teacher added:

Assessing pupils with reading difficulties on phonemic awareness is good. This is because, when they are able to master all the sounds, even not all but most of them, they will be able to learn two and three-letter words very easy. In assessing them, I write the sounds on a cardboard paper. I hang the cardboard on the chalkboard and ask them to identify the sounds individually.

A third teacher remarked:

After I had taught them about five sounds in the classroom, I have to assess them. By so doing, I bring cut out cards to them classroom. I write one sound on some of them and other too I write two sounds on them. After that, I pronounce a sound and ask them to identify by picking from the group. After a while, I put them in groups and ask them to form words with the sounds provided. We do this for about a week before we move on to a different thing.

It could be said that assessment in phonemic instruction is very vital so long as pupils improving reading skills is concern. It could be analysed that with the array of data collected, teachers can analyse and plan effective instruction that meets the needs of the varying degrees of the pupils who struggle to read in their classroom. This is important because, it is essential for making sure all struggling readers receive appropriate educational reading experience and then verifying that they meet the expected level of proficiency. Assessment in phonemic awareness was also important because teachers were able to analyse whether a particular approach was helpful in the quest to making important instructional decisions regarding improving reading for struggling readers. It is obvious that assessment procedures yield rich insights as to

determining ways of offering instruction that can positively affect the reading skills of struggling readers. Lastly, once teachers are able to understand the strengths of the struggling readers, it becomes much easier for the teachers to decide which learning experiences should be offered to develop their reading skills further.

Motivation

Motivation emerged as part of the themes from exploring the strategies teachers use in improving phonemic awareness among struggling readers. It was revealed that struggling readers were praised, and were given gifts such as toffees, books and high-five as a way to motivate them. This approach was helpful because since it increased participation of struggling readers in the entire phonemic awareness remediation activity. Teachers affirmed these in the following comments:

A teacher remarked:

The pupils are motivated to do more. I do this by giving them high five, praising them, giving them gifts such as toffees and books. Sometimes I even have to dance for them to just laugh so that we can have a smooth lesson in learning the sounds.

Another teacher opined:

Pupils with reading difficulties need to be motivated when teaching them reading especially learning the sounds of the English alphabet. Therefore, I motivate them during phonemic awareness instruction. When one gets an answer correct, I ask the colleagues to clap for him or her. I also ask them to shin for anyone who gets an answer correct just to motivate them and takes away boredom.

Another teacher added:

Learning the sounds of the English alphabet, pupils with reading difficulties are awarded. I praise them, soothe them. I award them with story books, pencils and toffees. When I do that, they give full attention to detail and participate fully in the reading activity.

It is obvious from the responses of teachers that motivation plays a vital role in learning the sounds of the English alphabet. Teachers posited that motivation in phonemic awareness instruction enhances students' participation and maintains the attention of struggling readers. Teachers indicated that motivation helps struggling readers to fully participate in learning the sounds of the English alphabet and avoids boredom which invariably occurs when learning is not interesting. Also, teachers posited that the motivational strategies spelt out makes struggling readers feel that they have an integral role to play while learning to read in order to take sufficient control of their own reading process. It seems clear from the analysis that, such motivational approaches create conducive learning environment where struggling readers work hand in hand with peers in the classroom in the reading process.

4.3 Research Question 3: What strategies do teachers use in improving reading fluency among struggling readers in the school?

Concerning the strategies teachers use in improving reading fluency among struggling readers in the school, four sub-themes emerged. These included the instructional methods, teaching and learning materials, assessment practices and motivation.

Instructional methods

The participants indicated the strategies they adopt in improving fluency skills among struggling readers. Some teachers indicated that they read while all struggling readers sit quietly and analyse the speed and accuracy with which the text was read (model reading), unison reading, and. Other teachers added that they break reading passages into segments or paragraphs and read, and make other fluent readers to read so that the struggling readers could emulate (partner reading). The teachers said these in the comments below.

A teacher said:

I do the model reading then after that I ask fast readers to read through the passage. At times we read in unison. I read and let them read after us but they say it is not a good practice most of our officers have told us not to do that. Last year I was caught by one of the education officers while we were doing unison reading because we have been told to stop it. I was moving around and an officer came and it wasn't easy. I explained that some of the pupils feel shy or cannot even open the mouth to read, but in fact, I have to beg him but he wasn't happy so we are managing small.

A teacher added:

As for this one it is a very difficult task. I do the partner reading. I do tell them to pick up with those who are fluent readers. So I tell them to read as the same rate that I read. So they follow what I read. They listen to me attentively and they read as I do. I sometimes encourage them while we go along with repeated reading of passages. I pay special attention to them sometimes after closing I spend about thirty minutes for them. We have those whose reading fluency is very poor so sometimes too we come to school early before the regular time and practice fluency before others come in. I make sure fluency is practiced within thirty minutes each day.

Another teacher opined:

With fluency, I give a passage that is of a lower class for the child read. As he or she reads, I make him or her to go over it. Once the child is able to read let say three letter words and four letter words, I do unison reading. However, if the children still fail to do so, I do model reading or I ask more fluent reader to read for them to see how it is read fast. This is how I go about fluency instruction for those who have fluency difficulties.

A fourth teacher remarked:

For fluency, if a passage is given, I do what is called model reading and repeated reading. I read and I ask the children to listen as I read to them. Sometimes too I use fluent readers to read as the others listen, after I ask them to do silent reading and later read aloud. Sometimes too I assist them to read newspapers and magazines collected from the headmistress. I write a passage in the board and break the reading into paragraph and teach them to observe punctuation marks. If you have to pause you pause and a comma you do as such.

It has been established that teachers engage struggling readers in a set of varied instructions to improve reading fluency. Some of the fluency practices teachers engaged struggling readers included repeated reading where a teacher reads for the children read along and to analyse the speed and rate of reading (model reading), whole-class method of reading (unison reading), using peer fluent readers (peer/partner reading) and using read aloud. With the methods mentioned, the teachers posited that struggling readers are likely to decode words in text accurately and effortlessly, read with an appreciable volume, phrasing, appropriate intonation, and at a reasonably rapid rate indicating that reading has become automatic. The understanding drawn from the comments of teachers is that, not only do these methods used to enhance fluency skills among struggling readers, but by reading aloud effortlessly with speed, and as struggling readers go through this process, their mind is free to focus on comprehension which is also a great predictor of future reading process among struggling readers.

Teaching and learning materials

Teachers indicated the teaching and learning materials they use in improving fluency skills among struggling readers. According to the teachers, textbooks, storybooks and blackboard are the main teaching and learning materials used in fluency instruction for struggling readers. They explained these in the following comments:

A teacher said:

I use textbooks. At times too I use storybooks from lower classes. I make sure they all have copies of the storybooks. We look at the pictures in it and then read it.

Another teacher remarked:

I use the blackboard and the reading textbook that the pupil have. In using the blackboard, I write a short sentence on the board and drill the students on how to read it fluently for a number of time.

Another teacher opined:

With fluency we use the textbooks and chalkboard as the teaching and learning materials to develop their fluency skills.

The kind of teaching and learning materials used by teachers to improve fluency skills among struggling readers have been outlined in the comments above. Teachers noted that the use of textbooks, chalkboard and storybooks make fluency acquisition easy and simple. Teachers said this because, a lot of different and simple sentences could be taken from such materials to facilitate the reading process for struggling readers. Since such materials are readily available, teachers could choose from a wide range of them and distribute them to the learners as and when possible. It is clear that, once sentences are written on it, the chalkboard helps to easily illustrate instructions of fluency practice. The implication is that once such teaching and learning materials are used, and as struggling readers go through the fluency practice, their attitude towards reading is likely to change and they become more willing to read for pleasure.

Assessment practices

Teachers described some assessment practices they undertake as part of measures to improve fluency skills among struggling readers. Teachers indicated that struggling readers are asked to read storybooks, and they are made answer some questions after reading. Teachers explained these in the following comments.

A teacher said:

I also assess them by asking them to read a storybook while I sit and observe. As I observe their reading, I make them pause when necessary and provide the needed support.

Another teacher added

For assessing reading fluency, I do that by calling them upon to read in front of the class.

A third teacher opined:

Assessing fluency, I ask them to read a short passage in their storybooks. During the reading, I ask questions. So they read for me to listen. I normally ask them to read as we read saying listen to me a little bit faster then I ask questions.

Another teacher remarked:

In assessing fluency, I give them short paragraphs to read to my hearing and assess their speed. I ask them to read on the board one after the other. I check punctuation marks as well.

It was clear from the comments of teachers that teachers assessing fluency among struggling readers take many forms. Some of them were that struggling readers were made to reread several times. As the students read, teachers also check the appropriate use of punctuation marks and find out which sounds needs more instruction. Struggling readers were made to read from the chalkboard individually while teachers assess their speed, accuracy and ascertain who needs additional support. Teachers also read to struggling readers so that they will be able to observe how fluent reading is done appropriately. All these assessment practices were carried out so that struggling readers will gradually become fluent and proficient in reading.

Motivation

To find out how teachers improve fluency among struggling readers, motivation emerged as a theme. Teachers in the discussion indicated how they motivate struggling readers during fluency instruction. Teachers expressed these in the following comments.

A teacher said:

I praise the children and give them an award like chalk, pencil etc.

Another teacher added:

By giving them an award like chalk and pencil, it motivates them to do more.

A teacher confirmed:

The child is given another task and applauded for. Another said by giving them an award like chalk and pencil. That is what we do.

As seen in the comments of teachers above, becoming a fluent reader cannot be achieved without appropriate motivation. This means that, struggling readers will become fluent readers when they are adequately motivated. Therefore, measures teachers used to motivate struggling readers in fluency instruction was in the form of praises, giving them chinks, pencils and other educational materials. Teachers used these motivational strategies to ascertain how well struggling readers were able to put words together in short paragraphs. As struggling readers were motivated to read fluently, they do so with minimal teacher support. It is to be noted that when teachers spend significant amount of time to motivate struggling readers in fluency instruction, such as modelling, children learn the behaviours of fluent readers as well as the elements of oral fluent reading.

4.4 Research Question 4: What methods do teachers adopt in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers in the school?

Concerning strategies teachers use to remediate vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers in the school, four major sub themes emerged. These included instructional methods, teaching and learning materials, assessment practices and motivation. The teachers indicated strategies they adopt in remediating vocabulary among struggling readers. Teachers indicated that they skim through passages and allow the children to come out with difficult words. Others added that after they have read, they write all the keywords on the chalkboard for the children to learn them one after the other.

Instructional Methods

Teachers indicated the strategies they adopt in remediating vocabulary skills among struggling readers. Teachers indicated that they write keywords on the board for the pupils to read, use prefix, suffix and affixes of words. Others said that they break reading passages into segments, do a lot of repetitions, picture description and use relate vocabularies to various concepts and topics. Teachers affirmed these in the comments below:

One teacher said:

With the vocabulary instruction I take them through direct and indirect instruction anytime we are reading. We read the passage, I relate the vocabulary to different concepts and topics that are familiar to the children. After that, I write all the parts and concepts on the board and explain the meaning to the children.

Another teacher added:

For vocabulary, because of their level and difficulty, I teach only important words. I do lot of modelling of words, definitions of keywords, and even at times synonyms and antonyms of words when the need be. In most cases, I pick the key words in every reading and

explain to them one after the other. With that the children become conversant with some vocabularies.

Another teacher stated:

With vocabulary, when I am teaching reading comprehension or storytelling, at times I write keywords on the board I have the textbooks so before we start the lesson itself I ask them to glance through. After that, I break the keywords into word parts. I also do picture description when the passage is having pictures. We describe the picture and then after that they glance through the passage. Sometimes too, I explain vocabulary to the children using common prefix, suffixes and affixes. Finally, we form sentences with the words and I explain it to them.

Another teacher posited:

Sometimes vocabulary instruction becomes a very difficult task. So I make sure that I explain about five (5) words which seem to be a bit difficult for them. I make sure they all get one dictionary and then we find meaning of those words from the dictionary. Sometimes, if you find the meaning from only the dictionaries some of the words does not give the clear meaning to the sentence so the children themselves will come out with how they understand them. Sometimes too I write keywords on a manila card and paste them on the wall in the classroom and learn their meanings gradually. We also do a lot of repetitions when we are pronouncing the vocabulary words on the board.

From the comments above, teachers have explained methods they use to remediate vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers. According to the teachers, remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers was considered a difficult task. However, since vocabulary is a requirement to becoming a proficient reader, teachers outlined some direct and indirect instructions used in vocabulary remediation. The direct instruction took the form of teachers explicitly teaching struggling readers meaning of words either on the chalkboard or on other educational materials. Notably among the methods were skimming, repeated reading, modelling, defining keywords and picture description, using prefix, suffix and affix and relating vocabulary to various concepts and topics. In skimming, struggling readers were

made to read through passages quickly while they identify a difficult word. In repeated reading, struggling readers were assisted by teachers to read over a passage for several times. In picture description, teachers and struggling readers associate pictures and words which have been used in a text in finding its meaning. The indirect approach to remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers was that, anytime struggling readers come across difficult words in the classroom, they were assisted by teacher to find their meaning.

Teaching and learning materials

Teachers indicated teaching and learning materials they use in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers. According to them, dictionary, flashcards and personal computer (laptop) are the main materials used in vocabulary instruction for struggling readers. They explained these in the following comments:

A teacher remarked:

I use the word card, flashcards and then we bring in dictionary.

Another teacher opined:

I use the flashcards. Knowing the word, I clean it from the board then I will write the words on the flashcards and will display the cards on the table and call them one after the other to identify the word on the board.

Another teacher added:

I use word cards, dictionary, flashcards and laptop. I sometimes pick them randomly you pick you pronounce it and they point that same word on the marker board. Just like we use for the phonics, it is the same thing. The materials are inadequate so we mostly improvise.

To remediate vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers in the school, teachers remarked that flashcards, dictionary and personal computer (laptop) were teaching and learning materials used. Teachers added that such teaching and learning materials

were inadequate in the school. Teachers explained how these teaching and learning materials help to remediate vocabulary difficulties that as keywords were identified, struggling readers were guided to find their meaning in context and as used in the dictionary. Amid the process of using the dictionary and laptop to find the meaning of words was identifying words which are also similar in meaning (synonyms) and words which form its opposite (antonyms) of the keywords. Difficult words were written on the flashcards, and while their meanings were searched, they were used to form simple sentences on the chalkboard.

Assessment practices

Teachers described the following regarding their opinions about the importance of assessment in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers.

A teacher said:

I do conduct dictation and then we give them the word for them to look them in the dictionary. I also ask them the meaning of words that is the only thing I do to assess them.

Another teacher remarked:

On vocabulary assessment, we do dictation, spellings. At times I ask the children to form a sentence with the word from the dictionary.

Another teacher added:

I do assess them sometimes. I do a lot of spellings with them. I will clean some of the letters of the alphabet and ask them to fill in the blank spaces with the appropriate letters sometimes I will ask them to use their knowledge to find the meaning of these words on the board and sometimes use those vocabulary to construct meaningful sentences.

Another teacher opined:

I evaluate them by writing the words in the board and ask them to explain the word in their own words. So you see that some will be

having dictionary and context meanings depending on where the child heard or met the word.

It is apparent from the analysis of the comments of teachers that struggling readers were assessed in vocabulary instruction through dictation, and asking them to form sentences with the meaning of words. The analysis of the comments seemed to indicate that struggling readers need to spell words in remediating their vocabulary difficulties. It is also clear that teachers evaluated in vocabulary instruction by asking struggling readers to write words on the board and asking them to explain them in their own words. The analysis revealed that after struggling were asked to find meanings of words, they were also asked to form meaningful sentences with them. It was disclosed that such assessment practices carried out by teachers enable struggling readers not only the meaning of words, but also, how to use one word in different contexts.

Motivation

Teachers described the following regarding their opinions about the importance of motivation in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers.

A teacher said:

I also motivate them by giving them chocomilo or one cedi. So they are motivated to always look out to learn new words.

Another teacher remarked:

For motivation, I applaud them and we give them gifts like pencils as appraisal. At times too, I reassure them even if they make a mistake to let them know they can do it. If I do that they become eager to do more.

A teacher added:

For motivation at times we clap for them, and if I have pencil, toffee or biscuit I give it to them just to motivate them.

Another teacher opined:

I encourage them by praising them to try and do more. Sometimes too, I ask them to come close to me and give them high five to come out with the best.

From the views expressed by teachers, struggling readers were motivated during vocabulary instruction. Praises was noted as one of the major ways to motivate struggling readers in acquiring vocabulary. Other forms of motivating struggling readers by teachers was by clapping, going close to teachers, giving of toffees to enhance their participation in the vocabulary instruction. It is clear that all the teachers make an effort at ensuring that struggling readers can learn new words and connecting them to known words.

4.5 Research Question 5: What techniques do teachers employ in enhancing reading comprehension skills among struggling readers in the school?

Regarding the techniques teachers use in improving reading comprehension among struggling readers in the school, four major sub themes emerged. These included the instructional methods, teaching and learning materials, assessment practices and motivation.

Instructional methods

Teachers indicated the strategies they adopt in improving comprehension skills among struggling readers. Some indicated that they do picture description, and break the entire comprehension activity into stages. Others added that they use mnemonics, maps, and acronyms. Other teachers also said they break reading passages into segments and explain in their local dialect. Teachers described these in the following comments:

A teacher remarked:

Reading comprehension is one huge problem with struggling readers. However, whenever they are reading I break passages into pieces and ask a lot of questions. I believe that teacher questioning helps struggling to understand comprehension passages easier than mere explanation. After the questioning, we read the passages several times and then I explain. Sometimes too, I start comprehension instruction with vocabulary learning. Within that period, most of them are tempted to come out with an answer.

Another teacher said:

I read a passage with them several times. After reading, I try to identify where their problem or difficulty lies. After that, I explain the entire passage for them in their own words or in Fante, their local dialect. Sometimes too, I guide them to monitor what they read so that they will be able to understand the passages. I do that by guiding them to focus on the words they are reading and how they have been used in the passage. At times too, I use their colleagues to explain things to them when it becomes necessary and when it is still not effective, I still emphasise on what their colleagues have explained and we go.

A third teacher posited:

The best method that helps me a lot in reading comprehension especially for struggling readers is by using drawings, maps and organisers. Using these methods, I analyse the entire passage and draw the various concepts in the passage with the children. I also use mnemonics, maps, and acronyms. I make sure every morning whether we have reading or not I meet all of them and read passages several times and we all analyse the drawing and concepts we did the previous day. The only difficulty is that sometimes one passage can last for about for about 3 days before they will be able to comprehend or answer all questions.

Another teacher added:

With improving reading comprehension for struggling readers, I do what is called, task analysis. That is, we have three stages. We have the pre reading stage, reading stage and the post reading stage. So the pre reading stage we do picture description. Before the reading stage, I summarize the entire passage using simple words. . Then later, I as a good reader to read the first and another to read the second paragraph, as they sit down and listen. During the post reading stage, we pause and I ask questions to know whether the children have understood.

It came to light that teachers used some techniques to enhance comprehension skills among struggling readers. Notable among the techniques were picture reading, use of mnemonics, maps, and acronyms, breaking passages into stages or segments (task analysis), using local dialect to explain passages to struggling readers and using questioning. It was noted that all the techniques used by the teachers proved effective in enhancing reading comprehension skills among struggling readers. For example, struggling readers understood passages using pictures in the passage. Teachers explained this as that struggling readers were guided to relate pictures to the passages in order to generate meaning and come out with meaningful explanations as they read. Some teachers stressed the use local language (fante) as a medium of instruction which made explaining passages to struggling readers easy and simple. Other teachers remarked that passages were put into about three segments (task analysis) and were explained in bits for easy understanding.

Teaching and learning materials

Teachers indicated the teaching materials they use in improving comprehension skills among struggling readers. According to them, dictionary, flashcards and blackboard are the main materials used in comprehension instruction for struggling readers. Teachers explained these in the following comments:

A teacher said:

Before we start any reading comprehension activity, I try to select materials the children are interested in. They like textbooks with pictures and drawing so that is the material I use for them. When we come across a difficult word, I guide them to look out for the meaning in the dictionary I also use their basal reading textbooks.

Another teacher added:

For the comprehension we just use the textbooks they have, and the blackboard and at times the manila cards.

Another teacher opined:

Apart from writing the passage on the board, I have to use textbooks. The textbooks are not sufficient so sometimes I do photocopy then I share it to them at cost to the children but sometimes I pay for. Sometimes too I use word cards.

A teacher remarked:

I use textbooks as teaching and learning materials and then I do chalkboard illustrations.

It is apparent teaching and learning materials were used by teachers in the improving comprehension skills for struggling readers. The teaching and learning materials include English basal readers (textbooks), dictionary and manila cards. Giving a number of such teaching and learning materials, struggling readers were allowed to select the ones that suited their interest. It could be noted that teaching and learning materials used by teachers were insufficient for use, therefore, teachers have to make more copies and distribute to the learners. Some teachers aside using textbooks also resort to using chalkboard for illustrations. Finally, it can be deduced from the comments of teachers that teaching and learning materials facilitate a reader's skills in comprehension.

Assessment

Teachers indicated some assessment practices they do to improve skills in comprehension among struggling readers. It is to be noted that the nature and purpose of the assessment was to find out how well struggling readers have progressed with skills in comprehension and how well teachers approaches have yielded positive outcome for struggling readers. They expressed these in the following comments.

A teacher said:

I also assess their comprehension through exercise. Since the passage used is content and age appropriate, I ask questions for them to explain in their own understanding on a particular passage.

Another teacher indicated:

After reading, I write a question for them to answer based on the story they have read. I pick the pupil who have done very well and applaud them. But those who couldn't do very well too we try to help them award them but no one laughs at them.

A third teacher remarked:

After the comprehension activity, I ask oral questions. I ask them to answer questions in their exercise books too and write their results in the continuous book which is used for promotion at the end of the term.

Another teacher opined:

I give them different exercise from those who will pick it but based on the same passage. If it is a whole passage I break it into three or four paragraphs and ask questions on each of the passage. Sometimes, on the main idea. At times too we do pen and paper exercise.

It can be clearly inferred that when assessment is conducted to evaluate comprehension skills among struggling readers, teachers were able to identify specific problems that contribute to poor reading comprehension. Notable among the comments of teachers on assessing comprehension among struggling readers in comprehension instruction were giving of paper and pen exercises and oral questioning. Lastly, teachers assessed skills in comprehension among struggling readers by asking a main idea question based on the text structure. It is to be noted also that passages used to assess skills in comprehension skills among struggling readers were at the pupils' independent reading level. Hence, were effective for improving comprehension skills among struggling readers.

Motivation

Teachers indicated some ways to motivate struggling readers in improving skills in comprehension among struggling readers. It was noted that struggling readers were praised, and were given learning materials such as pens, pencils and books. Teachers said these in the following comments.

A teacher said:

As we move one, try to I motivate them by giving them another task and applaud them as well. I give them educational materials like pens and pencils too.

Another teacher added:

It is also good to motivate them especially when you see they are tired. I do so by giving them reading books, short stories or by giving them a story book to take home to go and read two days and bring it. That is what I do to motivate them.

A third teacher confirmed:

I sometimes encourage them to try very hard and when I have gifts in my bag. I give them gifts like exercise books, pencils, erasers etc.

Another teacher remarked:

I encourage them as we go on with the comprehension instruction. I do so by allowing them to sit beside me the whole day. I sometimes give them free exercise books, erasers and pencils for them to use just to encourage them.

It is obvious that struggling readers were motivated by teachers in comprehension instruction. Some of the ways struggling readers were motivated by teachers include praises, giving free exercise books, hugging, and encouraging them to do more. It is clear that almost all the teachers use similar technique to motivate struggling and it behooves on teachers to find out more approaches to motivate struggling readers because the ability for a learner to comprehend a text is said to be the purpose for which we read.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the results of the study. It attempts to link the outcome of the study to existing studies. Discussions were done based on the five specific objectives of the study. Themes presented under this chapter include; approaches teachers use in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling reader in the school, strategies teachers adopt in improving phonemic awareness in struggling readers, strategies teachers use in improving reading fluency among struggling readers in the school, methods teachers adopt in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers in the school, and techniques teachers employ in enhancing reading comprehension among struggling readers in the school.

5.1 Approaches Teachers use in Remediating Phonics Difficulties among Struggling Reader in the School

Teachers play pivotal role in helping learners in the acquisition of language. The data revealed certain strategies used to help learners who find it difficult to grab phonics in school. The availability of approaches to assist struggling learners in reading phonics signals that the participants considered the educational needs of each learner when planning reading instruction in English.

Analysis of interview data revealed that there are methods the participants used to remediate phonics difficulties among struggling readers. One method the study revealed was that teachers start phonics remediation by first introducing struggling readers to identification and blending of letter names before they are introduced to letter sounds. The teachers believe that knowledge in letter names is an effective

means for assisting learners who are learning the alphabetic principle to become proficient readers. This finding is consistent with Chuunga (2013) who conducted a study in Zambia to investigate how teachers remediate phonics difficulties for pupils with reading difficulties at the lower primary level. Chuunga (2013) found out that phonics instruction is helpful to all children especially those who are learning to read when it is focused on letter names acquisition. With this, children will be able to use words and even, letters to construct sentences. The findings also agree with the views of Adams (2000) and the recommendations by the NICHD (2000) that struggling readers must know letter names well before instruction in sound-symbol association begins. In the same way, Curtis (2004) believed that names of letters may be learned early, and pupils who know them have greater advantage. This implies that in phonics instruction, it is appropriate to teach names of letters before learners are introduced to the sounds patterns that represent them.

While some teachers focused phonics instruction on letter names, another teacher believed that remediating phonics difficulties is effective with letter sound which is important in learning to read. Plaza and Cohen (2003) found out that, a struggling reader must first learn that letters carry sounds that are associated with each letter and letter clusters. Hence, when pupils have reliable knowledge of the sounds in letters they understand the alphabetic principle, knowing that phonemes of language correspond to the letters they represent. This is not to argue that knowledge in letter names is more important than letter sounds relationships. However, one key question to ask is which of these approaches enables struggling readers to easily overcome phonics difficulties?

Meanwhile, these two different strategies used by the teachers are somewhat connected. This is one of the reasons why the bottom-up theory of teaching reading put forward by Gough in 1985, recommended that the best way to teach struggling readers to read is by systematically and directly teaching them to decode letter names and sounds, and by blending the sounds to form two or more words. The bottom-up theory also emphasizes that there is the need for learners to read through and develop series of repeated skills in letter and sound relationship as in phonics.

What the above results mean is that teachers to some extent have utilized both the synthetic and analytic phonic instructional method to help struggling readers overcome their phonics difficulties. In synthetic phonics, teachers guide struggling readers to make connections between letters of written texts (graphemes, or letter symbols) and the sounds of spoken language. In analytic phonics, teachers model how to sort (or separate) letters. Bald (2007) and the National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000) found that one type of the phonics approach is not superior to the other. Thus, teachers to some extent have insight in handling learners with difficulties in phonics.

Results of the study revealed that teachers provide extra tuition to struggling students, engage struggling readers in rhyming and using jolly are effective in remediating phonics difficulties. The teachers explained that such practices were important in phonics instruction designed for struggling readers. Vadasy and Sanders (2010) indicated that direct group-based teachings, identifying learning patterns, question and answer sessions, rehearsals, extra tuition, among others are teaching strategies needed for an effective phonics instruction. It could be deduced from these findings that teachers do all they could to enable struggling readers develop the needed skills to overcome their phonics difficulties.

Results of the study revealed that teaching and learning materials such as chalkboard, manila cards, and flashcards were used by teachers in phonics instruction. Teachers indicated that adopting a sound remedial instruction for learners with phonic difficulties cannot be successful unless they incorporate instructional materials. This finding agrees with the views of Carreker et al., (2007) who concluded that struggling students required phonetically written books, flashcards and illustrations using regular words that are interesting to young children. This finding again agrees with an observation by Johnston et al., (2012), who indicated that phonics instruction is only one part of a larger, well-balanced reading program necessary for all children learning to read and must be simple, short and exciting with a lot of interesting teaching and learning materials. This is the reason why a lot of authorities and studies on reading such the National Right to Read Foundation (2001) and Allington (2002) have all highlighted the crucial role of teaching and learning materials in learning to read. These authorities believe that learning sound and their blend may be disinteresting for young children, therefore, the need to use a lot of different teaching and learning materials. Kemizano (2007) found that a variety of flash cards, picture books, shapes of objects, word and rhyme games must be used in phonics development because playing with language apparently helps young children focus their attention on the sounds of words as well as their meaning. This suggest that, teaching and learning materials must not just be used while ensuring effective phonics instruction for struggling readers, but must also be interactive to keep the pupils on task.

Assessment strategies were also identified in the study to play pivotal role in assisting learners who struggle with phonics. The study revealed that teachers after phonics instruction do dictation, word identification, oral reading, and give struggling readers written exercise to assess their performance. The findings agree with Adoma (2016)

research into using (MS-PAS) phonics methods of teaching reading where the results revealed that dictation, alphabet identification, written exercise and oral reading were good assessment strategies needed in a phonic remediation activity. The findings again agree with Chuunga (2013) who observed that there cannot be effective reading instruction without effective assessment. Armbruster (2010) pointed out that there is a need to assess the strength and needs of learners through exercise, letter identification; using information gathered to inform instructional decision and monitoring learners' individual reading through assessment. Armbruster added that organizing instruction based on group needs of the learners; recording how learners are responding to assessment and teaching; and the teacher reflecting on instructional practices are also part of assessment methods used in phonics instructions. It has been established that assessment of a struggling reader's letter knowledge will indicate what letters and sounds he/she knows and what letters and sounds will need to be practiced.

Analysis of teachers' approaches in phonics instruction revealed that motivation is important in the learning of phonics. The finding of the present study revealed that the methods teachers used to motivate struggling readers were both intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic packages included teacher applauding learners, giving the learners high-five, hugging the learners, telling them stories, and establishing cordial relationship with the pupils. The extrinsic method was by giving of gifts such as money, stickers, chalks erasers and pens. This finding supports the assertion by Chuunga (2013) that effective reading instruction requires motivation. Also, Chuunga's study (2013), revealed that motivational practices such as giving gifts to struggling readers and praising learners make learners active and participate fully in phonics activities. These motivational practices were similar to those practices identified by teachers used in the study. This implies that motivation makes phonics learning easy and simple.

5.2 Strategies Teachers Adopt in Improving Phonemic Awareness in Struggling Readers

Developing phonemic awareness plays a critical role in becoming a proficient reader. The ability of struggling readers to identify phonemes, the vocal gestures from which words are constructed, when they are found in their natural context as spoken words enables them to improve their reading ability. It must also be pointed that without the awareness of phonemes, it is difficult to study phonics (NRP, 2000). This however suggests that phonemic awareness is a prerequisite of studying phonics. In the view of Goswami and Bryant (2016), a child who is good at identifying phonemes is able to divide pronunciation of names into syllables.

Results from the study indicated that teachers have adopted instructional methods to enhance skills in phonemic awareness among struggling learners in the classrooms. Teachers pointed out that struggling readers pass through a series of instructions in onset and rime, phoneme isolation and deletion, phoneme identification and phoneme segmentation. All these instructional methods have been proven to be effective in improving struggling readers' skills in reading. These findings are consistent with studies by Anku (2017) who researched into using phonemic awareness instruction to help a child in blending the sounds of the letters of the English alphabet. Anku (2017) found out that, phonemic awareness can be taught and learnt, and so, using various activities under phoneme segmentation, deletion, isolation, blending and phoneme identification are foundational skills needed in phonemic awareness instruction. Anku further recommended that phoneme identification is important in teaching struggling readers. The findings again agree with Block and Israel (2005) who indicated that an effective reading instructional programme must contain the eight types of phonemic awareness instruction which includes phoneme segmentation, phoneme deletion and

addition, phoneme categorization, among others. Ukrainetz (2006) added that segmenting sounds in words and blending strings of isolated sounds to form recognizable word forms is made possible through phonemic awareness. The implication of these findings suggests that instruction in phonemic awareness, just as phonics, must be taken seriously. This is because, until a child develops skills in sounds of the alphabet, learning to read can be a very difficult task.

Results of the study revealed that adopting effective phonemic awareness instructional strategies such as sound segmentation and blending enable struggling readers to develop skills in reading. These instructional activities have been found to be crucial in the teaching of phonemic awareness as observed by (Boison, 2013). Boison supported the views that various activities in blending and segmenting sounds are the most effective methods of teaching phonemic awareness. Fountas and Pinnell (2015) pointed out that knowledge in segmenting words is a predictor of successful reading. Letter sound segmentation has been emphasized by the bottom-up as an effective mechanism for students to de-code or put into sound what is seen in a text in reading development.

Teachers involved in the study placed emphasis on using consonant vowel consonant (CVC) methods in improving skills in phonemic awareness among struggling readers. This finding agrees with Sun and colleagues (2015) who posited that the CVC method in phonemic awareness is effective and beneficial in learning to read. However, teachers must be sure to point out initial, middle, and end sound positions to students as the various components are manipulated. As has been highlighted in bottom-up theory, a reader processes text by first recognizing the lower level of units of language; the letters and their corresponding sounds and by blending these lower level

units into more complex units. The understanding derived from the findings is consistent with Athans and Devine (2010) who indicated that unless children have a strong awareness of the phonemic structure of the English language firmly in place, asking a child the first letter or sounds of a word is to no avail. This suggests that the approaches used by teachers enabled struggling readers develop the ability to segment words into their phonemic parts and to blend the parts into whole words for successful reading outcomes.

Like the teaching of phonics, teaching struggling readers' phonemic awareness requires the use of teaching and learning materials. These materials must attract learners to develop interest in the development of phonemic awareness. From the study, the use of flashcards, pictures, manila cards and audio-visuais are common teaching and learning materials used by teachers to develop phonemic awareness for struggling readers. However, teachers indicated that teaching and learning materials required for facilitating phonemic awareness instruction are inadequate. Heric, et al., (2016) found that teaching and learning materials such as flashcards are excellent tools for assisting children who do not have strong phonics skills work on their phonemic awareness. The authors further opined that there is the need for teachers to create a series of flashcards using pictures that are familiar to a child. This suggests that the use of flashcards is an essential learning material that makes developing skills in phonemic awareness possible.

From the study, it was revealed that assessment in phonemic awareness instruction is crucial in the teaching and learning of phonemic awareness. Teachers pointed out that they assess their learners after every phonemic awareness lesson. Teachers explained that the assessment enables them to identify and monitor the progress of learners. The

assessment methods take the form of asking students to identify sounds on chalkboard, identify onset sounds from storybooks and reading materials. The findings correspond with studies by the National Right to Read Foundation (2001) and August and Shanahan (2006) who indicated that to foster a child's fascination with print is by extensive assessment and reading of books that have a strong sense of rhythm, pattern, and predictability. The implication of assessing struggling readers in phonemic awareness instruction is that teachers can determine which sound learners already know and which sound learners need to learn which is also an important foundational skills in learning to read.

It must also be emphasized that motivation in the teaching and learning process is vital. Learners, especially struggling readers need to be motivated in order to enable them acquire skills in phonemic awareness. Results of the study revealed that motivation in phonemic awareness instruction improves learners' involvement and also maintains their attention. The use of high five, clapping, praise and giving of gifts as a form of motivation, enabled struggling readers to be on task. These motivational strategies to a large extent aroused the interest of learners in the phonemic awareness instruction. It must be pointed that successful child learning is dependent to a large extent on motivation from instructors or teachers. The NICHD (2000) asserted that instruction in phonemic awareness will always have a positive effect on young children such as; pre-K through Grade 1, young children at risk, children speaking English as a second language, and older students with reading disabilities when pupils are motivated with gifts. Among other findings of the NICHD (2000) children with reading disabilities did not improve in spelling following phonemic awareness training without effective motivation and assessment. The implication of these

findings is that motivation and appropriate assessment methods need to be factored into remediating difficulties in phonemic awareness for struggling readers.

5.3 Strategies Teachers Use in Improving Reading Fluency among Struggling Readers in the School

Fluency relates to how well a learner or a speaker of a language develops the ability to read text accurately and quickly. Fluency provides a bridge between comprehension and recognition of words (NRP, 2000). Results of the study revealed that teachers utilized a set of instructional methods to enhance the fluency of struggling students. Some teachers pointed out that they do model reading for pupils, while others indicated that they break reading passages into segments or paragraphs and read, and engage struggling readers in repeated reading. They explained that in repeated reading they make other fluent readers read so that struggling readers could learn from them. Chard, et al., (2002) offer evidence to support the fact that repeated reading is useful for developing fluency skills among children of all ability groups. According to the authors, repeated reading enhances automaticity and makes pupils stay connected to comprehension. Meyer and Felton (1999) in a review of several studies came to conclusion that repeated reading is effective in becoming a fluent reader.

Results of the study further revealed teachers engage struggling readers in unison reading. However, results of the study found that, educational officers are against the use of unison reading because they believe unison reading does not allow teachers to determine the individual reading ability of learners since it requires learners reading together at the same time. Therefore, unison reading has been cited as a strategy which is not suitable for struggling readers.

The result of this study revealed textbooks and storybooks as teaching materials in assisting struggling readers to become fluent readers. This is consistent with Cooter (2010) who stated that like reading comprehension, fluency needs to be developed across all text types, such as poetry, narrative (storybooks) and expository reading materials. The implication is that effective or successful reading fluency can be attained using teaching and learning materials such as textbooks. Results of the study also indicated that struggling readers need textbooks and other materials to enable them to engage in regular reading. An individual's ability to read fluently is dependent on how he/she uses reading materials. Paris et al., (2005) indicated the importance of teaching and learning materials in becoming a fluent reader. Stahl stressed that fluency practice and instruction are essential components of high-quality reading instruction in the elementary years when accompanied with reading short passages from different teaching materials such as genres, texts and reading materials.

It must be noted that the goal of teaching and learning can be realized when students are assessed. Results of the study also revealed that teachers assessed struggling readers by asking them to read story books, read short paragraphs in passages, and they are asked questions relating to what they read. The findings of this study also revealed that when students are motivated, it encouraged them to be more engaged in vocabulary learning. However, studies on reading have found that struggling readers ability to become fluent readers has nothing to do with a one way approach students are motivated. For example, as reported by Klecker (2005) of a large scale study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (2000) in the United States which found that 44% of a representative sample of the nation's fourth graders was low in fluency after weeks of enough encouraging and motivation to do so. The study also found that fluency and teacher a repeated motivational strategy has no close link

with reading. The findings on motivation corroborate research by Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006) where the results revealed that fluency is not a stage of development at which readers can read all words quickly and easily even with suitable motivation, but fluency changes, depending on what readers are reading, their familiarity with the words, and the amount of their practice with reading the text. Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006) found no correlation between teacher's motivation and pupils' fluency. This suggests that, despite these two different views, it must be pointed out that motivation varying motivational strategies counts a lot in improving an individuals' performance in fluency.

5.4 Methods Teachers Adopt in Remediating Vocabulary Difficulties among Struggling Readers in the School

Snow et al., (2004) had indicated that vocabulary plays pivotal role a student learning to read. When a reader can use words in speaking or recognize them in listening, it is said that he/she is good at vocabularies. A reader's knowledge in vocabulary is a gate way to comprehension. For example, scholars such as Juel (2010) and Birsh (2005) believe that vocabulary instruction results in comprehension unless the methods used are appropriate to the age and ability to the reader with a lot of word spelling assessment strategies.

Findings from the study revealed that teachers use prefix, suffix and affix of a word to remediate vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers. Walpole and McKenna (2017) explained that knowing some common prefixes (letter or word used before another word to make a new word), suffixes (letter used at the end of a word to make a new word) and affixes (letter added to the beginning or end of a word to make a new word), base words, and root words can help students learn the meanings of many new

words. This agrees with the basis of the bottom-up theory of teaching reading which explains that developing reading for children must be explicitly taught. This means that knowledge in prefixes, suffixes and affixes help struggling readers to know the meaning of words and make remediating vocabulary easier among struggling readers.

Findings of the study revealed that teachers relate vocabulary (words) to various concepts and topics to develop vocabulary for struggling readers. This agrees with Yopp and Yopp (2000) who found that relating vocabulary to concepts and topics using semantic maps help struggling readers relate concepts to schemata and vocabulary already in the brain as they integrate new information and restructure existing information for greater clarity.

Results of the study revealed dictionary and other reference materials, breaking reading passages into segments, engaging students in picture description and writing keywords on the board for the pupils to read as effective approaches in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers. The NRP (2000) reported that dependency on a single strategy for vocabulary development is not likely to result in optimal learning. It must be noted that instructional methods or strategies used by the teachers interviewed is consistent with some findings from other researchers. Recommendations by the NRP and the NICHD (2000) meta-analysis found that repetitions, use of keywords and reference aids, and provision of rich support for learning are good practices which foster vocabulary acquisition and development for all pupils.

The NRP (2000) reported that dependency on a single vocabulary is not likely to result in optimal learning. This can be attributed to the fact that each instructional method has weakness, and so the use of several methods in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers is appropriate and must be encouraged.

In assisting struggling readers in vocabulary development, the results of the study revealed that teachers use of dictionary, flashcards and blackboard as the main teaching and learning materials in vocabulary instruction. These study materials have been proven to be effective, which enable teachers to achieve the learning objectives. Bursuck and Damer (2007) found that struggling readers must learn how to use dictionaries, glossaries, and thesauruses to help broaden and deepen their knowledge of words, even though these resources can be difficult to use. Bursuck and Damer (2007) further contended that using a dictionary is an effective mechanism that helps readers across all grade and ability levels to master vocabulary.

The use of dictation, giving students word for them to look for the meaning in the dictionary, sentence formation, and also writing words on the board and asking students to explain the word in their own words were assessment methods used by teachers. All these assessment methods enable teachers to know the actual ability of learners in terms of vocabulary acquisition and development. Learners' inability to score good marks is an indication that they have not developed adequate vocabulary. Chall (2000) found that in vocabulary instruction involving struggling readers, teachers must provide more assessments practices and learning tasks.

Results of the study revealed that motivation enables struggling readers learn vocabulary. From the study, it was revealed that teachers motivate struggling readers by giving them material things such as pencils, toffees, biscuit and money. Teachers

also clap and praise students who can make attempt to produce a word or identify words in a book or dictionary. Graves (2006) found that when thinking about organizing instruction that is focused on long-term growth for struggling readers, instructions must include motivating struggling readers which will encourage them to engage in vocabulary reading opportunities. From the findings above, it can be noted that teachers do their best to create a conducive environment by employing varieties of motivational strategies for struggling readers in vocabulary development and acquisition.

5.5 Techniques Teachers Employ in Enhancing Reading Comprehension among Struggling Readers in the School

It must be pointed out that reading without comprehension is meaningless. Mckeown and Beck (2009) put it that comprehension is the reason for reading. Ersely (2010) has opined that if readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading. The assertions of these researchers indicate that the result of every reading is the ability to comprehend. A reader's inability to comprehend indicates that he/she has not achieved the purpose of reading. Therefore, it is important for instructors/teachers to help struggling readers to be able to comprehend.

From the results of the interview, teachers use picture reading, mnemonics, story maps and acronyms to enhance reading comprehension skills among struggling readers. Teachers were of the view that the methods mentioned above help struggling readers to understand passages easily and faster with less teacher support. The findings corroborate Anggraeni's (2019) research into using the semantic maps and mnemonics to improve reading comprehension among grade two pupils where the

results revealed an improvement in comprehension skills among pupils using semantics mapping and mnemonics strategies. The findings are again consistent with Icht and Mama (2015) who indicated that mnemonics and picture reading help all categories of readers to overcome difficulties in reading comprehension. This suggest that mnemonics, picture reading and semantic map as used by teachers are effective for remediating comprehension difficulties among struggling readers.

Results of the study revealed that teachers break passages into bits to enhance reading comprehension among pupils. Teachers indicated that, to overcome difficulties comprehending a passage, it must be taken paragraph by paragraph. This agrees with Pressely (2000) who indicated that development of reading comprehension skills for struggling readers is a two stage process, beginning with “lower processes” focused at the word level such as the word recognition (phonics, sight words), fluency (rate, accuracy, and expression), and vocabulary (word meanings). Pressely (2000) added that whenever possible, teachers could break passage into stages or bits. The bottom-up approach of teaching reading agrees that read. This indicates that struggling readers will develop skills in reading comprehension when passages are in bits unlike learning all passages at a time

Results of the study also revealed that teachers used questioning in helping readers to comprehend passages. Ness (2016) found that by generating questions, struggling readers become aware of whether they can answer questions in a passage and if they understand what they are reading. Teaching struggling readers to ask their own questions improves their active processing of text and their comprehension (Ness, 2016).

Analysis of the interview data revealed guiding struggling readers to monitor their comprehension as effective methods in enhancing comprehension skills among struggling readers. Kinnunen and Vauras' (2010) found that less fluent readers and struggling readers can be guided to monitor their comprehension when they are assisted to understand what they read. Results of the study revealed that teachers summarize passages as an approach to improve comprehension among struggling readers. However, Nelson and Manset-Williamson (2006) indicated that instruction in summarizing may not help struggling readers to identify or generate main ideas, connect the main or central ideas. Summarizing only helps to eliminate redundant and unnecessary information, and remember what readers read.

The use of local dialect as a medium of instruction was revealed as a method that teachers use to improve comprehension for struggling readers. Supporting this finding, a study by Washington-Nortey (2013) found that regardless of the approach used to teach reading comprehension, some factors such as the circumstances under which children are assessed after the introduction of the intervention, questioning, and helping struggling readers to understand passages using their local dialect can affect the impact of an intervention in reading comprehension (especially with very young struggling readers). Using local dialect as a medium of instruction is pivotal in helping struggling readers overcome their comprehension difficulties (Washington-Nortey, 2013).

Findings from the study revealed that maps and graphic organizers are effective methods in comprehension instruction. Teachers explained that graphic organizers help struggling readers to connect different ideas in a passage which makes understanding easier and simpler. This finding agrees with Mills (2009) who indicated

that graphic organizers help struggling readers learn from informational text in the content areas, such as science and social studies textbooks and trade books. Marcell, et al., (2010) believed that, with informational text, graphic organizers can help struggling readers see how concepts fit common text structures. Mills (2009) further added that graphic organizers can also be used with narrative text, or stories, as story maps which help struggling readers to focus on text structure as they read, provide them with tools they can use to examine and visually represent relationships in a text, and help them write well-organized summaries of a text.

Analysis of results of teachers' interview indicates that teachers have at their disposal a repertoire of instructional methods, strategies, and approaches in enhancing comprehension skills among struggling readers. This confirms Mckeown and Beck (2009) who indicated that teaching children how to use a combination of comprehension strategies as they read, or multiple comprehension strategies and assessments yields strong results for improving struggling readers reading comprehension skills. Research Building Blocks of Reading Instruction as cited by First (2003) indicated that different comprehension strategies enable struggling readers to become purposeful, active readers who are in control of their own reading comprehension.

The study revealed that teaching and learning materials are relevant in making struggling readers overcome their comprehension difficulties. The main teaching and learning materials utilized by teachers were textbooks, dictionaries, flashcards and the blackboard. The findings suggest that how well an instructor or a teacher utilizes teaching and materials will determine how he/she can achieve positive outcomes in comprehension instruction for learners who struggle to comprehend written materials.

The results of the study revealed class exercises and oral questioning as assessment strategies teachers used in comprehension instruction. Teachers after assessment identified the weaknesses of students and assisted them to comprehend what was read. The use of questioning in comprehension instruction agree with Duke and Bennett-Armistead (2003) who indicated that questioning helps struggling readers learn to answer questions that require an understanding of information that is text explicit (stated clearly in a single sentence), text implicit (implied by information presented in two or more sentences); or scriptal (not found in the text at all, but part of the readers prior knowledge or experience). This implies that, a teacher may not know whether a comprehension lesson for struggling readers is effective until the performance of readers is assessed.

Results of the study revealed some strategies teachers use to motivate struggling readers in comprehension instruction. The motivational strategies used by teachers to enhance struggling readers' comprehension were in the form of giving readers educational materials like pens, pencils, erasers, etc. Contrary to this finding is a descriptive study by El-Dinary (2002) which revealed that it can take up to 3 years for struggling readers to effectively use multiple comprehension strategies even with strong motivation and assessment. The implication is that, even though motivation could be used to improve comprehension skills among struggling readers, other more effective methods such as appropriate use of fix-up strategies in comprehension instruction is much required.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations made on the findings from the study which explored teacher approaches in remediating reading difficulties among struggling readers at Unipra South Cluster of Schools in Winneba. The study was set out with five objectives and research questions. The first objective was aimed at finding out approaches teachers use in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers in the school. Secondly, the study was aimed at finding out strategies teachers adopt in improving skills in phonemic awareness for struggling readers. Also, the study revealed strategies teachers use in improving reading fluency among struggling readers. The study further explored the methods teachers adopt in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers. Lastly, the study identified the techniques teachers use in enhancing reading comprehension among struggling readers in the school. The bottom-up theory of teaching reading which was propounded by Gough (1985) underpinned the study. Semi structured interview was conducted on four English teachers at Unipra South Cluster of Schools. Data from the interviews were analysed using themes that emerged from the responses of participants.

6.1 Summary of Major Findings

The major findings are summarized here as follows:

Research question 1: Approaches teachers use in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers in the school. Analysis of interview data on research question 1 revealed the following:

1. Teachers emphasized the use of jolly phonics and rhyming as effective methods in remediating phonics difficulties in struggling readers.
2. The teachers noted that vowel sounds must be taught separately from consonant sounds in phonics instruction and reading remediation activities.
3. Identification of letter names before letter sounds yields greater results in learning to read. Contrary to this, one teacher stressed on the need to rather begin phonics instruction with letter sounds unlike letter names.
4. Struggling readers receive extra tuition, rehearse what is learnt, and are put in ability groups while their learning patterns are monitored.
5. The use of flashcards, manila cards, chalkboard and textbooks make phonics learning very easy and simple.
6. Teachers incorporate various forms of assessment and motivation for struggling readers to participate fully in the entire phonics remediation activity.
7. Phonics instruction for struggling readers must be short and entertaining.

Research question 2: Strategies teachers adopt in improving skills in phonemic awareness for struggling readers. Analysis of interview data on research question 2 revealed the following:

1. Struggling readers go through different instructions which include onset and rime, phoneme isolation and deletion, phoneme identification and blending, consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) method and phoneme segmentation in improving skills in phonemic awareness.
2. Teachers find it difficult to provide adequate teaching and learning materials for instructions in phonemic awareness. It was revealed that teaching and learning materials used in phonics instruction were the same materials used in phonemic awareness instruction for pupils with reading difficulties.
3. Assessment in phonemic awareness instruction is very important. The teachers added that struggling readers are given sample words to identify their sounds on the chalkboard.
4. Motivation in phonemic awareness instruction enhances students' participation and maintains their attention. Teachers indicated that motivation helps struggling readers to fully participate in learning the sounds and avoids boredom.

Research question 3: Strategies teachers use in improving reading fluency among struggling readers: Analysis of interview data on research question 3 revealed the following:

1. Teachers utilized a set of instructional methods to enhance the fluency among struggling readers. The teachers pointed out that they do model reading, unison reading, peer/partner reading, repeated reading and break reading passages into segments or paragraphs. However, the study revealed that

educational officers are against the use of the unison reading especially among struggling readers.

2. The result of this study revealed textbooks and storybooks as teaching and learning materials in assisting struggling readers to become fluent readers. This implies that struggling readers need textbooks and other materials to enable them to engage in regular reading.
3. When struggling readers are assessed appropriately, it encourages them to be more engaged in improving their vocabulary development and acquisition.
4. A child's fluency skills may change depending on the text he/she is reading and for that matter teachers vary their motivational strategies.

Research question 4: Methods teachers use in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers: Analysis of interview data on research question 4 revealed the following:

1. Teachers have adopted instructional strategies to enhance vocabulary skills of struggling readers. Among some of these strategies included, using prefix, suffix and affix of words to explain meaning of words to struggling readers, writing keywords on the board for the pupils to read and engaging struggling readers in picture description.
2. Other methods to remediate vocabulary among struggling readers were using dictionary and other reference materials, breaking reading passages into segments and relating words (vocabulary) to various concepts and topics.
3. The use of dictation, giving students word for them to look for them in the dictionary, sentence formation, and also writing words on the board and asking struggling readers to explain the word in their own words were identified assessment methods used by teachers. Similarly, these assessment

methods enable teachers to know the level proficiency of learners in vocabulary acquisition.

4. Motivation was also found to enable struggling readers learn vocabulary. Findings revealed that teachers motivate struggling readers by giving material things such as pencils, toffees, biscuit and money. Teachers also clap and praise students who can make attempt to produce a word or identify words in a book or dictionary.

Research question 5: Techniques teachers employ in enhancing reading comprehension skills among struggling readers: Analysis of interview data on

research question 5 revealed the following:

1. The use of mnemonics, drawings, maps, and organizers were instructional methods adopted by teachers to improve comprehension skills among struggling readers. It was further revealed that teachers break passages into pieces to aid pupils comprehension skills. The study found that almost all the teachers made use of questioning in helping struggling readers to comprehend reading passages.
2. Using local dialect as a medium of instruction is pivotal in enhancing reading comprehension skills among struggling readers in the school.
3. Instruction such as summarizing may not help struggling readers to identify or generate main ideas, connect the main or central ideas in passages when developing comprehension for struggling readers. Summarizing only helps to eliminate redundant and unnecessary information, and remember what readers read.

4. Instructions such as using concept maps and graphic organizers and guiding struggling readers to monitor their comprehension were found to be effective in improving reading comprehension among struggling readers.
5. Assessment methods that were commonly used by the teachers, and these were; giving struggling readers exercises on what they have read and asking readers oral questions on a passage.

6.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that although teachers are doing their best to remediate reading difficulties among struggling readers. However, teachers face some challenges in terms of resources and the requisite teaching approaches in remediating difficulties in reading among struggling readers. For example, the teachers find it difficult to provide adequate teaching and learning materials to facilitate instructions in developing reading for struggling readers. Also, the use of unison reading to develop fluency skills among struggling readers was unsuitable. From the study, educational officers were against the use of unison reading. This is because, unison reading may be difficult for teachers to find out whether a child is participating in the reading activity since it requires all children to read a text at the same time.

Again, motivation plays a critical role in reading development and acquisition among struggling readers. However, some strategies teachers used to motivate struggling readers were unsuitable. For example, the use of money as a way of motivating struggling readers must be discouraged forthwith. This is because when children get use to money, they would always want money from teachers as a form of motivation which may not be consistent or maintained and could rather demotivate the children. Another instructional approach that was used by teachers to develop comprehension

for struggling readers was summarizing. Summarizing is unsuitable comprehension development and acquisition among struggling readers. This is because, summarizing may not help struggling readers to identify or generate main ideas, connect the main or central ideas in a passage and may be difficult for pupils at that level. Lastly, what is to be noted is that, to develop reading for struggling readers, instructions must be more intense, more explicit, and more supportive.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that;

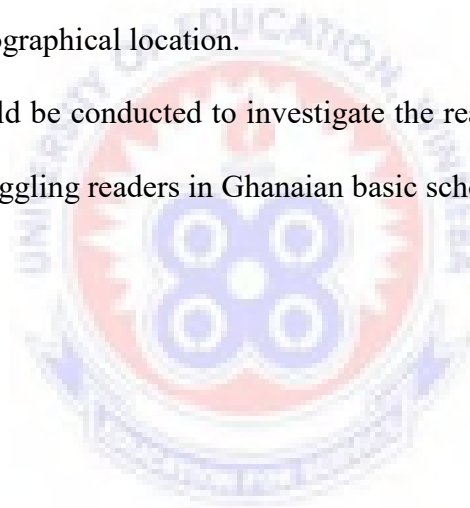
1. The school administration should provide adequate teaching and learning materials to the teachers so that remediating reading difficulties among struggling readers will be more supportive and easier.
2. Teachers use of unison reading as an approach to develop fluency skills for struggling readers must not be encouraged since it may be difficult for teachers to monitor the participation of pupils individually in a reading task.
3. The use of money to motivate struggling readers by teachers must not be encouraged since it can be demotivating to the pupils when it is not consistent and maintained.
4. The use of summarizing to develop comprehension for struggling readers by teachers must be discouraged since it may be counter-productive to comprehension development and acquisition and may be difficult for pupils at that level.
5. The school authorities must ensure that teachers responsible for developing reading among pupils in the school embark on professional development through short courses, workshops, orientations and mentoring on effective teaching of the five basic components of reading (phonics, phonemics awareness, fluency,

vocabulary and comprehension). However, this sort of professional development should not be the typical onetime workshop, or even a short term series of workshops, but an engagement in an on-going, long-term professional development environment, the kind of environment through which lasting, positive changes in teacher practice are promoted.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

In relation to the study, the researcher suggested the following areas for further research:

1. Need for a study to be conducted using a different research approach in a different geographical location.
2. A study could be conducted to investigate the readability of reading materials used for struggling readers in Ghanaian basic schools.



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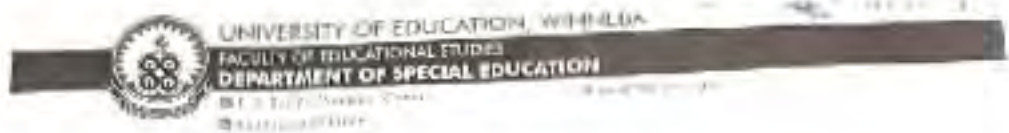
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction



25th August 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION, MR. PRINCE ODURO


I write to introduce to you Mr. Prince Oduro an M Phil student of the Department of Special Education with registration number: 8170150014

He is currently working on his thesis title: "Teacher Approaches in Remediating Reading difficulties among struggling Readers at Unipra South Cluster of Schools in Winneba". He needs to interview some of students in your school.

I should be grateful if you could give him the needed assistance to enable him interview and administer the questionnaires.

Thank you for the consideration and assistance.

Yours faithfully,


DR. DANIEL S. O. DOGBE
Ag. Head of Department

2019
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION
WINNEBA
P.O. BOX 20083
WINNEBA

Made Koko
He give him
the needed
assistance.
25/8/19



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APPENDIX B

Semi- Structured Interview Guide

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES**

SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS WITH PUPILS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES

Introduction

Thank you very much for having accepted to participate in this exercise. I'm an M. Phil student at University of Education, Winneba and carrying out my study on teacher approaches in remediating reading difficulties to struggling readers. I would like to assure you that all the information you share with me will be treated with confidentiality and only used for educational purpose. Feel free to ask me questions where you do not understand. I hope you do not mind if I use a tape recorder since I need to go back and listen to our conversation.

Background

1. Age range: Below 20 years 20-30 years

31- 40 years 41 and above years 2.

Gender: Female Male.....

Approaches teachers use in remediating phonics difficulties among struggling readers in the school.

Prompts:

- a. What specific approaches do you use to remediate phonic difficulties in your struggling readers?
- b. How do you use these approaches?
- c. How effective is that approach in helping struggling readers become proficient readers?
- d. What do you do after you have used the approach in phonics instruction?
- e. Have you had any form of training in phonics instruction?
- f. What do you do to make struggling readers enjoy phonics lessons?
- g. For how long have you been using this approach?

Strategies teachers use in improving skills in phonemic awareness for struggling readers.

Prompts:

- a. What specific approaches do you use in improving skills in phonemic awareness for struggling readers?
- b. How do you use these approaches?
- c. How effective is that approach in helping struggling readers become proficient readers?
- d. What do you do after you have used the approach in a phonemic awareness instruction?
- e. Have you had any form of training on phonemic awareness instruction?
- f. What do you do to make struggling readers enjoy phonemic awareness lessons?
- g. For how long have you been using this approach?

Strategies teachers use in improving reading fluency among struggling readers.

Prompts:

- a. What specific approaches do you use in improving reading fluency among struggling readers?
- b. How do you use these approaches?
- c. How effective is that approach in helping struggling readers become proficient readers?
- d. What do you do after you have used the approach in fluency instruction?
- e. Have you had any form of training in fluency instruction?
- f. What do you do to make struggling readers enjoy fluency lessons?
- g. For how long have you been using this approach?

Methods teachers use in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers

Prompts:

- a. What specific approaches do you use in remediating vocabulary difficulties among struggling readers?
- b. How do you use these approaches?
- c. How effective is that approach in helping struggling readers become proficient readers?
- d. What do you do after you have used the approach in vocabulary instruction?
- e. Have you had any form of training in vocabulary instruction?
- f. What do you do to make struggling readers enjoy vocabulary lessons?
- g. For how long have you been using this approach?

Techniques teachers employ in enhancing reading comprehension skills among struggling readers.

Prompts:

- a. What techniques teachers employ in enhancing reading comprehension skills among struggling?
- b. How do you use these approaches?
- c. How effective is that approach in helping struggling readers become proficient readers?
- d. What do you do after you have used the approach in comprehension instruction?
- e. Have you had any form of training in comprehension instruction?
- f. What do you do to make struggling readers enjoy comprehension lessons?
- g. For how long have you been using this approach?

