

## **INTERACTIVE READING STRATEGIES ON LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT IN READING SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KISUMU COUNTY, KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Effective utilization of interactive reading strategies engage learners resulting in competence in fluency and meaningful depiction of literary texts. The study examined the influence of interactive reading on learner achievement in reading skills in eight sub county mixed day public secondary schools in Kisumu County. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design with 209 learners randomly assigned to experimental, while 238 to control groups and 19 teachers of English. Primary data was collected through reading skills assessment tests, questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. The study revealed that interactive reading practices were frequently used which resulted in enhanced achievement in reading skills. The study concluded a statistically significant relationship between interactive reading strategies and learner achievement in reading skills. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers should consistently engage learners in interactive reading in order for learners to recognize words concurrently with comprehension of the text and suggests further research in other school categories.*

**KEY WORDS:** guided reading, interactive reading, read aloud, repeated reading, shared reading.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Interactive reading is an engaging instructional activity which incorporates teaching by engaging and guiding learners on appropriate strategies for competency in reading fluency and comprehension (Merga, 2017). Through interactive practices, the teacher is able to understand how individual learner interrelates though processes with information in the text. In essence, the process of reading entails learners dynamically receiving and interpreting information by engaging existing background knowledge, information in the text and context of reading to be successful in arriving at the conveyed meaning of a text. However, Maingi (2015) observed learner's failure to achieve reading skills was a result of underutilizing reading strategies. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), in a study on strategies for improving reading skills, affirmed that learners require an interactive practice to come up with meaningful depiction of literary texts. Subsequently, Mraz, Nichols, Caldwell, Beisley, Sargent and Rupley (2013) insinuate that teachers ought to apply reading strategies that assist learners to transit from decoding words towards fluency and comprehension in reading skills.

Interactive reading being an engrossing classroom practice borrows from the interactive model of reading which employs lower-level word decoding progression and higher-order process of

discourse structure. Writing on a cognitive inquiry on reading and comprehension, Kibui (2012) acknowledged that interactive reading employs progressive discourse interaction where quick and natural access to word recognition as well as interpretation skills is experienced for successful construction of word meaning with the readers' knowledge of the world. This rapid interaction enables learners to be regarded fluent readers and experts in interpretation skills. However, Kabita (2015) observed that teachers did not have tangible basis for instructing reading. On the other hand, Yusuf (2015) observed significant outcome on learner achievement in reading comprehension after engaging in interactive reading. Therefore, due to the essential role played by reading on academic success, learners require reading approach that is interactive through read aloud, repeated, shared and guided reading in order to interpret and infer meaning at the same time recognize and decode words.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Read aloud strategy is a purposeful and precise method where teachers model reading during instructional process. Press, Henenbers and Getman (2011) observed that during read aloud, an interactive environment is created which results in developing reading skills. During read aloud activities, teachers model fluent reading and word recognition (Lee & Yoon, 2017). In support, Walch (2016) observed that during read aloud class activities, learners are provided with an opportunity to be involved in the reading process as the story unfolds. While reading aloud, learners join in the discussion for effective comprehension. Therefore, adoption of read aloud strategy as an interactive process, will build word recognition skills and fluency, thus improving proficiency in English language.

Young and Rasinski (2017) observed that during read aloud, oral fluency is built due to phonological awareness and word recognition skills. When learners in secondary school read literary texts fluently indicates automaticity in recognition of words. On the other hand, recognition of words comes with ability to comprehend what is written in literary texts. In conformity, Yildirim, Rasinski and Kaya (2017) observed automaticity in word recognition was a significant predictor of comprehension. This is because read aloud reveals relationship between the printed word and meaning as learners relate sounds to proper pronunciation of words. Steinert (2012) argued that fluency is improved by verbalizing interpretations and constructing meaning. Thus, proficiency in word recognition skills builds when learners actively participate and verbally articulate words for meaning.

Repeated reading is a practice where learners read literary texts several times to build vocabulary besides strengthening fluency. Black and Stave (2016) reported that learners who displayed insufficient fluency focussed more on word level. Spending much time processing individual words interferes with comprehension because fluency is impeded. However, Mraz et al. (2013), suggests that learners should be exposed to same print over and over in order to develop word decoding skills that would result in fluency and acquisition of vocabulary. Acquisition of adequate vocabulary is essential for reading and understanding the text. In support, Chang and Millett (2013) revealed that learners in Taiwan demonstrated an increase in fluency and comprehension through engaging in repeated reading intervention.

Jeon and Lee (2013) observed that mistakes in decoding words decreased through repeated reading. However, Karanja (2015) in a study carried in public secondary schools in Kenya,

observed learners in secondary schools demonstrated difficulty in recognizing and decoding words. On the other hand, Huddle (2014) observed that limited vocabulary contributed to poor comprehension. Resonating Jeon and Lee (2013) assertion that repeated reading enriches acquisition of vocabulary, Karanja (2015) recommended that teachers should select words and phrases for highlighting and defining. Highlighting specific words during repeated reading activates linguistic knowledge among learners. According to Young and Rasinski (2017), words encountered earlier in similar contexts enable automaticity when learners re-read short and significant passages resulting in comprehension of the literary text.

Shared reading is a collaborative practice whereby learners mutually read with the teacher or an experienced peer. According to Vasinda and McLeod (2011) teachers should be positive in utilizing texts that are familiar to learners in order to enable them transfer decoding skills to other sentence structures during shared reading. Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger (2011) asserted that teachers should sustain development of fluency in language by utilizing appropriate strategies through shared reading. Learners who struggle with reading fluency can benefit from effective modelling aided by shared reading. In practice, shared reading results in learners' reiterate after observing teacher's fluent reading. Hawkins, Hale, Sheeley and Ling (2011) observed adolescents benefitting from error correction and modelling through shared reading. Learners improve phonemic awareness by repeatedly applying decoding rules through shared reading (Kibui, 2012).

According to Kibui (2012), language teachers' guidance is significant during shared reading to enable learners remember the incidences in the text or guess what might occur next. Further, learners are able to recall related earlier encounters in other contexts by use of contextual cues. Contextual cues allow learners relate what they read with prior knowledge, emphasizing comprehension and developing strategic synthesis of meaning. However, Mahmoudi (2017) observed that comprehension was hindered due to lack of activating relevant background knowledge. Kulo and Omulando (2014) asserted that presenting visual diagrams or pictures on the topic activated background knowledge thereby enabling learners place the passage in context. Ideally, teachers of English are expected to engage learners in specific varied classroom activities as ways of enhancing proficiency in reading. In this regard, secondary school learners activate and utilize rhetorical knowledge.

Guided reading as a classroom approach requires the teacher to work with small groups of learners who display related learning habits to independently utilize reading strategies. Ukrainetz, Cooney, Dyer, Kysar and Harris (2000) asserted that in guided reading learners become independent readers and read texts of class level. Karanja (2015) acknowledged that through guided reading, learners are able to handle challenging texts as they strive to become independent readers. Learner's individual reading interests are taken into consideration through offering small group support and explicit teaching for them to tackle more challenging texts. In practice, during guided reading, teachers constantly weigh the difficulty of the text and assist learners understanding by deliberating on individual differences through presenting relevant strategies.

Caposey and Heider, (2003) asserted that guided reading was useful for learners who display reading fluency yet fall short of comprehension skills. Piper, Shcroeder and Trudell (2016) observed learners read fluently but did not achieve comprehension. In practice, guided reading

should focus on identifying difficult words, transacting with challenging sentence structure and comprehending ideas never found before in texts. As a strategy to improve comprehension, guided reading enables learners to focus on utilizing problem-solving skills. According to Block, Whiteley, Parris, Reed and Cleveland (2009) when teachers facilitate explicit guided reading through extended sessions, learners significantly increase comprehension skills. Explicit instructional reading strategies according to Salavati and Tabatabaei (2018), involve utilizing 'before reading,' 'during-reading' and 'after reading' approaches. Thus, perceived guided reading instruction benefit learners to apply appropriate reading strategies.

### **Statement of the problem**

Interactive reading strategies engage learners to enhance reading fluency and comprehension through top down and bottom up processing of information in literary texts. However, secondary school learners despite having been exposed to English language in early years of learning still experience difficulty in reading fluency and comprehension. This shortcoming is attributed to under utilization of appropriate reading strategies. Adopting interactive reading strategies during the reading process, through read aloud for word recognition, repeated reading to build vocabulary, shared reading to utilize contextual cues and guided reading for appropriate choice of reading strategies may assist secondary school learners attain proficiency in reading skills.

### **Purpose of the Study**

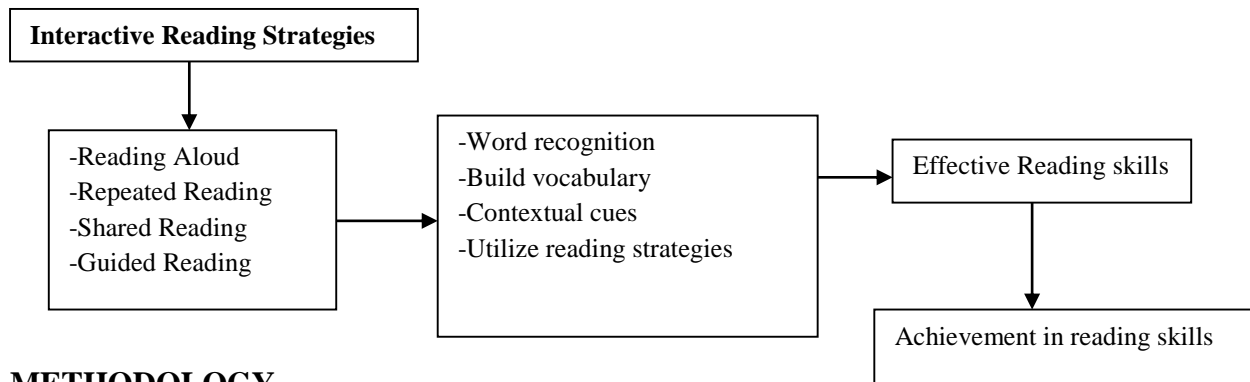
The study found it necessary to determine the influence of interactive reading as an intervention to learners in secondary school in Kisumu County, Kenya. The objective was to determine the influence of interactive reading on learner achievement in reading skills in secondary schools and the study hypothesized that there is no statistically significant relationship between interactive reading and learner achievement in reading skills in secondary schools.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1986) which emphasizes on social interaction, zone of proximal development (ZPD) and the more knowledgeable other (MKO) as influential aspects to the cognitive development of the learner. Interaction first occurs at inter-psychological level which is the social level where the child gets knowledge by interacting with other people. At this level schema is built from experiences around. Second, is intra-psychological which occurs at the individual level where the child incorporates the knowledge by adding personal value. On the other hand, the MKO signifies any other person with a higher ability level than the learner with regard to a particular task. Mostly the MKO is usually the teacher, but could also be peers or other scaffolds like contextual cues. The ZPD advocates that there is a difference between what someone can learn alone and what is achievable through scaffolding, guidance and support. Learning occurs when there is shared teaching where the teacher and learners interact to assist the learner on a task they cannot perform alone because of its difficult level. Thus, the theory focuses on the concept that learning takes place from the environment and at the same time when learners interact socially and actively with people surrounding them.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The relationship between interactive reading and reading skills is illustrated in the conceptual framework in Figure 1



## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test control group design which manipulated use of interactive reading on experimental groups to determine learner's achievement in reading skills. The study targeted form three learners and teachers of English in mixed day public sub county secondary schools. Purposive sampling was used to arrive at eight public sub county secondary schools situated within the confines of Kisumu city to guarantee homogeneity. 209 learners from four schools were randomly assigned to experimental and 238 from other four to control groups. The experimental groups used a 40-minute designed lesson plan, four lessons in a week for a period of eight weeks and participants worked in groups. The teachers in the experimental groups also guided on reading strategies and modelled reading; aspects controlled in control study groups.

The study triangulated collection of data as a way to strengthen validity and reliability (Heale & Forbes, 2013). The research instruments were designed, developed and piloted and verified for reliability before actual data collection. The instruments included: Reading skills achievement tests for learners (pre test and post test), two sets of questionnaire: one for teachers and the other for learners, semi structured interview for teachers, focus group discussions (FGD) for learners. The test had three sections, the first on comprehension skills, second on vocabulary and third on prosodic awareness. Learners and teachers filled questionnaires and responded to questions in interviews and FGD on thematic areas: read aloud, repeated, shared and guided reading.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used to analyse data. Descriptive statistics generated frequency distributions and percentages, thematic interpretations from the interviews, FGD and open -ended questions in the questionnaires was discussed in emerging areas guided by the study objectives. Inferential statistics was used to test the study hypotheses by use of multiple regressions, at  $\alpha = 0.05$  significant level to establish how each variable predicted achievement in reading skills and determine significance level. Research ethics was considered by acquiring a permit and informed consent sought from participants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

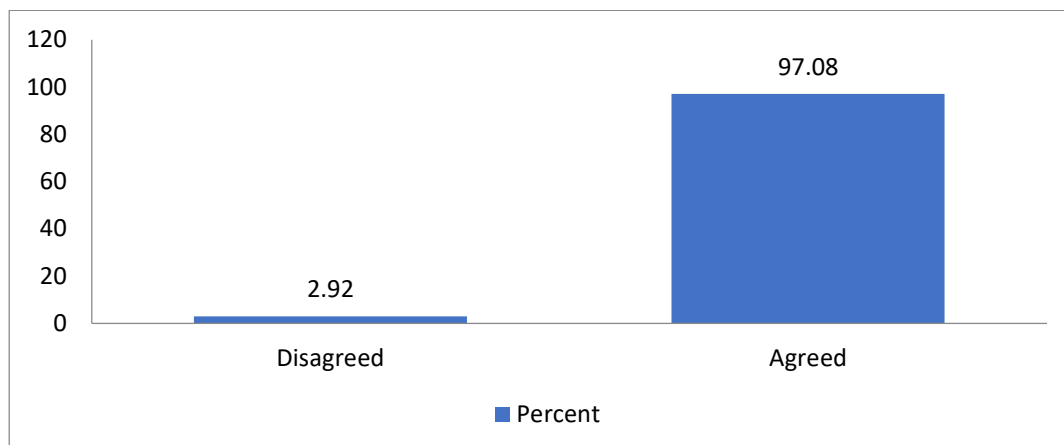
### Read aloud and learner achievement in reading skills

The study sought to ascertain whether teachers used read aloud during reading instruction as illustrated Table 1.

**Table 1 Teachers' rating of use of Read aloud strategy**

Study groups	Occasionally	Frequently	Total
Control	3	6	9
Experimental	2	8	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>5(26.32%)</b>	<b>14(73.68%)</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Mean</b>			<b>3.05</b>

Table 1 reveal that 73.68% (n=14) teachers, rated a mean M= 3.05 portraying that they frequently used read aloud strategy. Read aloud enabled learners to verbalize words for effective interpretation of information. Additional analysis revealed that 97.08% (n=199) learners agreed that read aloud was effective in enhancing achievement in reading skills as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 Learners' rating of effectiveness of read aloud strategy**

Findings in Figure 1 indicate that read aloud strategy enabled learners recognize words which resulted in effective comprehension as exemplified in the improved performance in the post-test. The findings from the teachers and learners questionnaires were supported by the findings from focus groups discussions which revealed that learners attributed achievement in reading skills to read aloud strategy, because it enabled them to pay attention during reading, thus, retaining information in the text. The learners experienced the whole class remained silent when one member was appointed by the teacher to read aloud. The learner's sentiments were supported by teachers who disclosed that read aloud was one of the strategies used to ensure all learners in class had a chance to read the text and familiarize themselves with pronunciation of words and subject matter in the text. This was the common practice where learners took turns to read aloud in class. The findings imply that read aloud strategy enabled learners to develop word recognition skills by verbalizing words effectively and building fluency which resulted in comprehension.



The findings in the study are in tandem with Young and Rasinski (2017) observation that participants who engaged in read aloud strategy increased comprehension due to having built fluency from recognizing words. Similar results were observed by Lee and Yoon (2017) who observed that during read aloud, proficiency was built due to phonological awareness, word recognition skills and oral reading fluency. This is because automaticity in learner's word recognition improves when they first listen to the text being read aloud. However, in a departure from the study findings, Lekwilai (2014) observed Thai teachers did not engage learners in read aloud attributing the strategy to be traditional. When learners do not practise read aloud, they spent more energy figuring out how to pronounce words leaving little energy for constructing meaning in the text.

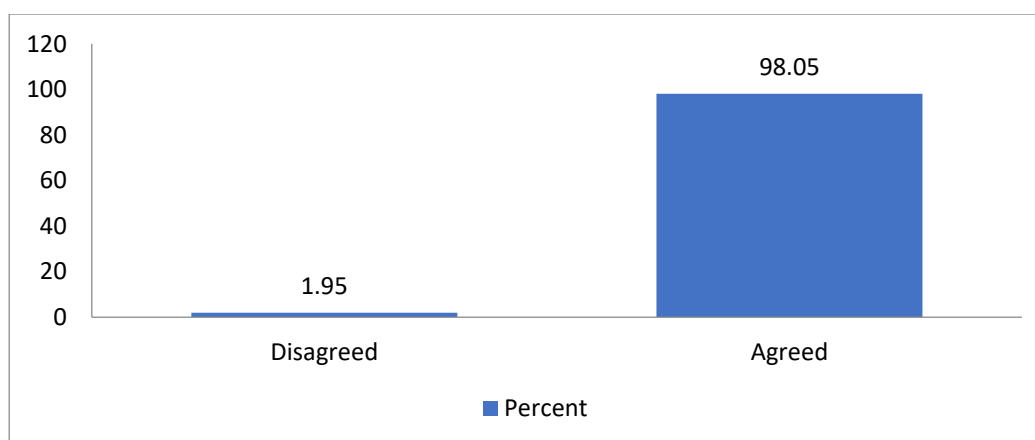
### Repeated Reading and Learner achievement in Reading Skills

The study sought to establish whether teachers engaged learners in repeated reading. Analysis on the teacher's rate on use of repeated reading is illustrated in Table 2

**Table 2 Teachers' rating of use of repeated reading strategy**

Study groups	Occasionally	Frequently	Total
Control	8	1	9
Experimental	7	3	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>15(78.94%)</b>	<b>4(21.06%)</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Mean</b>			<b>1.89</b>

The findings in Table 2 revealed that 78.94 % (n=15) teachers occasionally used repeated reading strategy, while 21.06 % (n=4) frequently used the strategy during reading skills instruction. The findings are confirmed with the mean  $M = 1.89$ , which indicate that teachers occasionally engaged learners in repeated reading. This implied that learners were not frequently exposed to same texts or passages to familiarize with words in context in order to build vocabulary. The findings confirm results reflected in the dismal performance in the item in the pre test where participants were not to explain meaning of words and phrases in context. However, after intervention of repeated reading, learners agreed that repeated reading enabled them improve vocabulary which enhanced achievement in reading skills. The findings from the learners' questionnaire are illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2 Learners' rating of effectiveness of repeated reading strategy**

Findings in Figure 2 indicate that 98.05 % (n=201) learners agreed that repeated reading enhanced achievement in reading skills. The findings were supported with improved performance in post- test items on vocabulary which predicted 89.9% of the scores in reading skills, and revelations by participants in experimental study groups who confirmed that repeated reading enabled learners familiarize with language enabling retention of information in the text. In addition teachers asked learners to re- read chapters already covered which contributed to mastery of content. One participant reported that after a read aloud session, the teacher asked them to re- read the passage silently which enabled them master information.

The results are in tandem with Jeon and Lee (2013) who observed learner's mistakes associated with understanding words reduced due to repeated reading. Similarly, Chang and Millett (2015) observed an increase in fluency and comprehension through engaging in repeated reading. This is attributed on the contention that words encountered earlier in similar contexts enable automaticity in reading, resulting in increased comprehension because learners do not struggle with decoding words. Ideally, learners use same knowledge they have learned from other passages to transfer to other contexts for information processing. Exposing learners to more print during repeated reading provides exposure to a lot of words enabling familiarization and building vocabulary. Impaired vocabulary subjects learners to struggle with reading risking breakdown in comprehension. It is sensible that teachers should constantly engage learners in repeated reading for them to be exposed to a lot of print which will result in building vocabulary for effective comprehension.

### **Shared Reading and Learner Achievement in Reading Skills**

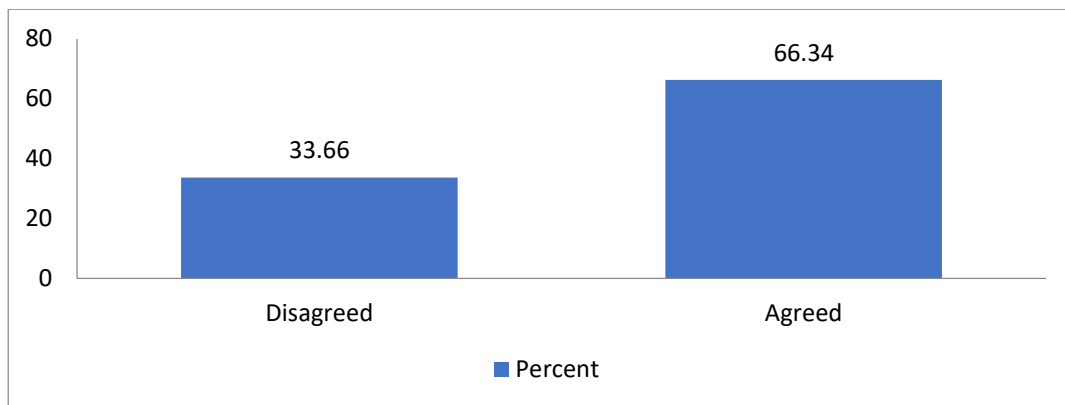
The study sought to establish if teachers engaged learners in shared reading during reading instruction. The findings are illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3 Teachers' rating of use of Shared reading strategy**

<b>Study groups</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Total</b>
Control	4	5	9
Experimental	3	7	10
Total	7(36.84%)	12(63.16%)	19
<b>Mean</b>			<b>2.74</b>

The findings in Table 3 reveal that 63.16% (n=12) teachers frequently used shared reading strategy, while 36.84(n=7) occasionally used. The teachers rated a mean M=2.74 revealing that they assisted learners to relate with contextual cues to monitor comprehension. Additional analysis from learners questionnaires revealed that 66.34 % (n=136) learners agreed that shared reading had a positive effect on achievement in reading skills, while 33.66 % (n=69) disagreed to the same effect as shown in Figure 3.





**Figure 3 Learners' rating of effectiveness of shared reading strategy**

The findings in Figure 3 show that monitoring own comprehension by utilizing contextual cues in the text enabled learners perform better in reading skills. In addition, field notes revealed that comprehension was supported by modelling and correction from reading errors by teachers. On finding out how teachers monitored comprehension, participants revealed that questions related to the text were asked before and during the reading process. Learners revealed that teachers engaged them in discussion and brainstorming that enabled them activate background knowledge. The implication is that teachers provided support that enabled learners activate background knowledge enabling them stay focussed.

Similar findings were realized by Hawkins et al. (2011) who observed adolescents benefitting from error correction and modelling through shared reading. Similarly, Kulo and Omulando (2014) observed that comprehension was enhanced when teachers asked questions which enabled learners activate background knowledge. When teachers demonstrate reading, they enhance learning of supra segmental features resulting in fluency and comprehension. Questioning, on the other hand activates learners' relevant background knowledge. This implied that participants were engaged in all the three phases of reading making learning interactive. The findings reveal that the teacher has a role to support development of fluency in language and frequently monitor comprehension at every stage of reading to enable retention of content from texts.

### **Guided Reading and Learner achievement in Reading Skills**

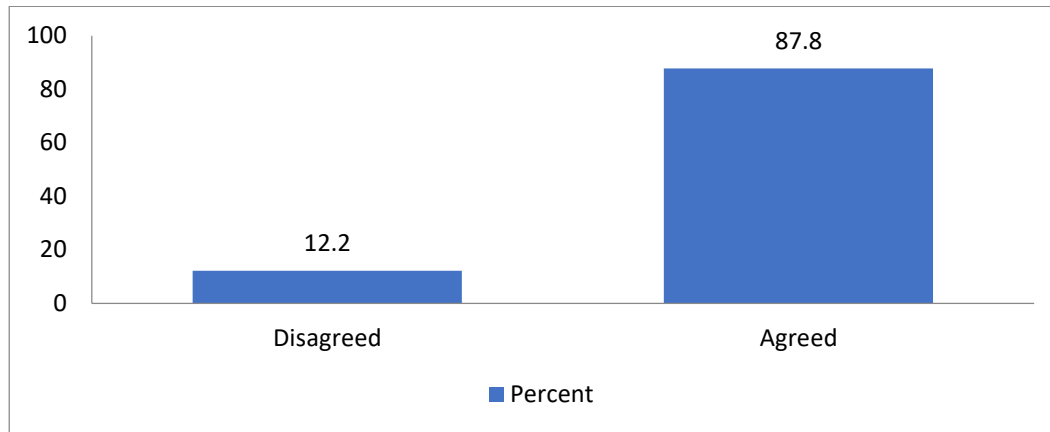
The study sought to establish if teachers engaged learners in guided reading. The findings are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4 Teachers' rating of use of Guided reading strategy**

Study groups	Occasionally	Frequently	Total
Control	2	7	9
Experimental	4	6	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>6(31.58%)</b>	<b>13(68.42%)</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Mean</b>			<b>2.89</b>

The findings in Table 4 reveal that 68.42% (n=13) teachers frequently used guided reading strategy. The findings portray a mean M= 2.89 indicating that learners were able to achieve comprehension by frequently utilizing appropriate reading strategies. The findings from

learners questionnaire revealed that 87.8% (n=180) learners agreed that guided reading enhanced achievement in reading skills due to utilizing varied strategies while 12.2 % (n=25) learners disagreed as illustrated in Figure 4



**Figure 4 Learners' rating of effectiveness of guided reading strategy**

The findings from questionnaires are supported with the improved scores in section A of the post test which tested on comprehension skills. Comprehension explained 95.9% of the variances in reading skills in the post- test. This implied that learners became active readers who could predict and question own reading comprehension because of appropriate utilization of reading strategies. Further, results from focus groups discussions revealed that learners were guided by the teachers on strategies like discussions and brainstorming which enabled them activate background knowledge. The teachers revealed that engaging learners in varied activities kept them engaged throughout the lesson.

The findings conform to Sattar and Salehi (2014) observation that learners who are exposed to explicit guided instruction become proficient in reading comprehension as they are able to apply appropriate strategies. Similarly, Salavati and Tabatabaei (2018) observed that acquisition of reading skills was realized when learners engaged in 'before reading,' 'during-reading' and 'after reading' strategies. Adopting strategies at all the three phases of reading is especially important for English language learners because reading strategies enable processing of information. Therefore, proper instruction at all three phases will enable learners apply similar strategies to other readings during independent reading.

#### **Relationship between Interactive Reading and Learner Achievement**

In order to establish the relationship between interactive reading and achievement in reading skills, the null hypothesis,  $H_0$ : there is no statistically significant relationship between interactive reading and learner achievement in reading skills in secondary schools was tested. Multiple linear regressions was run to predict reading skills based on read aloud, repeated, shared and guided reading as presented in Table 5.

**Table 5 Computed model of Interactive Reading**

Model	Multiple weights		Regression		Sig.	Correlation with Reading skills
	B	Std Error	Beta	t		
Constant	12.105	3.509		3.440	0.001	
Read aloud	2.603	0.770	0.199	3.380	0.001	0.364
Repeated reading	2.301	0.785	0.172	2.930	0.004	0.370
Shared reading	3.403	0.541	0.384	6.295	0.000	0.556
Guided reading	2.221	0.638	0.201	3.480	0.001	0.354

Notes  $R^2 = .42$ , ( $p < .05$ )

The findings in Table 5 revealed that there was a positive and linear relationship between reading skills and read aloud, repeated, shared and guided reading. A significant regression was found,  $F(4,200) = 36.259$   $p < 0.000$  with an  $R$  square of 0.420. Participants predicted reading skills is equal  $12.105 + 2.603(\text{read aloud}) + 2.301(\text{repeated reading}) + 3.403(\text{shared reading}) + 2.221(\text{guided reading})$ . The findings reveal that the multiple regression model with the four variables statistically significantly predicted achievement in reading skills because all the four variables were statistically significant predictors of reading skills. The  $R$ -square statistic that measures the strength of the input variable in influencing the output variable was 0.420 implying that the model with input appropriateness score explained 42% of the reading skills scores.

The findings revealed that  $p$  was  $< .05$ ; therefore, the study established a statistically significant relationship between interactive reading and achievement in reading skills. The findings confirm Yildirim et al. (2017) observation on word recognition skills being a significant predictor of comprehension. Similarly, Yusuf, (2015) observed that interactive reading activities impacted positively on learner achievement in reading skills.

## CONCLUSION

Interactive reading strategies employ both bottom up and top down processing thus playing a vital role in enhancing achievement in reading skills of learners. Bottom up processing develops word recognition skills and vocabulary. In addition learners are able to identify contextual cues by utilizing strategies for comprehension. On the other hand, top down processing employ use of learners background knowledge and knowledge in the text and context to execute intended meaning. The findings of this study revealed that interactive reading strategy had a positive impact on secondary school learner's achievement in reading skills for it explained 42% of variances in reading skills. The study concludes since there was a statistically significant relationship between interactive reading and learner achievement in reading skills, learners should be engaged frequently in interactive reading to realize better results in reading skills.

## Implications to Research and Practise

In policy, Teachers service commission and Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should certify that planning of teaching reading skills should incorporate both top down and bottom up processing for competence to be realized. On the other hand, in practise, teachers should engage learners in lower level and higher level processing of the text during reading instruction. The study suggests further research in other schools like boarding.

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