

AN EVALUATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD READING STRATEGIES IN A SECOND LANGUAGE IN GHANAN: A CASE STUDY OF EFFUTU MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT: *The study is an evaluation of two common methods employed in the teaching of reading in the second language (English) at the early grade vis-a-vis the simple view of reading. The work examines the appropriateness of the common teaching strategies employed by early grade teachers in teaching reading in the second language (English) in public schools in Ghana. Data for this work was gathered through interview, observation, instruction and assessment of 30 lower primary school pupils of three public schools in the Central Region of Ghana, as well as one hundred teachers selected from ten regions of Ghana. The thirty (30) pupils were put in three (3) groups of ten (10) and instructed using the look and say method, word association, and the simple view of reading for groups A, B and C respectively. The effectiveness of the various methods was assessed using the trends in the scores from the test. The study showed that while pupils who were instructed using the look and say method and the word association could not actually read, pupils instructed using the simple view of reading were able to read.*

KEYWORDS: evaluation, teaching methodology, early grade, second language, reading Ghanaian

INTRODUCTION

Reading constitutes an important academic skill for every child. The ability to read gives the learner not only significant autonomy in the educational process but also unlimited access to knowledge. It also quickens the process of acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for life. It is therefore not out of place to assume that reading is the key to the many windows of opportunity both in school and out of school. It is also not surprising that learning to read is given an important place at the initial stages of schooling. From the walls, through the entrance of the school, the child is welcomed by various inscriptions that could be interpreted as suggesting the overwhelming role of reading in the academic environment. Reading is a means by which the individual develops him/herself as well as an “access to social, economic and civic life” (Ogeyik and Akyay2009: 72). Thus, in the global world we are often compelled to read different materials with differing cultural backgrounds for educational, socio-personal, political and economic purposes.

In Ghana, the goal of primary education enshrined in the Free Compulsory Universal Education (FCUBE) programme and in the 1992 constitution is to build on the child's literacy skills with emphasis on reading. This national objective is reflected in the basic school curriculum as well as the curriculum of teacher education. Unfortunately, this goal is not being attained. According to a Ghana Education Service, National Education Assessment Unit report on early Grade Reading Assessment and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment, about (85.4%) of early grade pupils were unable to answer a single reading comprehension question correctly in English. In the classroom interaction, there is a tight correlation between goal and methodology in the sense that the former has the tendency of influencing the latter. In other words, the methodology that is employed can largely be determined by the goal of the teacher. Given this assumption, it is right for one to assume that the poor performance suggests a great disconnection between the goal and the methodology. It is in the light of this disconnect that this study seeks to evaluate the common methods employed in the teaching of reading in the second language (English) at the early grade vis-a-vis the simple view of reading (*a method that is attested to be effective in developing reading skills*). The main objectives that underpin this current research include the following: (i) to investigate the level of competence in reading of the early grade pupils (ii) to investigate the strategies teachers use in teaching reading skills to early grade pupils (iii) to find out how effective are the commonly employed strategies as compared to the simple view of reading and finally (iv) to suggest strategies that could be used to help improve upon the teaching of reading skills at the early grade level in our educational sector. Based on these objectives, the following research questions guided the research: (i) what reading strategies do teachers use to teach reading skills to early grade pupils? (ii) how effective are the commonly used strategies as compared to the simple view of reading and (iii) what strategies could be used to help improve upon the teaching of reading skills at the early grade level in our educational sector?

Beyond this section, this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents an overview on a review of literature within the domain of reading. Here, I reviewed reading teaching methods such as the look and say method, the word association method and the simple view of reading method. The study focused mainly on the tenets of these methods in the teaching of reading skills at the early grade levels. Section 3 is devoted to a discussion on the methodology that was used for the data collection procedures. The instruments used were purposive sampling for both teachers and pupils, participatory observation and interviews. This mixed qualitative approach was found appropriate because it would present us with a more reliable and accurate data aimed at producing optimal findings on the topic under investigation. In section 4, a discussion on the findings is considered. A summary of the findings of the research concludes the paper in section 5.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents a review of some literature considered relevant to the current topic. Spache and Spache (1969: 4)) describe reading this way: 'The reader directs his attention to the printed page with his mind intent on meaning. The reader reacts to each word with a group of mental associations regarding the word form, its meaning, and its sound. With the aid of these associations, he discriminates this word from all others, also using clues of general configuration, distinctive characteristics of the shape, some of the letters or syllables, and the implications of the

sense or pattern of the sentence. Thus, the process begins with word recognition. As the meanings of successive words become clear, they are fused into thought or ideas.' Reading skills in the Ghanaian community has been argued to be poor at both secondary and primary levels. For instance, Leherr (2009) is of the view that in Ghana, the most educational problem is the inability of pupils to read, understand and interpret a text at the primary and secondary level. As stated in the introduction, the main goal of primary education in Ghana enshrined in the Free Compulsory Universal Education (FCUBE) programme and in the 1992 constitution is to build on the child's literacy skills with emphasis on reading. This national objective is reflected in the basic school curriculum as well as the curriculum of teacher education. To achieve this national objective, various reforms and strategies have been initiated since independence. Among other needs and aspirations, literacy has been given the center stage with special emphasis on reading probably on the assumption that reading is a core and a precursor to writing in literacy. Reading has the potential of promoting writing skills and enhancing all other language proficiency skills. Most Ghanaian children enter the school after age six when they have acquired their first language already. By this time, they would have acquired an appreciable level of proficiency in speaking and listening and are able to communicate well in their first language (L1). They are able to express themselves in basic conversations such as introducing themselves, making basic requests, asking questions, and in some cases narrating and describing things in their L1. However, their proficiency in the L1 is limited to only listening and speaking. Generally, children are introduced to signs and orthography of their languages at school. Hardly do they have any idea about the sign systems of even their first language before they enter the school system. This reflects the fact that formal literacy commences from school.

It is also instructive to acknowledge that most Ghanaian children have their first encounter with the English language at school, particularly those whose parents are not literates. In some cases, some children by virtue of their location and family ties, engagements, status or aspirations acquire some English outside the school environment. Today, it is not surprising to hear low and working class parents struggling to speak some English with their children with the view of facilitating their children's acquisition of the target language or demonstrating their own language ability and social/educational status. This phenomenon is common in peri-urban settlements where social engagements such as: family gatherings, religious activities, employment, etc. bring together the middle class and the working or low class. For many who belong to the former, English is not only the exclusive language for communication but also for expressing status because of its supposedly prestige. For the latter, especially those in rural communities, it is almost an anomaly for anyone to be found exclusively using English as the medium of communicating with their children.

Experience shows that there are three categories of children who enter the school for the first time.

- (i) Those with almost native-like, acquaintance with the English language prior to entering school
- (ii) Those who have a moderate level of encounter with English prior to entering school
- (iii) Those who have limited or no understanding of English prior to entering school

The task of the primary school teacher is thus to find a method that will be able to adequately teach these groups the skills of reading. In order to achieve this goal, several methods have been proposed. In the next sections, I discuss 3 of these methods (*look and say*, *word association* and

simple view of reading). This review is aimed at introducing the reader to the methods that will be accessed in this study. It will also allow for easy understanding of the sections that follow.

The Look and Say Method

The Look and Say Method as the name implies, is a method that pupils look and say whatever words the teacher shows them. It is a method that helps pupils to learn to recognize alphabets, words, and sentences after the teacher has taken them through drilling activities. The teacher shows them words or sentences, pronounces them for the pupils to repeat and then the teacher guides the pupils to say them correctly. It is a method used for word recognition and memorization of whole words through the use of flash cards in association with pictures by the teacher. There are two kinds to this method: whole word and whole sentence (iammontessori.com.au, 2018).

First, the pupils are taken through individual words for them to be able to read the words through repetitive practice before the words are combined to form sentences for the pupils to learn how to read them. That is the pupils first learn to read the individual words and then move on to read a number of different sentences made up of the individual words that they are familiar with. The pupils read the whole sentences with the aid of pictures and other teaching aids which help them to understand the sentences (Fianu; 2009).

One main advantage of this particular method is that it enables the pupils to build up sight vocabulary. In addition, it has the tendency of encouraging them to have the love for reading. Though it helps the pupils to acquire vocabulary, the problem with this method is that pupils are not able to read unfamiliar words and therefore restrict their development in constructing sentences with words that they are not familiar with.

The Word Association Method

Another method that has often been used in the teaching of reading skills is the word association method. Richards et al. (1985 cited in Oynama, 2010) see word association as a way in which words come to be associated with each other and which influence the learning and remembering of words. It is a technique/strategy that is used to identify the associative meaning/relationship between two stimulus words. The response word creates a cluster of associative representations of stimulus words. The cluster of response words can be seen as an indication of the pupils unconscious/conscious understanding of the strategy applied by the teacher. The main idea is to ensure that pupils are able to understand these words and later be able to identify them and the words with similar associations. The pupils are also made to add up additional associations that may have associations with the said vocabularies/words under consideration.

This method when used helps the pupils to acquire and to build on their vocabulary in the target language.

The Simple View of Reading Method

The Simple View of Reading is a theory of reading that advocates that reading has two basic components; word recognition (decoding) and comprehension. This theory of reading was first

proposed by Gough and Tunmer in (1986). It was developed in an attempt to reconcile the views of advocates of bottom-up processing (decoding) and advocates of the top-down processing (language comprehension.) The Simple View of Reading argues that, although reading is a complex activity, it can be simplified if it is viewed as two interdependent processes: Word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension (Cox & Guthrie; 2001).

According to Gough and Tunmer (1986), reading equals the product of decoding and comprehension, or $R = D \times C$ thus, Decoding (D) x Language Comprehension (LC) = Reading Comprehension (RC). They argue that pupils have to decode the sound of a word and understand the word before reading can be said to be taking place.

They argue that “if there is no comprehension, then reading is not taking place; if $R = D \times C$ and $C = 0$, then $R = 0$.” (Gough and Tunmer, 1986: 7). At the same time, they argue that the reverse holds as well: “Comprehension is not sufficient, for decoding is also necessary”. Knowing a language does not suffice to make one literate; the average 5-year old is living proof. Without the ability to decode, no amount of linguistic comprehension will make a reader; if $R = D \times C$ and $D = 0$, then $R = 0$, whatever the value of C.

Proponents of the simple view of reading assert that reading ability should be predictable from a measure of decoding ability and a measure of listening comprehension.

Relating this to the classroom, the teacher has the responsibility to teach first to the pupils to decode the sounds of the words. This allows pupils to be able to recognize the sounds when they occur in different words.

This study is significant as it gives a special focus to reading in a second language thus helping to deepen understanding of the uniqueness of this phenomenon. It also draws policy makers, parents, educators, and other stakeholders’ attention to the peculiar challenges of the early child grader in learning to read in a second language. Besides, the study offers a comprehensive view of learner reading strategies and to examine how they enhance learners’ comprehension, and it is to enhance Educators’ understanding of second language reading strategies and the common strategies they teach the early childhood learners. It is to help teachers of early childhood learners select the appropriate reading strategies to teach their learners reading. It is to serve as a source of reference to future researchers who will want to undertake a study related to this area.

METHODOLOGY

The study is a case study. It is an evaluation of three methods employed in the teaching of reading in the second language (English) at the early grade; look and say, word association and the simple view of reading. The study involved 30 (fifteen boys and fifteen girls) Basic Two (2) pupils and hundred (100) early grade teachers purposefully sampled from three public schools in the Central Region of Ghana. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), the purposeful sampling technique, involves the researcher handpicking the cases to be involved in the study on the bases of typicality.

Basic two class was selected because it was seen as the class that had gone through a lot of reading strategies and had acquired adequate amount of such strategies and therefore could read. The names of the schools were not mentioned for the sake of confidentiality, which is one of the ethics of research. The schools were labeled **School A**, **School B** and **School C**. Ten (10) pupils, that is five(5) and five (girls) were purposefully selected from each of the 3 schools; making a total of 30 pupils.

The headteachers and teachers of the various schools; and the classes chosen for the study were also contacted for permission to be granted for the research to be carried on in their schools and classes respectively. Lessons of the teachers of the chosen classes were also observed to find out the kind of reading strategies they used. All the one hundred teachers purposefully sampled to include only those who taught at the early grade class were also interviewed to find out the kind of reading strategies commonly used by them.

The study composed of two stages. The first stage was a survey conducted on 100 early grade teachers using a semi-structured interview. The survey aimed at identifying the predominant reading strategies deployed in Ghanaian classrooms. The second stage involved an observation of the strategies used by the teachers of the selected schools for the study. This informed the researcher to do an initial assessment of the sampled pupils based on these strategies to ascertain their level of competence in reading. After that was the deployment of the third method in the sampled classrooms to ascertain the competency of the participants in relation to it. The sampled participants from each of the schools were instructed using the three (3) methods under review. All the participants were first tested using the *look and say method*, followed by the *word association* and then finally, on the *simple view of reading* as that was the least preferred method. The mapping was as follows: **School A, B and C: look and say method**, **School A, B and C: word association** and **School A, B and C: simple view of reading**. All groups were instructed for 4 lessons, each spanning 30 minutes using their designated method. At the end of the 4 lessons, the pupils were assessed on their ability to read 2 letter words, 3 letter words, 4 letter words, words with pictures and a 20 word passage. Below is the summary of the test categories and the number of words involved.

Evaluation of the Methods under Review

This section discusses the finding of first part of the research based on the interview results. For purpose of clarity, the results are presented in both tabula and graphical forms

Common Strategies Employed in Ghanaian Early Grade Classes

The first stage of the study involved a survey of the teaching strategies deployed in the early grade classrooms. The survey involved 100 purposefully sampled early grade teachers across the then 10 regions of Ghana (*10 teachers from each region*). The survey took the form of semi - structured interviews with each of the 100 teachers. The questions generally regarded the methods they used in class during the teaching of reading in English. Below is a summary of the finding of the survey.

Table 1: Common Strategies Deployed in Ghanaian Early Grade Classes

Region	look and say	word association	simple view of reading	Total
Upper West	7	3	0	10
Upper East	8	2	0	10
Northern	4	5	1	10
Ashanti	6	4	0	10
Brong Ahafo	5	5	0	10
Eastern	4	4	2	10
Western	5	3	2	10
Volta	6	3	1	10
Central	5	4	1	10
Greater Accra	4	3	3	10
Total	54	36	10	100
Percentages	54%	36%	10%	100%

The table 1 above gives a summary representation of the interview results in relation to the reading strategies (*Look and Say Method, Word Association Method and the Simple View of Reading Method*). In the Upper West, 7 (70%) out of the 10 teachers interviewed on strategies that they used in teaching early grade reading were of the view that they used the **look and say** method while the remaining 3 (30%) used the **word association** method with no body (0%) using the **simple view of reading**.

In the Upper East, the 8 (80%) of the interviewed teachers used the **look and say** method while the remaining 2 (20%) used the **word association** method. Like the case of the Upper West, no body (0%) used the **simple view of reading**.

In the Northern the 4 (40%) of the interviewed teachers used the **look and say** method while the remaining 5 (50%) used the **word association** method. Only 1 (10%) used the **simple view of reading** method.

The case of the Ashanti Region was as follows: **look and say** method 6 (60%), **word association** method 4 (40%) and the **simple view of reading** method 0 (0%).

The Brong Ahafo Region had 5 (50%) each for **look and say** method and the **word association** method with the **simple view of reading** method scoring 0(0%).

The Eastern Region scored 4 (40%) each for the **look and say** method and the **word association** method with the **simple view of reading** method, scoring 2 (20%).

The Western Region scored 5 (50%) for the **look and say** method 3 (30%) for **word association** method with the **simple view of reading** method, scoring 2 (20%).

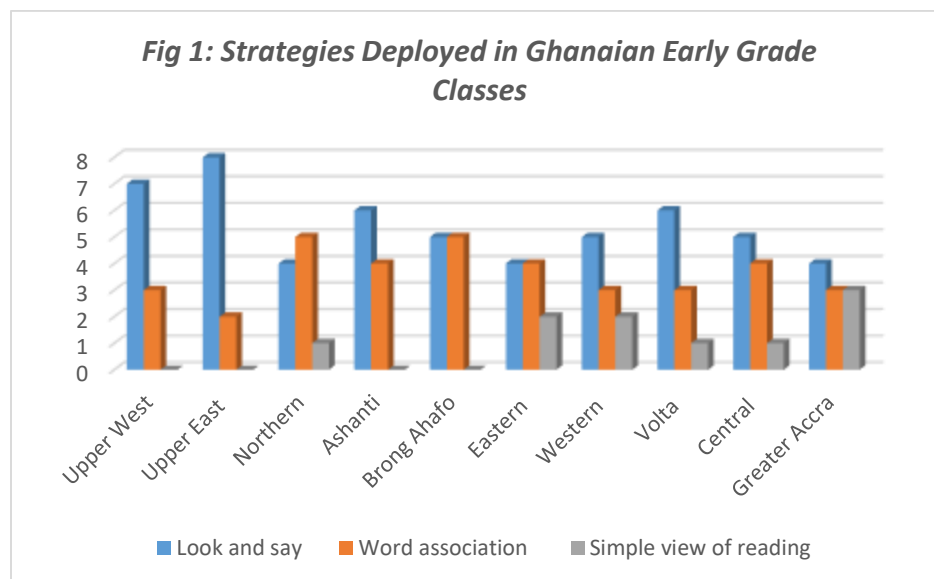
The Volta Region had 6 (60%) for the **look and say** method 3 (30%) for **word association** method with the **simple view of reading** method, scoring 1 (10%).

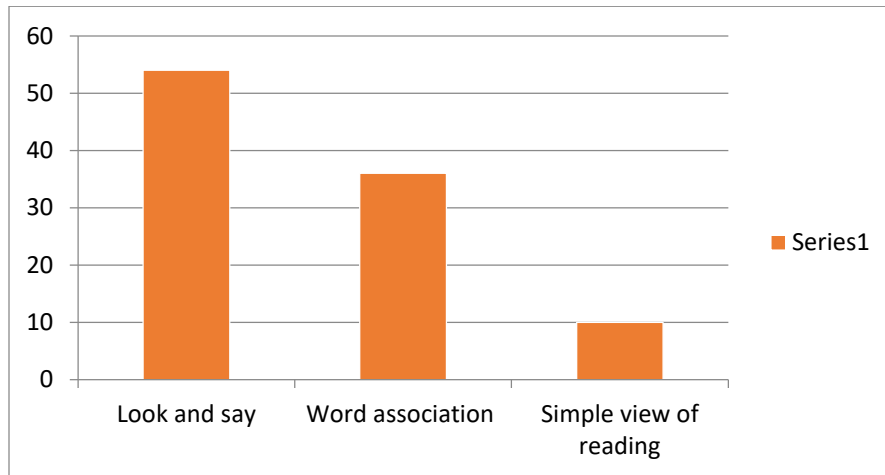
In the Central Region, the scores were as follows: **look and say** method 5 (50%), **word association** method 4 (40%) and the **simple view of reading** method, 1 (10%).

Finally the Greater Accra Region scored 4 (40%) for the **look and say** method 3 (30%) for **word association** method with the **simple view of reading** method also scoring 3 (30%).

A holistic national picture reads as follows: **look and say** method 54 (54%), **word association** method 36 (36%) and the **simple view of reading** method, 10 (10%).

The table above indicates clearly that the most common method deployed in the early grade in Ghana is the look and say (54 %) followed by the word association method (36%). The simple view of reading came a distant third with only (10%). The look and say and the word association methods have a combined (90%) penetration. Below in figures 1 and 2 are bar chart of the various regions and the national picture. A question that arises, but the research is unable to address immediately is why the look and say method appears to be the most common of the methods used in the teaching of reading at the early grade level. For now, I leave this observation for further investigation in the future.





DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

This section of the work focuses on a discussion of the findings of the current research. The findings are presented in tabula form for better understanding.

Level of Competence in Reading

As a starting point, the study assessed the pupils to ascertain their reading needs. The participants selected from each of the schools were tested for their reading abilities based on the two of the strategies (*Look and Say*; and *Word Association Methods*) that the teachers frequently used in teaching reading to the learners. These two methods were first used to assess the participants' reading ability because the researcher observed that all the teachers of the various classrooms in the selected schools used them as strategies to teach reading. Also, the interviews conducted on the selected teachers from the ten regions and had these two strategies as their preferred choice for reading by almost all the teachers. The initial assessment of the participants took the same format as the final assessment which the third strategy (simple view of reading) was used and involved similar test items. Below are the results of the initial assessment.

Table 2: Tests and number of words

code	category	number of words
2LW	2 letter words:	20
3LW	3 letter words	20
4LW	4 letter words:	20
WWP	words with pictures	20
P	passage	20
	total	100

The Words Used for the Assessment of Look and Say Method:

2 letter words: *go, do, lo, so, to, at, up, in, on, of, an, as, by, if, be, he, we, us, me, my*

3 letter words: *try, fit, pot, bell, our, toy, eat, oak, oat, day, lay, pay, bow, low, row, ray, air, set, put, men*

4 letter words: *pain, rain, same, pass, find, live, move, most, kind, show, year, take, just, came, feed, weed, jeep, soak, goat, goal*

Words with pictures: *phone, ride, bike, cupcake, kite, drive, feet, coat, soak, weed, team, freeze, farm, grain, soap, ground, mow, maid, stain, steam*

Short passage: *The passage was made up of six (6) sentences with six (6) to ten (10) words per sentence. Decodable words were used to form the sentences. The passage was on domestic animals.*

Table 3: School A: Look and Say Method

S/N	2LW	3LW	4LW	WWP	P	Total/100
A1	4	3	0	3	4	14
A2	10	7	5	12	11	45
A3	6	6	5	9	10	36
A4	5	6	5	8	7	31
A5	7	6	6	8	8	35
A6	6	5	7	10	10	38
A7	6	6	6	9	8	34
A8	7	6	7	7	7	34
A8	7	7	6	11	12	43
A10	5	6	6	10	11	38

Table 4: School B: Look and Say Method

S/N	2LW	3LW	4LW	WWP	P	Total/100
B1	6	6		8	7	33
B2	7	7	6	10	9	39
B3	6	6	5	7	6	30
B4	5	6	5	8	6	30
B5	7	6	6	7	8	34
B6	6	5	7	11	10	39
B7	6	6	6	9	5	32
B8	7	6	7	8	8	36
B8	7	7	6	7	9	36
B10	5	5	4	6	5	25

Table 5: School C: Look and Say Method

S/N	2LW	3LW	4LW	WWP	P	Total/100
C1	6	5	5	7	6	29
C2	8	8	6	8	9	39
C3	8	6	7	6	6	33
C4	7	8	7	10	10	42
C5	5	4	2	5	2	18
C6	9	8	7	9	7	40
C7	11	10	10	13	12	56
C8	10	9	6	5	4	34
C8	13	10	10	15	13	61
C10	7	6	7	10	8	38

The tables 3-5 above show the results of schools A, B, and C in relation to the Look and Say Method. School A had the highest mark of 45 % and the lowest mark of 14%. No participant could score an average mark of 50%. School B recorded the highest mark of 39% with the lowest score being 25%. School C which did well, had a highest score of 61% which is a little above average, and a lowest score of 18%.

Words Used for Assessing the Participants on Word Association Method:

2 letter words: *it, no, is, am, hi, be, ad, an, go, of, in, as, at, my, he, by, on, do, so, lo*

3 letter words: *cat, bat, bee, wee, bud, dud, fix, mix, way, nay, how, bow, oil, bed, led, toe, doe, can, ban, bin*

4 letter words: *glad, flat, clam, flag, miss, will, crab, drop, trap, grab, frog, trip, less, bell, skin, skip, game, plan, help, time*

Words with pictures: *brush, dress, press, trash, truck, clock, tree, zone, joke, rope, bone, bake, naked, pile, pig, map, meat, lime, water, block*

Short passages: *the passage used had the same features as the one used for the Look and Say assessment.*

Table 6: School A: Word Association Method

S/N	2LW	3LW	4LW	WWP	P	Total/100
A1.	12	12	10	19	12	65
A2.	7	7	6	10	11	41
A3.	6	6	5	7	10	34
A4.	5	6	5	8	10	34
A5.	7	6	6	8	8	35
A6.	6	5	7	9	6	33
A7.	6	6	6	10	11	39
A8.	7	6	7	9	9	38
A9.	7	7	6	8	7	35
A10.	5	6	6	7	8	32

Table 7: School B: Word Association Method

S/N	2LW	3LW	4LW	WWP	P	Total/100
B1.	6	6	6	9	8	35
B2.	7	7	6	7	7	34
B3.	6	6	5	7	8	32
B4.	5	6	5	9	10	35
B 5.	7	6	6	8	9	36
B6.	6	5	7	10	13	41
B7.	6	6	6	9	9	36
B8.	7	6	7	9	8	37
B9.	7	7	6	7	6	33
B10.	10	9	10	13	12	54

Table 8: School C: Word Association Method

S/N	2LW	3LW	4LW	WWP	P	Total/100
C1.	10	10	8	11	9	48
C2.	9	7	7	8	6	37
C3.	7	5	5	7	6	30
C4.	11	9	7	9	10	46
C5.	10	10	9	10	7	46
C6.	6	4	4	6	5	25
C7.	8	8	6	8	5	35
C8.	5	3	3	5	4	20
C9.	7	6	4	6	6	29
C10.	8	8	6	7	6	35

Tables 6-8 also show the results of schools A, B, and C in relation to the word association method assessment. School A recorded a highest score of 65% and a lowest score of 32%. School B had

54% as its highest score and also 32% as its lowest score. School C had 48% as its highest score and 20% as its lowest score.

The initial test results confirmed the findings of the Ghana Education Service, National Education Assessment (NEA) Unit report on early Grade Reading Assessment that most early grade pupils are unable to read. Almost all the participants performed below average in their reading tasks though their teachers used these two methods frequently to teach them reading. In all the three schools, each participant was made to read two, three, four letter words, and words with pictures and also a short passage. Each test was marked over twenty. The total score for all the test items was hundred (100). Both strategies used to assess the participants did not yield the results expected as almost all the participants could not decode most of the 2, 3, and 4 letter words, and word with pictures as well as the short passage. The various results on tables 3 to 8 attest to that. Based on the poor performance exhibited by the participants in relation to the two strategies commonly used by the teachers, the third strategy was used to assess the participants. First, the participants were taken through a reading session using the Simple View of Reading. After the activities, the participants were again assessed with the similar test items; 2, 3, 4 letter words, and words with pictures in addition to the short passage. Below are the results of the assessments.

Words Used for the Assessment of Simple View Method:

2 letter words: *we, by, lo, no, on, do, so, as, am, at, us, up, to, or, it, is, if, he, my, me*

3 letter words: *fan, fun, cut, axe, hoe, bow, cow, dig, err, sin, tea, lit, old, new, sit, fig, bit, ate, hit, not*

4 letter words: *diet, mate, late, date, safe, save, sing, lick, tick, clap, tire, free, girl, blue, dirt, dung, chin, thin, fate, faith*

Words with pictures: *firewood, charcoal, crate, skin, chain, tooth, teeth, thief, drink, green, safety, laugh, slap, hair, head, shoulder, leg, hand, eyes, nose*

A short passage: *The passage used for the assessment had the same features as the one used for the Look and Say but had a different theme on safety.*

Table 9: School A: Simple View of Reading

S/N	2LW	3LW	4LW	WWP	P	Total/100
A1.	16	15	15	17	13	76
A2	12	12	10	14	12	60
A3	10	10	9	11	11	51
A4	15	13	10	13	12	63
A5	13	11	10	14	13	61
A6	8	8	7	9	9	41
A7	12	12	11	13	12	60
A8	10	10	9	14	10	53
A9	11	10	9	12	10	52
A10	15	13	11	14	12	65

Table 10: School B: Simple View of Reading

S/N	2LW	3LW	4LW	WWP	P	Total/100
B1	17	15	13	15	12	72
B2	13	11	11	12	11	58
B3	10	10	10	12	10	52
B4	16	16	14	15	14	75
B5	13	12	13	14	13	65
B6	12	10	10	12	11	55
B7	13	12	10	12	10	57
B8	9	7	7	8	6	37
B9	10	10	8	11	8	47
B10	12	11	9	10	10	52

Table 11: School C: Simple View of Reading

S/N	2LW	3LW	4LW	WWP	P	Total/100
C1	18	16	15	18	15	82
C2	12	11	10	13	10	56
C3	10	8	8	10	9	45
C4	16	14	14	12	13	69
C5	14	12	11	10	10	57
C6	10	9	8	11	11	49
C7	9	8	8	10	9	44
C8	8	6	6	7	6	33
C9	10	8	7	7	8	40
C10	12	12	10	11	9	54

Tables 9-11 provide the results after the assessment of the participants using the Simple View of Reading. The results show great improvement in the reading of the participants based on their scores. School A had a highest score mark of 76% and a lowest score of 41%. School B had a highest score of 75% and lowest score of 37%, with School C recording a highest score mark of 82% and lowest score mark of 33%. These results show a vast improvement in the reading of the participants as they could decode most of the words and the passage given them.

To the question: *what reading strategies do teachers use to teach reading skills to early grade pupils?*

It was observed from the discussions that almost all the teachers who taught at early grade level used the look and say method and word association method to teach reading skills at the early grade levels. Results from both the observation and the interview conducted show the two strategies are the most commonly used strategies for teaching reading at the early grade level. These strategies had some results in relation to the reading competency of the participants at the early grade level but not all that encouraging. With the results obtained from the simple view of reading when the participants were taken through, there was an improvement in the reading

competency of the participants. This gives an indication that the simple view of reading is more effective than the look and say; and the word association methods. This is in response to the second question that guided the study: '*how effective are the commonly used strategies as compared to the simple view of reading?*' Though the look and say method and the word association method are the most preferred strategies by the teachers at the early grade level, the simple view of reading could be used in addition to these strategies as that could help improve the reading competencies of the pupils at the early grade level in our educational sector.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to offer an evaluation of the reading strategies of early grade pupils in Ghana with focus on selected early childhood within the Effutu municipality. The findings together with the recommendations can be summarized as follow. In the first place, it was discovered that most teachers use the Look and Say and the Word Association Methods in the teaching of reading skills at the lower grades. This was interpreted to mean that these two methods were influential among the teachers of lower levels. However, it remained a puzzle as to the effectiveness of these methods in achieving the maximal of teaching reading skills. Thus, it was evident that these methods were their strong hold. It is also the case that all the methods produced some results. However, the best in terms of autonomous reading was with the Simple View of Reading. Based on this observation, the study recommends for the need for in-service training on the use of the simple view of reading. This, I argue will further enhance the productivity of the teachers which will consequentially reflect in the acquisition of reading skills among the pupils. In terms of implication for curriculum development, the study recommends that textbooks be designed with the combination of these three methods. This study is significant because it has devoted time to investigating a salient component of language skills, which has not received much scholarly attention within the lower grades in the Ghanaian context to the best of the author's knowledge.

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