

## **Pre-Reading Activities and Their Effects On English Reading Comprehension of ESL Basic School Pupils**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study sought to ascertain the effect of pre-reading activities on the English reading comprehension of upper primary pupils in Ho-West Basic Schools of the Volta Region of Ghana. The study adopted the concurrent mixed method design which aimed at gathering both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. The sample size of the study consisted 18 upper primary teachers and 99 upper primary pupils. The sample was drawn using census, simple random and purposive sampling techniques. A structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Questionnaire data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation while the interview data were thematically discussed. The findings showed that pre-reading activities motivate and sustain pupils' interest in the actual reading activity. They also activate the building of related information in such a way that new information is easily assimilated into learners' existing fields of knowledge. Though pre-reading activities play a critical role in the reading comprehension classroom, the study revealed that a significant number of teachers do not use them. The few who do, neither use a variety of them nor use them regularly. The study recommends that curriculum developers and implementors should incorporate appropriate and regular pre-reading activities for assigned texts in the reading comprehension classroom.*

**KEYWORDS:** reading, pre-reading activities, English, reading comprehension, classroom, achievements.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

English language is the medium of instruction from upper primary and beyond in the Ghanaian educational system and this presupposes that success in education at all levels, to a very large extent, depend on an individual's proficiency in English. It is for these and other reasons that English

Language is a major subject of study in Ghanaian schools and reading is a major element or skill in our study of language and other disciplines in the academic field. Reading is basically the level of understanding of a text/message resulting from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text/message (Mahmoud, 2015). Without reading, ideas and facts stored up in printed materials and electronic sources cannot be tapped. In view of this, reading is regarded indispensable in education as it promotes cognitive growth (Beard, 2021). Hence reading and engaging with written language ensures serious human thought, including thinking about thinking (Olson, 2016). To this end, pupils' achievement in schools largely depends on their ability to read and understand texts well. Martino (2016) sees reading as the process by which a mind elevates itself by the power of its own operations while focusing only on the symbols of the readable content to work with. Reading, therefore, facilitates the academic formation of the student (Naranjo et al., 2021) and as such, a child with little interest in reading and in understanding what is read is a danger to her/himself and the society she/he lives in. It is for this reason that educationists regard reading as one of the key aims of education. Reading English language plays a vital role in the teaching and learning of all subjects since it is a receptive skill that aids learners to learn new ideas and concepts. In formal education, reading plays an essential role in the lives of both the instructor and the learner and this is a result of the fact that instructors and learners through reading, are able to transform their thoughts and understanding. In the educational setting, facilitators are able to assess learners mostly by reading what they write; pupils are also able to understand written instruction and questions in examinations through reading. Therefore, the essence of reading, especially in English, cannot be over-emphasized in all educational settings and Ghana is no exception.

In other words, the basis of all forms of academic, professional, and personal development of an individual is the ability to read and write, especially in the English language. Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols to derive meaning. It is a means for language acquisition, communication, and sharing information and ideas. Word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation are all important components of the complicated process of reading. Sometimes, one can interpret written words without being able to recognize all of them. Sandhu (2016) emphasizes that reading requires one to identify and understand strings of words in a fluid manner. It is a detailed process that includes comprehension, word recognition, engagement, and fluency.

In the acquisition of any language, skills are required and these language skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The absence of any one of these skills retards the development and function of an individual. Therefore, an individual's ability to read is important to personal as well as national development. This is because reading different text types like newspapers, books, journals, magazines, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook messages, and other internal presentations helps in deriving pleasure and information (Agbevi, 2022). Besides, reading is the tool that we use in finding knowledge and in assessing the already acquired knowledge. This is to broaden our imaginations and achievements in all fields of endeavor and serve as a pre-requisite skill for the study of other subjects.

Just as reading has been of great interest to scholars and educational stakeholders, so has the possession of pre-reading skills gained tremendous consideration. Pre-reading activities come in a variety of forms and are geared toward assisting learners by giving them the confidence they need

to interact with the structure and content of the text. The instructor has to identify the potential problems of readability inherent in a chosen reading text, and then help learners find ways to overcome those difficulties. Thongyon and Chiramanee (2011) assert that pre-reading skills and activities are relevant dimensions in language acquisition and, have received a great deal of attention as several studies intimate on conceptualized practices that help provide teachers and practitioners with clear knowledge and understanding in teaching reading of different text types, especially those written in English.

Osei et al. (2016), for instance, looked at the use of pre-reading activities in reading skills achievement in preschool education. Also, Azizifar et al. (2015) conducted a study at Omol Habibeh High School in Ilam, Iran and Mujahidah & Ramli (2019) investigated the effectiveness of pre-reading plan (PReP) technique to improve student's reading comprehension of narrative text at one senior high school in Pinrang, South Sulawesi of Indonesia. Nesrim (2020) also explored the impact of pre-reading strategies on the reading performance of students studying English as a second language. In the EFL context, Hashemi et al. (2016) explored the impact of content-based pre-reading activities on Iranian High school EFL learners' reading comprehension, Asgar (2016) investigated the effects of three types of pre-reading activities on the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners, Rondon & Tomitch (2020) explored the effect of different pre-reading activities on pre-intermediate and advanced Brazilian EFL students' reading comprehension and Nahid & Asgar (2016) investigated, specifically, the extent to which pre-reading activities might improve EFL learners' reading comprehension. Also, Al Akremi (2016) investigated the impact of pre-reading activities on male ESL upper-intermediate students' comprehension in a post-Basic Education school in Oman.

Most of the studies conducted concentrated on EFL classroom environments and at the tertiary, pre-tertiary, and preschool levels. There exists little current literature on the impact of pre-reading activities on the reading comprehension of upper primary pupils in ESL classrooms. It is in light of this gap and in contributing to literature that the current study sought to ascertain the use of pre-reading activities in public basic schools in ESL classroom environments.

This study, therefore, purposed to find out the kinds of pre-reading activities upper primary teachers use in teaching English reading comprehension and the effect of pre-reading activities on English reading comprehension of upper primary pupils in public basic schools in Ghana.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions;

1. What kind of pre-reading activities do upper primary teachers in Ho-West basic schools use in teaching English reading comprehension?
2. How do these pre-reading activities impact on English reading comprehension among upper primary pupils of Ho-West basic schools?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Part of the cognitive process of reading involves decoding symbols to derive understanding and meaning from written texts. In view of this, readers who can activate prior knowledge determine the main ideas and significant details, efficiently decode words, make inferences, retell, synthesize, and visualize are seen to have developed a repertoire of reading skills (Cheyenne, 2018). Reading has a way of changing human beings' perspective about life in general, leads to learning, helps people to grow, and enables people to acquire different experiences in life. Reading can entertain and amuse the reader, but most of all it enriches the reader with knowledge and experiences narrated. Agbevivi (2022) projects reading as the most vital skill for students; consequently, it is believed that the more one reads, the more one learns. Reading purely for leisure is fun but when reading skills and strategies are perfected at an early stage, it produces better and more comprehensive readers with purpose.

Reading, literally, helps us to live other lives or lifestyles in other places and other times and even on other planets. It contributes to shaping our personality and identity as well as facilitating our learning of things that help us in our daily life. Reading is an essential accomplishment for young learners and developing reading and writing skills is an essential aspect of pupil overall development (Badu et al., 2022) Through reading, we experience sorrow, joy, and relaxation depending on the content of what we read at a particular point in time. We consciously and unconsciously read as we go about our normal life activities. We read when we check email, watch TV, walk on the streets, drive, go shopping. According to Vacca (2008), reading arouses an innate curiosity in students and stimulates them to dig deeper into a text to find answers and meanings. However, the desire to become active readers is often not shared by all students, mainly because they do not have the spur of motivation or competency in reading. Reading is a key skill for most students who study English as a second language as the ultimate application and use at the end of studying language is reading. This is because most materials are printed, so it is actually the primary skill for learning and as a primary and receptive skill, reading remains a valid aim in the second language classroom.

Arguably, many people consider reading as the most important of the four skills in a second language classroom. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) considers reading as the "new civil right". Accordingly, a person cannot fully exercise his or her democratic rights if he/she is unable to read. Reading is not just reading books, but it also includes observing the surrounding with eyes, ears, and mouth. As such one will find it difficult to go places if s/he cannot read the directional sign boards. Reading books, notices, newspapers, journals, signposts, and magazines gives us access to information and enables us to cross-check information we get from other people. It helps us to do revisions and to know the demand of examination questions and other instructions. We can imagine how difficult it would be to live if we are unable to read.

The National Reading Panel (2000) affirms that comprehension is an active process between the reader and a text, a process that is both 'intentional and thoughtful. Similarly, Cotter (2011) defines comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Reading comprehension is therefore the purpose of reading and remains an essential part of all learning. Comprehension can be conceptualized as the

extraction of relevant knowledge from texts and consists of three elements; the reader, the text, and the purpose of reading. It is the interaction between text, readers, and purpose as well as the use of reading comprehension strategies that increase comprehension. Tompkins (2011) consequently defines reading comprehension as the level of understanding of a text/message. Reading comprehension is the interaction between the written words and the knowledge they elicit from sources outside the text or message. Thus, reading comprehension is a cognitive process that is meant for decoding the meaning embedded in a text in order to understand what the author is communicating to his/her audience through the message. Without comprehension, reading is reduced to symbols that do not provide the reader with any information, and again, without comprehension, reading is nothing more than tracking symbols on a page with the readers eyes and sounding them out (Mahmoud, 2015).

### **Impact of Pre-Reading Activities on English Reading Comprehension**

Pre-reading activities are meant to give students the background knowledge they need in order to better understand a text when they interact with it. They are the activities that pupils are taken through to enable them to acquire skills for actual reading. Therefore, they are designed to prepare beginners for formal reading. Johnson et al. (2010) state that pre-reading activities are a series of activities pupils are exposed to, as a way of preparing them for formal reading. For this reason, they can be viewed as essential tasks that should be carried out to activate learners' schema and avoid any failures in text comprehension. Pupils familiarize themselves with the subject, vocabulary, or challenging structures in the passage through the use of pre-reading activities. Pre-reading exercises are particularly useful in fostering a love for reading and in introducing important cultural ideas. According to Ping (2014), pre-reading activities are essential to pupils' later applications in school activities. They are exercises that give pupils the chance to decide whether to read more of a text in order to discover more intriguing ideas from it (Ghamrawi, 2014), bring about success in pupils' comprehension (Malikhatul, 2019), has key impacts on reading comprehension (Jamilah, 2018).

Osei et al. (2016) state that pre-reading activities are essential for giving students the fundamental knowledge they need about texts, piquing their interest in reading texts, and keeping them in a reading environment throughout their formal learning stage. According to Hasan (2011), students' schemata can be triggered during the pre-reading phase before the real reading stage, and this can improve their comprehension of written material. It is clear that pre-reading activities are very important in the reading class and have a good impact on pupils. Pre-reading activities, according to Tsadidey (2002), include a variety of games, comparative picture studies, and picture-storytelling exercises that are typically helpful in assisting children in developing the reading abilities necessary for formal reading. These activities are enabling activities which give young readers the thorough grounding they need to plan activities and understand the reading material (Kim & Quinn, 2013). In this view, pre-reading activities uncover and elicit prior knowledge, and the purpose(s) for reading, and develop a knowledge foundation required for dealing with the content and structure of the contents provided (Suggate et al., 2013).

Pre-reading activities set up and strengthen students' foundation for reading materials, demonstrating the critical function pre-reading activities have in strengthening students' focus and attention on the reading materials they will be reading (Franceschini et al., 2013). Without a doubt, the activities

allow the child to gradually test out his emotional self, calm himself through emotional expression in a range of reading situations, and more easily pick up pre-reading skills (Abdulai, 2014). Pre-reading activities have drawn a lot of attention as the cornerstone techniques for introducing children to reading and maintaining their interest in texts (Suggate et al., 2013) and by employing these activities, readers are better prepared for the reading activities when they are motivated to read the text, which is a result of pre-reading activities. Additionally, because of their increased confidence, children are better able to complete the activity without expending too much effort, and they are more eager to participate in it. Furthermore, pre-reading activities add excitement to the activity, give the students a reason to read, and give the teacher an opportunity to assess how well the text can be understood with the aid of the activities assigned before/after reading (Osei et al., 2016) hence, by providing pre-reading activities, teachers can help learners become successful readers (Dickson, 2022). The application of the pre-reading technique is effective in improving reading comprehension of narrative text (Mujahidah & Ramli, 2019) and increases reading performance (Nesrim, 2020). Pre-reading activities have positive effects on students' performance in reading comprehension (Rondon & Tomitch, 2020; Asgar, 2016) and can have positive effects on all students whether high-level or low-level, and all learners can benefit from the techniques (Hashemi et al., 2016). They are motivational (Nahid & Asgar, 2016), and improve students' comprehension of texts because pre-reading strategies activate students' prior knowledge and facilitate L2 learners' comprehension ability of the target text (Al Akremi (2016). Therefore, the wise use of pre-reading techniques is one primary step in ensuring efficient comprehension and a more successful reading (Febrianti et al. 2022),

Pre-reading activities and practices are pertinent in language acquisition and the acquisition of reading skills in childhood education, especially in the reading comprehension classroom.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted at selected primary schools in the Ho-West District of the Volta Region of Ghana. The study was anchored on the pragmatist paradigm and was directed by the mixed-method research approach. The study employed the concurrent nested mixed method design where qualitative and quantitative data were collected in parallel.

The population of the study comprises all public basic school teachers and pupils of Ho-West District. The target population comprised all upper primary pupils and teachers of public basic schools in the Ho-West District. The accessible population consisted of upper primary pupils and teachers of nine (9) public basic schools in the Ho-West District. Thus, eighteen (18) teachers and ninety-nine (99) pupils made up the sample size for the study. The entire population of upper primary five and six (BS5 and BS6) teachers in the selected schools was used for the study. This was because the researchers deemed it appropriate to use the whole population since it was within their capacity to solicit information from each member. The sampling techniques employed included census which was used in the collection of data from the whole population of BS5 and BS6 teachers. Nine (9) pupils were purposively sampled for the interview phase and ninety (90) pupils were selected through the lottery method of simple random sampling.

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The structured questionnaire for teachers was made up of three sections. Section A captured the demographic information of respondents, section B collected data on the kinds of pre-reading activities used by teachers in teaching reading comprehension and Section C collected data on the impacts of pre-reading activities. The structured questionnaire for pupils was made up of two sections. Section A captured pupils' demographic information and section B collected data on the impacts of pre-reading activities on pupils' reading comprehension. Researchers took notes and recorded (audiotape) the interview and later transcribed it to complement the notes taken during the interview.

The instrument was pre-tested to enable the determination of ambiguities in the questionnaire and the improve the interview guides. The responses helped the researchers to test the reliability of the questionnaire output with the use of Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability of the structured questionnaire was obtained by calculating the Cronbach coefficient after the pilot test. The reliability statistics provided Cronbach's alpha value which indicated an internal consistency of 0.81 indicating that the questionnaire was 81% reliable. To ensure the trustworthiness of the interview schedule, the researchers adhered to the constructs; of credibility and confirmability, which Morrow (2005) opined correspond to internal validity and objectivity respectively, in qualitative research.

Qualitative data collected were thematically analyzed based on research question two. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*What kind of pre-reading activities do upper primary teachers of Ho-West basic schools use in teaching English reading comprehension?*

Pre-Reading Activities	N	No	Yes
Box and dot	18	12 (66.7%)	6 (33.3%)
Circle and cross	18	18 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Tracing the path	18	17 (94.4%)	1 (5.6%)
Classroom discussion	18	0 (0.0%)	18 (100%)
Kim's game	18	12 (66.7%)	6 (33.3%)
Vocabulary pre-teaching	18	1 (5.6%)	17 (94.4%)
Pre-Questioning	18	2 (11.1%)	16 (88.9%)
Whose voice	18	13 (72.2%)	5 (27.8%)
Semantic mapping	18	16 (88.9%)	2 (11.1%)
Matching shapes, objects, and pictures	18	9 (50.0%)	9 (50.0%)

The results of the kind of pre-reading activities used by upper primary teachers before teaching reading comprehension show that all teachers are conversant with classroom discussion. Specifically, the results revealed that 94.4% and 88.9% of teachers regularly use vocabulary pre-teaching and pre-questioning pre-reading activities respectively. This shows that most of the teachers of the nine (9) public basic schools in the Ho-West District have some level of knowledge and use

matching shapes, objects, and pictures in pre-reading activities in the reading comprehension classroom. The use of box and dot, Kim's game, and whose voice were not highly unutilized as pre-reading techniques. The least used pre-reading strategy or activity by the teachers were tracing the path and semantic mapping with 5.6% and 11.1% scores respectively. The findings further confirmed that the pre reading activity. Circle the path was not used by the teachers. These findings suggest that teachers have insufficient knowledge of pre-reading activities and are unable to use a variety of them in the reading comprehension classroom. This deficiency on the part of the teachers, to a very large extent, explains pupils' inability to read, understand and enjoy comprehension passages as well as other simple reading materials.

*Teachers' perspectives on the impact of pre-reading activities on English reading comprehension among upper primary pupils in Ho-West basic schools*

The results of teachers' perspectives on the impact of pre-reading activities on reading comprehension showed a mean value of above 3.0 for all items. This indicates that teachers have positive perspectives on the impact of pre-reading activities on students' ability to read and understand a written text as well as perform well in the reading comprehension classroom. Aside from this, a standard deviation of less than 1.0 was realized from the results given by the teachers and this is an indication that the responses were homogeneous. The results therefore imply that the use of pre-reading activities contributes tremendously to students' ability to read and comprehend a written text. The finding confirms the assertion of Febrianti et al. (2022) that pre-reading activities uncover and elicit prior knowledge, the purpose(s) for reading, and developing a knowledge foundation required for dealing with the content and structure of the contents provided. The finding is also in line with the assertion by Nesrim (2020) that pre-reading activities have a positive impact on pupils' reading performance. To a very large extent, pre-reading activities add excitement to the reading activity, give pupils a reason to read, and give teachers an opportunity to assess how well the text can be understood with the aid of the activities assigned before/after reading (Osei et al., 2016).

*Pupils' perspectives on the impact of pre-reading activities on English reading comprehension among upper primary pupils in Ho-West basic schools*

The section presents the results of students' perspectives on the impact of pre-reading activities on their reading comprehension. It was confirmed that 85 (86%) agreed that pre-reading activities are used in their reading comprehension lessons. However, 88 (88%) and 73 (74%) of pupils indicated that pre-reading activities were not used regularly and when used, there was little variety in usage. Also, 79 (80%) of students agreed that pre-reading activities improve their oral skills while 20 (20%) disagreed while 57 (58%) agreed that pre-reading activities improve their visual discrimination/visual memory skills. Similarly, majority of the students (60 (61%)) agreed that pre-reading activities develop their auditory discrimination/auditory memory, visual motor/left to right eye movement, visual understanding of the text, pre-reading skills, and background knowledge about the subject matter of the text. It was further confirmed that 96 (97.4%) students mentioned that pre-reading activities activate their background knowledge about the topic of the text and as such helps

them in learning more. This finding implies that pre-reading activities have positive effects on pupils' performance in reading comprehension (Asgar, 2016) and as a matter of fact, the more they read, the more they learn (Agbevivi, 2022). Pre-reading activities are thus, invaluable tools in reading comprehension classrooms. They are learner-focused and ensure the participation and involvement of pupils in the reading activity yields comprehension. Thus, the use of pre-reading activities has positive effects on students' performance in reading comprehension activities of these students (Rondon & Tomitch, 2020) and these pre-reading activities bring about success in the reading comprehension (Malikhatul, 2019). The benefits of pre-reading activities in the reading comprehension classroom are enormous such that all efforts must be made to ensure their use, especially in the rural classroom where learners are disadvantaged as far as opportunities for provisions of educational facilities, equipment, and materials are concerned. This is to ensure that pupils especially those in rural settings have value for education.

### **Interview Results**

After a thorough thematic analysis of all the responses given by the students, the findings confirmed that seven major themes emerged with regard to the views of students on the impact of pre-reading activities on their reading comprehension. These themes include the use of pre-reading activities in the reading comprehension classroom, frequency in the use of pre-reading activities, variation in the use of pre-reading activities, high reading achievement, improvement in reading skills, motivation and sustained reading interest and comprehension of reading materials. Few responses are presented in support of the themes.

#### *Use of pre-reading activities in the reading comprehension classroom*

The import of this theme is to determine the kinds of pre-reading activities employed in the reading comprehension classrooms. Some of the responses provided are presented below;

“Madam sometimes makes us discuss the title and pictures in the passages.”

“Madam teaches us how to pronounce new words but not always.”

“Sometimes, sir will teach the meaning of new words before reading but he does that more often when we are reading.”

“Anytime madam is busy or will not come to school or she will be late, she asks us to read. When our teacher is absent, another teacher or the headmaster can come and say we should read and I should write names of talkative.”

“When someone is reading and cannot pronounce a word, sir pronounces it and asks us to pronounce it after him. After that, we continue reading.”

The above responses suggest the use of two pre-reading activities in the reading comprehension classroom. These are vocabulary pre-teaching and classroom discussion. One important issue

requiring attention and future investigation is how reading comprehension is structured and used in the language classroom.

#### *Frequency in the use of pre-reading activities*

This section focuses on finding out the frequency at which pre-reading activities are used in reading comprehension classrooms in rural schools. A few responses relating to this discussion are presented as follows;

“Yes. Sometimes.”

*“She asks questions about the pictures and title sometimes.”*

*“Before reading when sir is around, sometimes he teaches us the pronunciation of words through drilling.”*

*“Not always. When visitors are around or when she is in a happy mood, we spend a lot of time treating passages to our understanding.”*

The above presentations indicate that pre-reading activities are not frequently used in the reading comprehension classroom. This is worrying considering the finding that only two pre-reading activities are employed. As such, monotony is likely to set in and the outcome may not create interest and curiosity in learners. If teachers are able to employ a variety of pre-reading activities, learners are going to be much interested in what is to be read than the constant use of one or two ‘over-used’ strategies.

#### *Variation in the use of pre-reading activities*

The focus of this is to determine the number of pre-reading activities used by a single teacher or within a single lesson.

“I don’t remember any game or activity we do before reading, madam.”

“Madam sometimes teaches the pronunciation and/or meaning of new words before or during the reading time.”

“We learn how to pronounce big words and sometimes we talk about the pictures.”

“Sir asks questions and we answer.”

“He also teaches us how to pronounce words.”

Responses provided suggest that teachers do not vary the use of pre-reading activities in the classroom. At best, teachers use either pre-questioning or classroom discussions as pre-reading activities during reading comprehension lessons.

#### *High Reading Achievement Scores*

Responding to questions, the pupils gave various responses some of which indicated the above theme as shown in the following statements:

“Anytime he teaches new words, I am able to answer questions and even score higher marks because I can answer the questions.”

“I answer all the questions.”

“Madam, I answer questions very well after we finish reading. This made me score good marks in comprehension. Last week, I scored 8 out of 10.”

Responses from respondents indicate that the use of pre-reading activities helps learners in attaining higher scores in reading exercises. This supports findings that the use of pre-reading activities is valuable for improving pupils’ achievement in reading comprehension texts (Azizifar et al. 2015) and brings about success in pupils’ comprehension (Malikhatul, 2019).

#### *Improvement in Reading Skills*

To the students, pre-reading activities are a means of improving their reading skills. The excerpts below give evidence of their perspectives:

“The activities help me to be able to read my books. My parents are becoming proud of my reading skills.”

“Even my friend is able to read whenever our teacher takes us through some activities before we start reading.”

“My teacher sometimes teaches us how to pronounce new and difficult words before we start reading. It helps us to read well”

It is clear from the above excerpts that the use of pre-reading activities motivates pupils to read. Through this, pupils’ confidence in reading and reading comprehension is developed. The phrase, ‘even my friend’ suggests that the weak ones in the class are able to cope up with reading comprehension when teachers link the text to learners’ prior knowledge through pre-reading activities. The role of teachers in using relevant pre-reading activities linked to the text and learners’ background is crucial.

#### *Motivation and Sustained Reading Interest*

Motivation and interest play a significant role in any successful classroom interaction. The students’ responses suggest that pre-reading activities develop their interest and motivate them to read and comprehend written text. This view is supported by the following comments made by them.

“They make reading easy.”

“Madam, you see I enjoy it a lot.”

“It helps me to know the pronunciation of sounds in words.”

“When the student-teachers come, nobody wants to miss reading lessons because they are enjoyable and interesting.”

“My teacher normally asks us questions before we start reading. It gives us an idea about what we will read.”

“Today, we have a reading comprehension lesson and I want Sir to talk about the passage and teach us how to pronounce the big words before we read”

The excerpts above show that pre-reading activities excite, arouse, and sustain learners' interest in reading. Thus, confirming findings that pre-reading activities activate pupils' prior knowledge and generate their interest in the topic (Dickson, 2022). The findings also prove that pre-reading activities are essential for giving pupils the fundamental knowledge they need about texts, piquing their interest in reading texts, and keeping them in a reading environment throughout their formal learning stage (Osei et al., 2016). The desire of the learner for the teacher to use pre-reading activities is expressed in the response: "I want Sir to talk about the passage and teach us how to pronounce the big words before we read." The positive outcome of the use of pre-reading activities cannot be under-estimated.

#### *Comprehension of Reading Materials*

Students also admit that pre-reading activities enhance their understanding of reading materials. They made the following comments to confirm their perspectives.

"Pre-reading activities improve my ability to make meaning of the images in the textbooks."

"I understand the reading material very well."

"The activities we are carried through before reading the passages make us to understand what we read."

"The activity enables us to read and understand the subject matter of a reading material."

It is clear from the extracts from the participants that pre-reading activities have a positive impact on students' comprehension abilities and confirms the finding that pre-reading activities improve pupils' reading comprehension (Mujahidah & Ramli, 2019). The discussion above confirms that pre-reading exercises are highly advised for practice as they have key impacts on reading comprehension (Jamilah, 2018). It is undeniable that pre-reading activities are crucial for educating young children in preschool settings because they prepare them for formal reading instruction in the formal school setting.

#### **Main Findings**

The findings revealed that Classroom discussion, Vocabulary pre-teaching and Pre-questioning are the pre-reading activities used by upper primary teachers in the Ho-West District of the Volta region of Ghana. However, teachers do not use pre-reading activities regularly in reading comprehension classrooms and when they do, there is very little variation in the activities used. Findings also revealed that comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text and this is enhanced through the use of pre-reading activities. Pre-reading activities motivate and sustain pupils' interest in the actual reading activity and activate the building of related information in such a way that the new material is easily assimilated into the learner's existing field of knowledge. Again, they improve learners reading skills to help them in enjoying texts and other materials. They also help in the comprehension of reading materials and hence, make positive changes in pupils' reading comprehension achievements. The benefits are required and necessary for any successful and effective formal reading activity.

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### **Implications of the Study**

The study projects the importance of pre-reading activities as an effective strategy that can help address the reading needs of pupils. The findings also establish the need for the use of effective pre-reading activities in promoting effective English reading comprehension among upper primary pupils. The outcome of the study also establishes that providing prior background knowledge through pre-reading activities to pupils has key impacts on their reading comprehension. In other words, providing and activating background knowledge by means of pre-reading techniques can make up for the difficulties pupils encounter in the reading comprehension classroom.

Aside from these, this study provides empirical evidence to project the role of pre-reading activities in improving reading comprehension and improving the pedagogy of teaching the English language in general and reading comprehension skills in particular in English language reading comprehension classrooms. Teachers, in planning and organizing their reading comprehension lessons, should choose appropriate and varied pre-reading activities to suit the experiences, age, level, and interests of learners as well as the context of use. They should also consider learners' level of proficiency and ensure consistent use of pre-reading activities in their reading comprehension classrooms.

Findings also provide educational stakeholders with a good background for providing better conditions for learning and teaching. Teachers and syllabus designers should incorporate appropriate and varied pre-reading activities for texts assigned for use in reading comprehension classrooms. This, therefore, requires attention to contextual factors when considering the effect of pre-reading activities on pupils reading comprehension.

### **CONCLUSION**

Reading is one of the tools of communication essential for the existence of man in the complex pattern of society and makes it possible for a man to perceive himself in the context of history and the fluid universe around him. It is a sort of submarine with the help of which one can reach the unfathomable depth of the ocean of knowledge. One cannot know how to learn if he does not know how to read. A step further, to neglect reading means to shut ourselves within the folds of darkness and ignorance, to withdraw ourselves from the world of knowledge, and to detach ourselves from the world in general. It is therefore important for teachers to usher pupils into the formal reading process through the use of pre-reading activities. Pre-reading activities are thus, preparatory activities aimed at preparing students for the formal reading process and aimed at improving the reading abilities and comprehension of reading materials. The study indicated that with the help of the pre-reading phase prior to the actual reading stage, the pupils' schemata can be activated and they can have better comprehension in reading a written text. Teachers' knowledge of pre-reading activities and their ability to appropriately and regularly use a variety of reading activities in the English reading comprehension classroom is key to attaining educational goals. Deficiencies in teachers' use of pre-reading activities would contribute greatly to pupils' inability to read, understand and enjoy comprehension passages as well as other simple materials.

## Recommendations

This study recommends the provision of sufficient language and context clues through restoring pre-reading activities since comprehending a text is an interactive process between a reader's background knowledge and the text. Teachers should recognize the importance of pre-reading activities in building-related information in such a way that the new material is easily assimilated into the learner's existing field of knowledge. Pre-reading activities should become a regular practice for all teachers in the English reading comprehension classroom because they make positive changes in pupils' English reading comprehension achievements. Workshops and seminars aimed at improving or enhancing the pedagogical content knowledge and skills of English language teachers in teaching reading comprehension should be rolled out. This way, teachers can effectively use appropriate and varied pre-reading activities to improve the reading skills and comprehension of pupils.

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