



Determining the Activities of Teachers that Enhance Reading Interest of Early Grade Learners

Samuel Adzah

Presbyterian Senior High School, Tema, Ghana

* Corresponding Author: **Samuel Adzah**

Article Info

ISSN (Online): 2582-7138

Impact Factor (RSIF): 7.98

Volume: 06

Issue: 05

September - October 2025

Received: 02-07-2025

Accepted: 03-08-2025

Published: 25-08-2025

Page No: 89-94

Abstract

The study sought to determine activities of teachers that enhance reading interest of Early grade learners. The study employed sociocultural theory and its importance in acquisition of reading skills and knowledge. Quantitative research design (method) was employed in this study and data was obtained from structured questionnaires that were administered to the class teachers. The study adopted a purposive sampling in selecting fifteen (15) Early grade class teachers at a public school in Asutsuare (Ghana). Data obtained was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences and Services Solutions; formally Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The analysis revealed that using guided reading in the classrooms and questions were identified as the most activities that influenced their interest in reading. Engaging the children in book talks and Reading picture books were then followed. Also, identifying children's attitude to reading, Storytelling and identifying children's attitude to reading were identified as means to enhance their interest. Motivating reading and reading aloud to children were least identified by the teachers among the other activities. Therefore, teachers must ensure that pupils are compelled to read and pronounce words appropriately.

Keywords: Teachers' activities, Reading, Interest, Early Grade Learners, Sociocultural theory

Introduction

It is at the primary school level that a child truly enters the world of school. Having the ability to read accurately is a gateway for accessing reading comprehension. Galletly and Knight (2004, p. 6) ^[18] suggested that if reading accuracy is mastered by the middle of primary school, the reader is now more able to focus on reading comprehension. Reading is taught using the syllabic method, which allows learners to assimilate the foundations of reading and spelling quickly and surely.

The significance of reading in any society cannot be overemphasized as it is the key to academic, social and economic progression of learners. For this to happen, the teaching of reading must be effective. A reading society is likely to succeed in sustainable development as its citizenry will participate in decision making and economic development with an informed mind. This is especially necessary in countries where majority of learners do not go beyond the 7th grade due to poor retention rate and lack of infrastructure/resources to absorb them. This is the reason why many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are working hard to ensure that the school going learner do not just attend school but also learn and acquire necessary skills of reading and writing (Adeniji & Omale, 2010) ^[1]. The ability to read is one determiner of learners' success or failure. They must form the habit of reading to perform well in all subjects. A good reader has a better opportunity for greater achievement. Ajibola (2006) ^[2] stated that reading habits are cultivated by individuals who are ready to give their all to it. Also, the skill acquired in reading can promote the acquisition of language skills like listening, speaking, and writing. Some primary school learners find it difficult to read and understand even though reading is indispensable. Some show a carefree attitude towards reading. This problem is not peculiar to primary schools but pertains to all categories of readers. Lasisi (2007) ^[24] asked a fundamental question on what books the average African child reads and later found out that reading seems not a part of the culture of the people that control their countries' destiny.

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Reading in our country (Ghana) has been a problem which is yet to be solved in most primary schools. Most primary school learners do not receive the necessary education which could assist in reading skills. Hence the syllabic method which is used as a reading skill for the development of reading as well as phonetics which is used as the basis of reading is either not taught well, not taught at all or the learners do not understand it hence the problem of reading might emerge when the learner reaches the college or tertiary institution and will be unable to read effectively. The study therefore sought to determine activities of teachers that enhance reading interest of learners. It addresses the question; What are the activities of teachers that enhance the reading interest of Early grade learners?

Theoretical framework

The Sociocultural Perspective in Teaching Reading

Having laid down the groundwork regarding the sociocultural theory and its importance in acquisition of skills and knowledge, it is now important to see the relevance of this theory to teaching reading (and writing). McIntyre, *et al* (2011)^[27] argued that there is interplay between a child's difficulties or successes in learning to read and write with the environment in which that child is. But all this depends on the social interaction between these forces. Additionally, they argue that reading (and writing) difficulties are a perception contextualized and constructed within a learner's history, culture, institutions, and interactions. For instance, although there are common and evidence-based studies that have been carried out in the world that have been adopted by many countries to inform policy and shape methodologies for teaching reading and writing; each country has its own practices, choices and challenges. Therefore, the practices teachers employ in teaching reading are influenced by the environment in which they are and so are the challenges and strengths of the children in a given school.

In view of the above theory, reading today is perceived not only as a cognitive process but also a social process in that although reading deals with mental processes in the head of an individual, the reader is surrounded and affected by a number of factors in his or her learning environment. Without viewing reading in this way, it becomes difficult if not impossible for educators to appreciate why some learners struggle with reading and writing. For this reason, McIntyre *et al.*, (2011)^[27] argued that all actions, including reading, are mediated by tools, of which language is the primary tool; and a learner's development occurs through assisted performance.

Conceptual framework

Reading

There are many terms used in reading problems whose definitions need to be explored. Understanding definitions and using terms is helpful as it equips teachers with necessary tools on how to handle different learners and meet their needs. Hall (2009)^[9] stated that different definitions may help teachers come up with dynamic assessment that is appropriate for each child. But before going into detail there is need to define reading so that this understanding will be helpful in appreciating what reading difficulties are. There are many definitions of reading but at least three of these have been a source of debate for quite some time. For instance, the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory cites the following as definitions of reading: The first definition is learning to read means learning to pronounce words. The second definition, learning to read means learning to identify words and get their meaning. According to the third definition, learning to read means learning to bring meaning to a text in order to get meaning from it.

From the first definition, reading is defined as pronouncing words. Pronouncing does not just come about but has something to do with accuracy and may relate to identification of letter sounds and sounding them out. In the second and third definitions, the whole word approach seems to be inferred, whereby learners begin to understand words in their own way and attach meanings to them. Such definitions may be definitions of performance as they do not go beneath the surface to show the processes involved in learning to read as such, they may not be suitable for use in teaching reading (Chunga, 2013)^[11].

Vital Elements of Reading

With the realization through the stated developmental model that reading is a process that does not happen at once but involves different other skills, there are vital elements in the teaching of reading that teachers should take seriously. The National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read (2000), recommends five important evidence and research-based elements as key to learning to read: phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency in word recognition, vocabulary and comprehension. Lyons (2003) added that majority of children who are at-risk for reading failure can learn to read at average or above levels, but only if they are identified early and provided with systematic, explicit and intensive instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies.

Therefore, if children with reading difficulties are exposed to these elements at an early stage, they may develop the skills of reading. Children pass through a gradual and systematic developmental reading process from logographic reading (use of visual cues) through phonological reading (use of phonetic cues) to orthographic reading (attainment of decoding skills) (Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1994)^[37]. Reading instructions that recognize these factors may succeed. For the purposes of research however, this study has focused on phonemic awareness and phonics decoding skills only.

Methodology

Research design is the strategic plan a researcher adopts to achieve valid results. Research design is the plan or strategy for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Cooper

& Schinder, 1999). Polit and Hungler (1999)^[32] on the other hand, argued that research design is the blue-print, or master plan for conducting research in a way that maximizes the control over factors that could interfere with the validity of the results. They add that research design is the conceptual aspect of the methodology that establishes the scope of the study and the validity of the data obtained as well as the analysis of data that ensures the desired result is obtained. Choosing research design means the objectives are well stated and understood. The nature of the research questions means that quantitative data will be required to answer the research objectives. Therefore, the researcher used quantitative research designs (methods) for this study. Quantitative research method is objective and uses numeric data to assess a problem (Creswell, 2003). The mean method of data collection for the study was the administering of structured questionnaires. Quantitative methods of data collection involve counting and measurements or using numerical data and data can be obtained through primary and secondary sources by administering questionnaires. The questionnaires had two types of questions: close-ended and open-ended questions. Quantitative data was obtained from structured questionnaires that were administered to the class teachers at a public school at Asutsuare (Ghana). Data obtained was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences and Services Solutions; formally Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

The study adopted a purposive sampling in selecting fifteen (15) Early grade class teachers at a public school in Asutsuare (Ghana). The purpose for the selection is that basic school is the dominant formative stage of a pupil's reading skills. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique used in selecting a sample base on how well the researcher is informed about the population from which the sample is selected, proximity to the sample to be selected and the nature of the research (Babbie, 2001)^[4]. The first step to achieving a high degree of validity is to subject the questionnaire to expert scrutiny. Inputs suggested was then factored into the final questionnaires that were administered to target respondents. Even prior to the actual questionnaire administration, I pre-tested the questionnaire to a few of the target respondents to ascertain how well they understood the questions and how convenient it was to understand and answer the questions asked. By this approach, data collected was deemed as being very reliable.

Ethical Consideration

In this research, participants' consent was obtained before they took part in the answering of the questionnaires. They were informed of their rights to voluntarily consent or decline to participate and to withdraw participation at any time without penalty. In addition, the respondents received a complete overview of the research endeavor so that they can be as objective as possible, though no certain method exists to control objectivity. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures that were used to collect data, and assured them that there were no potential risks or costs involved.

Results and Discussion

Gender distribution of respondents

From table 1, it could be noticed that 10 respondents constituting 66.7% of the total sampled respondents were

females while 5 respondents constituting 33.3% of the total respondents were males.

Table 1: Gender distribution of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	5	33.3	33.3	33.3
Female	10	66.7	66.7	100.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Educational qualification of respondents

Table 2 depicted those 8 respondents constituting 53.3% of the total respondents indicated that their highest educational qualification is below bachelor's degree. 7 respondents constituting 46.7% of the total respondents indicated that their highest educational qualification is bachelor's degree.

Table 2: Educational qualification

Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid below Bachelors 8	53.3	53.3	53.3
Bachelor's degree 7	46.7	46.7	100.0
Total 15	100.0	100.0	

Activities that promote reading interest of learners

This section sought to find out the activities of teachers that promote the reading habits of learners. Although the mental, emotional and physical state of learners can determine their engagement and academic performance in class lessons. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) promotes situations where learners feel esteemed, interconnected, and inspired to participate in their academic pursuits (Konadu, 2025)^[22]. In addition, activities of teachers play a vital role in enhancing reading abilities and interest of learners. The teacher-respondents were provided with a Likert scale to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree to some activities that help to promote reading interest of learners. Where 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree.

From table 3, it could be noticed that 53.3% of the total respondents strongly agree that reading aloud to children promotes their interest in reading. 40% of the total respondents agree that reading aloud to learners promotes their interest in reading. 6.7% of the sampled respondents neither agree nor disagree that reading aloud to learners promotes their interest in reading. With a mean response of 1.53 which is approximately 2 agree on the Likert scale hence it could be concluded that on average the respondents agree that reading aloud to learners promotes their interest in reading.

Table 3 depicts that 33.3% of the total respondents agree and strongly agree respectively that using reading guide in the classroom promotes the reading interest of learners. 26.7% of the total respondents disagree that using reading guide in the classroom promotes the reading interest of learners. 6.7% of the total respondents neither agree nor disagree that using reading guide in the classroom promotes the reading interest of learners. With a mean response of 2.27, which is approximately 2 representing agree on the Likert scale hence it could be concluded that on average the respondents agree that using reading guide in the classroom promotes the reading interest of learners.

From table 3, 53.3% of the total respondents agree that

identifying learners' attitude to reading promotes reading interest of learners. 33.3% of the total respondents strongly agree that identifying learner's attitude to reading promotes reading interest of learners. 6.7% of the total respondents disagree that identifying learner's attitude to reading promotes reading interest of learners. Another 6.7% of the total respondents neither agree nor disagree that identifying learner's attitude to reading promotes reading interest of learners. With a mean response of 1.87, which is approximately 2 representing agree on the Likert scale hence it could be concluded that on average the respondents agree that identifying learner's attitude to reading promotes reading interest of learners.

Table 3 depicts that 66.7% of the total respondents agree that engaging pupils in book talks promotes reading interest of learners. 20% of the total respondents neither agree nor disagree that engaging learners in book talks promotes reading interest of learners. 13.3% of the total respondents strongly agree that engaging pupils in book talks promotes reading interest of learners. With a mean response of 2.07, which is approximately 2 representing agree on the Likert scale hence it could be concluded that on average the respondents agree that engaging pupils in book talks promotes reading interest of learners.

From table 3, 60% of the respondents agree that using questions promotes the reading interest of learners. 13.3% of the sampled respondents strongly agree, disagree and neither agrees nor disagree respectively that engaging learners in book talks promotes reading interest of learners. With a mean response of 2.27, which is approximately 2 representing agree on the Likert scale hence it could be concluded that on average the respondents agree that engaging learners in book talks promotes reading interest of learners.

It could be noticed from table 4.8 that 73.3% of the total respondents agree that storytelling promotes the reading interest of learners. 26.7% of the total respondents strongly

agree that that storytelling promotes the reading interest of learners. With a mean response of 1.73, which is approximately 2 representing agree on the Likert scale hence it could be concluded that on average the respondents agree that storytelling promotes the reading interest of learners.

Table 3 depicts that 40% of the total respondents agree that reading picture books promotes reading interest of learners. 33.3% of the total respondents strongly agree that reading picture books promotes reading interest of learners. With a mean response of 2.07, approximately 2 representing agree on the Likert scale hence it could be concluded that on average the respondents agree that reading picture books promotes reading interest of learners.

Table 3 depicts that 60% of the total respondents strongly agree that motivating reading promotes reading interest of learners. 20% of the sampled respondents agree and neither agree nor disagree respectively that motivating reading promotes reading interest of learners. With a mean response of 1.60 which is approximately 2 representing agree on the Likert scale hence it could be concluded that on average the respondents agree that motivating reading promotes reading interest of learners.

This depicts teaching activities of teachers that determine the engagement and interest of early grade learners. Indeed, this finding can be similar to studies done across high school learners. Several studies have utilized different teaching activities at different levels and have yielded similar positive outcomes in their learners. For instance, a study by Konadu, Annan and Hordzi (2024)^[23] utilized computer simulation on biology learners and yielded improved academic experiences. Similarly, a study by Dei, Eminah and Konadu (2025)^[14] employed cooperative teaching methods to instruct complex science concepts among learners and the intervention resulted in better understanding of the learners. These studies confirm how teachers' activities in the classroom can impact learners positively.

Table 3: Activities that promote reading interest of pupils

Activities	Strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	Strongly agree	mean	StDdev
Reading aloud to children	0	0	1 (6.7%)	6 (40%)	8 (53.3%)	1.53	0.64
Using guided reading in the classrooms	0	4 (26.7%)	1 (6.7%)	5 (33.3%)	5 (33.3%)	2.27	1.22
Identifying children's attitude to reading	0	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	8 (53.3%)	5 (33.3%)	1.87	0.83
Engaging the children in book talks	0	0	3 (20%)	10 (66.7%)	2 (13.3%)	2.07	0.59
Using questions	0	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	9 (60%)	2 (13.3%)	2.27	0.88
Storytelling	0	0	0	11 (73.3%)	4 (26.7%)	1.73	0.46
Reading picture books	0	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	6 (40%)	5 (33.3%)	2.07	1.03
Motivating reading	0	0	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	9 (60%)	1.60	0.83

Limitations

The scope of the study is limited to the public school at Asutsuare (Ghana), and its aim is to assess the factors of teachers that enhance the interest of grade one learners reading. The main limitation is that only the class teachers for the early grade were sampled and used as a representation of the larger population of teachers. As such the degree of generalizing the findings is limited.

Implication of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide information on the activities that enhance the interest of reading among early grade learners. The study's findings will also enable learners to gain insight into the various activities and assist them in developing a good reading skill. The study's findings will enable learners to gain insight into the models of reading and learn how to be good readers. The study will enable students

to know that the school going child does not just attend school but also learn and acquire necessary skills of reading and writing in order to meet the international standard.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study therefore concluded that several activities could enhance the reading interest of the early grade learners' reading interest. However, according to the teachers, using guided reading in the classrooms and using questions were identified as the most activities that influenced their interest in reading. Engaging the children in book talks and reading picture books were then followed. Also, identifying learner's attitude to reading, Storytelling and identifying learner's attitude to reading were identified as means to enhance their interest. Motivating reading and reading aloud to learners were least identified by the teachers among the other activities. After finding several challenges associated with learners' reading skills, the study recommends the following for policy considerations. Firstly, pre-service teachers of English should be trained on assessment techniques for reading that will enhance learners reading skills. Effective teaching techniques and assessment training should be combined in teacher education programs to produce teachers who can both measure and actively support learners' learning. Konadu (2025) ^[21] asserts that assessment knowledge is essential for teachers in general to improve their classroom instruction, which in turn enhances learners' learning outcomes. In-service teachers must ensure that learners are compelled to read and pronounce words appropriately. They must also be made to pronounce the words aloud so they can be corrected. Also, teachers must also make sure that the syllables outlined for the learners are adequately followed. This will help them to effectively teach the learners effectively and lastly, learners must be made to read frequently in class, especially in groups, to promote confidence and skills among all learners.

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