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The Teaching of Word Recognition to Pupils with Reading Difficulties in Class Two to Overcome Their Problems

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to build the automatic process of word recognition for pupils who are less proficient at word recognition and reading. This study initially looked at the problems less proficient readers face and what research has revealed. It then explores what teachers can do in their practice, such as reading aloud, unlocking pronunciation models, using reading materials in reading programmes or letter-sound association, and mastering spelling, to name but a few, to facilitate the process of word recognition. Tasks are then introduced, such as extensive reading, read and look-up procedures, the matching of specific words with identical words, and predict and infer meaning tasks that pupils can work on to develop their word recognition skills. These include the use of phonics, fluency, vocabulary building, extensive reading, the look-and-say method, and syntactic word order clues. The final part of the paper explores autonomous learner methods (learner strategies) that can be employed by pupils to improve their word recognition skills.

Keywords: Phonics, word recognition, reading, vocabulary, competence, behaviour, attitude, proficiency, handicapped, foundation

1. Introduction

At present, a trend towards standard-based educational reforms and corresponding assessment approaches can be observed throughout the world. By setting standards and monitoring pupils' levels of competence using standard-based assessment, policymakers hope to identify strengths and weaknesses of the educational system, increase the overall outcome level, and reduce inequalities.

According to Asiedu-Inkoom et al. (2002), formal education, especially basic education, is the fundamental block of every nation. Ghana's hope of becoming a middle-income gateway to Africa may only be realized if the type of education offered in our country is very effective.

It is against this background that the government's development plans and education policies are to achieve sustained nationwide efforts to expand, strengthen and make the basic education system in the country more relevant.

In this recognition, the Ministry of Education seeks to provide quality basic schooling for all school-age children. At the primary school level, the main objective is to give children training in numeracy, literacy, and, more importantly, socialization. For some time now, however, there has been a general feeling by all the stakeholders in education – the Government, Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, parents, and guardians, about the academic standard of pupils passing out at school (Asiedu-Inkoom et al., 2022).

It is common knowledge that a greater percentage of the pupils/learners in our public schools especially, cannot read and write good English. They are very weak in reading and writing. Children can only read if they can identify or recognize the individual words. This is very important because reading is a common thread that runs through all the subjects taught in school.

Since the introduction of formal education, a lot of educational efforts have been focused on meeting the individual reading needs of children. Techniques for individualizing reading instruction and relevant materials were, therefore, developed to provide better classroom management techniques in reading instruction. This saw the birth of a more individualized approach – the Scheme Reading Approach (SRA). The Scheme Reading Approach focuses on the language experience of the learners to enhance their reading ability.

According to the report of the Education Reforms Review Committee (ERRC), Pre-Tertiary Education (October, 1994), "The Criterion Referenced Tests conducted by the Primary Education Programme (PREP) in 1992 and 1993

confirmed that levels of literacy and numeracy at the primary level in our public schools are terribly low." Therefore, reading difficulties are a concern for all stakeholders, especially parents, and teachers. Without word recognition and reading skills, the child is seriously handicapped in the text and cannot study other subjects. In effect, he must learn to recognize the individual words, which will enable him to acquire proficiency in all aspects of education.

French (2004) also maintains this assertion that it is necessary for learners to acquire effective reading ability as early as possible in their academic pursuits. The expectation of the education reform that was started in Ghana in 1987 was that by the time the learner left the Primary level to Junior Secondary School, an appreciable level of reading competence would have been acquired to enable the learner to perform quite easily any reading task as was indicated by Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) syllabus 2001. This expectation of the CRDD of the Ministry of Education can be linked to an assertion by Milan (1995), who also sees the need for a good reader. Milan (1995:1) is of the view that a good reader is one who has "... the ability to read carefully, thoughtfully and confidently. A good reader knows what to look for and is actively involved in the text – by thinking, questioning, and evaluating."

Milan's assertion brings to the fore the fact that learners are really expected to be able to:

- Firstly, link sound to symbols and,
- Secondly, relate form and structure to arrive at the meaning of a text (Roberts, 1991)

The role of the teacher in helping learners acquire the ability to read is quite crucial. The teacher/facilitator is the pivot around whom children's acquisition of effective reading ability revolves. Thus, it is incumbent on the teachers to assess the learners and their own appropriate materials that will help the learners to read with pleasure. It is quite true, therefore, that pupils' achievement in reading reflects, to a very large extent, the teachers/facilitator's own drive and enthusiasm (French, 2004). The teacher's/facilitator's own drive and enthusiasm (French, 2004). The teacher's/facilitator's role in helping learners acquire competence in reading and word recognition becomes even more crucial when it concerns basic pupils/learners. For example, Basic Two is a crucial point in the academic life of learners because they have just graduated from Basic One, where they are expected to do more at word recognition and intensive reading to enable them to achieve success in their academic journey. For this reason, Primary Two teachers see the need to help establish a solid foundation in word recognition and reading ability in their pupils by selecting appropriate strategies that will develop and promote reading interest in the children.

The Ghana Education Service for effective implementation of reading has developed several strategies. The strategies are the focus of its public school system on improving classroom instructions. The following commitments have been made by the state and local districts to improve reading:

- Establish a statewide curriculum in every grade level,
- Provide teachers with more explicit assistance in effective ways to teach the state curriculum,
- Strengthen teacher preparation and certification by requiring vigorous academic content preparation in both pre-and-in-serve education, Mentor novices, and redefine or reorganize administrative roles to allow principals to assume instructional improvement as their primary and most important role, and
- Hold teachers and administrators accountable for improving reading for all pupils

The programme is aimed at helping pupils to master and improve their reading standards. This new assessment will yield individual pupil levels in reading to give pupils, parents, and teachers specific information on a pupil's/ learner's progress relative to the curriculum.

1.1. Problem Statement

The problem to be investigated is work recognition, how to teach word recognition to pupils with reading difficulties in class, and how to overcome their problems.

The problem to be investigated is the inability of Basic Two learners/ pupils to read because they lack word recognition when reading.

1.2. Research Questions

The research questions are:

- Which factors contribute to the reading difficulties experienced by Basic Two learners/ pupils of the English language?
- What appropriate strategies need to be used to address the problem of reading difficulties among Basic Two learners/pupils?

1.3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework underlying the examination research: Which factors contribute to the reading difficulties experienced by Basic 2 learners of the English language?

For many years, there has been widespread research on the strategies that children use in identifying words. The body of work done to date suggests a possible relationship between word recognition and reading. It also provides some evidence that learners (children) can be helped to use various strategies in their word recognition exercises.

Several criticisms, however, have been made of this field of research. This study reviews the problems related to pupils' difficulty in word recognition and the various strategies that can be used to help to improve the situation. The study proposes a series of features essential to solving the problem of word recognition and reading among children. The framework aims to enhance the current theory of teaching word recognition. Intricate connections have been postulated between reading and word recognition. Snyder (1980) described some of the components of processes in reading

(decoding, sight word, word recognition, syntactical comprehension, passage comprehension, and recall). Menyuk and Flood (1981) delineated specific reading problems that would be expected to occur depending on specific language deficits. Examples of such problems are: poor reading comprehension, weaknesses in word reading skills, and poor decoding skills.

The study is based on Interactive Instructional Model. Proponents of the Interactive Instructional Model, like Rumelhart (1977), Stanovich (1980), and Barr and Sadow (1990), state that learners need explicit instruction to be able to process information. The model highlights the idea that information processing is a bi-directional process that concerns both the reader and the text, such that the level of reading comprehension of a text is determined by how well the reader variable, that is, interest level in the text, purpose for reading text, knowledge of the topic, awareness of the reading process, interacts with the text variable, that is text type, structure, syntax and vocabulary (Samuels & Kamil, 1988).

According to Rumelhart (1977), we are able to interpret what we read because of the context in which the text segment is subsumed. The interconnections between the various units of a text provide a network that enhances comprehension. The Interactive Instructional Model perceives meaning as not being constructed just from a particular text segment being processed but from its surrounding environment (Samuels & Kamil, 1988).

Stanovich (1980:32) also affirms, "Interactive Models of Reading appear to provide a more accurate centralization of reading... When combined with an assumption of compensatory processing (that a deficit in any particular process will result in a greater reliance on other knowledge sources, regardless of their level in the processing hierarchy), interactive models provide a better account of the existing data on the use of orthographic structure and sentence context by good and poor readers."

Against this background, the researchers decided to base the research on the interactive model, which combines features of both models – learners/students interact with both phonics and text. Teachers using the interactive model use both instruction methods relying on phonics and a learner's experiences with text, believing that each is necessary for understanding. In classrooms using the interactive model, learners receive direct instruction on the sound/symbol relationships in phonics alongside instruction in comprehension and reading strategies (Tierney, 1982).

Word recognition is the foundation of reading, and all other processes are dependent on it. If the word recognition process does not operate fluently and efficiently, reading will be, at best, highly inefficient. The study of word recognition processes is one of the oldest areas of research in the whole experimental psychology. Rayner, Juhasz, and Pollatsek (1993) presented an overview of current theories, methods, and findings in the study of word recognition processes in reading. Their discussion is centered on movement in reading. To them, eye movement provides a fascinating window into how word recognition processes operate in the natural context of reading continuous text.

What do we mean by recognition here? According to Dallmann (1978:33), "Reading involves the identification and recognition of printed or written symbols which serve as stimuli for the recall of meanings built up through past experience, and further the construction of new meanings through the reader's manipulation of relevant concepts already in his possession." Word recognition processes in reading outline models of word recognition that have shaped the direction of reading research during the past three decades and present research reviews on reading processes.

1.4. Aims/Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the existence of difficulties in word recognition and reading among Basic school pupils, find out the circumstances leading to those problems and provide relevant instructional strategies to help minimize such problems.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Researchers have long tried to identify the specific reasons some people do not learn to read as well as others. However, the more that researchers have realized how complex the reading process is, the more they have concluded that it is more important to treat reading problems that arise in an individual child than to find the precise cause of the problems (The World Book Encyclopedia Q-R Volume 1b, 1994).

The problem of reading among pupils and students is a worldwide phenomenon. This is not peculiar to Ghanaian pupils and students only. Featherstone (1971) wrote that in every sample of one hundred pupils selected at random from the elementary schools in a nation, there are at least twenty who must be regarded as slow learners. They are left behind year after year. They are the ones who take up the time and energy of teachers. This assertion was confirmed by Asiedu-Inkoom et al. (2002) that a lot of pupils in Amamoma in the Central Region of Ghana find it difficult to read.

Lescano (1995) also agrees to this when he asserted, "Statistics show that two out of every ten students in a class in Peru were slow learners. The number within the whole is very high, but just the fact that there are slow learners who demand concern of teachers." The existence of pupils or students with difficulty in word recognition, and hence the inability to read in schools, especially in public schools, is a challenge to all stakeholders in education, particularly for English teachers (Asiedu-Inkoom et al., 2002).

The pupils in Primary 2 of Anyinasu D/A Primary and Solomon D/A Primary Schools who have problems and cannot identify the individual words while reading must be considered victims of circumstances and be assisted in coming out of their difficulties. Against this background, Thompson (1979) admonishes all teachers that "in those areas where children come from bookless homes in which reading and writing have little perceived value, teachers must redouble their efforts to make reading appear enjoyable and purposeful."

2.2. Causes of Difficulties in Word Recognition among Pupils

There are some factors that militate against word recognition hence poor reading. For the purpose of analysis, Curtis and Lango (1999) categorized the causes under three main headings, namely school, home, and socio-cultural.

The causes under school are:

- Poor pronunciation: Lack of teaching correct sounds associated with the letters of the alphabet. The inability to pronounce words correctly due to poor methodology.
- Lack of word identification: The pupils cannot identify the letters of the alphabet correctly. They do not practice reading.
- Problem with letter-sounds association due to the influence of L1.
- The classroom environment: Lack of rich point environment. Children need to see a lot of reading materials before they start effective reading.
- Ignoring/skipping words: Words substitution of unfamiliar words.

The causes of home environment are:

- Lack of encouragement from parents: no role model at home,
- Poverty leading to malnutrition,
- Child labour/abuse/violence at home,
- Broken homes: Lack of parental care and control,
- Single parenthood,
- Indifferent attitudes from both parents and teachers,
- Poor learning environment at home,
- Advent of electronic media (the negative effects)
- Lack of electronic media to expose the child to know what is going on around him or her,
- Emotionally disturbed parents unable to help their children,
- Alcohol-addicted parents: Fatal syndrome in the child.

Socio-cultural causes are:

- Society's attitude to education,
- Some parents do not value literacy,
- The influence of Western culture,
- Children's status in our culture: It affects the interactional issues;
- Physical problems: Disabilities, and
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD): Some children are not able to concentrate.

According to Stoodt (1978), "Reading is a complex process and is subjected to cognitive, emotional and physical development, experiential and family background and of course, the role of teacher." If a child continues to fail to make adequate progress, diagnostic testing will help the teacher to determine why the child is not making progress. Effective professional development that builds teacher understanding and proficiency with curriculum and assessment is critical to children's success in learning to read. "Teaching reading is a job for an expert" (Moats 1994: 4).

2.3. Strategies for Helping Pupils with Word Recognition Difficulties

Learning to read is an interesting exercise, and if properly initiated and nurtured, it yields good results. On the other hand, when reading has no firm foundation, it results in disaster.

The English Curriculum in Ghana for basic schools is an essential curriculum organized around the three essential components of reading. In the essential curriculum, the progression of the acquisition of reading skills from kindergarten to class three reflects three components of the reading Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) Syllabus (2001):

- Standard Statements
- Indicator Statements
- Objective Statements

2.3.1. Standard Statements

They are broad, measurable statements of what pupils should know and be able to do within a content area. The standards remain fairly consistent across grade levels.

2.3.2. Indicator Statements

They break the standard statements into 'teachable' component parts and are more specific statements of what pupils should know and be able to do at a particular grade level.

2.3.3. Objective Statements

They are written with a further level of specificity and depict the knowledge or skill of the pupil. Objectives are intended to guide teachers in daily units and planning.

Dallmann et al. (1974) describe teaching reading as a very complex exercise. "It requires a repertoire of instructional and classroom management skills, the ability to make data-based decisions about children's needs and their reading skills."

2.4. *Kinds of Skills and Knowledge to Teach Readers to Make Them Become Fluent and Skilled Readers*

Less proficient readers can be assisted in improving their ability to recognize words (Grabe, 1991; Paran, 1996) through various tasks. Some of the tasks are the use of phonics/graphophonic or phonemic awareness methods, fluency, vocabulary, context clue, teaching sight words, and extensive reading.

Sulzby and Teale (1989) identify the various component skills of the reading process as follows:

- Affective aspect
- Decoding knowledge
- Vocabulary knowledge
- Syntactic knowledge
- Discourse knowledge
- Content and prior knowledge
- Automaticity knowledge
- Metacognitive knowledge
- Emergent literacy

2.4.1. Affective Aspect

Birsh (1999) states that the affective aspect deals with the reader's general attitude towards reading, and his interest increases his love for reading and will help him comprehend more information in his reading. According to Birsh, we should help children acquire an interest in reading and see reading as a source of enjoyment. To do this, the development of self-motivation in reading should be encouraged. Self-motivation in reading can take the following forms:

- The intrinsic form of reading – It is done to arouse children's interest in reading by reading interesting books to them and relating the essential qualities or features of the characters in their everyday life.
- Give children books with bright colours – This will attract them and encourage them to read a lot of books.
- The teacher can stimulate the children and read to them by dramatizing the behaviour of some of the characters as they read. He can also ask the children to imitate interesting characters.
- To provide a good environment where numerous writings are displayed for the children to read – the book tour. The children's own writings and paintings can also be displayed.
- Some of the children dress in different characters during reading; their interest should be sustained, and they will never forget the story.

2.4.2. Decoding Knowledge

It is the understanding of the letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds. The knowledge of the sounds will help children to determine oral sounds in reading. This can be helpful when the teacher/instructor reads to their hearing and pays particular attention to words and their sounds.

2.4.3. Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary knowledge is the acquisition of words and their meanings. The ability to use the context to determine the meaning of the words will help children build up vast word knowledge (Hart and Risley 1995, Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998).

Vocabulary knowledge can be encouraged by reading books to the children and helping them to retell what they heard. The teacher can introduce new words to the children after every exercise, especially related to reading.

Constructing synonyms and antonyms trees is another way of developing the children's vocabulary knowledge. In this exercise, the children should look for their synonyms and antonyms for every new word given. The teacher can also create a word bank in the classroom by providing a box in which children will provide new words they come across.

2.4.4. Syntactic Knowledge

It is the knowledge of word order. It is the ability to determine within sentences (Garnharm, 1985). A child without syntactic knowledge cannot form a sentence in an organized form. The teacher can help the child to improve his syntactic knowledge by teaching grammar in context and reading story books to the children (Garnharm, 1985).

2.4.5. Automaticity

Automaticity is the ability to perform a complex task without attending to any of the components of that task. For instance, proficient drivers, typists, and others have learnt to perform all the complicated tasks (movements) without being conscious of what they are doing. In the same way, the reader performs the complicated process of reading without having any problems.

Automaticity of word recognition is generally defined as the automatic process of determining the pronunciation and some degree of the meaning of an unknown word (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

2.4.6. Metacognitive Knowledge

Baker and Brown (1984) define metacognitive knowledge as a type of knowledge about cognition and it is important for reading that includes:

- The strategies readers use during reading

- Comprehension monitoring – It is to find out if you are making sense of what you are doing (reading). Metacognition, according to Harris and Hodges (1995), means a reader's awareness of the strategies he/she uses effectively during reading to help him/her solve a comprehensive problem.

2.4.7. Emergent Literacy

It is the state where the child is involved in literacy. As soon as it is detected that the child is showing signs of readiness in reading, he/she is to be helped. Emergent literacy encompasses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that a child develops in relation to reading and writing throughout the early childhood period, starting at birth and before the onset of conventional reading and writing instruction.

The right environment should be provided for the child to show reading readiness. Reading and writing should be developed in the child simultaneously. Sulzby and Teale (1989), advocators of emergent literacy, defined emergent literacy as "the reading and writing behaviour that precedes and develops into conventional literacy or emergent literacy is the gradual process children are taken through as they develop an understanding of written language."

2.5. What a Good Reader Does

Proficient reading, like any skill performance, requires the ability to identify words very quickly or instantly. Word identification is very important for a good reader. Researchers have found that competent readers actively construct meaning through a process in which they 'interact' and 'transact' with the words while reading by integrating new information with pre-existing structure (Anderson, Herbert, et al. 1985). The following are the skills of a good reader:

- Pays attention to words and meanings,
- Understands what he/she reads,
- Guesses meanings, looking at the context,
- Reads with expression – paying attention to punctuation, Slowing down/flexibility, Skipping words,
- Background knowledge is used,
- Interactive – exchange of information,
- Sets purpose for his/her reading – Reading is rapid, reading is strategic, etc

Laberge and Samuels (1974) postulated that fluent readers automatically recognize most of the words they read. This implies that good readers are also good decoders. Good readers are strategic readers who actively construct meaning as they read; they are self-motivated and self-directed (Paris, Lipson, and Wixson, 1983). Good readers have learned that it is the reader in the reading process who creates meaning and not the text or even the author of the text. Pinnell et al. (1995) discuss that "students who are low in fluency may have difficulty getting the meaning among what they read." There is some consensus among researchers that competent readers have a plan for comprehending; they use their metacognitive knowledge in an orderly way to implement their plans (Flavell, 1981). The plan is to develop a positive attitude toward his reading.

3. Methodology

The aim of this study was to investigate the teaching of word recognition to pupils with reading difficulties in class 2 and how to overcome their problems. There are many pupils who, for one reason or another, have difficulties in word recognition when it comes to reading. Since reading ability has a strong influence on nearly every other subject area, it must be given serious attention so that these pupils can be given the appropriate assistance. In teaching and developing such a skill, the teacher will face a lot of difficulties since there are a variety of tasks that can be given to less proficient readers that can assist them in improving their ability to recognize words (Grabe, 1991; Paran, 1996). However, several means and methods have been explored and examined to serve as a solution to the reading problem.

3.1. Research Design

The following steps were taken:

- Administration of a pre-test that measured the dependent variable. The dependent variable was that pupils have problems with word recognition and reading, and two schools were selected for the investigation,
- Implementation of the experimental treatment (intervention for all the participants),
- Administration of a post-test that re-measured the dependent variable.

The pre-test and post-test scores of both schools were compared to determine the effect of the experimental treatment (interventions).

3.2. Population and Sampling

The research was conducted in two schools – Anyinasu D/A Primary (the controlled school) and Solomon D/A Primary (the experimental group). Both schools are located in a rural community at Bisease Circuit of Adjumako District in the Central Region of Ghana.

Out of a total number of thirty-nine (39) pupils in Primary 2 at Anyinasu School, an Individual Reading Inventory Test conducted by the researchers revealed that twenty-two (22) pupils could read, while seventeen (17) comprising eight (8) boys and nine (9) girls were virtually illiterate in reading. At Solomon Primary 2, out of the total number of thirty-nine (39) pupils, twenty-one (21) pupils could read after the Individual Reading Inventory Test, while eighteen (18) were illiterate in reading. Out of the eighteen (18), ten (10) were boys, and eight (8) were girls. Children who could not read

from both schools were given tasks from their English Course Book 2. The intervention was to determine their baseline reading levels.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

To collect data, the researchers used three tools – pre-test, interventions, and post-test.

Pre-test – The pre-test data collection consisted of a teacher-made. They used the phonics/graphophonic method to develop word recognition.

3.3.1. Interventions

The use of the phonics/graphophonic method to develop word recognition, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, sight words, and extensive reading was taught by exposing them to the letters, words, and their corresponding sounds (symbols) to help them identify words.

3.3.2. Post-test

The post-test was conducted to collect the necessary data to determine whether there was any change in the pupils' reading pattern and, if there was a change, how significant it was. At Anyinasu D/A Primary 2 (the controlled group), the performance was not encouraging, but the performance at Solomon D/A Primary 2 (the experimental group) was very encouraging.

3.4. Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. Microsoft Excel was used to calculate the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and percentage of the pupils' responses.

4. Results and Discussions

	Solomon D/A	Anyinasu D/A
VALID	39	39
MISSING	0	0
Mean	1.00	1.026
Median	1.00	1.00
Mode	0	0
Standard Deviation	1.100	1.088
Percentiles	3.000	3.000

Table 1: Pre-test Statistics Analysis of Both Schools

Before we conducted the pre-test on Individual Reading Inventory Test, we were expecting the mean to be 2.0. This was done to determine if the pupils had reading and word recognition problems. However, after computation of the mean response, a mean of 1.000 was realized for Solomon D/A Primary and 1.026 for Anyinasu D/A Primary, as indicated above.

Table 2 indicates that for Solomon D/A Primary, the percentage score of zero (0) is 46.2, and three (3) scores is 12.8%, and for Anyinasu D/A, the zero (0) score is 43.6, and three (3) scores is 12.8%.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	17	43.6	43.6	43.6
	1.0	4	23.6	23.6	66.7
	2.0	8	20.5	20.5	87.2
	3.0	5	12.8	12.8	
Total		39	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2: Pre-test Analysis for Both Schools

The above results indicated that most of the pupils had difficulties in reading and word recognition, hence the need for the intervention process. Anyinasu D/A was used as the controlled group, and Solomon D/A was used as the experimental group.

4.1. Post-Intervention Responses

After the intervention, we were expecting the mean of the responses to be 2.0 or more. This was to show that the pupils' difficulties in reading and word recognition had been solved. Table 3 shows a significant change.

	Anyinasu D/A	Solomon D/A
Valid	39	39
Missing	1	1
Mean	1.026	2.462
Median	1.000	3.000
Standard Deviation	1.088	0.942
Percentiles	1.000	1.000
Percent	12.8	69.2

Table 3: Post-test Statistics Analysis of Both Schools

Table 3 shows the mean score for Solomon D/A is 2.462, and that of Anyinasu D/A is still 1.026. Also, the highest percentage score is 69.2 for Solomon D/A, and that of Anyinasu D/A is still 12.8% for the highest score of 3.

4.2. Findings

The results of the pre-test revealed an overall reading skills profile that shows the children's deficits not only in decoding proficiency for which they were selected but also in word identification. The experimental test provided some insights into the nature of word recognition deficits.

The analysis of the post-intervention tests and responses proved that the pupils' difficulties in reading and word recognition were not based on their intelligence quotient, the teaching and learning environment, and their socio-economic background. Their difficulties actually stemmed from their teachers' approaches to teaching reading and word recognition, as the difference between the control group and the experimental group clearly demonstrates.

All needed by most teachers are the use of the appropriate techniques and methodology in teaching reading and word recognition. Among them are the use of phonics/graphophonetic method, phonemic awareness method, fluency, vocabulary, the teaching of sight words, and extensive reading.

5. Conclusions

The results clearly show that there has been a tremendous improvement in the pupils' performance after the intervention process. The difference between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores for the highest score of 3 in the experimental group is 69%.

This finding suggests that it would be rewarding if teachers/instructors, especially English teachers/instructors, would be willing to break away from the traditional pedagogy of teaching reading and word recognition by modifying their teaching skills, by adopting more practical approaches which would be meaningful and beneficial to pupils and society.

6. Recommendations

The results of this study here provided the necessary information to the regular classroom teachers at the basic level as well as English teachers and any language teacher regarding pupils with a reading problem to automatize word recognition.

Through the suggested teaching ideas, and task and learner strategies used throughout the study, it is hoped that when such problematic issues as word recognition manifest themselves that teachers and pupils together can draw on the resources available to successfully grapple and conquer the task of learning to identify and recognize words.

Reading is very important in our everyday activities, especially in our academic journey. Reading runs through all subjects, and without the skills, the child is doomed to such an extent that the study of other subjects becomes very difficult, and therefore the right foundation must be laid.

As a result of our interactions with the pupils of both schools and the outcome of the research, we make the following recommendations to teachers, especially English teachers:

- The periods allotted for English language on the timetable should be increased to enable the teacher to get enough time to teach effectively,
- The class size should also be taken into consideration,
- A large class size will render the teacher/instructor ineffective,
- Ideally, a lower class should not exceed twenty (20) learners,
- Teaching reading should be pupil-centred and not teacher-centred,
- The fear associated with learning English language should be discarded from the children,
- Varieties of games should be introduced to children,
- Teachers should introduce a lot of vocabulary items to the children to improve their reading ability,
- Teachers should try as much as possible not to use the local language/vernacular (L1) while teaching English reading,
- In-service training/education in modern methods of teaching reading should be organized regularly (if possible once a term) for teachers to equip themselves with more current methods of teaching reading and word recognition to help children with reading difficulties,
- Remedial classes should be organized for poor readers regularly to enable them to catch up with the competent ones.

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