

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**A STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF READING ON STUDENTS ACADEMIC  
ACHIEVEMENTS**



**BASUO MOHAMMED**

**JULY, 2017**

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**A DISSERTATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS,  
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TESL)**

**JULY, 2017**

## DECLARATION

### Student Declaration

I, Basuo Mohammed hereby declare that this thesis is an entirely original work that I have done on the topic except the quotations and references of published works made in the work and appropriately acknowledged. This work has not been submitted, either in part or whole elsewhere for another degree.

Signature: .....

Date:.....

### Supervisor's Declaration

I, Dr. Charlotte Fofu Lomotey, hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Signature: .....

Date:.....

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I thank the almighty Allah abundantly for protecting, assisting and guiding me throughout my course of study. May His name be glorified. In fact may God richly bless my supervisor Dr. Charlotte Fofu Lomotey for her patience in painstakingly reading through and correcting my work and for her invaluable and brilliant constructive comments which made it possible for me to produce this work. Many thanks to you.

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I thank all of you for supporting me.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my beloved and cherished Mother, Madam Hawa Bayong from Wallembelle, my brother, Deibrimiah Yahaya, my wife, Ayisheitu Basuo Mukeedatu, Deibrimiah, Hajar Deibrimiah, my beloved son. Tajudeen Deibrimiah and all friends for their support and useful pieces of advice, not forgetting Mr. Gabina Susuoroka and Mr. Amadu Nandzo for their encouragement throughout this work.



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## **ABSTRACT**

Reading is an essential skill that every child of school age should acquire. The reason is that students who are able to read very well and understand what is read often perform better academically than their counterparts who struggle to read. This clearly demonstrates that there is a very close relationship between reading and academic performance. Hence the researcher's interest to investigate how reading influences the academic performance of students, especially some first year students of Kanton Senior High School. To investigate the topic, the researcher conducted test, interviews and also made personal observations. The purposive sampling technique of the non-probability sampling approach was used to sample the population for the study. The study population of twenty-five (25) students was sampled through personal observation the researcher made on students reading in the classroom. Three (3) teachers from the Department of Languages were also selected for the study. Two (2) interview guides were prepared, one for the students and the other one for the teachers. A comprehension passage was equally given to the students to read and answer questions on it. Multiple choice and open-ended questions were designed in accordance with recall, comprehension, analysis and synthesis steps for the students to work on. The data gathered were analyzed and results converted into percentages and tabulated. Findings were made and conclusions drawn.



## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 Introduction

The chapter explains the background to the study, statement of the problem, scope of the study, purpose of the study, the research questions, significance of the study, research objectives, limitation of the study and organization of the study

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Reading determines the achievement of students to a great extent. Both reading and academic achievement are interrelated and depend on each other. Students often come from different environments and localities with different levels of academic achievement. As a result they differ in the way they read or approach a given reading material. Many students cannot express themselves fluently in the English language as one expects them to do. The situation is more alarming in Kanton Senior High School because students perceive the English Language as a difficult language. This may be due to the fact that they were exposed to reading very late in their educational life. Children, who miss the opportunity of getting in touch with books in their early stages of life, find it difficult to acquire good reading habits in their later years (Deavers, 2000). Different people have expressed dissatisfaction with children's inability to read. Some of the factors identified among other things as the causes of poor performance of pupils are:

1. Lack of pre-reading skills on the part of pupils.
2. Improper teaching of literacy.

The Read Wide Society and the Ghana Library Board have also recognized the low performance of reading in children. As a result, they are encouraging children to read by providing library facilities for them. The Library Board organizes reading

competitions throughout the country every now and then with the view to improving children's reading skills. Although the problem of reading is a general one, it seems to be more pronounced in Kanton Senior High School because most students in Kanton Senior High School find it very difficult to read prescribed textbooks, and are not able to understand what they have read.

While some students have good reading habits, others tend to exhibit poor reading habits which automatically lead to poor academic performance. Every child, whether he or she is gifted or normal should be educated in his or her own way but if he or she can read effectively he or she can perform well in academics and in every situation. It is through reading a child can obtain meaningful and desirable knowledge. Considering the strong relationship between reading and academic performance and the fact that the researcher observed the abysmal performance some students of Kanton Senior High School put up academically, has decided to investigate how reading influences students' academic performance. Many researchers like Ogbodo (2002), Bhan & Gupta (2010) have all done work on reading, especially how it affects the academic performance of students. However, most of these works pertain to the international community. A researcher like Agbezree, (2001) conducted a similar research in Ghana limited to primary and secondary levels of education. It is against this background that the researcher has deemed it necessary to conduct a similar study in Kanton Senior High School in Tumu in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The problem most students have that contributes to their poor performance in tests and examinations is their inability to read effectively and make meaning from given

reading material. For every student to perform excellently, he or she should be able to read effectively. At present, due to the influence of the mass media, people do not show much interest in reading books; magazines, journal articles and many others. Even the challenge of examination malpractices may be traceable to students' inability to read and the prevalent poor reading interest and habits among the wide spectrum of students. In addition, the by-product of scientific and technological inventions and innovations has also contributed greatly to the dwindling fortunes of the good practice of reading among majority of the students. Today, many students prefer to watch movies and other shows on the television, listening to audio-CDs among others. Again, many students are not exposed to reading very early in their educational life. As a result of all these, officials of the West African Examinations Council and teachers of English complain of the kind of English written by today's generation of students (WAEC, 2008). The net result is the poor performance of many students in their examinations. The problem is that many students especially first year students in Kanton Senior High School cannot read efficiently. Hence this work was conducted to examine the influence reading has on academic achievement on the students of Kanton Senior High School in Tumu in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The following are the objectives of the study:

- (i) To find out why some students cannot read even at the Senior High level.
- (ii) To investigate the relationship between reading and academic performance.
- (iii) To find out what can be done to remedy students' inability to read.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

The research questions that guided the study are:

- (i) Why is it that some students of Kanton Senior School cannot read efficiently?
- (ii) What is the relationship between reading and academic performance of students of Kanton Senior High School?
- (iii) What measures can be adopted to solve or improve students' inability to read in Kanton Senior High School?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Even though this study is not the first one to be carried out on reading and academic achievement, the problems that have been identified will enable teachers, education officers and all stakeholders concerned with the implementation of policies and programmes of the Ministry of Education have an insight into the problems associated with reading and its effects on students' performance. The research will expose the reasons for which students at the senior high school level cannot read and understand what they read. It will also prompt parents on the significant role they play in complementing the efforts of teachers to develop good reading competence among children. The research will also reveal to all stakeholders in education that the earlier a child is exposed to books or reading the better for them. Our educational authorities and for that matter, the government, will also be made aware of the lapses emanating from their end which contribute to the reading challenges some of the students face.



### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study was restricted to twenty-five (25) randomly selected Home Economics students of Kanton Senior High School in Tumu in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

The study was not extended to cover all the students because of the large population size of the students and inadequate resources on the part of the researcher.

### **1.7 Limitation of the Study**

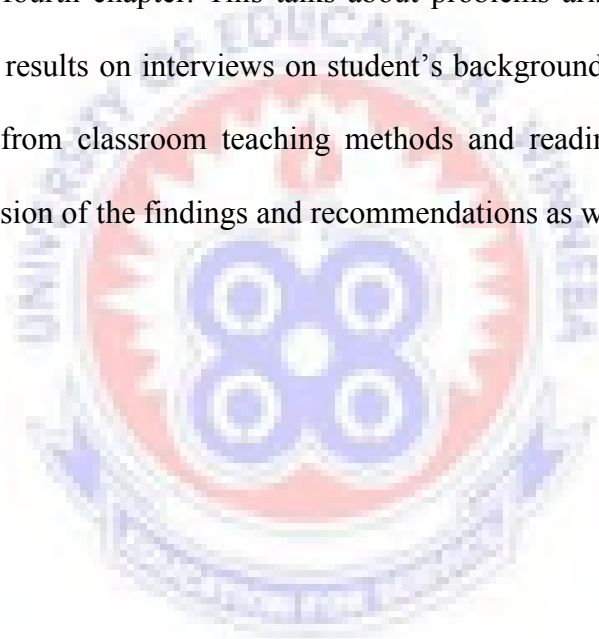
This research is limited to Kanton Senior High School where the researcher is a teacher. One of the reasons for limiting the study to this school is that the time frame is short that schools outside the town cannot be covered. More so, this school was chosen so that the work could be done effectively. A research work needs money and to do effective work with the little resources, the researcher decided to confine himself to this school so that there should not be any financial problems in the course of the work.

### **1.8 Purpose of the Study**

Proficiency in effective reading at the Senior High School level is very vital to each student's future success in his or her academic, social and economic or political career. It is this significant role reading plays that makes it very disturbing when children cannot read efficiently and make meaning from the material they read. The complex turn in which nature has directed its course requires every individual to be able to read if he must make the best out of life. The purpose of the study is to investigate the influence reading has on students' academic achievements.

## **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The essay has been arranged in the following order. The first chapter discusses the introduction to the topic, the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the scope of the study, purpose of the study, limitation of the study and organization of the study. Chapter two presents the literature review of the study. The chapter discusses the causes of problems of low proficiency in reading and how best they can be solved. The third chapter discusses the methodology of the study while the results of the study are presented in the fourth chapter. This talks about problems arising out of the children's reading abilities, results on interviews on student's background and problems associated or which result from classroom teaching methods and reading materials. Chapter five provides a discussion of the findings and recommendations as well as suggestions.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

Literature review is a critical component of every academic study. It shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the one the researcher is undertaking. The related literature to be reviewed in this study includes; meaning of reading, importance of reading, strategies/ techniques of reading, reading challenges students face, some reading programs that can improve students reading and performances, relationship between reading and performances, reading habits and academic achievements, reading comprehension, structural relationship between reading attitude, reading comprehension and academic achievements, attitudes of students towards reading in general and finally at what age is a child to be taught how read.

#### 2.1 Meaning of reading

It is widely believed that reading is an interactive process that allows the reader to construct meaning from a text by using information obtained from various knowledge structures which include knowledge of letters – sound relationships, knowledge of words, knowledge of syntax and schematic knowledge. Reading is not merely a physical or visual contact with written symbols. It is rather a way of decoding, interpreting or making meaning from these symbols – shorthand and braille (Sakyi, 2003). Pavonetti, Brimmer and Cipielewski (2003) see reading as a fundamental skill that affects all other content areas when completing standardize tests. Inline with the above, Deavers (2000) defines reading as an intellectual action which is possible only if a man forms a habit of reading

and practices these from childhood. Reading habits, therefore, play a very crucial role in enabling a person to achieve practical efficiency. By implication, reading has to do with the mind and it is central in all academic pursuits and so affects all areas of content.

Reading is the ability to understand words contained in a document and make use of the knowledge for personal growth and development (Dadzie, 2008). This implies making meaning out of recorded information either printed or non-printed in the life of an individual. People read for different reasons and purpose, some of which include, pleasure, leisure, relaxation, information and knowledge. But for academic performance to be enhanced, students mostly read for information and knowledge. Similarly, reading is the identification of the symbols and association of appropriate meaning with them. It requires identification and comprehension. Comprehension skills help the learner to understand the meaning of words in isolation and in context (Palani, 2012). He believes reading is a process of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning and problem solving.

Further, reading is an essential tool for knowledge transfer and the habit of reading activity increases skills in reading strategies. Guthrie, Benneth&McGough (2007)believe that “reading “ is the act of getting meaning from printed or written words, which is the basis for learning and one of the most important skills in everyday life. Issa et al(2012) further explains that reading is usually associated with books as only the written words provide a complete picture of the act of reading. Some of the materials identified for reading include, novels, plays, newspaper text\books, games, short stories, advertisements, specialized articles, rhymes, essay, application forms, instruction (Maduekwe, 2007).Parents should teach their children how to read these materials to

develop lifelong interest in reading in them. Students are supposed to read every day. Everyday reading consists of individuals reading activities for a variety of purposes, such as for relaxation or information (Issaet at, 2012). They believe that from middle childhood through adulthood, reading becomes a major component of studying, and much information learnt through studying is initially acquired through reading. Reading is an important activity in any language class as a source of information and a pleasurable activity and a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge of the language.

Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols for the intention of constructing or deriving [reading comprehension]. It is the basic cognitive process to the point where they are automatic so that attention is freed for the analysis of meaning. Reading is a means of language acquisition of communication, and of sharing information and ideas (Owu-Ewie, 2015).

Reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game because it involves an interaction thought and language. Reading in the actual sense is a very complex process that requires a great deal of active participation on the part of the reader. The reader actively interacts with the material or text presented (Owu-Ewie, 2015). It is the motivated and fluent coordination of word recognition and comprehension. In a nutshell, reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency and motivation and readers learn how to integrate these facets to make meaning from print.

## **2.2 Importance of Reading**

The importance of reading are numerous and diverse. Some scholars are of the view that reading helps in mental development and as such parents should inculcate the

habit of reading in their children in their early years. Reading plays a more definite role in our lives. As students and researchers, reading gives us access to information especially new information from books, articles, journals etc.

Through reading, we are able to cross-check information, do revision and improve our spellings. It also helps us students to know the demands of questions and other instructions, helps to maintain and enhance our vocabulary (Baidoo 2003). In today's information society, the ability to read is essential for maximizing success in the endeavors of daily life, continuing intelligent growth and realizing personal potentials. Similarly, a literate citizen is vital to a nation's social growth and economic propensity (Martin et al, 2007). Reading touches on every aspect of human life and our country at large-including; buying, selling, driving, learning, etc.

Directions to places, signboards and names of persons or things are generally written and have to be read. To know about the world and its environment, a child helps himself through reading books, newspapers and other magazines. Once the child has been taught to read and to develop the love for books, he explores for himself the wealth of human experiences and knowledge through reading (Deavers, 2000). Children, who miss the opportunity of getting in touch with books in their early stages of life, find it hard to acquire good reading habits in their later years. It is also worthy of note that through reading an individual is able to build or fix things, enjoy stories, discover what others believe and develop ideas or beliefs of their own. Thus, reading provides the key to all forms of information necessary for our day-to-day survival and growth.

Further, knowledge is acquired or constructed through reading which is used for so many things, especially for examination purposes and problem solving. Information acquired through reading can help cool the brain and avoid mental fatigue of an individual which promotes good health habits. In addition, reading offers a productive approach to improving mental development (Owu-Ewie, 2015). When one reads often one acquires and builds a large stock of vocabulary (acquires different types of word and their meaning). The mental development will also have improvement in his memory. Reading improves academic success and also helps develop reading competence.

### **2.3 Strategies/techniques of reading**

For the purposes of comprehension, different ways are always employed when reading a passage, newspaper or a book. Motivating children to read is one of the strategies that should be adopted to encourage our children to read. However, many of our children are not given the necessary encouragement to always attend to their books both in school and at home. Apart from not motivating to read at home, there are other factors like parents' education, parents' occupation, number of books at home, and parents not emphasizing reading. It is expected that the child of a parent who is well educated, has good occupation with lot of books at home should learn how to read earlier than his/her counterpart. Motivating students to read is one of the critical tasks of teaching. With this the researcher is of the view that all teachers should take it upon themselves to encourage and motivate students to read at all levels especially at the beginning stage. Children should be taken through early reading activities like picture reading, use of h word card. Similarly Duncan (2010) stresses that students must be motivated to read both at home and in school. In line with this, she writes about the

importance of teachers instilling a lifelong love for reading into the students. Duncan further writes that within all the everyday tasks required of teachers, they must remember to “help cultivate one of the most important habits that they can possess, the practice of regular reading”. Students who read frequently acquire stronger literacy life. To instill the love of reading in students, teachers must be a reading model, read aloud, provide opportunities to connect and keep reading fun, Duncan (2010) However, Gambrell (2011) thinks that, if educators instill the love of reading and students are not motivated to read, they will never reach their full literacy potential. It is advisable that teachers create classrooms that encourage and motivate student to read. This will help build the foundation to turn unmotivated readers into lifelong readers, Gambrell (2011). In the view of the researcher, many teachers have lagged behind in this direction. Teachers do not create conducive atmosphere for reading in our classrooms especially at the basic levels. In addition they do not motivate students to read. This, to a very large extent is a major contributory factor to some of our students not being able to read even at senior high school level, hence the challenge the researcher faces in Kanton Senior High School. So at the school level, variables of educational quality, time spent on reading activities and the opportunities created for reading should be seriously looked at. Educational quality specifically refers to those activities undertaken by teachers in the classroom to teach, promote and engage students in reading. Time spent on reading refers to measurable aspects of actual time devoted by the teachers and the school on reading activities while opportunities created by the teacher at the classroom level are simply opportunities or chances afforded the students to engage in reading. Mucherah and Yoder (2008) in conducting a study found that students who spend at least six (6) hours



per week reading did better academically and students who are less motivated to read are less likely to spend time challenging themselves with their school work. Educational quality, time spend on reading activities and opportunities created for reading, when taken up seriously and implemented in schools, the question of why some students even at the senior high level not being able to read will not arise.

In addition, supervision on students should be intensified by both teachers and parents. Students should also be advised to stop using several hours ringing their friends with their mobile phones instead of paying attention to their books.

On techniques of reading, Sakyi (2003) defines it as the different ways in which we achieve our objective for coming into contact with a material. We may just seek to identify certain words from the material to get the gist of some information or to get the full meaning of the material. He identifies three (3) techniques for reading; skimming, close reading and scanning. Skimming is a technique used to identify the gist of a story or text and not to identify the words, figures or phrases. When a student does an effective skimming, it provides the best understanding of the material in the shortest possible time. As a result of this, the researcher should encourage his students to adapt this strategy of skimming anytime they are given comprehension or summary passages or even a story book to read and answer questions, This will help them form a pretty rough idea as to what the passage is on before close reading is done for details. In skimming, the reader should concentrate on topic sentences, topics and subtopics; special writing forms, italics, capitalizations, transitional markers and keywords to enhance understanding. In support of this, Maduekwe (2007) notes that the inability of students to skim, greatly contributes to their poor reading comprehension.

Close reading on the other hand is done for the details of the text. In other words, it aims at yielding the full meaning of a text and not to identify particular structures or get a gist of the text. This close reading is a technique the students should use to the fullest in order to understand every bit of the text. The researcher thinks that this technique should be promoted among students, because it is so vital. Sakyi (2003) states that close reading improves vocabulary and equips the students with the specialized vocabulary associated with the particular field of study or business (meta-language). He adds that close reading offers training in the art of writing as well as how best to organize one's work, for example linking one paragraph to another, how to introduce or conclude one's essay or presentation, how to introduce new points in an essay or presentation and how to link points. With all these, the performance of the students will improve tremendously. Scanning on the other hand is meant to locate or identify specific information in a given text. This is usually done after skimming and close reading especially when answering comprehension and summary question in an examination. In scanning the reader has an idea about what he is looking for and this makes the reading a directed activity. Scanning is usually done under the following academic activities; looking for words in a dictionary, locating a book's title from list of books or catalogue, locating a book from a shelf using its name among others. The researcher should advise his students to effectively use these techniques, since it will help them sift relevant information from a given text thereby aiding their understanding of the text as well as well as improve their performance.

## **2.4 Reading challenges students face**

Students face several challenges in reading in their journey to making meaning from a text. One of the challenges is students' inability to use context clues to find meaning to unfamiliar words in a passage.

Gborsong (2011) stresses that most of the words we come across in reading are not isolated, they are surrounded by many other words that can help the reader guess their meanings. By this, it means that the student should be guided to use word environment and context of usage to understand meaning of words and expressions used in a text. It is failure of students to do this that mostly results in the challenges they encounter in reading in their attempt to make meaning of print materials, hence poor performance in their academic work.

Another challenge students encounter in their reading exercises hinges on the manner in which students approach given texts. Maduekwe (2007) points out that the inability of students to skim through a reading text, slow rate of reading, inability to interpret what is read, difficulty in comprehension leads to students' abysmal performance academically. Once students cannot read fluently and comprehend what has been read, performance in all subject areas would be far below average. Hirsch (2006) supports this assertion when he stressed that in order for students to achieve on standardized tests, they must be strong readers who have read a wide variety of tests over a large a number of topics. In addition, students must be knowledgeable about a wide array of subjects in order to have the schema to comprehend standardized text passages.

In connection with what Gborsong said above, Torgesen (2000) also stresses that “to comprehend written materials, children need to be able to identify the words used to convey meaning, and they must be able to construct meaning once they have identified the individual words in print. “The reading act is composed of two parts: the reading process and the reading product. The reading process has nine (9) processes – sensory, perceptual, sequential, experiential, thinking, learning, association, affective, constructive – combined to produce the reading product. When these aspects blend and interact harmoniously, good communication between the writer and the reader results, Bum et al (2003).

The researcher blames the challenges students face in reading on the overall attitude of the reader, unfamiliarity with certain texts, length of some texts and the use of unfamiliar words and expressions in passages. Baidoo (2002) stated that poor reading posture, reading in psychological stress, seeing words outside context, inattention to punctuation, stress and intonation are some of the factors that hinder effective reading and comprehension. And once comprehension is thwarted performance suffers. According to him, punctuation marks do not have any meaning in themselves, but they help to realize one meaning or the other and that effective reading must take into consideration the effects punctuations marks can have on the meaning of the text.

Pointing at words while reading is a reading fault that was also discussed. It reduces reading speed and understanding since in effective reading our eyes see more than a word at a time.

## **2.5 Reading programmes that can improve students reading and performance**

There are a number of reading programmes if implemented can immensely improve reading and performance among students in our schools. One of these programmes is the Accelerated Reader Programme advocated by Pfeiffer and her colleagues.

Pfeiffer (2011) wrote that “Accelerated reader is based on individual guided reading practices which allow readers to work at their own levels and choose books that reflect their own interest”. Cregar (2011) in support of Pfeiffer’s Accelerated Reader Programme added that Accelerated reader is “advance technology for data driven schools. According to Cregar, the Accelerated Reader Programme consists of students choosing books that are in their zone of proximal development. These books are read by the students and after they finish reading the books, they take a computer based quiz that can range from five (5) to twenty (20) and awarded marks thereafter.

It is a programme that can gauge reading comprehension and track reading improvement. The Accelerated reader Programme has been called “the world’s most popular reading management software” by Pavonetti, Brimmer, Cipielewski (2003). According to them, it has reached as many as 50, 000 schools in the United States. The Accelerated Reader Programme works because it is research-based and it is focused around free-choice and not a scripted programme. Student that are achieving with the accelerated programme are also the students achieving during testing.

However, critics of the programme believe that it is also important that students are intrinsically motivated to read both inside and outside the school, Franklin and

Stephens (2006). The definition of motivation to read is the “likelihood of engaging in reading or choosing to read”, Gambrell (2011). In the view of the researcher, the software if introduced in all schools in Ghana will be excellent, but the huge challenge is the remoteness of a large number of communities where schools are found. The programmes can only be introduced in schools that are found in our towns and cities where there is network but not in remote communities where the problem is more pronounced. But if something can be done about it by government, then it will be welcoming news to Ghana Education Service.

## **2.6 Relationship between reading and performance**

There is a very close relationship between reading and performance. It is common knowledge that effective and fluent readers do better than poor readers when it comes to testing. When one reads and understands, one performs well in examinations or exercises given by teachers. The reverse is the case when a student cannot read. In order for students do well on standardized tests, they must be strong readers that read a wide variety of texts over a large number of topics. Students must be knowledgeable over a wide array of subjects in order to have the schema to comprehend standardized test passages, Hirsch (2006). Non-fluent readers are not usually successful during high-stakes testing. Stanley and Stanley (2011) support Hirsch’s view when they stated that “the importance of successful achievement on a high-stakes test in reading cannot be under stated”. Franklin and Stephens (2006) also stressed that reading in schools is important to students’ academic achievement. In the researcher’s school, it is mostly those that find it difficult to read and understand that often perform abysmally in their

examinations. Students that can read and understand mostly perform well, holding all other factors constant.

## **2.7 Reading Habits and Academic Performance**

It is common knowledge that reading and academic achievements are interrelated and heavily depends on each other. And so, one's reading habit can greatly affect academic performance. According to Bashir &Mattoo (2012), "academic achievement means how much knowledge the individual has acquired from the school". For reading habits, they are patterns of study attained by a student. These can be negative (poor reading habits) or positive (good reading habits). With this, the researcher thinks that with good reading habits, academic achievement will approve holding all other factors constant because it is the reading habit which helps the learner in obtaining meaningful and desirable knowledge. Good reading habits act as a strong weapon for the students to excel in life, Bashir &Mattoo (2012).

Reading habit is an essential aspect for creating a literate society in this world. It shapes the personality of individuals and it helps them to develop proper thinking methods, and creates new ideas, Palani (2012). However the developments in the mass media has continued to influence interest in reading hard copies of literatures such as; books, magazines, journals and others. Palani (2012) again mentioned that reading habit has lost its importance as both the young and the old are glued to the television to the detriment of reading their books. They have more interest in watching movies and playing music than reading or even doing their assignments. He also argues that effective reading is an important avenue of effective learning and reading is interrelated with the

total educational process and hence educational success requires successful reading habits. Indeed reading is interrelated with the total educational process because poor reading habit will slow down academic achievement in all the subjects under study, that is, Mathematics, Science, Economics, History and others, not only English Language.

## **2.8 Reading Comprehension**

The ability to read and comprehend a text is considered one of the basic conditions for success in life, Van den Broek&Edpin, (2012). Effective readers are known to understand what they read and to learn better from texts. Reading comprehension is a complicated process by nature, which requires readers to integrate their knowledge with the information in the text, Meneghetti, Carretti, & De Beni (2006). Good readers construct, revise, and question the meanings they make as they read, Duke & Pearson (2002). During the process of comprehension, the reader selects pieces of information from a text, ignoring some and adding things to others. In this way the reader can infer new meanings from a text beyond the ones presented. Accordingly, students can increase their learning levels through effective reading and comprehension. Many readers find it difficult to understand what they read because they do not use the strategies necessary to enhance comprehension. Apart from the reader's respect for the punctuation marks and accurate pronunciation of words, readers should take into consideration the functions of both inter and intra paragraph linkers like: furthermore, also, again, in addition to, moreover, nevertheless, but, however, and such like to aid them comprehend the text or story book they are reading. Paragraph linkers like; and, again, in addition to, moreover, indicate an addition of information when used to connect paragraphs, while but, nevertheless, however and many more, indicate contrast of ideas



either within a paragraph or between paragraphs. All these help one to comprehend a text very well. To understand meanings of unfamiliar words and expressions, readers should employ the use of collocations, that is, the use of related words and expressions within the environment of the unfamiliar word(s) to guess their meanings.

## **2.9 The Structural Relationship of Reading attitude, Reading Comprehension and Academic Achievement**

There exist a very close relationship between reading attitude, reading comprehension and academic achievement. This means that good reading attitude leads to comprehension and comprehension brings about effective academic achievement. This assertion is true as many scholars have conducted studies in this regard.

The studies mostly focus on the relationship between reading motivation, reading success and academic success. It is found out that reading motivation predicts the amount of reading and the amount of reading also predicts reading comprehension, Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, & Guthrie (2009). Also, they found out that there is a structural relationship between reading motivation, fluent reading, reading comprehension and academic success. It is believed that the student's internal academic motivation predicts students' academic success. The studies that are conducted on reading attitude, reading success and academic success are studies that are done generally at the correlative level and in these studies, the two (2) way relationship between reading and academic achievement is mentioned. The correlation between student's attitudes towards reading and their achievement in reading and comprehension has frequently been studied in the literature by many scholars. These studies explore the interplay between reading attitude and achievement in reading and comprehension, and emphasized the role

of attitudes in achievement. A good understanding of texts and a positive attitude towards reading are prerequisites for being a good reader. Also, Gborsong (2011) indicates that there is a positive and significant correlation between reading attitudes and academic achievement, and that positive reading attitudes allow students to enjoy higher levels of academic achievement. In studies on the effects of reading comprehension on academic achievement, reading comprehension is regarded as important for academic achievement, Bharunthram (2012) and deemed to be a prerequisite for many academic skills; this is because many subjects are learnt by reading, which means that one's reading comprehension skill should be of high quality. A decrease in one's reading comprehension ability will inevitably lead to a decrease in the amount of learning from texts.

### **2.10 Attitude of students towards reading in general**

The concept of attitude is an issue that is often studied in educational environments. Sainsbury (2004) points out that attitude is an internal situation that is acquired and has an effect on the selection of behaviour. Base on this definition, attitude can be defined as a cognitive manner that has emotional and sentimental side and affects the person's decision regarding doing something or not. If a student has good attitude towards reading, he/she will do well academically, but if the student's attitude towards reading is negative his academic achievement will be nothing to write home about. According to Bhani and Gupta (2010) the concept of attitude is made up of three components which are; emotional, cognitive and behavioral. The emotional is made of emotional reactions towards the attitude. The second which is the cognitive component is made of ideas and believes that the individual has about the attitude object. The third one

is the behavioural component that involves behaviours towards attitudes. Attitudes are emphasized heavily in studies of reading. Sainsbury (2004) stresses that reading education has two fundamental objectives; developing reading skills and positive attitudes towards reading. Studies of reading have also emphasized attitudes, since attitude towards reading is a variable that predicts academic achievement, Hood, Greed and Neumann (2012). Reading attitude is an important factor that affects students' reading achievement and in-class reading activities, determines whether they will become independent readers or not, Logan and Johnston (2009).

### **2.11 Hypothesis**

Reading is an important skill that each child should develop since it is related to academic achievement. As a result many researchers and experts have delved into the importance of reading to the child and strategies of reading that children should adopt. Teachers and parents should join hands to change the attitude of children towards reading. Reading should be effectively taught both in school and at home to let children develop interest in it. If it is possible, reading should be even be made a subject on it own and taught in schools. With this, pupils' academic work will be enhanced.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design, population of the study, research site, population selection procedure, data collection protocol, data collection and data analysis.

#### 3.1 Research Design

A research design is the framework that has been created to seek answers to research questions (Owu-Ewie, 2012). In other words, it is a detailed outline of how an investigation takes place. The design usually defines the study type that is, whether it is descriptive, correlational, case study, experimental or semi-experimental. A research design usually includes; data collection, the instruments employed in the collection, how the instruments are used and the intended means for analyzing the data collected. Case study is used to study a problem in some depth within a limited scale. The case study research is used to report on an individual, group or a situation that has been studied over time. It can be used on any mix of quantitative and qualitative data and explains why it is slightly different from the qualitative research. With the case study approach, if the case is about a group, it describes the behavior of the group as a whole, not behavior of each individual in the group. Because of its vivid descriptive approach it gives a clearer picture of the topic and the necessary details exposed for solution. Due to its in-depth nature, the researcher decided to employ the case study design to investigate the topic; “The influence of reading on student academic performance in Kanton Senior High School.

### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The study population was twenty-five (25) students purposely selected from the four first year vocational classes in Kanton Senior High School. The researcher, who is a teacher in the school and has been teaching the first year students, selected students from the vocational classes because the problem of some students' inability to read fluently is more pronounced in those classes. Many of them do not usually do well when they are given reading materials to read them aloud in class or to read them and answer questions.

### **3.3 Population Sample Selection Procedure**

The purposive sampling technique of the non-probability sampling approach was used to sample the population for the study. The population was sampled through personal observations the researcher made on students reading in the classroom. On a number of occasions students were engaged in 'Reading Aloud' exercises in class to determine those who could read efficiently and the ones who faced reading challenges. They were also given a reading comprehension passage to read and answer questions appended below it. The researcher realized through his observation that some students could read effectively and understand what they read while others found it uneasy to read and comprehend the content. With this, the students who could read fluently did better than their counterparts academically. So, for the purpose of the study, the researcher selected the sample that could not do any meaningful reading and for that matter could not understand the content of the given material for the project.

### **3.4 Data collection protocol**

Before the researcher collected all the data, the Headmaster and his two Assistants (assistant headmaster in charge of administration and assistant headmaster in charge of academics) were informed about the study to be undertaken. Permission was there after granted the researcher to go ahead with the study. The researcher gave them an overview of the study to enable the three teachers who were involved in the study to play their roles expectedly. Teachers who also teach the four vocational classes that the researcher is conducting the study on were also informed. The students in the four vocational classes were not also left out. The researcher briefed them on what the study was about and why it was to be conducted.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

Data collection is a scientific means of organizing a set of information to arrive at a meaningful and acceptable solution or answer(s) to a problem using research instruments. The research instruments for the study include: tests/exercises, observations and interviews. These instruments when properly used are very effective for data collection.

#### **3.5.1 Tests/Exercises**

Organizing of tests is one of the data collection strategies the researcher used. A comprehension passage was given to the students to read silently. First, the respondents read the text aloud for the researcher to check fluency, accurate pronunciation and respect for punctuation marks before the silent reading was done. Accurate pronunciation of words in reading is very important because without it understanding will be lost completely and so are the punctuation marks. According to (Baidoo, 2000), punctuation

marks do not have any meaning in themselves, but they help realize one meaning or the other. An effective reading must therefore take into consideration the effects punctuation marks can have on the meaning. After the silent reading, the students were asked to answer the two (2) sets of questions which were designed in accordance with recall, comprehension, analysis and synthesis steps. These questions were multiple choice questions and open-ended ones. Content and appropriateness of the questions were checked by the researcher and his three (3) colleagues from the Department of Languages. Correct and incorrect answers attracted one (1) and zero (0) points respectively. The open-ended questions were to determine whether the students had really comprehended the text and could sift or locate the main ideas. The questions covered content, inferential and vocabulary. The content questions were those questions whose answers were located directly from the text whereas the inferential questions demanded an in-depth thinking before getting the answer. That is, the student must make inferences from the text before getting the responses. The vocabulary question(s) measured students' level of vocabulary understanding by asking them to use a word or phrase to replace the underlined word(s) in the text. Each correct content question attracted one (1) mark while inferential and vocabulary questions carried two (2) marks each because they needed deeper thinking than the content questions.

### **3.5.2 Observation**

Observation is a primary technique of data collection on nonverbal behavior. The observation done by the researcher involved getting to the field to participate, organize and collect data personally on the topic. Because observation takes place in the field, it is often referred to as fieldwork. It consists of detailed documentation of behaviors,

events and context surrounding the events and behaviours (Best & Kahn, 2006). We have two different forms of observation; complete observation and participant observation. The behavior, deeds, interactions and academic work of the respondents have been critically observed by the researcher for over a year. The researcher taught and interacted with the students both inside and outside the classroom and so had first-hand information about their academic work and general behavior of the students. Before the observation, it was incumbent on the researcher to decide on the goal of the study, the group to be observed and how to gain entry to the group. Observation has several advantages because of which the researcher has decided to use it as a data collection strategy. The strategy was used because the researcher personally observed how the students read in class.

According to Patton (2002), observation among other things allows the researcher to understand and capture the setting of the problem, it makes the researcher open and adopts a discovery oriented approach in the study, and it gives the researcher opportunity to see things likely to elude people in the setting. Observation also helps the researcher learn about things participants will not want to talk about (helps collect data on non-verbal issues), and finally it helps the researcher discover things which people have not paid attention to.

### **3.5.3 Interview**

The use of interview is another effective data collection technique the researcher used in his data collection. Interviews are powerful conversations with subjects to obtain information to answer research questions. With the interview approach, the researcher interacted face – to face with the respondents and asked questions on the given topic,”



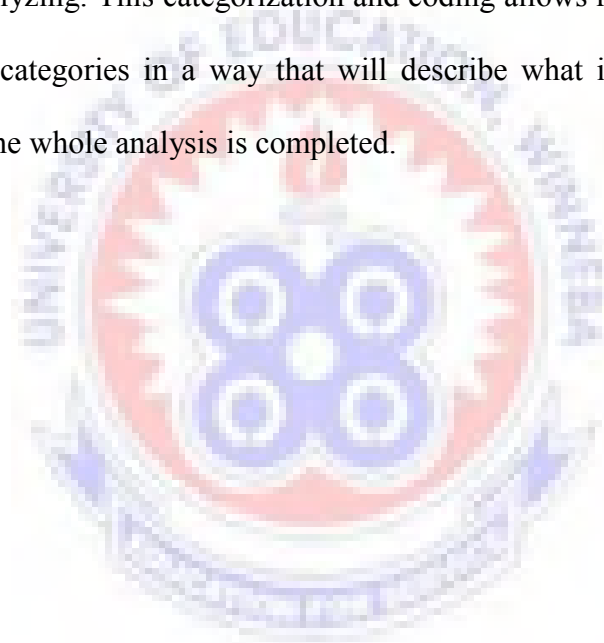
The influence of reading on student academic performance” to elicit responses from them. There are three (3) forms of interviews, namely, structured (standardized), semi-structured (semi-standardized), and unstructured (unstandardized) (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The structured interview form was preferred by the researcher to the other two because it offered each respondent approximately the same stimulus/questions so that the response elicited could be compared and contrasted. Apart from that the questions for the study were formally prepared and all students were asked the same questions. The researcher did not deviate from the order in which the questions were arranged. Also, no additional questions were added in the process of interviewing to avoid any form of interview bias and to also ensure that participants do not answer different questions. The researcher did not use the semi-structured interview form because its wording is so flexible that the level of language used in the questions can change at any point in time and this to the researcher is not good enough. For the unstructured interview schedule, there are no predetermined questions before the interview, but questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked as interview evolves (Patton 2002).

### **3.6 The Research Site**

Kanton Senior High School is the site of the study. This is a school located in Tumu in the Upper West Region of Ghana. It is one of the oldest Senior High Schools in the Upper West Region with a student population of close to two thousand. It is a mixed school. The school runs a number of programs namely; General Arts, Visual Arts, Science, Home Economics and Business. One of the hallmarks of the school is its undoubtable academic credentials which is a shining light to the people of Tumu and its environs.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Data analysis, according to Patton (2002), has different forms which include, unique case orientation, inductive analysis and creative synthesis. Considering these three, the researcher decided to use the inductive analysis approach because with this approach, similar responses elicited from respondents on the research topic are grouped according to the judgment of the researcher. These responses were described conceptually and domains created into which the researcher will group the responses as he continues analyzing. This categorization and coding allows recurring themes to be put into conceptual categories in a way that will describe what is happening. This trend continues until the whole analysis is completed.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the results and findings of the study. The results were the outcome of the tests, the interviews and observations made on the students. The respondents' performance on the test conducted, the interviews and the observations made by the researcher on the respondents are analyzed and discussed. All responses were coded into definite categories for easy and adequate analysis. Students' responses were tabulated; percentages were worked out and analyzed.

#### 4.1 Analysis of the test scores

Here, a passage was given to the students to read carefully and answer questions that were appended below the passage. The test was about hundred and twenty words long. The questions were made up of five (5) multiple choice questions and five (5) open-ended ones. While the multiple choice questions were basically on understanding and recall, the open-ended questions demanded a bit of inferences. For the purposes of the analysis the multiple choice questions were separated from the open-ended ones. Each set of questions were analyzed and discussed.

**Table 1: Multiple choice Questions**

Score	No. of students	Percentage (%)
0 – 2	8	32
3 – 5	17	68
Total	25	100

With the figures displayed in Table One (1), a score of zero to two (0-2) is a failed score and a score of three to five (3-5) is a pass score. This means that any student who scores zero (0), one (1) or two (2) out of the five (5) marks has performed below average and so has failed the text. On the other hand, any test score of three (3), four (4) or five (5) out of five (5) by a student indicates good performance. From table one (1), seventeen (17) students representing sixty-eight percent (68%) passed the test while thirty-two percent (32%) made up of eight students performed below average. This reveals that the percentage of students who passed the multiple choice test, that is, sixty-eight percent (68%) is far more than the thirty – two percent (32%) that did not do well. The percentages of performance signify that more than half of the students found it easier answering the multiple choice questions probably because the questions were based on recall.

**Table 2: Open-ended question**

Score	No. of students	Percentage (%)
0 – 2	22	88
3 – 5	3	12
Total	25	100

Just like the analyses in Table One (1), a score of zero to two (0-2) means the students have not done well whereas a score of three to five (3-5) is a pass mark. It can be seen from table one (1) that as many as twenty-two (22) students representing eighty-eight percent (88%) failed the open-ended test, while three (3) students indicating a percentage of twelve (12%) passed the open-ended test. Comparing the results of the multiple choice test with the results of the open-ended test one realizes that many students passed the multiple choice test than they passed the open-ended test. I suggest that the students could not effectively read and understand the text and so could not infer any meaning from it to enable them answer the open-ended questions, since they needed deeper and critical thinking before answering the questions.

#### **4.2 Observation**

In my observation, I carefully monitored how students read in class and their attitude towards reading in general. Based on the close observation made on how the students read, a number of reading inaccuracies were identified among the students. Some of the reading faults identified/observed included inaccurate pronunciation of words, skipping some words as they read, neglecting the punctuation marks, ignoring

initial and final consonant clusters, substituting one word for another word, pointing at words as they read, overly repeating words and phrases and many others. These reading inaccuracies were grouped under the following headings; inaccurate pronunciation of words, ignore parts of words, skip words, exchange words, repeat words and ignore punctuation into table three (3).

**Table 3: Observed Reading Inaccuracies of Students**

Reading inaccuracies	Number of students		Percentage (%)
	Yes	No	
Inaccurate pronunciation	25	-	100
Ignore parts of words	20	5	80.20
Skip words	19	6	76.24
Exchange of words	16	9	64.36
Repeat of words	25	-	100
Ignore punctuation	23	2	92.8
Difficulty in pronunciation of certain words	25	-	100

All the twenty-five (25) students forming the researcher's sample size admitted that inaccurate pronunciation of words was really a great challenge to them. While twenty (20) students representing eighty percent (80%) agreed that most of them ignore parts of words as they read, five (5) students representing twenty percent (20%) objected to it as a reading fault, giving a percentage ratio of 80%:20%. On skipping words in the

course of reading, nineteen (19) students representing seventy-six percent (76%) giving a 'yes' response as against six (6) students representing twenty-four percent (24%) saying 'no'. This shows that seventy-six percent (76%) of the students observed really face this reading fault while twenty-four percent of them do not.

Sixteen (16) students representing sixty-four percent (64%) responded in the affirmative on the issue of exchange of words when reading while nine (9) students, a percentage of thirty-six (36) responded 'no' indicating that they mostly do not exchange one word for another when they are reading. This gives a percentage ratio of 64%:36%.

Nevertheless, since as high as sixty-four percent (64%) of the students face this reading fault something urgent should be done to remedy the situation. With repeat of words and phrases as a reading challenge students encounter, all the twenty five (25) students, representing hundred percent (100%) admitted it as true. According to the students, they are all fond of repeating words, phrases and sentences more often as they read a given material. However, Sakyi (2003) states that repeating words and phrases is not completely out of the way, but too much of it slows down your reading pace and therefore hinders understanding.

From Table Three (3), as many as twenty-three (23) students, a percentage of 92 ignore punctuation marks. Just like inaccurate pronunciation of words and repeat of words, all the students representing hundred percent (100%) also agreed that when reading, they find it really very difficult to pronounce certain words. Students further revealed that it is a general problem they have been encountering any time they pick a book or any material to read.

### 4.3 Analyses and Discussion of Results of Interview

An eighteen (18) item interview guide was designed and administered to both students and teachers to draw information on how reading affects academic performance. Twelve (12) of the interview questions were directed to the students while the remaining six (6) were administered to five teachers, three (3) from the Department of Languages and two from the Science Department. Out of the twelve (12) questions for the students, the first four questions were based on personal data and so were not analyzed; only eight questions were analyzed and discussed. For that of the teachers' two of the questions were also on personal data which were equally not analyzed; but the four (4) remaining questions were analyzed. The students' interview was a written one while that of the teachers was recorded orally.

#### 4.3.1 Analyses and Discussion of students' interview

Item one (1): Can you read?

This question was posed to find out if students could read fluently any material given to them. Students' responses were put in a form of a table as seen below.

**Table 4: Students' ability to read**

Responses	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	21	84
No	0	-
A little	4	16
Total	25	100



From Table Four (4), twenty-one (21) students, a percentage of 84 said they could read, no students said they could not read, but four (4) of them representing (16%) admitted they could read a little. By this, these four (4) students agreed they were not fluent readers. Shortly after this interview, these same students were made to read page one (1) and page two (2) of Ananse in the Land of Idiots, one of their core literature books. A lot of them could not read fluently as they claimed. Consider table five (5).

**Table 5: Showing students ability to read**

Responses	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Can read	7	28
Cannot read	12	48
Can read a little	6	24
Total	25	100

The figures in Table Five (5) reveal that the eighty –four percent (84%) of students in table four (4) who earlier on said they could read did not say the truth because after they were made to read the first and second pages of Ananse in the Land of Idiots to confirm their responses on whether they could read or not, the percentage reduced drastically from eighty-four percent (84%) in table four (4) to twenty – eight percent (28%) in table five (5). That is, the number of students who claimed they could read in table four (4) (21 students) came down greatly to seven (7) students in table five (5), giving a difference of fourteen (14) students who claimed they could read. In table five (5), the figures further indicate that twelve (12) students representing forty-eight percent

(48%) out of the total sample of twenty-five (25) students could not actually read the given materials. Six (6) students making a percentage of twenty-four (24) could read a little while seven (7) students representing twenty-eight percent (28%) could fluently read the materials given to them and understand what they read. The students who read and understood what they read performed better academically than those who found it difficult to read. With this, the indication is that students' academic achievement is significantly influenced by their ability to read efficiently and make sense of the text or book given to them.

Item two (2): Do you like reading?

This question was asked to find out if respondents had interest in reading or like reading in general. Consider the table below;

**Table 6: Students' interest in reading**

Responses	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	17	68
No	3	12
Somehow	5	20
Total	25	100

Seventeen (17) students representing (68%) of the sample size have interest in reading, twelve percent (12%) making three (3) students has no interest in reading at all

and five (5) students representing (20%) somehow like reading. The 20% does not have so much interest in reading and therefore do not read all the time.

Item three (3): Do you always understand what you read?

The essence of the question was to find out whether students really comprehend all the reading materials that they go through. The responses elicited from the students were tabulated as can be seen below:

**Table 7: Students' ability to understand what they read**

Responses	Number of students	Percentage (%)
I understand	2	8
I don't understand	10	40
Sometimes, I understand	8	32
Sometimes, I do not understand	5	20
Total	25	100

The students who understand what they always read were two (2) representing 8% of the selected students. This is woefully inadequate. Ten (10) students, a percentage of 40 do not understand what they read. Eight (8) students' constituting 32% of the sample size, sometimes understand what they read whereas five (5) students making a percentage of 20 sometimes do not understand what they read at all. The two (2) students who understand and the five students who sometimes do not understand constitute 28%, while those who do not understand and the students who sometimes understand also constitute

72%. By implication, those students who understand what they read are far less than the percentage of students who do not understand very well what they read.

Item 4: If 'no' why?

This question was related to the above item with the intention of finding out reasons why students read and do not understand and what they have read. The students' responses were collated and tabulated.

**Table 8: Reasons students read and do not understand**

Responses	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Length of text	4	16
Language complexity	6	24
Structure of text	1	4
Vocabulary of text	10	40
Unfamiliar texts	4	16
Total	25	100

Out of the five (5) reasons advanced for students' inability to understand what they often read, four (4) students representing 16% stated that it is always as a result of the length of the text that they read and do not understand.

Twenty-four percent (24%) of the students, that is, six (6) students blamed it on language complexity of texts given to them to read or they come across. One (1) student

representing four percent (4%) of the students mentioned the structure of texts they come into contact with. The majority of the students (i.e. ten (10) in number forming a percentage of 40) believed that the vocabulary used in texts usually hinder comprehension. According to them, the words used are mostly unfamiliar to them. Lastly, four (4) students forming sixteen percent (16%) were of the view that it is the unfamiliar nature of the texts that hamper comprehension. That most of the reading materials appear completely new to them.

The students' responses indicated that they would find it easy to understand a passage/text that is not too long. The language should be simple and the material familiar to them. Above all, the vocabulary should not be above the level of the senior high schools student.

Item 5: Do you always score high marks in your exercises and exams?

The purpose of this interview question was to find out how students perform in the subjects especially the subjects involving much reading. The responses given by the students to the question were written down and tabulated. Look at the table below.

**Table 9: Showing students' academic performance**

Responses	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	10	40
No	15	60
Total	25	100

Out of twenty-five students, ten (10) of them constituting a percentage of forty (40%) admitted that their academic performance was good. However, more than half of these students, fifteen (15) students representing sixty percent (60%) agreed their academic performance was really bad. They answered 'no' to the question. By this, the percentage of students (60%) whose academic performance were bad were more than those whose academic performance were good. The percentage of the students who perform badly exceeded the students who do well by a twenty percent (20%). That is sixty percent (60%) minus forty percent (40%) is equal to twenty percent (20%).

Item six (6): Why do you not score high marks in your exercises and exams?

The question was to elicit reasons for which students do not perform well, in their examinations. The responses given by the students were put in a table as shown below.

**Table 10: Reasons for which students do not perform well in their examinations**

Responses	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Questions are always difficult	5	20
I cannot read and understand	12	48
I cannot express myself	8	32
I am always sick	-	0
The school environment is noisy	-	0
Total	25	100

All the responses of the students are relevant and can bring about poor performance in an examination. Out of the responses, five (5) students, a percentage of 20 stated that the difficult nature of the questions accounted for the poor performance. Forty-eight percent (48%) representing twelve (12) students agreed that they performed poorly because they could not read and mostly do not understand what they are to do. Once they cannot read and understand the material before them, they will surely not know how to answer the questions and this in no doubt brings about poor academic performance. Eight (8) students' constituting thirty-two percent (32%) said they do not perform well because they cannot express themselves very well when they are writing. This means that they lack the necessary vocabulary and expressions to explain themselves very well when writing. This is partly because they do not read extensively. Here, one can see the relationship between reading, understandings, writing and academic performance. All these aspects are closely related with reading as the bedrock or the springboard that leads to the rest. This is deduced from the table above. None of the students agreed that being always sick or the school environment being noisy is a reason for their poor performance.

Item seven (7): At what level were you taught reading?

This item was to help the researcher know the point at which the student was exposed to reading in his/her educational life. The responses of students were tabulated and analyzed.

**Table 11: Showing the level at which students were taught reading**

Responses	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Kindergarten	-	-
Primary	2	8
JHS	17	68
SHS	6	24
Total	25	100

From the figures in Table Eleven (11), as many as seventeen (17) of the students were taught reading in the Junior High School. This represents a percentage of 68 out of hundred percent (100%). Two (2) of the students representing eight percent (8%) were taught how to read in the primary school and six (6) students making twenty-four percent (24%) only started to learn how to read in the senior high school. This statistics tells the researcher that many of the students were not taught how to read early in their educational life which is very bad. In the words of (Deaver, 2000), a child should be exposed to books in his early years so as to instill in them the lifelong love for reading. Under normal circumstances, pupils from primary four (4) should vigorously be exposed to reading story books, letters, hymns, articles and novels so that by the time these students move into the Junior High School, they would have been very good readers. Here is the case the majority of them were introduced to reading at the JHS and others at the Senior High School. This explains why a number of students in Senior High Schools find it extremely difficult to read a given material and make sense out of it. Indeed the

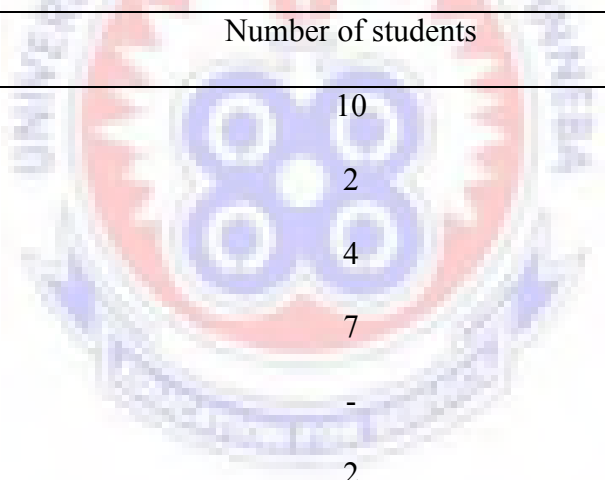


level at which a child is introduced to reading or books plays a vital role in his educational life.

Items 8: How often do you read your books?

The question was to help the researcher know how regularly the students attend to their books. The responses they gave made the researcher deduce whether they had interest in reading or not. Consider table twelve (12);

**Table 12: Showing how often students read their books**



Responses	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Everyday	10	40
Once a week	2	8
Twice a week	4	16
Thrice a week	7	28
Monthly	-	
Occasionally	2	8
Total	25	100

The figures displayed on the table indicate that ten (10) students' constituting forty percent (40%) attend to their books every day. Two (2) students representing eight percent (8%) read once a week. Sixteen percent (16%) representing four (4) students read their books twice every week. For thrice a week, seven (7) students forming twenty-eight

percent (28) attend to their books. Nobody reads monthly. That is no student waits until it is a month before he/she reads his books. But occasionally, two (2) students representing eight percent (8%) of the sample visit their books. Even though the figures on the table reveal that those students who read their books are ten (10) forming the highest percentage on the table, critical analyses depicts that an addition of the percentages of those students who read once a week eight percent (8%), twice a week (16%), thrice a week (28%) and occasionally (8%) giving a total percentage of (60%) is twenty percent (20%) more than the highest percentage on the table. This means that the number of students who do not read often or attend to their books regularly are more than those who read every day.

#### **4.2.2: Analyzing the outcome of interview conducted for teachers.**

Item 1: Do your students perform very well in your subject area?

The item was targeted at finding out the performance of the students in their respective subject areas from the teachers who handle them. The table below contains the teachers' responses.

**Table 13: Showing performance of students in their respective subject areas**

Responses	Number of Teachers	Percentage (%)
Yes	-	0
No	4	80
Sometimes	1	20
Total	5	100

From the data in table thirteen (13), none of the teachers interviewed agreed that the student always perform well in their subject areas. This gives a zero percent (0%) for the 'yes' response. Four (4) out of the five (5) teachers interviewed stated categorically that the students do not prove their worth in the subjects they teach. This number of teachers stand at eighty percent (80%). One teacher representing twenty percent (20%) said the students sometimes do well and sometimes too do not pull up. With this, the one (1) teacher also still doubts the students' performance.

Item 2: If 'no' why?

This question was presented to ascertain the reasons for which the teachers were saying that the students were not doing well. The reasons assigned by the teachers were collated and tabulated. Consider table fourteen (14) below;

**Table 14: Reasons for which students don't do well**

Responses	Number of Teachers	Percentages (%)
They dodge classes	1	20
They cannot read	3	
They are lazy	1	60
They cannot pass	-	20

Even though twenty percent ( 20% ) of the teachers believe that students perform poorly because they dodge classes and are also lazy respectively, sixty percent (60%) emphasized that the students abysmal performance is as a result of their inability to read and understand materials given to them. The implication is that there are other reasons responsible for the poor academic performances of the students but the greatest of them is their inability to read and understand what they are reading.

Item 3: Do you often teach your students how to read in the classroom?

This question was directed to the teachers of English with the aim of finding out whether they teach the students reading during their lessons or not, better still whether they even encourage the students to read.

**Table 15: Indicating how often teachers teach reading in their classrooms**

Responses	Number of Teachers	Percentages (%)
Yes	2	40
No	2	
Sometimes	1	40
		20
Total	5	100

The Table reveals that two (2) teachers, making 40% stated that they often teach reading in their classrooms. Forty percent (40%) said they do not often teach reading as a topic, while twenty percent (20%) said they sometimes teach students how to read in their classes. A close look at the figures above shows that the teachers are also part of the reading challenges students encounter and hence students inability to understand what they read. And this greatly influences their academic work.

Item 4: what is the way forward to ensure that your students are able to read fluently?

This item was meant to know what teachers would do to ensure that their students overcome their reading challenges. What steps would teachers employ to make sure students are able to read efficiently which would translate in to their academic performance.

**Table 16: Showing the way forward to ensure students ability to read**

Responses	Number of Teachers	Percentages (%)
Encouraging students to go to the school library	2	40
Ask students to attend classes regularly	1	20
Teach reading lessons in class	2	40
Total	5	100

The numbers show that two (2) teachers representing forty percent (40%) advocated that to overcome the reading challenges students encounter, they should be encouraged to frequently visit the school library and read novels and other story books. One (1) teacher representing twenty percent (20%) was of the view that students should be asked to regularly attend classes. Another forty percent (40%) of teachers believed that teaching reading lessons in the classrooms would greatly help students read efficiently. And when they are able to read very well, their performances would improve tremendously.

From the analysis, what it means is that if the students are encouraged to read novels or story books and reading lessons are taught in the classrooms, students would overcome their reading challenges and as a result improve academically.

#### **4.3 Summary**

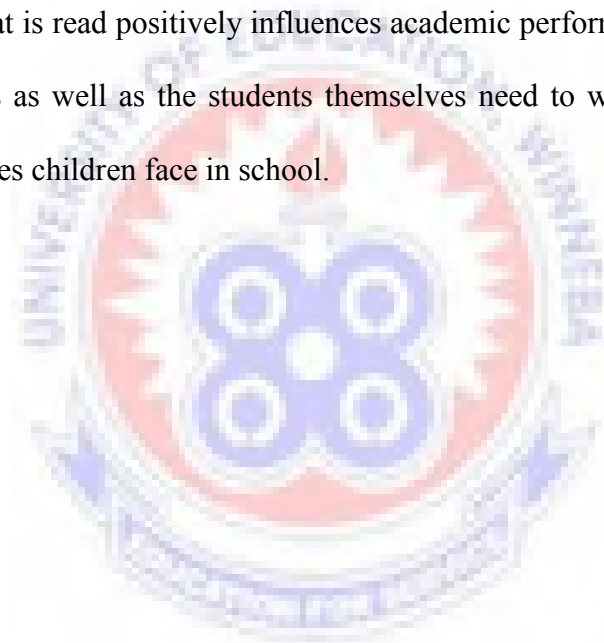
The chapter analyzes the outcomes of the tests and interviews conducted by the researcher for the students as well as observations made on them.

The results of the two sets of test items comprising multiple choice questions and open-ended questions were analyzed and discussed. Also, the outcomes of the twelve (12) items on the interview guide for students and tutors were vigorously analyzed and tabulated. The reading inaccuracies or faults identified by the researcher were also dealt with. The chapter further explains the essence of the questions posed, describes the responses of respondents and draws conclusions. Again, it highlights the fact that some students face reading challenges which adversely affect their academic performance. These reading challenges are traceable to students' lack of interest in reading, late

introduction of children to reading or books in their educational life, children not being motivated to read by teachers and parents, teachers not paying much attention on reading in the classroom and laziness and shyness on the part of students. With these reading problems, teachers need to assist students to overcome them to enhance their academic achievements.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The analysis in the chapter clearly reveals that students' ability to read and comprehend what is read positively influences academic performances and vice versa. So teachers, parents as well as the students themselves need to work together to solve the reading challenges children face in school.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0: Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the findings of an Action Research conducted in Kanton Senior High School. It is to assist students with reading challenges overcome those challenges to enable them perform better academically. In line with this, various intervention measures including interviews, tests and observations were used by the researcher to elicit information from the students and teachers. Students were also given passages to read in the classroom to ascertain the level of difficulty they go through when reading. The data gathered was analysed, findings were made, conclusion were drawn and recommendations outlined.

#### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

One of the major findings discovered was that some students are unable to read fluently at the Senior High School level when they are given any reading material to read. This is exactly the challenge many first year students face in Kanton Senior High School. The researcher sees this phenomenon of some students not been able to read even at the senior high school level as not only a worrying situation but also a threat to standards of education in Ghana.

In the analyses, sixty-eight percent (68%) of the students said they were introduced to reading at the Junior High School level and this, the researcher thinks is not



good enough because they should have been introduced to reading in the primary school to expose them to reading very early in their educational life.

Apart from the above discovery, it was also found that many students do not have interest in reading. Teachers as well as the students confirmed it in the analyses in chapter four (4). As a result, many students find it challenging to read fluently and comprehend the text read.

Closely related to the above finding was that students who read fluently and grasp what they read often perform better academically whereas those who find it difficult to read usually do not do well in their academic work. Four (4) out of the five (5) teachers interviewed actually confirmed that some of the students cannot indeed read fluently and understand what is read.

Another finding was that students really have reading inaccuracies like inaccurate pronunciation of words, and ignoring parts of words as they read. All these negatively affect understanding and for that matter performance in reading. Slow reading and glossing over punctuation marks were also part of the reading faults identified probably due to poor vision among students, poor teaching methods and lack of motivation to learn. Based on these, it is argued that the reading challenges among the study population are true and this greatly affects performance.

It is clear that part of the problem of students' inability to read emanate from teachers. Some teachers do not motivate their students to read to overcome their reading challenges to enable them perform better. To forestall this, they need to change their negative perception about the difficulties of reading and rather whip up students' interest

in reading. The study revealed that twelve percent (12%) of the students do not show interest in reading. The methods some teachers adopt in teaching reading in the schools appear not be learner centred.

It is believed that if students are taught how to read very early, they would overcome their reading challenges and therefore perform excellently in their academic work, for there is a very close relationship between reading and academic performance.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The objective of this study was to investigate how reading influences academic achievement. This was specifically carried out in Kanton Senior High School in Tumu in the Upper West Region of Ghana. The findings suggest that one's ability or inability to read reflects on one's academic performance. It was also gathered from the research that many students do not show interest in reading and that many students are not introduced to reading very early which affects them academically in their educational life. Teachers are the role models of students and whatever they do in class have direct impact on the students either positively or negatively. And as role models, teachers should do everything possible to motivate students or encourage them to read at any point in time. Teachers' methodology of teaching reading in the classroom should be activity based and student centred.

Although the research is comprehensive, it is not exhaustive as the conditions that prevailed for reading and its impact on students' performance in Kanton Senior High School could change from one school to another in the country.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

From the findings, it is recommended that children should be introduced to reading very early in their lives to help them cultivate the reading skills when they are young, so that it becomes part of their educational life. Today, there are many community libraries where children can be encouraged to go and read novels and fictions. When this is done, it will help them express themselves well in speech and write good English in the compositions and other write-ups which will eventually lead to better academic performance in their future.

It is recommended that teachers should also use reading methods that are activity based and can help children to become quick and fluent readers in their various classrooms.

Again teachers should always encourage and guide children to read both in school and at home so that they can develop interest in reading.

Experienced and qualified teachers should be placed in the lower classes of the primary school so that students will have firm grips of language before they enter the Junior High School. When this happens, students will be able to read efficiently and understand what they read when they are enrolled into the Senior High Schools.

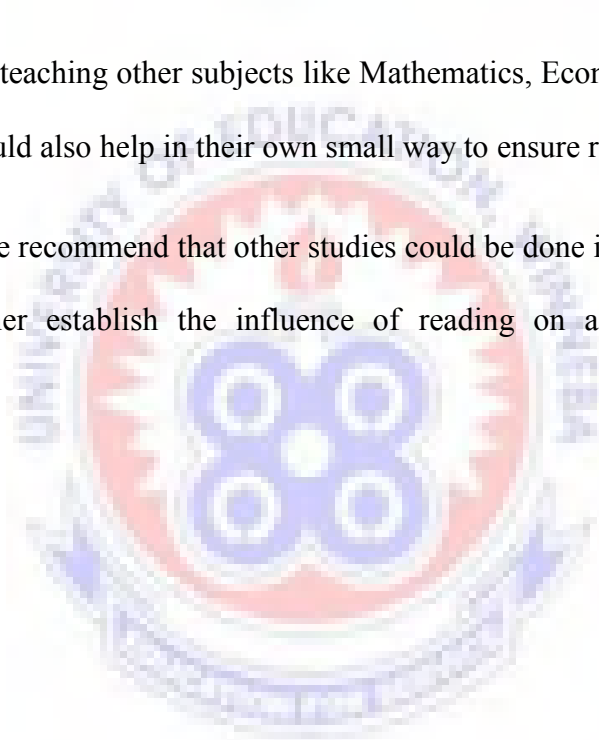
In addition, much attention should be given to reading across all levels of education. The Government of Ghana should introduce Reading as a separate subject to be taught in schools at all levels. With this, teachers should be specially trained and equipped with the necessary strategies and methodology to handle reading in our schools.

Such teachers will have time to study and help students with individual reading problems and correct them early before they enter the Senior High School.

Schools should release reading materials especially textbooks and other supplementary readers to students. There is the need to classify teachers according to their areas of specialization so that non-English teachers are not made to teach English Language.

Teachers teaching other subjects like Mathematics, Economics, Social studies and the Sciences should also help in their own small way to ensure reading in their classes.

I therefore recommend that other studies could be done in other schools across the country to further establish the influence of reading on academic performance of students.



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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Guide

#### Interview Questions for Students

Answer all questions below, please;

1. What is your name?.....
2. Where did you attend your basic school?.....
3. What aggregate did you get at the BECE level?.....
4. Do you read?.....
5. Do you like reading?.....
6. Do you always understand what you read?.....
7. If 'no' why?.....
8. Do you always score high marks in your exercise and exams?.....
9. Why do you not perform well in your exams?.....
10. At what level were you taught reading?.....
11. How often do you read your books?.....
12. If 'no' why?.....

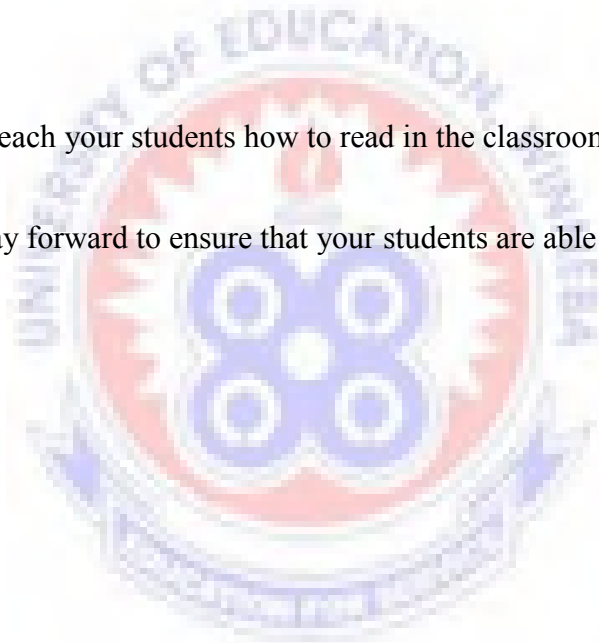


## **APPENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS**

Answer all questions below, please;

1. Name of teacher.....
2. Subject taught and classes.....
3. Do your students perform very well in your subject area?
4. If 'no' why?
5. Do you often teach your students how to read in the classroom?
6. What is the way forward to ensure that your students are able to read fluently?



## APPENDIX C

### SAMPLE COMPREHENSION PASSAGE

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions on it

Our daily experiences shape our character. Strangely we can acquire certain enduring habits from very embarrassing situations, such as this one, provided we are ready to learn our lessons.

It was the tradition in my college that, every final year literature student should give an oral presentation to the class on the topic of his choice. On the first day of the presentation, I had hoped desperately that Mr. Mumuni would not notice me. I therefore moved to the back of the class and hid behind a burly boy. I looked everywhere except towards the front of the room not wanting to meet his glance. But all my ploys were unsuccessful: I was the first on this list.

I was very much displeased on hearing my name and concluded that Mr. Mumuni disliked me. My heart started pounding furiously and I developed ghost pimples all over my body. “Don’t get nervous; be a man” I tried to encourage myself as I got up. With sweating hands, I gathered my notes which I had tucked away in my note book. He watched me with that familiar half –smile of his which seemed to say he knew I was as usual not well prepared and was about to make a fool of myself.

It was not that I didn’t have ample time to prepare for the presentation. It was no surprise assignment. For weeks we had gone over the fundamentals of writing a research paper, but I had typically waited until the last few days before working on the assignment. After thumbing through an encyclopedia for a suitable topic, I settled on William Blacke, a

poem whom I knew nothing about. When three short days were over, my paper was finished with so little content.

As I stood on the podium, I was confident that, all would be over in a matter of minutes because my mates would not ask many questions since they were ignorant of the topic as myself. I only steeled myself from the rebuke from Mr. Mumuni who never countenanced ill-prepared papers such as the one I have written. But how wrong I was!.

After my short and hurried presentation, my mates bombarded me with a lot of questions which exposed my scant knowledge of the topic. What a shame to learn for first time that Blake was one of the poems recommended for our study and was for first time that Blake was one of the poems recommended for our study and was treated in the class the previous week; my whole body shook uncontrollably as I tried to answer the question. I became very downhearted and wish that Mr. Mumuni would step in and end my humiliation at the hands of my mates.

That day, his attitude surprised me instead of admonishing me for my poor performance, he drew our attention to the few salient points raised in the discussion and asked the next speaker to present his paper. Perhaps he had concluded that, I would never reform, so he did not want to flog a dead horse.

However, I turned over a new leaf after this humiliation and bitter experience. The incident cured me of procrastination and for the rest of my college life, I submitted well researched papers to my teachers.

To the surprise of everybody, I was top of the class in our final examination. What I cherished most is that, I no longer underrate the intelligence of anyone.

Answer the following questions

A. For each of the following words underlined in the passage, give another word or phrase which means the same and which can replace it in the passage.

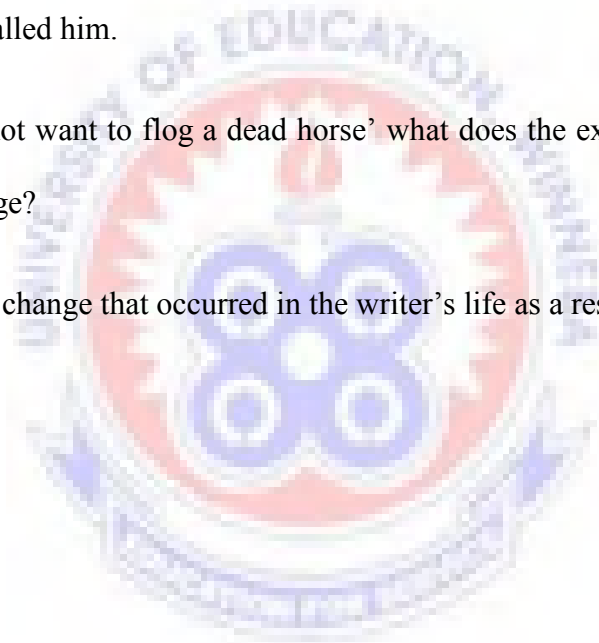
(i) Enduring (ii) ample (iii) downhearted

B. Why did the writer try to dodge the presentation on the first day?

C. Give one word or expression which describes the writer's state of mind when the teacher called him.

D. 'He did not want to flog a dead horse' what does the expression mean as used in the passage?

E. State one change that occurred in the writer's life as a result of the incident.



**Objective questions**

1. What was the tradition of the writer's college?
  - (A) Every final year literature student should give an oral presentation to the classroom on a topic of his choice.
  - (B) That every student should pass his/her exams
  - (C) That every student should be loyal to the teachers
  - (D) That no student should visit a teacher.
  
2. What is the grammatical name of the underlined expression "who never countenanced ill – prepared papers".
  - (A) Noun clause
  - (B) Adjectival phrase
  - (C) Adverbial clause
  - (D) Relative clause
  
3. Why did the writer try to dodge the presentation on the first day?
  - (A) He was afraid of the teachers
  - (B) He was ill-prepared
  - (C) He had no enough books to prepare
  - (D) He didn't know what to prepare on.

4. It was not that I did not have ample time to prepare for the presentation.

Which of the following words can best replace the underlined word above?

- (A) Enough
- (B) Calculated
- (C) Approved
- (D) Unmarked

5. What change occurred in the writer's life as a result of the incident?

- (A) His attitude of laziness
- (B) His attitude of disturbing opponents in the class
- (C) Not always preparing well when given a presentation
- (D) Always respecting the orders of his teachers.

## APPENDIX D

### Sample students scripts

Name: Sadzongoly Istazianah Ebony

Class: Vocational one (A)

Date: 13th July 2016

Subject: English class test.

1. Objectives ✓

1. A. Every final year literature student should give an oral presentation to the classroom on a topic of their choice.

3. D He didn't know what to prepare on.

2. C. Adverbial clause ✗

2/5

4. A Enough ✓

5. His attitude of laziness ✗

Theory

A. During ✗

ii. ample - Enough ✓

iii. downhearted - discouraged, disturbed.

ttt

B. He didn't know what to prepare on.

1/10

# Definition Via-Anka Bayong

## VIA

A words and their meanings.

- (i) Enduring → New ~~x~~
- (ii) ample → Much or more or Enough.
- (iii) downhearted → worried ~~x~~

(B) They [Because they writer's things that his presentation was wrong] ~~x~~

(C) Displeased. ✓

4/10

▷ He did not want ~~to~~ ask for more.

E He progress the habit of confident. and always respecting the orders of his teachers.

## Objectives

- (1) C ~~x~~
- (2) B ~~x~~
- (3) A ~~x~~
- (4) A ✓
- (5) D ~~x~~

1/5



✓ NEMES ARE REACHED TUBRAHIM

✓ 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2016

1) A ✓

i) Enduring - good ✓

ii) ample enough ✓

2) B ✗

ii) downhearted - sad ✓

3) A ✗

4) A ✓

5) A ✗

2/5

2/10

JAWIA  
JHS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
CLASS TEST

13<sup>th</sup> July 2016

ABDUL-FAWAZ SEIDU CHACSU

Comprehension

A(ii) Enduring — Good ✓

(i) Ample — enough, sufficient ✓

(ii) downhearted → disappointed ✓

B. Because he did not prepare for the assignment given to them. ✓

3/10

C. His heart was beating and he was shivering and afraid. ✓

D. He ~~did not~~ <sup>do</sup> not ~~study~~ <sup>have time for</sup> non-serious students. ✓

E. He presented all ~~work~~ <sup>assignments</sup> that was given to him by his teachers. ✓

OBJECTIVES

1. A. ✓

2. B. ✓

3. D. ✓

4. A. ✓

5. A. ✓

2/5

NAME: ISSAH SULLY

CLASS: VIA

SUBJECT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

DATE: 21st JULY, 2016.

1/10

A. J. Enduring - interesting. ✓

↓ Ample - Enough. ✓

↓, downhearted - ~~afraid~~. ✓

B. He wanted to ~~dogt~~ dodge the presentation on the first day because he was asked to give an oral representation to the class ~~of his~~ on the topic of his choice.

C. He ~~was~~ afraid didn't know what to prepare on for the presentation. ✓

D. He ~~was~~ did not want the teachers to hate him because of his ~~laziness~~.

E. Not always preparing well when given a presentation.

0/10

13th July 2010

# Yawid Abudu Saani |VIP

Enduring provided we are ready to learn  
tradition ~~of~~ our lessons.

E Tradition

(D) Enduring

(W) Tradition

(M)

(D) Enduring = badly  $\alpha$

(W) ample faithfully enough  $\checkmark$

(M) Downhearted  $\alpha$

1/10

b Why did the writer try to lodge the  
presentation on the first day?

I had hoped desperately that Mr.  
Mumford would not notice me.

Therefore I went to the back of the class  
and hid behind a burly boy.

A  $\checkmark$

B  $\alpha$

C  $\alpha$

D  $\alpha$

1/5

A enough  $\alpha$

B calculated count  $\alpha$

C

D

PS D  $\alpha$

VOC 1<sup>A</sup>.

Name: MEKE MAHAMAH ~~MEKE~~

- (A) Enduring - bad ✓  
ample - enough ✓  
down hearted - afraid ✓
- (B) ~~not~~ because he was not prepared. ✓
- (C) The teacher dislike him ✓
- (D) he don't want to be confused. ✓
- (E) He submitted a well research papers for his teachers. ✓

3/10

ENGLISH  
VOCAB

NANSIA AZIZ

Wednesday  
14th July, 2016

- A. (i) Enduring : Going through. ✓  
(iii) Down hearted : Confused. ✓  
(ii) Ample : more enough ✓

B. Because, he had typically waited until the last few days, before working on the assignment and was not fully prepared up. ✓

C. He was very much displeased on his name as

d. To embarrass ✓

E. The incident cured him from procrastination and for the rest of my college life. ✓

3/10

VIA

Badung Alhassan Murana

- A // (i) Lazy  $\alpha$
- (ii) Much  $\alpha$
- (iii) disappointed  $\alpha$

0/10

B // Because he thought the teacher would not know him.  $\alpha$

C // He thought the teacher dislike him.

D // He thought he was not goto change

E // He submitted well researched papers

Objective

- (1) A ✓
- (2) C  $\alpha$
- (3) B ✓
- (4) A ✓
- (5) A  $\alpha$

3/5

VIA

Badung Alhassan Murana

- A // (i) Lazy  $\alpha$
- (ii) Much  $\alpha$
- (iii) disappointed  $\alpha$

0/10

B // Because he thought the teacher would not know him.  $\alpha$

C // He thought the teacher dislike him.

D // He thought he was not goto change

E // He submitted well researched papers

Objective

- (1) A  $\checkmark$
- (2) C  $\alpha$
- (3) B  $\checkmark$
- (4) A  $\checkmark$
- (5) A  $\alpha$

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English Language 11<sup>th</sup> July 2016  
VOC A.

Abdu Issahaque Nasir

- (i) enduring ~~badly~~ ✓
- (ii) Ample ~~confidence~~ enough ✓
- (iii) downhearted. Afraid ✓

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(b) I had hoped desperately that Mr. Mumuni would not notice me. Therefore I moved to the back of the class and hid behind a burly boy.

(c) He became very downhearted and wish that Mr. Mumuni would stop in and end ~~my~~ his humiliation at the hands of his master.

(d) ~~Because he died so~~ he did not want to flog a dead horse. means he did not want to perform badly in class. ✓

(e) ~~He was top of the class in his final examination.~~

(e) ~~It was not always prepared when given a presentation.~~