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INVESTIGATING THE USE OF THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH AT LA ANGLICAN BASIC SCHOOL

BY

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPHIL TESL DEGREE

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ABSTRACT

The importance of reading cannot be overemphasized. It is one of the means through which most of the knowledge we possess now was acquired. Due to the importance of reading, its acquisition must be given a special attention. The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of the Language Experience Approach on the reading performance of primary three pupils at the La Anglican Basic School in Accra. The focus was to ascertain whether the use of the Language Experience Approach could facilitate pupils' acquisition of reading skills.

A sample of 52 pupils, comprising 23 girls and 29 was used for the main study. A pre-intervention test was conducted to assess the reading performance of the participants. There was also a post-intervention test after the intervention. The results of both the control and experimental classes were used to test the hypothesis using the t-test. The findings of the study show that the experimental class performed significantly better than the control class. The use of the Language Experience Approach, thus, improved the reading skills of pupils and may, therefore, have some advantage over the traditional way of teaching reading. The study recommends that further investigations could be conducted on a larger scale to support the findings in this study.

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own research prepared entirely by me under the supervision of Prof. N. A. A. Amfo and Dr. J. T. Agor (both of Department of Linguistics, university of Ghana, Legon).However, I amsolely responsible for any blemishes that this work may contain. All sources of data used have been duly acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Mrs. Margaret M. Mensah, who, despite the discouragement I encountered, kept on urging me on.

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The success of this study is due to the strength given to me by Jehovah God, the giver of every good gift.

I am also indebted to my supervisors, Prof. N. A. A. Amfo and Dr. J. T. Agor who read through this thesis and helped me make all the necessary corrections. I am, however, solely responsible for any shortcomings found in this study.

My profound gratitude also goes to the Headmistress and the entire teaching staff of La Anglican Basic School for their cooperation and assistance during the study.

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INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.E.C.E.	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CA	Communicative Approach
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ESL	English as a Second Language
EELs	English Language Learners
JHS	Junior High School
LEA	Language Experience Approach
UG	University of Ghana

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This thesis investigates the use of the Language Experience Approach in teaching reading at La Anglican Basic School. The basic premise of the approach is that an effective way to help students learn to read is through their already known words. In the Language Experience Approach, students relate an experience and the teacher writes down what the students say. The transcription is then used as a literacy source.

This chapter discusses the spread of English language to Ghana. It also discusses the important role it plays in the country. The chapter also states the research problem, the research questions, the hypothesis and the theoretical framework.

1.1 The Spread of English to Ghana

The English language was introduced into Ghana as a result of trade contact between Ghana and Britain. The main aim of the British for coming to the Gold Coast was to trade. In the course of the trade, the indigenous traders learnt most of the commonly used expressions of the British. It was after the British realized that there were many business opportunities in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) that they started establishing schools. A few who excelled were sent to England to receive special training. These Africans came back to serve as clerks to the British.

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The teaching and learning of the English language in formal educational institutions could be traced back to the colonial schools. Lessons were planned around reading, writing and the study of the Bible, (Sackey, 1997:127). According to Sackey (1997:127), learning took place in the form of repeated reading of primers and spelling books.

During the tenure of Sir Charles McCarthy (1822-1824) as governor of the then Gold Coast, English was taught in all government schools the way it was taught in England. It exposed the students to the English way of life as the readers contained stories from and about England. English, thus, was the medium of instruction in all government schools. The 1822 and 1887 educational ordinances passed by the colonial government brought a real change in formal education, which has persisted right down to today. Some of the recommendations made in those ordinances were: "grants-in-aid, payment by result and division of primary schools into those maintained entirely from public funds and assisted schools established by the missions and private persons," (Sackey, 1997: 129).

In the 1920s, the colonial government accepted the use of the indigenous languages in the primary schools. This notwithstanding, a committee of enquiry set up in 1951 by the colonial office made the following observation, as quoted by Sackey (1997):

> It may well be that children will be able to read and write English at the end of the primary school course better if they have first been taught to read and write in the vernacular; but in the absence of comparative experiments the mere assertion that this is so ought not be accepted as proof.

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(H.M.S.O. 1953: 21, cited in Sackey 1997: 130)

Those who opposed local languages as a medium of instruction gave such reasons as a non-existence of adequate literature and lack of qualified teaching personnel.

1.2 The Language Policy of Education in Ghana

Different committees had been set up to review the country's educational system. The current language policy of education in the country comes from the recommendations made by the committee led by J. Anamoah-Mensah. Among other issues the committee recommended that

i. At the basic level, emphasis shall be placed on literacy (reading and writing), numeracy and creative arts

ii. The medium of instruction in kindergarten and lower primary will be the dominant Ghanaian language of the area.

The Ghana Education Service is following these recommendations currently. The medium of instruction used at the lower primary (primary 1 to 3) is the dominant Ghanaian language of the area where the school is situated. English Language becomes the medium of instruction from primary 4 onward where the Ghanaian language becomes a subject that is taught like any other subject. This approach, some experts believe, facilitate the acquisition of second language.

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1.3 Statement of the problem

Although there are several factors that contribute to reading problems, the fundamental issue has something to do with how reading is taught. Most teachers of English do not follow any particular approach to the teaching of reading. The reading textbooks available to most public schools are inadequate in terms of both contents and quantity. The textbooks in most cases are not enough to go round the class. This situation forces teachers to resort to a combination of a number of different approaches such as phonics, bottom-top etc.

Every language teacher should have one aim and that is to guide the pupils/students to both grammatical competence and communicative competence, (Dzameshie 1997:173). "But this does not seem to be the case with regard to the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) in Ghana," (Dzameshie 1997:173). The majority of students the researcher interacted with exhibited lack of both communicative and grammatical competence.

All the blame cannot be put on the pupils/students alone. A few studies done on teachers and teacher trainees show that all is not well; most teachers in Ghana teaching English language are " . . . basically non-native speakers of English, most of whom probably lack adequate communicative competence" (Dzameshie 1997:188). Lack of communicative competence is not the only problem identified. A study done by Agor (2003), revealed that tutors of the teacher trainees are not happy about the falling standards of the students' performance in English.

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1.4 Theoretical framework

The Language Experience Approach guides this study. The main tenet of the LEA is that it is easier for a pupil to read what he says and also to write what he is able to read. The procedure followed in LEA is that the learner should be motivated to talk about his/her personal experiences on a certain topic in the presence of his/her teacher and colleagues. While the pupil talks, the teacher writes what the pupil says. After he/she has finished talking, the pupil will be given his/her written work to read. On another occasion, he/she will read what others have written. The next step is that the pupil will write and read his/her own words. In all forms of the LEA, the central principle is to use the pupils' own vocabulary, language pattern and background of experiences to create reading texts and this makes reading meaningful (Winsor, 2009).

The theory expounds Vygotsky's concept of Contextualism. The concept of Contextualism promotes a learning context in which pupils play an active role. Roles of the teacher and pupils are shifted. The teacher collaborates with his/her pupils in order to help facilitate meaning construction in students. The concept focuses on the connection between pupils and the sociocultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, the LEA posits that when the learner is placed in a language-rich environment, he acquires literacy skills naturally and readily.

Another approach that helps expound the LEA is the Communicative Approach. The CA promotes the use of stimulated real-life situations in order to promote effective language use. The teacher sets up a situation that is likely to occur in real life and encourages pupils to perform a task. The essence of CA

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is to use language to communicate (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). In like manner, the LEA encourages the use of real-life situation to facilitate the learning of reading and writing. This study will apply the principles of the LEA. The participants will be put in a situation that will help to elicit real-life experience from them.

1.5 Research question

One research question guides this study. This is:

Will the Language Experience Approach work better as opposed to the traditional approach to teaching reading?

1.6 Hypothesis

Based on the research question the following hypothesis will be tested.

If the LEA is followed to teach reading, pupils will be able to read earlier and better.

1.7 Relevance of the Study

The importance of reading can never be over-emphasized. Many are those who have described reading as a never-fading ornamental apparel that everyone must wear. This notwithstanding, there are a lot of problems with regard to the teaching and learning of reading not only in Ghana, but also all over the world. It is no wonder, then, that there are a lot of studies done on

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methods and approaches of teaching reading and this study is no exception. It adds to the gamut of research works on reading.

When completed successfully, the findings will inform the classroom teacher as to how to plan his/her lessons. The pupils stand to benefit greatly as most of their reading problems will be catered for. The textbook and syllabus designers might consult this work in future if the need comes for revision of the current textbooks and the syllabus. Parents and guardians will be relieved of the stress they go through having to find remedial measures that will enhance the reading proficiency of their wards if they consult this work.

1.8 Participants and Data sources

Specifically, the data for this research were obtained from primary 3 pupils and teachers of La Anglican Basic School in Accra. La Anglican Basic School is one of the schools in the 27 Maale Dada Circuit of the La Dadekotopon District. Its selection was mainly based on the fact that it is one of the two schools in the circuit that run the double stream system. The researcher believed that since the same conditions prevailed in both streams under the same administration, the outcome of the experiment that will be conducted will be authentic. In addition, the school is located near the researcher's place of work.

La is a coastal town on the Accra-Tema beach road. It lies between Osu and Teshie. Due to its cosmopolitan nature, one cannot really tell which occupation is dominant in the town. Even though La is a coastal town, fishing cannot be said to be the main occupation. If anything at all, one occupation that

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comes close to being the dominant is commercial driving as most of the young men have taken to driving the commercial mini buses popularly known as "trotro". The women in the town are mostly petty traders.

The appearance of most of the pupils said a lot about the economic status of their parents. Most of the pupils came to school in worn-out uniforms. The shoes and sandals they wore to school were no different. An interview the researcher conducted revealed that some of the pupils brought only as little as GHC 1 to school and this included a fee of 50p for extra classes. This explained why most of them were unable to buy any learning materials they were asked to buy. According to some teachers the researcher spoke to, the parents did not just care about their wards. This is because these parents who claimed that they did not have money were able to buy different clothes for every funeral or for other social gatherings.

The first hindrance to the study was the fact that the researcher was not a teacher in the experimental school. Under normal circumstances, the regular class teacher should carry out a study such as this in order to have ample time with the participants. In this case, the researcher only spent a few hours with pupils, as he had to leave for regular class activities planned for the day to continue. Attendance was low usually on Fridays. In order to arrest this situation, the researcher devised a motivational scheme to attract pupils to school, especially on Fridays. He made the Friday lessons full of interesting activities. He gave toffees to pupils who answered questions correctly. He organized quizzes and winners were given such prizes as exercise books, pens, pencils and candies. The researcher had to talk to some of the absentees

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personally, trying to convince them to understand the reason why they had to come to school regularly.

The experimental class was located on a compound which also had a secondary school, two different streams of JHS, another two different primary schools and a nursery and kindergarten. Just on the right side of the classroom was the nursery/kindergarten. On the immediate left was one of the JHSs. On the northern side of the block is the only football field for all the schools mentioned above. The timetable for the primary school differed from that of the JHS and the nursery/kindergarten. Sometimes, when a teacher needed the absolute silence and attention of his/her pupils, that was when either the JHS or the Nursery/Kindergarten would be less busy and therefore made a lot of noise. This made teaching–learning quite a challenge as all the attention of the participants were directed there.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is presented in five chapters. Chapter one discusses the general introduction, which sought to trace the spread of the English language to Ghana. It has also discussed the important role it plays in the country. The chapter also states the research problem, the research questions, the hypothesis and the theoretical framework.

Chapter two of this study reviews relevant literature for the study. Literature on the LEA is discussed in this chapter. Criticisms against the LEA from other experts in reading are not left out. The chapter also discusses the research method used for the study. Participants and data sources as well as

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techniques and interventions used for collecting the data are discussed in this chapter.

Presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data collected will be discussed in the third and fourth chapters. Chapter five will seek to present the findings from the analysis and interpretation. Suggestions and recommendations will be given in this chapter.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature relating to this study. Research works that explain the Language Experience Approach, criticisms of the approach, and other related theories are discussed in this chapter.

2.1 The LEA Overview

The Language Experience Approach is an educational theory that is very difficult to assign a single definition. This is because it lends itself to a number of research fields that includes education, linguistics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

Describing what the Language Experience Approach is, Moustafa and Penrose (1985) write that the basic premise of the method is that an effective way to help students learn to read is through theirown words. Students relate an experience and a teacher or a parent writes down what the student(s) say. The transcription is then used as a literacy source. For example, students retell group experiences such as a field trip, a science experiment, a story, information in a streaming video, anything they learned together in class, or a project in which they all participated. Since LEA is based on personal experiences and students tell these experiences, they provide highly meaningful and comprehensible reading materials.

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Winsor (2009:9) describes the LEA as a framework and not a prescriptive programme. She goes on to explain that the framework is not only contextually sensitive but also culturally sensitive. She believes that the approach is designed to support holistic, balanced instruction appropriate for all children, especially those whose L1 is not English and who are learning English and simultaneously becoming literate. In all forms of the LEA, the central principle is to use the student's own vocabulary, language patterns, and background of experiences to create reading texts, making reading an especially meaningful and enjoyable process. Traditionally, according to Nessel & Jones (1981), the LEA techniques involve the steps indicated in the subsequent paragraphs.

First of all, the teacher and the students discuss an experience in which all have recently participated, such as a school field trip or the examination of an unusual object. As the teacher and the students discuss their observations and reactions, the students' understanding of the experience is deepened while oral vocabulary and language skills are developed and reinforced.

Secondly, as students formulate and express their ideas, the teacher guides them in creating a dictated account. Students offer statements that they want included in the account, or the teacher selects statements from the ongoing conversation and suggests that these be used. The teacher records the students' statements on chart paper, constructing the text while the students watch. Seeing their words written down, students connect what they just said to what appears on the paper.

The third step involves the teacher reading the account to the students, modeling the sound of fluent, expressive reading. Students then read it several

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times, with the teacher's help as needed, until they become familiar with it.

Lastly, with the teacher's guidance, students learn to recognize specific words from the account and develop the decoding skills of context, phonics, and structural analysis, using the account as a resource. Students may also write their own thoughts to supplement and extend the dictation.

Students create and work with a new dictated account each week while continuing to work with past dictated accounts to strengthen their reading and writing skills and to build confidence. As students become comfortable with composing (oral and written) and reading, they begin reading other texts. Eventually, the use of dictated accounts is reduced and eliminated as students use other texts to refine and extend their reading skills and increase their expressive skills with more complex and challenging writing and speaking activities.

2.2 The Language Experience Approach Classroom

The LEA does not lend itself to a particular classroom sitting arrangement. The teacher may use the approach on the whole class as pupils sit in their usual positions or may put pupils into groups. No matter what sitting arrangement the teacher adapts, the arrangement should enable him to get almost every pupil actively involved in the generation of the story chart. The LEA classroom's activities are organized to conform to the principles and practices of the approach.

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2.3 The LEA in Practice

The Language Experience Approach to reading instruction is not just flexible but also pupil-centred. In countries where LEA is applied in schools, teacher education textbooks have recommended its use and variations have been explored and described by many (Nessel & Jones, 1981). Educators have also advocated the value of LEA for English language learners (ELL), including elementary, secondary, and adult ELLs (Dixon & Nessel, 1983). The recommendations have necessitated this study. With all its variations, the following is how a typical LEA is applied. Pupils create and work with a new story chart generated by the pupils themselves each week while continuing to work with past story charts to strengthen their reading and writing skills and to build confidence. As pupils become comfortable with composing (oral and written) and reading, they begin reading other authors' texts. Eventually, the use of story charts is reduced and eliminated as pupils use other texts to refine and extend their reading skills and increase their expressive skills with more complex and challenging writing and speaking activities.

An important advantage to this approach is that from the start, pupils learn to recognize words in print that are orally very familiar to them. For many pupils, learning to read their own words, in a meaningful context of their own story chart, is easier than grappling with the unfamiliar language and contexts of a published reading programme. Although dictated accounts and the selections in a published reader may be similar in some ways, learners will invariably perceive the story charts to be more relevant, significant, and engaging because they are so closely connected to the learners' own experiences and because they are created while the pupils watch. Because

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pupils compose the account, comprehension is inherent to their interaction with the text, leading them to expect written language to make sense. As a result, they expect other authors' texts to contain meaningful ideas and comprehensible language. Dictation also develops and strengthens pupils' skills at composing their thoughts in writing. Reading skills and composing skills develop simultaneously in an LEA programme. The flexible nature of LEA allows each teacher to tailor instructions to the specific interests and needs of individual pupils. For example, pupils' personal and cultural backgrounds are readily reflected in their story charts and in their writing, especially when they are encouraged to base their accounts on their experiences outside of school. This individualization occurs within a structure that is the same for everyone: discuss, dictate, read, write, and develop skills. Also, LEA lends itself to such cooperative learning activities as reading dictated accounts to classmates, working collaboratively on word-recognition activities, or responding to peers' writings.

Despite its many advantages, the LEA is not currently in widespread use. Most schools use published programmes for literacy instruction. With their many useful features, these programmes are considered well-organized and well-controlled systems for teaching literacy. They are designed by experts to provide systematic instruction. The teachers' guides provide detailed plans, and components such as workbooks and ready-made practice exercises. For many busy teachers, these programmes are preferable to an approach such as LEA that involves more planning and decision-making. However, theoretical and practical considerations generate perennial interest in LEA. Linguists have argued for meaningful input as a prerequisite for language acquisition

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(Krashen, 1981). Psycholinguists have focused on the relationship between language acquisition, reading, and writing Goodman (1967). Researchers have noted that reading is easier when the text closely matches the learner's own oral language patterns and is aligned with the learner's experiences. Winsor (2009) has pointed out that reading, writing, listening, and speaking develop alongside each other. These perspectives provide theoretical justification for choosing LEA as the foundation for literacy instruction for all pupils and suggest its particular strength for students who do not make good progress when taken through a standard published programme.

2.4 Strength of the LEA

Winsor (2009), perhaps sums it all up for the proponents who are in favour of the LEA when she posits that the LEA reflects current research in reading. She further explains that the LEA is borne out of four widely accepted premises about how children learn how to read and write Winsor (2009). The first premise is that oral language forms the basis for the development of literacy skills. The second premise says that literacy skills are best developed in children when holistic experiences with language that are meaningful to them are used. The third premise is that when children are able to identify sound-symbol associations (phonics) and how they function to create meaning, their literacy skills are enhanced.

The final of the four premises stresses the synergistic relationship between reading and writing. Allen (1976) held this view about the LEA long before some of these contemporary proponents of the LEA.Allen (1976), believes that the LEA is built on the belief that to get good results in the

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classroom, teaching reading comprehension should be based on the student's experience. It suggests that teaching reading should be accompanied by other language communicative skills such as listening, speaking and writing.Allen (1976), explains how the LEA works. According to him, learners' oral expressions are raw materials from which reading develops. And that experiences which learners can express are directly connected to their sensitivity to their language environment. He believes that a lot of activities and experiences help promote the learners' communicative skills, Allen (1976).

Explaining what the LEA essentially stands for, Nessel & Jones (1981) say "the central principle is to use the student's own vocabulary, language patterns, and background of experiences to create reading texts, making reading an especially meaningful and enjoyable process." This assertion supports the first two premises in Winsor (2009:9). The advantage the child who is new to English gains is that it affords him/her the opportunity to begin to use the social vocabulary they are acquiring through their interactions with peers and teachers. In the early stages of this kind of writing, the child's vocabulary will be mainly restricted to conversational English, but the method allows the child to build his confidence in the reading and writing process, providing a basis on which academic language can be encouraged and developed.

The LEA can be a follow-up activity for beginner-readers who have participated in a Total Physical Response activity. They draw the activity and retell whatever they can. A teacher records exactly what the student says, making no corrections. The scribe then reads whatever the student said. If ready, the student can read along during a re-reading lesson. Some proponents

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of the LEA believe that the non-competitiveness of the Language Experience Approach means that there is a positive impact on the child's self esteem, something that is essential for all learners, and particularly so for children who are new to the English language. The flexibility of the approach makes it adaptable to a variety of classroom situations, being it a large class, a small group or an individual.

2.5 Criticism against the LEA

The LEA has not been spared from criticisms. Its main rival, in some sense, is the Phonics approach. The whole issue started when Phonics proponents led by Rudolph Flesh in his book, *Why Johnny Can't Read* (1955) attacked the LEA. Since then the debate has been between two American educationists, Ken Goodman and Marilyn J. Adams. In her landmark book, Adams (1990) explains why the phonics-based system of teaching reading is a necessary foundation. It must be said that Marilyn J. Adams is not a fierce critic of the LEA. However, the importance she puts on Phonics puts her in the position she finds herself now. Critics of the LEA now use her findings as reference points to lash at the LEA programme. For instance, Adams (1990) recommends that the Phonics programme should come first, teaching decoding of letters and words, syllable rules, and use of explicitly taught reading strategies after which the LEA should follow. In this way, the learner does not only read but understand the rules underpinning what he reads. Furthermore, the learner who has undergone Phonics training stands the better chance of reading materials containing unfamiliar vocabulary with less difficulty since he is able to say the new words. Critics of the LEA believe that fluently getting

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sounds and meaning from print leads to skillful reading. Only after they assign sounds to the printed word can the children begin to address issues of comprehension.

However, advocates of the LEA such as Winsor (2009:2) and Goodman (2005) believe that this skill does not facilitate reading comprehension if students' oral language proficiency is not developed to the level of the texts they are expected to read. The LEA puts comprehension before decoding words and putting meaning into them. By the tenet of the LEA, reading can be acquired naturally just as a child acquires language. But it is this belief that the critics find difficult to accept. Because they reason that if it were so, then there should not have been many people in literate culture still struggling to learn how to read.

Proponents of the LEA posit that reading is not synonymous with recognizing and pronouncing individual words. Teaching students to decode words they do not know only makes it appear as if reading is pronouncing sounds out loud rather than creating meaning. And to them, this is exactly what Phonics teaches. Phonics teaches the ability to recognize individual words, not to understand text. Phonics, Goodman believes, rejects modern science about reading and writing and how they develop. However, the critics of LEA argue that what the LEA advocates claim to be reading is, in fact, guessing and predicting. Students are encouraged to look for contextual cues and clues beyond the text. They believe the children learn to memorize much of what they have heard. When the child does not know a word, he or she carefully studies the teacher's face for a hint. Children trained by the LEA are even less

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able to read unknown words from a list where there are no clues whatsoever to help them. Perhaps this belief is what forces Adams (1990) cited in the Reading Teacher (1991) to believe that skilled reading is the result of the reader's speed and completeness in perceiving the individual letters in words as well as the spelling patterns that make up words. She, therefore, advocates sufficient practice on a sequence of instructional activities which includes thorough over-learning of letter names and isolated phonemes or vice versa; thorough over-learning of frequently occurring spelling patterns and, thorough over-learning of the sequenced order of letters within words. She finally argues that fluent reading ultimately pivots on deep and thorough over-learning of letters, of spelling patterns and of spelling sound correspondences.

One thing is evidently clear in the on-going argument between LEA and Phonics. Whereas Phonics instruction encourages the learning of reading by first teaching decoding of letters and words, syllable rules, and use of explicitly taught reading strategies after which the LEA should follow, the LEA encourages the teaching of reading by using the student's own vocabulary, language patterns, and background of experiences to create reading texts, making reading an especially meaningful and enjoyable process. Just as Phonics does not condemn the importance of meaning, so does the LEA not condemn the importance of the Phonics. The issue at stake is; which comes first, which should be prioritised?

2.6 Other Reading Approaches

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the fierce debate about the best reading approach for beginner readers is between the Phonics and the LEA.

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But these are not the only reading approaches. There are other approaches worth considering. Depending on who reads what and for what purpose, one of them can be employed. But one thing that is evidently clear is that the principles underpinning these theories lend themselves to either the Phonics or the LEA.

One of such theories is the traditional view that focuses on the printed form of a text. In the traditional view of reading, beginner readers acquire a set of hierarchically ordered sub-skills that sequentially build toward comprehension ability. Having mastered these skills, readers are viewed as experts who comprehend what they read, Dole et al, (1991). It is the same theory that is usually referred to as the '*bottom-up*' view of reading, Nunan (1991). According to Nunan (1991), reading in this view is basically a matter of decoding a series of written symbols into their aural equivalents in the quest for making sense of the text. McCarthy (1999) has called this view *'outside-in'* processing, referring to the idea that meaning exists in the printed page and is interpreted by the reader then taken in. It is obvious this theory identifies itself with Phonics.

Then followed the cognitive view that enhanced the role of background knowledge in addition to what appeared on the printed page. Cognitively based views of reading comprehension emphasize the interactive nature of reading and the constructive nature of comprehension. Dole et al. (1991) have stated that, besides knowledge brought to bear on the reading process, a set of strategies are employed to make meaning of a text and to monitor ongoing understanding. Goodman (1967) presented reading as a psycholinguistic

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guessing game, a process in which readers sample the text, make hypotheses, confirm or reject them, make new hypotheses, and so forth. Here, the reader rather than the text is at the heart of the reading process. The schema theory of reading also fits within the cognitively based view of reading. Rumelhart (1977) has described schemata as "building blocks of cognition" which are used in the process of interpreting sensory data, in retrieving information from memory, in organising goals and subgoals, in allocating resources, and in guiding the flow of the processing system. Rumelhart (1977) has also stated that if our schemata are incomplete and do not provide an understanding of the incoming data from the text we will have problems processing and understanding the text. Some reading experts have referred to this approach as "top-down" or "language-based" approach. What is significantly interesting is that there is a connection between "top-down" of the reading process and the LEA teaching instructional practices. For instance, the "top-down" theory follows such processes as:

i Language is processed from the whole to the parts during reading.

ii. Students acquire reading skills naturally if they are constantly put in print-rich and language-rich environments.

iii. Repeated readings of authentic books of interest with help or reading independently lead to an ability to read fluently with comprehension.

iv. Having a large oral language base facilitates students' ability to read.

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Similarly, LEA, which supports the Holistic Reading Instruction follows such processes as:

i. Reading instruction begins by engaging children in an abundance of stories and books read aloud to and with children.

ii. Guessing the identity of a word based on the pictures, the meaning of the text, or the first letter clue (minimal cues) is encouraged so as to leave large amounts of attention capacity available for meaning or comprehending.

iii. Children are encouraged to learn many words by sight without further decoding or analysis. Using letter sounds to unlock words is seen as the strategy of last resort.

iv. Children practice reading a story again and again to internalize the language, structure, and meaning of stories. Analyzing story language too closely (sound-to-letter blending) is viewed as unnecessary to produce skilled, fluent readers.

v. Decoding ability is the product of language insights gained as children construct the meanings of a variety of texts and text patterns.

The researcher's decision to implement the LEA is not give the impression that it is the best option. The decision is based on the fact that these other approaches have been implemented for some years now but the problem of reading still persists. If the LEA proves to be a better approach to learning by the end of the study, it then becomes an alternative approach for teachers who teach reading to beginners.

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2.7 The Child and Learning

Every professional teacher needs to equip himself or herself with the knowledge of the developmental processes that go on in the child in order to understand him and handle his learning challenges adequately. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), if a classroom teacher will be successful in whatever he teaches, he needs to know who his/her learners are. Knowing the learners involves taking into cognizance the developmental levels of the learners – both physical and psychological. Reading involves a mental process and has never been easy for beginner readers and even the advance readers. According to Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998), young beginner readers who must acquire oral and literacy skills in English simultaneously encounter a great deal of cognitive challenge. Birch (2002) believes that reading involves the use of cognitive knowledge and learning strategies, as well as linguistic knowledge and processing strategies.

However, to make it easy, the teacher must make the learning of reading easier by placing it in a meaningful context. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory promotes a learning context in which students play an active role in learning, Vygotsky (1978). The teacher should collaborate with his/her students in order to help facilitate meaning construction in students. The theory focuses on the connection between people and the sociocultural context in which students act and interact in shared experience. Like Language, reading is for making meaning and is best learnt through meaningful use and practice. Learning how to read is the responsibility of childhood**.** As children acquire language, they acquire more than a set of words and sentences. They also

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acquire thought structures and learning strategies that aid to learn how to read and write.

Hence Dixon and Nessel (1983) and others recommend that teachers integrate vocabulary instruction with content instruction and with story reading. Some beginning English Language readers benefit from approaches that reinforce the relationships between experience, talk, and print. For example, in the Language Experience approach, students' attention is focused on an everyday or school experience such as taking a class walk to collect leaves, blowing bubbles or experimenting with magnets.

2.8 Research Method

This section of the study explains the data collection procedures and the methodology used to gather the data. A review of some of the data collection tools is treated in this chapter. The sources of data are discussed. The section explains thoroughly the intervention and the mode of evaluation.

2.8.1 Techniques and Instrument

Two main techniques were involved in collecting data for the study. These are interviews and intervention.

Interviews

Interviews are mainly used to obtain data to help undertake research works. They help uncover the truth behind a participant’s experiences. The researcher can follow strictly a line of questions to retrieve information about a topic or a problem. Or the researcher can further explore responses or findings.

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Interviews are preferred especially in qualitative research. They are popular because they are perceived as "talking" and talking is natural. The main aim of the researcher who undertakes a qualitative study is to understand how his respondent really is, apart from how the respondent is seen. According to Holloway and Wheeler (2010) the interaction that takes place during interviews between researchers and participants may be beneficial for the participants and provide them with the opportunity to explore events in their lives.

Interviews can be put into three types namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured. In terms of the structured interview, the questions the researcher uses to illicit responses from the participants are structured or arranged in a particular order. The participants are asked the same questions using the same wording. Some good things about this type of interview are that apart from the fact that it limits subjectivity, it also makes interpretation and analysis easier.

The unstructured type of interview is not entirely unstructured as the name goes. This is because even though the researcher does not make use of specific questions, he uses guides, comprising themes. These guides help organize the thoughts of the participant and also help to generate rich data as the researcher can always make use of follow-up questions.

In semi-structured type of interview, the researcher conducts the interview with predetermined questions but he is free to ask subsequent questions for the sake of clarification (Berg, 2009). The order and wording of the questions may be varied. In effect the interview is flexible.

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The Intervention

The intervention took the whole of the third term. Public schools in Ghana reopened for the third term in the 2012/2013 academic years on the 14th of May, 2013. All public schools were to do eleven weeks. Because of the special arrangement the researcher made with the headmistress of the school, the intervention started right from the outset of the reopening day.

The flexible nature of LEA allows each teacher to tailor instruction to the specific interests and needs of individual pupils. This can also mean that dictated accounts or story charts can be generated through different means and from different sources according to the language competent level of the pupils. For the purposes of this study, six sources namely daily morning chores, a football match, favourite games, how the weekend was spent, story telling and picture reading were used to generate the story charts. The story charts were generated on every Monday. The researcher used the same story chart for the rest of the week's activities. An hour's reading lesson was allotted to the researcher, usually in the early mornings when pupils were expected to be very active.

i. *Daily Morning Chores*

The researcher asked pupils, one by one, starting from the girls, what they did at home before they came to school. These questions were directed to the girls first because it is generally believed that girls are more fluent than boys. Based on this perception, the researcher had then expected that the boys

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could emulate the pattern of answering the questions from the girls so that when it came to their turn they should be able to do better.

The same questions but in different wordings were put to all the pupils. Every pupil in the class answered a question or two. Even though some of the pupils repeated answers some of their mates had given, the researcher thought it was necessary that every pupil responded to the questions orally. This was important because one of the principles of LEA is that speech must precede reading and reading must precede writing. At the end of this section of the lesson, the researcher wrote a few of the recurring responses on the chalkboard. This then became the story chart for the week.

In the subsequent days of the week, the story was read again and again in varied ways. Some verbs were replaced in the original story with other verbs that were not from the pupils.

For instance, "I *washed* on Saturday" became "I *cooked* on Saturday.

This practice of substituting words in sentences is usually accepted in LEA classroom as it gives pupils the opportunity to familiarize themselves with new but familiar vocabulary. The researcher then read the story aloud several times. Pupils were then called at random to read the story aloud. In order to discourage memorization, the researcher occasionally changed the trend of pupils' reading by asking pupils to read from the bottom to the top of the story.

Fridays were devoted to writing exercises because LEA embraces all the language skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing. The writing exercises took various forms. In one instance, a few key words were dictated to

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pupils. Pupils were instructed to write the dictated words down in their exercise books. The researcher went round to check and corrected pupils' work. In another form, pupils were put in groups of five and were asked to fill in the gaps with missing words. Pupils were sometimes asked to re-arrange the sentences of the story chart that had been jumbled to conform to the original arrangement of the story chart.

ii. Football Match

All the pupils agreed to go out to the football field to watch a football match between Anglican 'A' JHS and Anglican 'B' JHS. After the match was over, the pupils went back to the classroom to continue their academic work. They were then given the opportunity to talk about the football match they witnessed. The researcher used follow-up questions to further help pupils talk about not only what they had observed on the playing field but also how they felt about it. The researcher asked viewpoint questions such as:

Did you enjoy the game?

Do you think Anglican 'A' played better than Anglican 'B'?

Pupils responded to these questions.

After pupils had had enough time of the "talking" session, the researcher selected a few of the responses that came from pupils and used them to construct a text on the chalkboard. The text was to serve as material for reading lessons throughout the week. First, the researcher read the text out to pupils several times. Pupils were called upon at random to read as the researcher pointed at the words and pronounced them. Next, pupils were

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invited randomly to read. This time, the researcher did not say the words for pupils to say them after him. He only pointed at the words and pupils pronounced them. Again, just as it was done in the previous week, in order to discourage memorization, the researcher occasionally changed the trend of pupils' reading by pointing at words either from the end of the story right up to the start or from somewhere in the middle of the story down to the end or from the middle up to the start.

As indicated earlier in this write-up, on Fridays, pupils were taken through writing exercises such as dictation, filling in the gaps, rearrangement of sentences etc. All these writing activities were based on the text of the week. The purpose was to give pupils other language skills.

iii. Story telling

The next activity employed to generate text for the week was story telling. Pupils were to share with the class interesting stories. It was a bit of a challenge as no pupil was willing to share his/hers. Apparently, they had stories to share but saying them in English language was a challenge. Eventually, the researcher agreed to accept pupils' stories in the local dialect after which he would translate one into English. Pupils shared a number of stories with the class. The researcher accepted one of the stories. He translated it into English and adopted it as the story chart for the week.

As usual, the researcher read the story aloud several times after writing it on the chalkboard. He then asked all boys to read it after him. The girls were asked to do the same. Pupils were invited individually at random to read the

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story on the board. The story was modified by substituting some of the words and introducing new but related vocabulary. Pupils were taken through the same reading process. The trend continued until the writing session on Friday.

The writing session on Friday did not change much. The same activities as used in the previous writing exercises were used. Pupils were put in groups and boxes containing all the sentences of the story and one additional sentence that was not found in the story written on manila cards were given to all the groups. Pupils were tasked to select the cards on which the sentences were written and arrange the cards to tell the story. The researcher went round to inspect the arrangements of pupils. He offered help to those groups that could not get the arrangement done correctly. From each group, two pupils, a girl and a boy, were invited to read out the story. Other exercises such as dictation and fill-in-the-gaps were used.

iv Classroom Description

Pupils were given the opportunity to describe the objects in their classroom. Objects such as the teacher's table and chair, pupils' desks, the cupboard, the chalkboard etc. dominated the description. The researcher selected at random some of the descriptions of pupils to composes a text on the chalkboard. He then read the text out to pupils several times. Pupils were asked to read the text after the researcher. The researcher randomly invited pupils to read the text aloud. The researcher made sure that every pupil in the class read the text, or at least part of it.

The writing session on Friday was mainly based on spelling and introduction of new vocabulary to replace some of the words in the text. In the

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spelling exercise, the researcher wrote down the selected words from the text and copied them on the chalkboard. Some of the letters of the words were missing and pupils were tasked to supply the missing letters. For example:

i. t_b_e _____table
ii. _ha_r _____chair
iii. dust_r _____duster
iv. d_s_s _____desks

In another exercise, the whole text was written on the chalkboard. Pupils were given the chance to read the original text. The researcher subtly introduced new verbs and vocabulary. For instance:

i. "the *table* is big" became "the *chair* is big"
ii. "there *are* chairs in the classroom" became "there *is* a chair in the classroom"
iii. "there are twelve desks in the classroom" became "there are ten chairs in the classroom"
iv. "the classroom has two doors " became "the classroom has six windows"

v. Description of a Process

A table was set in front of the classroom where every pupil would see from where he/she sat. The researcher showed and mentioned the names of all the items that would be used in the process to pupils. These were a bowl, water, powdered soap and a straw. The researcher led the class to prepare soapy

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water. The researcher guided pupils to form bubbles by dipping the straw in the soapy water and blowing air into the straw.

Pupils had fun for some time after which the researcher called some of the pupils at random to describe the process involved in producing bubbles. The researcher constructed a story chart based on pupils' description. The researcher first read through the text several times. Pupils were called upon to read the text after the researcher.

The text was then used for the reading lessons for the rest of the days in the week. Writing activities followed. Pupils were asked to fill in the gaps with some words that were in the original text but had been taken out. The researcher assisted pupils to do this.

A Repeat of the Activities

There was a repetition of all the activities employed for the intervention through out the term. Even though the activities on the story charts differed, the stories remained the same.

Assessing the Reading

The researcher conducted two different assessments, pre-intervention and post-intervention. The pre-intervention was aimed at finding the level of reading difficulties of pupils before the intervention. And the post-intervention was aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the intervention. These assessments were conducted on both the control group and on the experimental group.

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2.8.2 The Control Class

The data for this study are sourced from primary school pupils and teachers of La Anglican Basic School in Accra. The control class was made up of 26 participants; 12 girls and 14 boys. The youngest was 8 years old and the oldest was 12 years old. The youngest was a girl and the oldest was a boy.

A short story of about fifty-three (53) words was chosen for the assessment. The researcher set a table away from the classroom. Pupils were called one after the other to come and read. The unseen story was given to the participants to read to the hearing of the researcher. The researcher wrote down the number of words that each pupil was not able to pronounce. After a pupil had finished reading, he/she was asked to go to another classroom to wait. This was to ensure that the story remained really unseen to the pupils who were yet to read. The process continued until every pupil in the class read.

2.8.3 The Experimental Class

The experimental class was also made up of 26 participants; 11 were girls and 15 were boys. The average age of the was 9 years.

The assessment of the experimental class took the same form as that which took place at the control class. Pupils were called one after the other to read the same text given to the control class. The unseen story was given to pupils to read to the hearing of the researcher. The researcher wrote down the words that each participant was not able to pronounce. After a pupil had finished reading, the researcher asked a couple of comprehension questions to check understanding. After that, the participant was asked to go to another classroom to wait there. This was to ensure that the story remained really

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unseen to the pupils who were yet to read. The process continued until every pupil in the class had read.

2.8.4 Scoring and Grading Procedure

The story used for the assessment consisted of 53 words. Participants who were able to pronounce every word correctly were said to have scored 100%. Those who could not pronounce 10 or fewer words scored 80%. Those who could not pronounce between 10 and 15 words scored 75%. Then between 15 and 20, 70%. Between 20 and 25, 65%. Between twenty-five and 30, 60%. Participants who were unable to pronounce below thirty words scored 55%. Those were unable to pronounce below thirty words scored 50%.

2.8.5 Scores Interpretations

80% _____	A_____	Excellent
75% _____	B+ _____	Very good
70% _____	B _____	Good
65% _____	C+ _____	Fairly good
60% _____	C _____	Satisfactory
55% _____	D+ _____	Pass
50% and below ___	D _____	Fail

The above grading system has been used for both assessments, namely, the pre-intervention and the post-intervention. In each assessment, the results

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of the two groups were compared. Words that pupils were able to pronounce were recorded.

To check comprehension, the researcher asked questions based on the story that the pupils had read. The number of students who demonstrated some level of understanding according to how they responded to the comprehension questions were recorded.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed a few works done on the Language Experience Approach. It gave the overview of the Language Experience Approach, how the approach should be handled and even how the classroom arrangement should be. The strengths and weaknesses of the LEA have been reviewed in this chapter. This chapter has taken a look at a few other reading approaches. Also, the chapter has discussed the research method. The techniques and instruments used to collect the data have been discussed in this chapter.

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CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the scores obtained from both groups. The sample size consisted of 52 pupils, 26 from the control group and 26 from the experimental group. The participants in the control class were made up of 12 girls and 14 boys, while those in the experimental group comprised 11 girls and 15 boys. This information is explained further in the subsections that follow.

3.1 Scores Obtained by Members of the Experimental Class

The study investigates the use of the Language Experience Approach in the teaching of reading amongst primary three pupils. Below are the scores ofboth pre-intervention and post-intervention tests obtained from the experimental class. Test 1 is to be understood as the pre-intervention test and Test 2 stands for post-intervention test. The experimental class consists of 26 pupils, 11 girls and 15 boys.

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Table 3. 1 **Test 1 Scores Obtained by Girls**

Number of girls	Percentage score %	Grade	Interpretation
1	80	A	EXCELLENT
1	70	B	GOOD
2	65	C+	FAIRLY GOOD
2	60	C	PASS
2	55	D+	PASS
3	50	D	FAIL

From the table above, only one pupil scored 80%. One pupil scored 70%, 2 scored 65%. Two scored 60% and another 2 scored 55%. Three scored 50% and below.

Table 3. 2 **Test 2 Scores Obtained by Girls**

No_ of girls	Percentage score %	Grade	Interpretation
1	80	A	EXCELLENT
1	70	B	GOOD
3	65	C+	FAIRLY GOOD
2	60	C	SATISFACTORY
3	55	D+	PASS
1	50	D	FAIL

From the table above, only one pupil scored 80%. One pupil scored 70%, 3 scored 65%. Two scored 60% and another 3 scored 55%. One scored 50%.

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Table 3. 3 **Test 1 Scores Obtained by Boys**

Number of boys	Percentage score %	Grade	Interpretation
1	70	B	GOOD
2	65	C+	FAIRLY GOOD
1	60	C	SATISFACTORY
4	55	D+	PASS
7	50	D	FAIL

From the table above, only one pupil scored 70%. Two pupils scored 65%, 1 scored 60. Four scored 55% and as many as 7 scored 50% and below.

Table 3. 4 **Test 2 Scores Obtained by Boys**

No_ of boys	Percentage score %	Grade	Interpretation
1	70	B	GOOD
2	65	C+	FAIRLY
3	60	C	SATISFACTORY
6	55	D+	PASS
4	50	D	FAIL

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From the table above, only one pupil scored 70%. Two pupils scored 65%, 3 scored 60%. Six scored 55% and 4 scored 50% and below.

3.2 Scores Obtained by Members of the Control Group

The study investigates the use of the Language Experience Approach in the teaching of reading amongst primary three pupils. Below are the scores of both pre-intervention and post-intervention tests obtained from the experimental class. Test 1 is to be understood as the pre-intervention test and Test 2 stands for post-intervention test. The control class consists of 26 pupils, 12 girls and 14 boys.

Table 3. 5 **Test 1 Scores Obtained by Girls in the Control Group**

No_ of girls	Percentage score %	Grade	Interpretation
2	70	B	GOOD
1	65	C+	FAIRLY GOOD
3	60	C	SATISFACTORY
4	55	D+	PASS
2	50	D	FAIL

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The above table indicates the marks obtained by girls in the control group in test 1. Out of 12 girls in the class, 2 scored 70. One pupil scored 65, 3 scored 60, 4 scored 55 and 2 scored 50.

Table 3. 6 **Test 2 Scores Obtained by Girls in the Control Group**

No_ of girls	Percentage score %	Grade	Interpretation
2	70	B	GOOD
1	65	C+	FAIRLY SATISFACTORY
4	60	C	SATISFACTORY
2	55	D+	PASS
2	50	D	FAIL

The above table indicates the marks obtained by girls in the control group in test 2. Out of 12 girls in the group, 2 scored 70%. One pupil scored 65%, , 4 scored 60%, 2 scored 55% and 2 scored 50%.

Table 3. 7 *Test 1 Scores Obtained by Boys in the Control Class*

No_ of boys	Percentage score %	Grade	Interpretation
1	70	B	GOOD
2	65	C+	FAIRLY GOOD
3	60	C	SATISFACTORY
4	55	D+	PASS
4	50	D	FAIL

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The above table shows the breakdown of marks obtained by boys in the control group in test 1. Four scored 50%. Another 4 scored 55%. Six did well, 1 scored 70%, 2 scored 65% and 3 scored 60%.

Table 3. 8 **Test 2 Scores Obtained by Boys in the Control Class**

No_ of girls	Percentage score %	Grade	Interpretation
1	70	B	GOOD
2	65	C+	FAIRLY SATISFACTORY
3	60	C	SATISFACTORY
4	55	D+	PASS
3	50	D	FAIL

The above table shows the breakdown of marks obtained by boys in the control group in test 2. Three scored 50%. Another 4 scored 55%. Six did well, 1 scored 70%, 2 scored 65% and 3 scored 60%.

3.3 Comprehension Test

After the reading section, the researcher conducted a short oral comprehension test. Two questions were posed to all the participants. The responses were then recorded. Below are the scores of the experimental group.

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Table 3. 9 **Test 1 Experimental Group**

Comprehension question	No idea	Show some level of understanding	Really understand
Who were Big Mama and Big Lizzie waiting for?	12	12	2
What did Little Nell say she was doing?	14	10	2

The above are the breakdowns of the responses to the two comprehension questions posed to members of the Experimental Group in Test 1. Those who indicated that they had no idea to the first and second questions were 8 and 10 respectively. Members who showed some level of understanding to both questions were 12 and 10 respectively. Only 4 really understood the two questions.

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Table 3. 10 **Test 2 Experimental Group**

Comprehension question	No idea	Show some level of understanding	Really understand
Who were Big Mama and Big Lizzie waiting for?	8	14	4
What did Little Nell say she was doing?	10	11	5

The above are the breakdowns of the responses to the two comprehension questions posed to members of the Experimental Group in Test 2. Those who indicated that they had no idea to the first and second questions were 8 and 10 respectively. Members who showed some level of understanding to both questions were 14 and 11 respectively. Four really understood the question one and 5 understood questions two.

3.4 Comprehension Test

After the reading section, the researcher conducted a short oral comprehension test. Two questions were posed to all the participants. The responses were then recorded. Below are the scores of the group.

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Table 3. 11 **Test 1 Control Group**

Comprehension question	No idea	Show some level of understanding	Really understand
Who were Big Mama, Big Mama and Big Lizzie waiting for?	12	13	1
What did Little Nell say she was doing?	14	11	1

The above are the breakdowns of the responses to the two comprehension questions posed to members of the Experimental Group. Those who indicated that they had no idea to the first and second questions were 12 and 14 respectively. Members who showed some level of understanding to both questions were 13 and 11 respectively. Only 2 really understood the two questions.

Table 3. 12 **Test 2 Control Group**

Comprehension question	No idea	Show some level of understanding	Really understand
Who were Big Mama, Big Mama and Big Lizzie waiting for?	10	14	2
What did Little Nell say she was doing?	11	13	2

The above are the breakdowns of the responses to the two comprehension questions posed to members of the Experimental Group. Those who indicated that they had no idea to the first and second questions were 10 and 11 respectively. Members who showed some level of understanding to

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both questions were 14 and 11 respectively. Only 4 really understood the two questions.

3.4 Conclusion

The chapter presented scores obtained by members of both the Experimental group and the Control group. First, the scores obtained by members in the Experimental group were presented. The scores of the Control group were also presented. The breakdowns of the responses to the two comprehension questions posed to members of both groups were also presented.

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CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the analysis and interpretation of results obtained from the study. This includes the testing of the hypothesis for the study.

4.2 Results and Interpretation

The study investigates the usage of the Language Experience Approach in the teaching of reading amongst primary three pupils. The sample size consisted of 52 pupils, 26 from the control group and 26 from the experimental group. The 26 participants in the control group were made up of 12 girls and 14 boys while those in the experimental group comprised11 girls and 15 boys. This information is illustrated in the subsections that follow.

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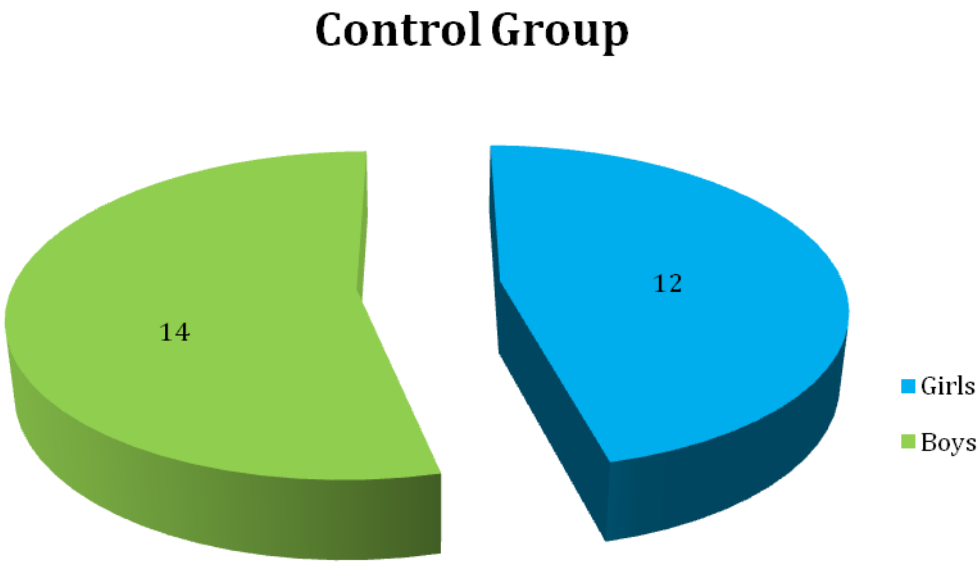


Figure 4.1 **The number of boys and girls in the control group**

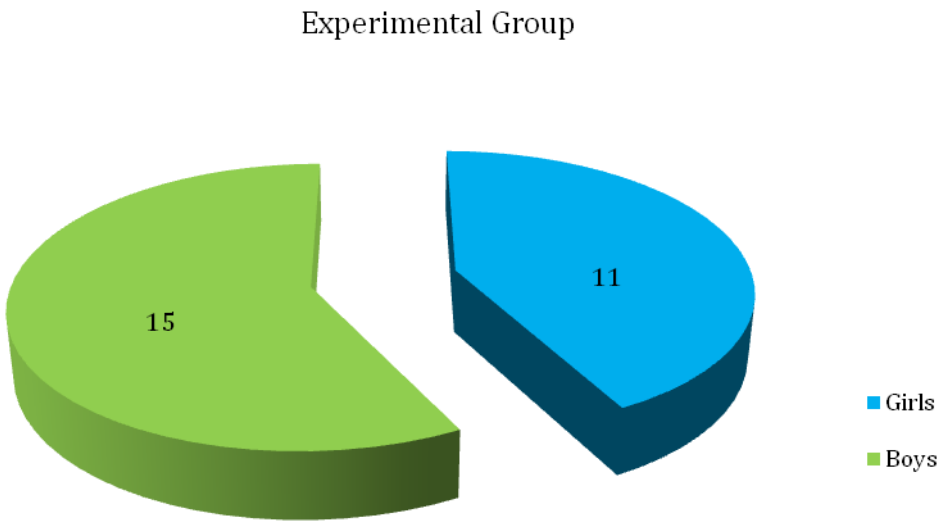


Figure 4.1 The number of boys and girls in the experimental group.

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It can be noticed in both figures above that the boys formed the majority of group members in both groups. In the control group, boys formed 53.8% of the group. The girls, on the other hand, formed a minority of 46.2%. This same pattern is observed in the experimental group, where boys again formed a majority of 57.7%.

This can be attributed to the fact that, boys formed a majority of pupils in the school. In addition to that, the boys were more willing to partake in the study as compared to the girls, who were more inhibitive.

4.2.1 Pre -Intervention Test

Before the introduction of the Language Experience Approach to the participants, there was the need to administer a pre-intervention test. The pre-intervention test was to help establish their level of intelligence in relation to the participants' ability toread and comprehend English Language. The pre-intervention test consisted of a short story chart of fifty-three words taken from Cuyler's *THE BIGGEST, BEST SNOWMAN*. The unseen story was given to pupils to read to the hearing of the researcher. The researcher wrote down the number of words that a pupil was not able to pronounce. After a pupil had finished reading, he/she was asked to go to another classroom to wait there. This was to ensure that the story remained really unseen to the pupils who were yet to read. The process continued until every pupil in the class read.

This was administered to all the participants in both the Experimental and the Controlgroups. The results obtained are presented below.

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Control Group

The results obtained by the participants in the control group are illustrated in the diagram below.

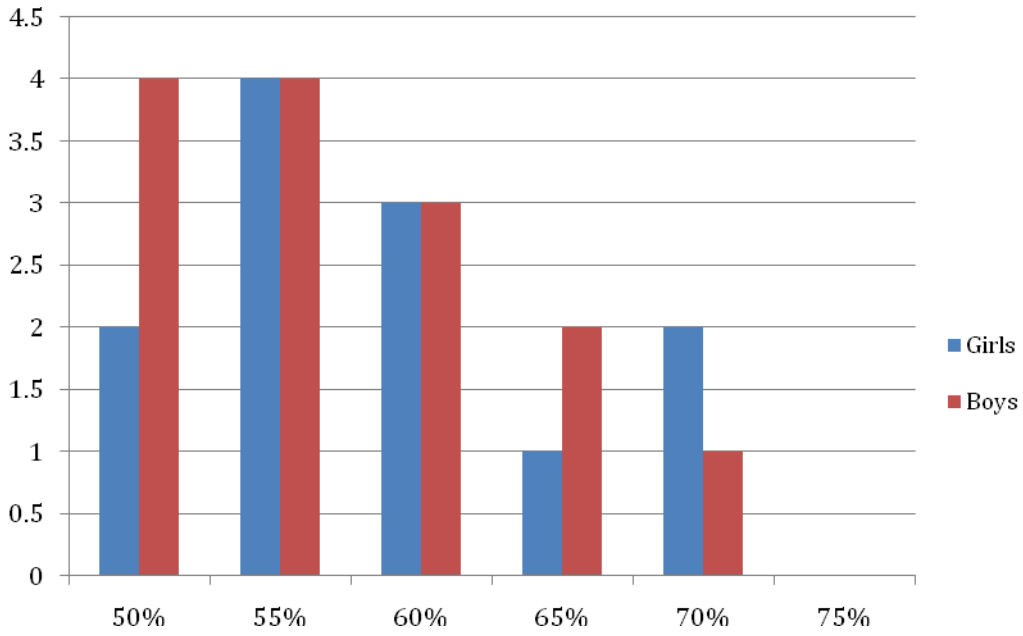


Figure 4.3 **Marks obtained in Pre Intervention test by Control group.**

From figure 4.3 above, it can be observed that whilst 2 girls obtained a score of 50%, 4 boys obtained the same score of 50%. The same number of boys and girls obtained 55% and 60%, that is, 4 and 3 respectively. One girl and two boys obtained a score of 65%. The highest score obtained in the test was 70%, and two girls and a boy obtained this score.

Using the formula; , to calculate the mean,

Where **= Mean**

=Total students' score

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The girls in the control group obtained a **mean** score of **58.75%**. The boys, on the other hand, also obtained a **mean** score of **57.14%**. This implies that, the average performance of the girls in the pre-intervention test is slightly ahead of the boys.

Experimental Group

The results obtained by participants in the experimental group, are illustrated in the diagram below.

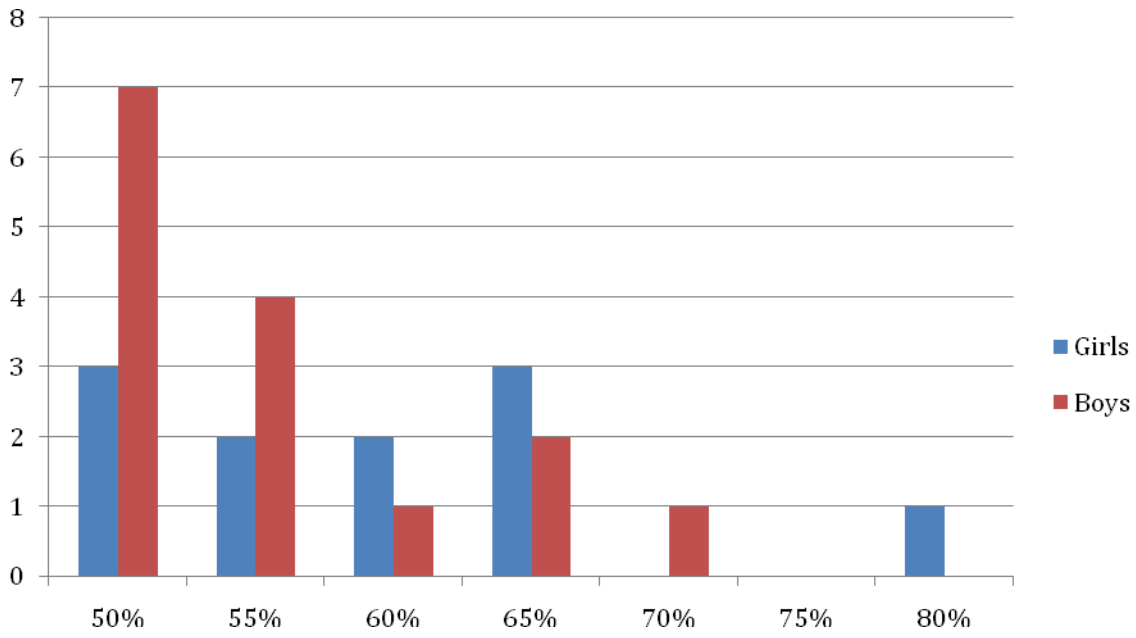


Figure 4.4 **Marks obtained in Pre-Intervention Test by Experimental group**

From figure 4.4 above, it can be observed that, half of the boys (seven) obtained 50% in the test, whilst three girls also obtained the same score of 50% in the same test. Four boys and two girls obtained 55% score. Two girls and a

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boy obtained 60%, whilst three boys and two girls obtained 65% score in the test. One boy and one girl scored 70% and 80% respectively.

Using the formula; , to calculate the mean,

Where = **Mean**

=Total students' score

The girls in the experimental group obtained a **mean** score of **59.55%**. The boys, on the other hand, also obtained a **mean** score of **55.33%**. This implies that, the average performance of the girls in the pre intervention test is ahead of the boys.

4.2.2 Testing of Hypothesis

After the pre intervention test, the participants in the experimental group were introduced to the Language Experience Approach in instruction. The participants in the control group were also instructed in their usual traditional method of instruction. After the period of instruction, which was eleven weeks, both groups were subjected to the same test. The test took the same form of the pre-intervention test. The results obtained from the test were used to test the hypothesis of the study.

The hypothesis of the study stated that; the Language Experience Approach helps pupils read English as a second language effectively, as opposed to the traditional approach of teaching English as a second language. In order to be able to test the hypothesis, both the dependent and independent variables had to be identified. According to Sekaran (2000), the dependence or

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otherwise of a variable is related to the context. Thus, in this study, the dependent variable is the test scores for both control and experimental groups whilst,the intervention, the Language Experience Approach becomes the independent variable.

Results from the study indicated that, at a mean of 58.27 and 62.88 for the Traditional approach and Language Experience Approach respectively, there was a significant difference between the two approaches. Table 4.1 below shows the summarized results of the study conducted at a confidence level of 95% and a sample size of 52.

Table 4.1 Summary of Results of the Independent t-Test, Means and Standard Deviation of Teaching Approaches

Teaching Approach	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	p
Traditional	26	58.27	6.315	47.079	-2.28	0.027
Language Experience	26	62.88	8.145		
Total	**52**				

From the table above, the following information can be deduced; at ***t*** (47.079) = -2.28, **p**<0.05. This illustrates that, pupils who were instructed with the Language Experience Approach performed significantly better than pupils who were instructed with the traditional approach. This result confirms the hypothesis.

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4.2.3 Comprehension Test

In order to find out the extent to which the Language Experience Approach influences comprehension, the participants were given a comprehension test before and after instruction using the Traditional and Language Experience Approaches in the control and experimental groups respectively. The comprehension test consisted of two questions based on the story chart. The participants were expected to answer them orally. The results of the test are discussed below.

Control group

Table 4.2 below shows both the pre-intervention and post intervention comprehension test results for the participants in the control group. The table indicates the level of comprehension of question one by subjects in the group.

Table 4.2 **Level of understanding of comprehension question 1 by the participants of the Control group participants**

	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequenc	Percentage(%)
No Idea	12	46.15	10	38.46
Some Understanding	13	50	14	53.84
Really Understood	1	3.85	2	7.69
Total	**26**	**100**	**26**	**100**

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The first comprehension question was, "Who were Big Mama and Big Lizzie waiting for?" In response to this question, 12 participants in the control group, representing 46.15% indicated that they had no idea during the pre-intervention stage. However, the percentage reduced to 38.46% during the post-intervention stage. Thirteen participants, representing 50% indicated that they had some level of understanding of the question. This percentage increased to 53.84% after the intervention. The number of participants who really understood the question increased from 1 to 2 during the pre and post intervention stages respectively. The change in the results obtained during the post intervention may be due to maturation of the participants.

Table 4. 1 **Level of understanding of comprehension** question 2 by the participants of the Control group subjects

	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage(%)
No Idea	14	53.84	11	42.31
Some Understanding	11	42.31	13	50
Really Understood	1	11.54	2	7.69
Total	**26**	**100**	**26**	**100**

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The second comprehension question was, "What did Little Nelly say she was doing?" In response to this question, 14 subjects in the control group, representing 53.84% indicated that they had no idea during the pre-intervention stage. However, the percentage reduced to 42.31% during the post-intervention stage. Eleven subjects, representing 42.31% indicated that they had some level of understanding of the question. This number and percentage increased to 13 and 50% respectively after the intervention. The number of subjects who really understood the question increased from 1 to 2 during the pre and post intervention stages respectively. The reason for the change could be the same reason offered for comprehension question 1.

Experimental Group

Table 4. 2 **Level of understanding of comprehension question 1 by experimental group subjects**

	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage(%)
No Idea	12	46.15	8	30.77
Some Understanding	12	46.15	14	53.84
Really Understood	2	7.69	4	15.39
Total	**26**	**100**	**26**	**100**

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The first comprehension question to the experimental group was the same as what was posed to the control group, "Who were Big Mama and Big Lizzie waiting for?" Twelve participants, representing 46.15% had no idea or understanding of the question, but after using the Language Experience Approach, this number was reduced to 8 (30.77%) during the post-intervention stage. Another 12 subjects indicated that they had some level of understanding of the question during the pre-intervention stages but the number appreciated to 14 (53.84 %) during the post-intervention stages. In addition to that, there was an increase in the number of subjects who really understood the question from 2 to 4 during the pre-intervention and post-intervention stages respectively.

***Table 4. 3*Level of understanding of comprehension question 2 by experimental group participants**

	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage(%)
No Idea	14	S53.84	10	38.4
Some Understanding	10	38.46	11	42.31
Really Understood	2	7.69	5	19.23
Total	**26**	**100**	**26**	**100**

The second comprehension question to the experimental group was the same as what was posed to the control group, "What did Little Nell say she was

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doing?" Fourteen participants, representing 53.84% had no idea or understanding of the question, but after using the Language Experience Approach, this number was reduced to 10 (38.46%) during the post-intervention stage. Another 10 participants indicated that they had some level of understanding of the question during the pre-intervention stages but the number appreciated to 11 (42.31 %) during the post-intervention stages. In addition to that, there was an increase in the number of participants who really understood the question from 2 to 5 during the pre-intervention and post-intervention stages respectively.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This is the last chapter of the study. The study investigated the use of Language Experience Approach in teaching reading at La Anglican Basic School in Accra. The aim was to ascertain whether the use of the Language Experience Approach could facilitate pupils' reading skills. This chapter also considers the findings of the study and recommendations for further study.

5.1 Summary

The first chapter considered the general background of the study. For instance, it briefly looked at the introduction of English to Ghana. It also looked at the language policy of education in the country. This same chapter dealt with the problem statement, the research question and the hypothesis. The Language Experience Approach, which is the theoretical framework in which the study is situated, was introduced in this chapter. In addition, it also captured the socio-economic background of participants.

In chapter two, the relevant literature relating to the study was reviewed. The review revealed that all the major works reviewed on the study are from authors outside Africa, mainly from the United States of America. This is because to the best of the researcher's knowledge no major work has been done on the use of the Language Experience Approach in Africa. This notwithstanding, some works relating to the teaching of English in general done by African authors such as Agor (2002), Dzameshie (1996) and Sackey

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(1997) have been reviewed. The chapter also discussed the data collection method. Some of the tools used in the data collection included interviews and observation. The implementation of the intervention was also discussed in this chapter. The two tests used to assess the participants were also explained.

Chapters three and four dealt with the presentation and interpretation of the data collected. First, the scores of both the control and experimental classes were presented. Then hypothesis was tested. Independent t-Test was used for the testing of the hypothesis. This is because the researcher was testing the significant difference between two teaching approaches with two different groups who are independent of each other. Due to the fact that the two groups are testing the approaches separately, independent t-test is suitable for testing this hypothesis.

5.2 Interaction with the Teachers

The researcher made some time to interact with some of the teachers, particularly teachers of primary one to four. The purpose was to find out what challenges they faced in the teaching of reading. They complained about pupils' attitude towards learning in general. However, through observation, the researcher realized that some of the teachers did not take their lessons seriously. There was a clear display of lack of proper planning. Pupils were given the readers and were asked to open to the page where the passage for the reading lesson could be found. Pupils had to keep their eyes close on the passage as the teacher read. The teacher then explained the passage in Ga. There was no attempt to teach reading.

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The readers were very old and some pages were missing. Pupils did not handle the readers well. It was expected that the teacher would caution the pupils or would show them how to handle books properly. But this was never done. The teacher looked on unconcerned. Again, some of the pupils would open to different pages to do something quite different from what the class was supposed to do.

The role of the teacher is a key to the academic achievements of the pupils. A lot depends on the competence of the teacher if his/her pupils are to perform well. So even if the pupils' attitude towards learning is bad, it is the duty of the teacher to develop the right kind of attitude towards his/her work.

5.3 Findings

This study assessed one of the approaches that could be adopted to teach English reading in lower primary schools – a case of class three pupils. The question was whether it was more effective to teach reading using the Language Experience Approach. It was found out through the interpretation of the data collected during the study that pupils performed relatively better when Language Experience Approach was used to teach reading. Another finding was that pupils enjoyed the reading class when the LEA was used. The interest of pupils, however, was impeded by their limited vocabulary. The study, therefore, indicated that, for the LEA to have its maximum impact on pupils, the current classroom language policy must be revised. Currently the language policy for lower primary pupils in public schools is that the dominant local

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language in the area where the school is situated must be used as a medium of instruction. This policy does not in any way support the LEA.

5.4 Recommendations

This study dealt with the performance of class three pupils in only La Anglican Basic School in 27 Maale Dada Circuit of La Dade Kotopon District in Accra. The total population size was 52. The major finding of the study is that the approach initiates and sustains pupils' interest in reading and therefore facilitates the learning of reading. Since the Language Experience Approach has proved, from the results of the study, to be effective in improving the reading ability of beginner learners, it should be pursued to give the needed support that a reading programme may require. To make it effective, the Language Experience Approach may be integrated with other interactive approaches.

Though the supply of textbooks to schools has improved, it has not as yet got to the level where each pupil has a book to himself or herself. The Language Experience Approach will help in this situation since pupils generate the story charts themselves.

5.5 Suggestion for further Researcher

The application of the Language Experience Approach consumes time and the fact that only one hour was allotted to the study each day for one term seemed too short. It is suggested that any future researcher who will want to conduct a research on a similar subject should make provision for a longer duration. The study was conducted in just one school. A wider area may be selected forsuch a large-scale project. The outcome might confirm the findings

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made in this study. The outcome of such a large-scale study will also give a broad idea as to how effective the Language Experience Approach will be in improving pupils' reading ability. The researcher also suggests that the Language Experience Approach should be used to teach reading to adult beginner readers, especially those studying English as a second language.

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APPENDICES

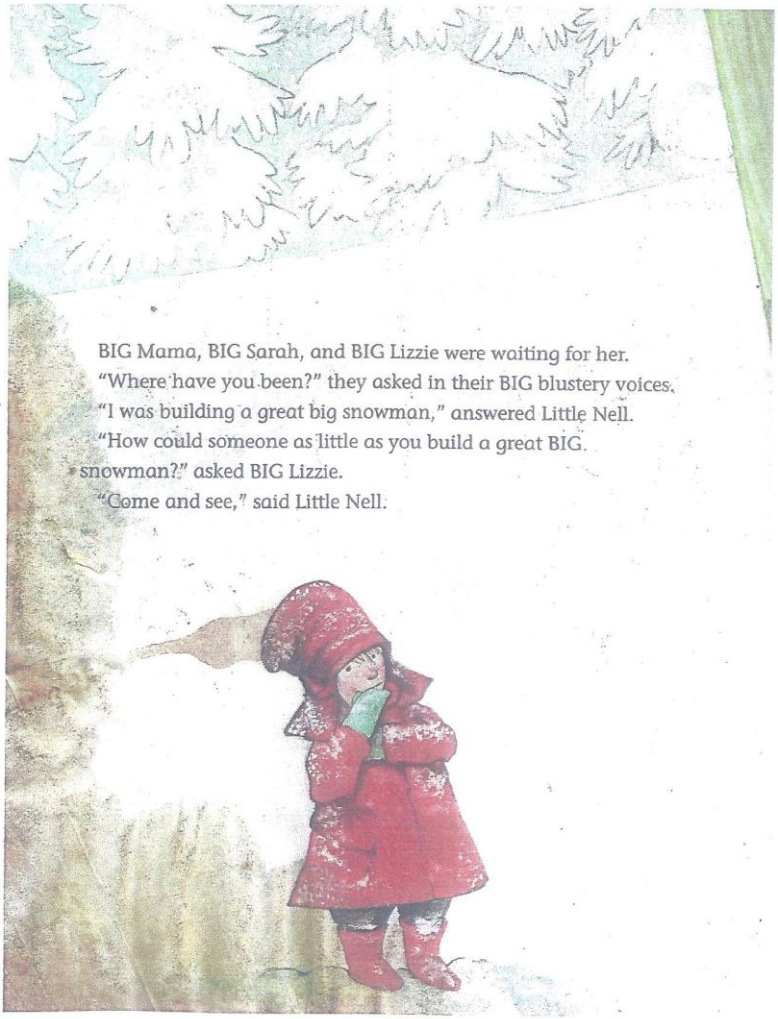
Appendix A

The story used for both tests

APPENDCIES 68

Appendix A

The story used for both tests



BIG Mama, BIG Sarah, and BIG Lizzie were waiting for her.
"Where have you been?" they asked in their BIG blustery voices.
"I was building a great big snowman," answered Little Nell.
"How could someone as little as you build a great BIG snowman?" asked BIG Lizzie.
"Come and see," said Little Nell.

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Appendix B

Some of the story charts composed by pupils during the intervention

i. The football match

All the players are wearing jerseys. The jersey colour of Anglican 1 is green. And the jersey colour of Anglican 2 is yellow. I like Anglican 2. They played better than Anglican 1. Their players are good. They play like Dede Ayew and Michael Essien. I want to play like them.

ii. Story Time

Once upon a time, there lived two friends, Hen and Egg. On their way to the farm, they saw an orange tree with a lot of oranges on it. Hen climbed the tree and plucked the fruits. Anytime Hen put the fruit down , Egg took it and ate it. So Hen became angry and chase after Egg. Hen caught Egg and ate it. That is why hens lay eggs.

iii. How I spent the Weekend

I went to play football on Saturday. And I went to church on Sunday. I went to studies on Saturday. I went to church on Sunday. I watched TV on Saturday. I played skipping rope on Saturday. I went to church on Saturday. I went to outdooring on Sunday.

iv. Grandma, Grandma sick in bed

Call for the doctor

And the doctor said:

Grandma, Grandma you are are sick

All you need is a lollipop sheet

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Hands up, shake, shake all around

Hands down, shake, shake all around

To the front, to the back, to the side, side, side