Investigating Pedagogical Strategies to Improving Reading Skills among Early Learners
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Abstract
This study investigating pedagogical strategies to improving reading skills among early learners. The objective of the study was to investigate the actual strategies employed by teachers in the present day teaching of reading, determine the effectiveness of such strategies to the teaching of reading. The study adopted the social constructivism theory using descriptive research design and employed qualitative approaches for data collection and the population of 500 pupils. Findings showed that synthetic phonics approach, demonstration methods, picture book reading and other interactive strategies improve achievement in reading skills for early learners. It was concluded that teachers play a crucial role in developing learners reading competencies. The study recommended that teachers should utilize appropriate tactics in order to improve reading skills among early learners and that the government and stakeholders should motivate.

Keywords: Pedagogical strategies, Reading skills, Early learners, Academic achievement, Language.

Introduction
In every modern society it is believed that education is the key to national development and there is a need to maintain children at the different levels of education, especially during the early years. This is because the early year's stage is the bedrock upon which all other educational levels build. Once a child misses that early stage, it is usually difficult for the learner to get back to the basics. Learning to read is a basic skill that unfortunately not everybody acquires sufficiently. Early age learning is crucial; earlier research shows that children who lag behind in early years reading development encounter considerable difficulties in following education later on as texts get longer and more complicated (Myrberg,2007).Reading is a very critical skill that many take for granted.

Reading plays a significant role in the education of an individual, especially children, hence it is an integral part of any child's education. Reading is indeed a basic life skill; as such it is the cornerstone for a child's success in school and throughout life. It creates a

good foundation and inspiration for a child's development and education. It awakens children's interest in books, which helps to cultivate a reading culture in them hence a push to future academic excellence. It equally provides an opportunity to develop children's minds and this helps them form enduring habits and character (Akindele, 2012). According to Akindele (2012) young children are in their most important development stage of life, what they learn now and what happens to them now will influence them for the rest of their lives. Furthermore, the children start to develop an ability to comprehend the contents of the books and apply their understanding to new situations on the basis of their background knowledge, vocabulary skills, reasoning and analytical skills, imagination, and judgment skills (Tomlinson, 2014). Engaging kindergarten children incomprehension can increase their ability to be good readers as well as encourage them to enjoy reading books (Jacobs & Crowley, 2010; Tomlinson, 2014). The long term goal of reading instruction therefore, is to provide learners with the skills necessary to help them construct meaning from texts they come across. For learners to develop reading skills in English language fully, the teacher should be in a position to choose reading instructional practices carefully and purposefully. Each reading instructional practice chosen must be meaningful- should be aimed at enabling the learner to acquire a particular reading competency. This should also be followed by enough practice to ensure that the learner is able to apply the learnt skill in new reading contexts. However, a teacher's choice of in appropriate instructional practices may fail to develop in the learners the necessary reading skills to enable them make meaning from reading texts they encounter in the various fields of knowledge. This may eventually lead to poor examination performance not only in English language but also in other school subjects. The ability to read is highly valued and is important for personal, social and economic well- being of an individual. For children to acquire this ability, they need to be taught by knowledge able teachers who provide quality reading instruction. The role of the teacher is to be responsive to the vast and varied needs of each child, and to promote an educational climate that facilitates motivation and the desire to read. Firstly, the reading lesson must reflect the identity of the children, children's orientations and beliefs towards reading. For this to be possible, teachers teaching reading should learn to plan their instructional lessons so as to meet the individual needs of each learner in there adding lesson by using appropriate instructional approaches and resources. Therefore, this study is aimed at investigating pedagogical strategies to improving reading skills among early learners.

Statement of Problem
Learning to read and write is a basic skill that unfortunately not all children in the world learn sufficiently. Early education is so important for young children because most of what they learn prepare them for the next stage of their lives. In a time when societal change

puts increasing demands on individuals' competence in using written language, it is important that schools are able to teach such skills to all children especially early learners. Learning to read is about listening and understanding as well as working out what is printed on the page. Through listening and hearing stories, children are exposed to a wide range of words. This helps them build their own vocabulary and improve their understanding when they listen, which is vital as they start to read. It is important for them to understand how stories work too. Even though the child does not understand every word, sound and phrases they hear, they can try out, copying what they have heard.

It is so obvious that learners are still not able to read properly at the middle level of education and further even after they have passed through the early stages of education. This entirely cannot be on the learners alone because reading is a skill that has to be developed for maximum productivity. Unfortunately, teachers do not give pupils the basic attention required; hence, pupils are left to cram their school work and not encouraged to do more research to learn new things that are different from what they are taught in school. This alone has dropped reading motivation in children to a very low percentage. Developing strong reading skills in children is one of the key goals of every early education programme. It is through reading that children expand their vocabulary and learn about the world.

The importance of parental involvement in a child's education is imperative as it relates to their growth and development. In fact, a child's parent should be considered a partner in their child's educational development. Parental involvement can be observed as a parent having a positive connection with their child's school environment and/or promoting enriched learning opportunities at home (Yoder &Lopez, 2013).

According to Harper and Pelletier(2010), parent's participation in their children's educational progress is very significant. Notably, parents who are active participants in their children's educational endeavours often observe increased motivation, social-emotional skills, and cognitive development. Irrespective of whether the children are only just beginning to read or whether they are fluent, parents have important roles to play by helping to keep them interested in books, find out what interests them, help them to find books that will be engaging and fun to them, and spend time reading the books they bring home from school together.

Furthermore, reading is also the key to success and writing. Not every child acquires reading skills at the same rate. Reading begins with understanding and mastering pre-literary skills including learning the alphabet and enhancing phonetic awareness. This is

followed closely by phonics instruction that teaches children how to map sounds to letters and sound out words. This can only be achieved at an early stage of education. After the preschool stage of education, pupils are gradually faced with comprehension passages as well as other reading engagement that they have limited time to attend to. If the issues of having good reading skills are not addressed at the early stage, this may lead to factors such as lack of motivation and anxiety that may lead to reading difficulties. Studies have shown that the above-mentioned challenges faced by pupils stemmed from the fact that most of the strategies used in the classroom were teacher-centred instead of pupils-centred. Moreover, teachers were more concerned with giving out information while the children learnt passively resulting in poor class participation during classroom lessons (Harper & Pelletier, 2010; Yoder & Lopez, 2013). The foregoing prompted this study to investigate pedagogical strategies to improving reading skills among early learners.

Aim and Objectives of the Study
The purpose of this study is to propose pedagogical strategies to improving reading skills among early learners. In specific terms, this study intends to:
1. investigate the actual strategies employed by teachers in the present-day teaching of reading;
2. determine the effectiveness of such strategies to the teaching of reading;
3. ascertain levels of teacher-talk time in the classroom presently;
4. explore the challenges children face when taught using the traditional methods
5. introduce more current interactive strategies to the teaching of reading.

Research Questions
This study is guided by the following questions:
1. What are the actual strategies employed by teachers in the present-day teaching of reading?
2. How effective are these strategies in the teaching of reading?
3. What are the levels of teacher-talk time in the classroom?
4. What are the challenges faced by children in a traditional classroom setting?
5. What current interactive strategies can teachers employ for the effective teaching of reading?

Theoretical Framework
This paper is anchored on the Social Constructivism Theory. The theory is applied in this study to reveal the analysis on the pedagogical strategies for improving achievement in reading skills for early learners. Social constructivism was developed by post-revolutionary Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978) and is often considered to be the

father of social constructivism, building on the work of Piaget, but argued against the ideas of Piaget that learning could only happen in its social context, and he believed that learning was a collaborative process between the learner and teacher. The social constructivism theory could be considered to be a blend of two priorities that is teacher guided, and student centred.

Socials constructivism is a variety of cognitive constructivism that emphasizes the collaborative nature of much learning. Vygotsky believes that social interaction plays a critical role in children's learning and through such social interactions, children go through a continuous process of learning. He believed that the child is a social being and cognitive development is led by social interactions. The social constructivism theory states in constructivism approach that the teacher would use group work elements in smaller group sizes, and limit the choice in topics. The teacher might also use teacher modelling, questioning, and a mixture of individual, pair, and a whole class instruction.

Review of Related Literature
Pedagogy
Pedagogy most commonly understood as an approach to teaching, refers to the theory of teaching, practice of learning, teaching style, and how this process influences, and is influenced by, the social, political and psychological development of learners. Pedagogy is often described as the act of teaching (Gambrell, 2016). Pedagogic is the science and art of education and/or teaching, specifically instructional theory. It can also be defined as different types and variations of teaching. This shows that the pedagogy adopted by teachers shapes their actions, judgments, and other teaching strategies by taking into consideration theories of learning, understanding of students and their needs, and the backgrounds and interests of individual students. Its aims may range from furthering liberal education (the general development of human potential) to the narrower specifics of vocational education (the imparting and acquisition of specific skills).

Pedagogy, taken as an academic discipline, is the study of how knowledge and skills are imparted in an educational context, and it considers the interaction that takes place during learning. Both the theory and practice of pedagogy vary greatly, as they reflect different social, political, and cultural contexts. Conventional western pedagogies view the teacher as knowledge holder and student as the recipient of knowledge (Fredriksson, 2012), but theories of pedagogy increasingly identify the early learner as an agent, and the teacher as a facilitator. Pedagogical strategies, also known as instructive strategies are governed by the pupil's background knowledge and experience, situation, and environment, as well as learning goals set by the student and teacher. One example would be the Socratic Method

(Perie, et al., 2016).Pedagogy is how the teaching and learning occurs, Students do not simply take in any knowledge teachers provide. Pupils construct their own understanding though their teacher's considered learning experiences by creating effective teaching strategies; the teachers will better educate their pupils.

On this ground, pedagogical strategies also known as interactive reading provides literacy strategies that enable teachers and pupils to share a positive interaction and to communicate meaning together. Each session is meant to build upon the teacher and child's knowledge, skills, and relationship-while scaffolding an effective reading strategy. Interactive reading helps children develop thinking skills, use their creativity, express ideas, increase their vocabulary, and understand the relationships between oral and written forms of language.

Reading
The definition of reading has been proposed by different experts. Reading is a process that is guided by human cognitive concept. Reading is developing, interactive and learning skill. In the Longman's Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, reading is defined as:
1. Perceiving a written text in order to understand its contents. This can be done silently (silent reading).The understanding that result is called reading comprehension.
2. Saying a written text aloud (oral reading).This can be done with or without understanding of the content.

Reading is an interactive process between the reader and the writer. Brunan (1989) defines reading as a two way interaction in which information is exchanged between the reader and the author. Reading is also said to be an act of looking at and understanding a point. This is true because reading involves the use of vision to understand several words in a sentence to make meaning meaningful.

There are also several definitions made by other people. According to White book, et al. (1990), reading is a process whereby one looks at and understands what has been written. There is a clear understanding that reading is something related to the activity of acquiring information and it is done either silently or loud. Reading is a means for language acquisition, communication and sharing information and ideas. Smith (1973) also shares the same attitude. This is proved by his line: Reading is an act of communication in which information is transferred from a transmitter to a receiver.

The reading process involves visual input and perceptions of words, utterances and symbols by the brain. We can analyse reading in two prospects: decoding and understanding what is read. Reading is not only done in the surface like putting letters together and just making the sounds or words, but it entails conceptual, connotative and figurative understanding. This explains that many people are able to read a text but may not understand what has been read. The purpose of reading is defeated when meaning is not derived. According to Mariam (1999) she proposed that a major avenue of learning is through reading. Yet if we do not understand what we are reading, we cannot learn or remember it. Wixon, et al. (1987), further defines reading as the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader, the text and the context of the reading situation. Reading involves visual motor skills and perception of the symbols by the brain.

Reading is one form of communication that must be developed in children right from their early years. It is an activity that every child engages in, from the day the child commences the educational career at the pre-primary level then through the long years at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education that involves the reader and the text leading to success both in and out of school. In this context, reading can be defined as the ability of the reader to get meaning from the author's message in the text. One example would be the Socratic Method (Petrie, 2009). Therefore, pedagogical strategies can be derived in a variety of dimensions such as identified below:

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is the foundation for reading success (Bredekamp, 2011). Reading aloud to young children, particularly in an entertaining manner, promotes language development, and supports the relationship between child and family. Reading aloud to children builds and supports their listening and speaking abilities and enhances their overall language development (Barrentine,1996).Teachers must read aloud to children so that they can learn about words and language; build listening skills; expand vocabularies; talk about the characters, settings, and plot and then relate them to their own lives; gain knowledge about a variety of topics; gain exposure to a variety of writing styles and structures; develop descriptive language; explore social and moral issues; and learn to monitor their own behaviour (Jalongo, 2013). One of the greatest gifts that an adult can give to their offspring and to the Society is to read to children (Carl, 2015).Reading aloud to young children can be an enriching experience both to the child, teacher and the parent.

Reading a text aloud is the most vital activity for building the knowledge required for successful reading(McCormick,1977).The reader tend to incorporates variations in tone,

pace, volume, pause, eye contact questions in order to produce a fluent enjoyable reading delivery.

Thinking Aloud

Thinking aloud is a process of reading in which teachers verbalize aloud while reading a selection orally. Their verbalizations include describing things they are doing as they read to monitor their thinking, re-read a sentence ahead to clarify and make sense of what they read, and slows down the reading process(Janssen, et al, 2006).Thinking aloud is also said to be a mental cognitive activity in which teachers reflect on their behaviours, thoughts, and attitudes regarding what they have read and then speak their thoughts aloud for students. The purpose of the think-aloud strategy is to model for students how skilled readers construct meaning from a text. The think-aloud strategy helps children build comprehension because it provides them with a mental map they can use to organize their thinking.

Demonstration

Another interactive model to support early learners, particularly those with limited English proficiency (LEP), is to use demonstration to help circumvent language barriers and avoid frustration. Children with LEP tend to perform poorly on content area exams because they often lack English literacy skills and academic vocabulary (Huerta & Jackson, 2010).Demonstration is a teaching method used to communicate an idea with the aid of visuals such as flips charts, posters power point and others. Children become familiar with various scientific instruments and methods of experimentation. This method allows the teacher to establish a good rapport with the students and they feel motivated and inspired.

Reading Favaourite Books

On the basis of their reading comprehension, children may broaden their interest beyond their favourite books to different topics and a variety of genres including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Allowing children to select their reading genres is a powerful motivation to strengthen their growth in literacy, to create a positive attitude toward reading, and to help them become lifelong lovers of books (Willingham, 2015).Children need access to quality books and print to develop and grow as readers. This in essence means that the teacher should avail a large supply of books for instruction as well as for independent reading in a classroom library. The books must be of quality and at the learner's ability range of reading.

Picture Books
Picture book reading is an important educational tool, it is an important part of learning how to read and it usually marks the first step in introducing a child to reading and it is often the start of language development for many children. Having picture books with few words will reach children of all ability levels and appeal to both boys and girls in a multitude of ways. Picture books are excellent learning materials to enhance children's reading comprehension. If children look at picture books, posters, signs, charts, and photos on a regular basis, they will enhance their background knowledge and can make connections between texts, they will enhance their background knowledge and can make connections between texts and their prior knowledge (Lilly &Fields, 2014).

Empirical Review
Several empirical studies have been conducted locally and at the international level which reveals the influence of pedagogical strategies on improving reading skills among early childhood education and social behaviour as well as development of pupils and how it will subsequently enhance education in the future. This section presents a review of such studies.

One of such studies was conducted by Olaleye and Omotayo (2009) on the impact of instructional methods on quality academic performance of early childhood education. Data was collected with the use of structured questionnaire administered by researchers on teachers, and head teachers of (12) twelve private nursery schools with a sample of 120 pupils. Data obtained were on quality learning outcome, learning activities, teaching staff, environment for teaching and learning. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze results which revealed the following:
- ⇨ The quality of learning activities were ranged average,
- ⇨ Non – qualitative teachers (No teaching qualification) questionnaires were only administered to pupils and teachers in private schools, while the public schools were left out, not giving room for comparison.
- ⇨ Adequate provision of facilities and learning environment were conducive to both pupils and teachers, which makes learning effective.

Another study was advanced by Miles and Stipek, (2006) to examine the importance of pedagogical strategies and their impact on pupils reading skills in early childhood even when academic success is the primary goal. It was a contemporaneous and longitudinal study which was carried out for the purpose of assessing both social behaviour and literacy achievement of 400 pupils (boys and girls) in urban and rural areas as sample for collection of data. In addition, the assessments were conducted in these sequences;

    i)   Beginning of Early Childhood
    ii)   Primary level of education

The self-designed tests were administered by class teachers to assess aggressive and pro-social behaviour of different pupils. The result reveals that children who were rated relatively aggressive in the early years were rated as relatively aggressive in the later years. Similarly poor reading in early years also predicted poor reading in higher class (primary school). Likewise, relatively low literacy achievement predicted relatively high aggressive behaviour in later years and good skills were associated with good reading scores. However, Miles and Stipek (2006) concluded that instructional strategies and academic performance are inextricably connected. Similarly, the present study influence of pedagogical strategies to improving reading skills among early learners but differ on the ground that anti – social behaviour of pupils was not assessed rather pro – social behaviour was focused sectional studies that is, pupils of different age but same class was used in collecting data within a short period of two weeks.

Shoaga, et al. (2017), also studied the nurturing of reading proficiency of pupils through phonics: Entrepreneurial opportunities for early childhood educators in Nigeria. Ex-post facto survey design and proportionate random sampling technique were adopted for the study. Structured Questionnaire (PRA Scale, r=.68) was administered on a sample, three hundred pupils from twenty (20) elementary schools in Ikorodu, Lagos, Nigeria. Descriptive statistics of simple percentages was used for data analysis. The findings revealed that teaching of phonics has improved the pupil's reading ability with 96.7% of the pupils applied sound of letters in pronouncing new words; the pupils have imbibed the culture of reading and through the use of phonics, while the teachers have adopted the use of phonics in instructional delivery to pupils. Thus, it was recommended that early childhood educators must be continuously trained in the use of phonics and a national philosophy should be entrenched in the national policy on education emphasizing a school-wide reading proficiency and culture.

Bibi and Ali (2010) research study showed the impact of pre-school education on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa in Pakistan. The research was survey and descriptive in nature. The population for the study comprises all primary school pupils from semi government and private schools of Peshawar district. The sample size used for the study were 100 pupils from three government and two private schools they were selected on the basis of purposive sampling technique, that is establishing relationship between the school and the research work. Data used for the study were obtained from pupils annual results of the top four pupils of class one to five.

A questionnaire was designed for teachers of each school to obtain information about pupils with and without the pre-school experience. Result shows that ECE pupils perform better than the non-ECE pupils.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive research design. The population for the study comprised five different schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers state making it a total of 500 pupils. A sample of one hundred (100) pupils was drawn from the population for the study. The random sampling technique was used in drawing the sample for the study. Data used in this study was obtained from two sources namely: primary and secondary sources. Data was collected by the use of questionnaires, direct observations, one –on- one interaction with the learners and teachers. The instrument used for data collection was a self-designed test and comprehension passages to help develop the mental cognitive skills of the pupils. Research questions were analyzed using tables and simple percentages.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the data collected for the study, data analysis and discussion of the data under the following subheadings: answers to research questions, summary of findings, and discussion of findings.

Research Question 1: What are the actual strategies employed by teachers in the teaching of reading in the present-day classroom?

Table 1: The Actual Strategies Employed by Teachers in the Teaching of Reading in the Present-day classroom

S/N	STRATEGIES	Teachers	Percentage (%)
1.	Whole-Word Method	7	33.0%
2.	Use of Letter Names	6	25.0
3.	Phonics Approach	4	22%
4.	**Rote-Learning Method**	3	20%
	Total	20	100

From the table seen above, it was observed that after the administration of the test, the methods used in teaching reading among early learners were stated as shown in the table above. According to the table, it was revealed that the actual strategies used by teachers in teaching reading in the present day include among others: The number of teachers that use the Whole-Word method of teaching reading were 7 and it has a percentage value of 33.0%

as seen on the table, the number of teachers that used the Letter names were 6 with a percentage of 25.0%, Phonics approach came to 4 teachers with a percentage of 22.0% and Rote Learning method had 3 teachers with a percentage of 20%.

Research Question 2: How effective are these strategies in teaching reading?
To provide answers to these questions, the researcher had to conduct a reading test to find out if the pupils that learnt using the whole-word method were able to read better than those that were taught using the letter names and those that were taught using the phonics approach and rote learning method as can be seen from the table below. The children were divided into four different groups Pre-schools 1 and 2 for the test twenty five pupils per class.

Table2: How Effective are these Strategies

S/N	Strategies	Average
1.	Whole-Word Method	4.16
2.	Use of Letter Names	3.12
3.	Phonics Approach	3.76
4.	Rote Learning Method	2.6

For the Whole -Word Method group, 5 pupils scored 4, 7 pupils scored 5, 8 pupils scored 3, 4 pupils scored 6 and 1 scored 1. Hence, the average score of the pupils was 4.16 which can be seen in the table above. The children taught using the Whole –word method had a low average because they were only showed words at the word level and they were not taught how to recognize the words rather they were encouraged to recognize the shapes of the words. The children were not taught the word recognition process and were not also introduced to the rudiment of words and letters as a result of this they were having difficulties making connections between the letters and the words.

The second group which is the Use of Letter Names, 8 pupils scored 2, 5 pupils scored 4, 7 pupils scored 3, 4 pupils scored 4, and 1 scored 5. Hence the average score of the pupils was 3.12 which can be seen in the table above. The children that were taught using the Letter names had a low reading average also. This is because they too were not introduced to the rudiments of the word. They were introduced to letter names but they do not know how the letters behave when they are in words. So, the children were able to read some

words, that they could read using the letter names but now when the letters were to be read using the sounds they were not able to do it.

The next group is the phonics approach, the scores of the pupils are as follows 5 pupils scored 4, 8 pupils scored 3, 4 pupils scored 4, 6 pupils scored 5, and 2 pupils scored 2. Hence the average score of the pupils was 3.76 which can also be seen in the table above. The children that were taught using the phonics approach were at some point taught the sounds but because they were not fully following the phonics approach strategically the way they should follow it, they still had a low reading average. The phonics approach was not effective because the children have not been fully taught the whole phonics process.

The last group which is the rote learning method 5 pupils scored 1, 7 scored 4, 8 scored 2, 4 scored 3, and 1 scored 4.Hence the average score of the pupils was 2.6 as can seen above. The children taught using the rote learning method, also had a low reading average this is because the children were only taught to repeat words after the teacher, they do not have a deep understanding of what they are taught, they tend to memorize words which they are not able to remember after a short time. There is no connection between the previous knowledge and the new knowledge of what they have learnt.

Research Question 3: What are the levels of teacher-talk time in the classroom?
Table 3: The Levels of Teacher-Talk Time in the Classroom

S/N	STRATEGIES	Teacher-Talk-Time (45 Minutes)	Pupil Participation Time (Minutes)
1.	Whole-Word Method	40	5
2.	Use of Letter Names	38	7
3.	Phonics Approach	30	15
4.	Rote Learning Method	42	3

As can be seen from table 3 above, it showed how much time the teachers allowed the children to participate in class learning and activities The teachers had 45 minutes to teach the children .It was observed that with the Whole –word method, the teacher talk- time was

40 minutes which was very high while the children had just 5 minutes to participate in the class, the second group which used the letter names, the teacher talk –time was 38 minutes which was also on the high side while the children had 7 minutes to participate in class, the teachers that used the Phonics approach talk –time was 30 minutes which was a little bit lower than the whole word method and the use of letter names while the children had 15 minutes to participate in class learning and activities. Finally, in the rote learning method the teacher talk time was 42 minutes while the children had just 3 minutes .The class is not interactive, the children were not involved and they did not have time to participate fully in the class activities and learning.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges children faces in the traditional classroom setting?

Table 4: The Challenges Faced by Children in the Traditional Classroom Setting.

S/N	Challenges
1.	Skipping in Decoding Process
2.	Pronunciation and Reading of Unfamiliar word of words
3.	Selection of Age Appropriate Books
4.	Lack of Time to Ask Questions
5.	Limited Vocabulary
6.	Unable to Comprehend Text
7.	Spelling

Table 4 above showed the challenges that children faced in reading with these traditional methods of teaching in the classroom which include:

1. **Skipping in Decoding Process**- Since the children are taught at word level as they read they are not able to sound out words but rather they learn to say the word by recognizing its written form and as their vocabulary grows they begin to extract rules and pattern that can help them to read new words. This poses a challenge to them.

2. **Pronunciation and Reading of Unfamiliar Words**–This is another challenge that the children face while reading, since they were not taught how to break words down into sounds, then make a connection between the sounds and the letters and then combine the letters to form new words. They become so frustrated when they are unable to recognize or read unfamiliar words. If a child is faced with a word that he/she has already been taught he will be able to read it.

3. **Selection of Age Appropriate Books**–This is also a challenge that the children face. They are unable to select age appropriate books/texts to read this is where the teachers come in to guide the children in selecting age appropriate books for the reading level of the children. Teachers need to balance children's varying abilities and needs while making sure that a chosen storybook fits developmentally and is culturally appropriate for the children. The selection of literature is key to providing an experience that promotes literacy development. Teachers/families need to select challenging and achievable books based on a child's level of development, rate of development, and varying interests in order for the child to receive maximum benefit from his/her experiences with literature.

4. **Lack of Time to Ask Questions-**Another challenge the children face is associated with the children not having time to ask questions during the lesson and as the class is going on.As the class is been dominated by the teacher, the children are not allowed to participate since the teacher takes more of the time talking and they have little or no time to participate and ask questions. At this age they are very inquisitive and it becomes a challenge for them.

5. **Limited Vocabulary**–This is another challenge that the children face in reading. As the children focus on sight words it tends to limits their reading vocabulary as they are only able to read what they have been taught. Children who learn by sight reading are also limited and may also simply memorize the text of the book and not be able to read the same word in a different book. The children also tend to have limited vocabulary since they are unable to break down large words into syllables or smaller words.

6. **Unable to Comprehend Text-**This is another challenge that the children face. Since they are only taught to memorize words which they are not able to remember after a while. They tend to cram words that they are taught. They do not have a deep understanding of what they are learning. However; children comprehend books based on the amount of their prior knowledge and experience. If adults read a

book that is beyond their comprehension, they will have difficulty understanding the book. Likewise, if children do not have the necessary background knowledge to comprehend a book, they will just read letters superficially without understanding the content. Therefore, teachers should build background knowledge and provide children with many opportunities to read books together before they can read independently by themselves.

7. **Spelling**–In the same vein, spelling is another challenge that the children face while reading. Without the skills of phonics and phonetics instructions the children are not able to spell properly. They tend to have difficulties in learning how to spell, they misinterpret words and they also find themselves guessing when they do not know a word or rather substitute an alternative word, one with a known spelling. This also poses a great challenge for them.

Research Question 5: What current interactive strategies can teachers employ in the teaching of reading?
Other current interactive strategies that teachers can employ in the teaching of reading in the classroom includes: Synthetic Phonics Approach, Demonstration Method, Picture Book Reading, Reading Aloud, Picture Crosswords, Reading Favourite Books, Thinking Aloud and others. After the first test, the researcher found out that the children reading average was very low so, the researcher decided to introduce the teachers to what will attain more current teaching strategies. The researcher taught the teachers the Montessori approach, Phonics methodology/ Jolly phonics and others which are fun and child centred approach to teaching through synthetic phonics method. Teachers using the phonics methodology and those that already had the phonics methodology that were not using it appropriately and were not doing all the things that they should have done were also taught how to do the right things and how to teach the children to read through phonics.

The children were divided into four groups which include: the two arms of Preschools1 and 2. In group 1, 5 pupils scored 14, 7 pupils scored 16, 8 scored 17, 4 scored 13 and 1scored 10. Hence, the average score of the pupils was 15.2. The second group scores are as follows 9 pupils scored 16, 5 pupils scored 12, 6 scored 13, 4 pupils scored 14 and 1 scored 10. Hence the average score of the pupils was 13.92, while in the third group 5 pupils scored 19, 7 pupils scored 14, 8 pupils scored 16, 4 scored 17 and 1 scored 13.Hence the average score of the pupils was 16.08 and in the fourth group 7 pupils scored 18, 4 scored 19, 5 scored 16, 3 scored 15 and 6 scored 17..Hence the average score of the pupils was 17.16.The average scores of the first and second test can be seen on the table below respectively.

Table5: Student's Scores after the Second Test

Class	No of Pupils 100	Previous Scores Average	New Scores Average	Age	Remark
Pre-School 1	25	4.1	15.2	3-4	Good
Pre-School 1	25	3.1	13.9	3-4	Good
Pre-School 2	25	3.7	16.0	4-5	Great
Pre-School 2	25	2.6	17.1	4-5	Great

The current strategies which include: Synthetic Phonics Approach, Demonstration Method, Picture Book Reading, Reading Aloud, Picture Crosswords, Reading Favourite Books, Thinking Aloud and others are more interactive, innovative and interesting. It encourages teachers and the children to explore research and use all the tools available in the classroom to uncover and discover something new. These pedagogical interactive strategies involve a different way of looking at problems and solving them. The thinking process that goes into it helps the children develop their creativity and their problem solving skills. The involvement of the teacher is reduced drastically giving the children more time to talk and participate actively in the lessons and the classes are more interactive and interesting which is more of student centred. Both teachers and the children are involved in learning and class activities.

The teachers were taught how to employ these strategies to help teach the children how to read which include: Picture Book Reading, Reading Aloud, Picture Crosswords, Reading Favourite Books, Thinking Aloud and others. These are the strategies that made the researcher to go back to expose to the teachers to improve their teaching methodology and gave them some time to use it. After that, the researcher now conducted another test as can be seen in the table above

Discussion of Findings
RQ1: The Actual Strategies Employed by Teachers in the Teaching of Reading in the Present-day Classroom?
From table 1, the actual strategies employed by teachers in the teaching of reading in the present-day classroom include:-The whole –word method, the use of Letter names, Phonics approach and Rote learning. This finding is in collaboration with the findings of Gambrell (2016), who observed that pedagogy is most commonly understood as an approach to teaching, refers to the theory and practice of learning, and how this process

influences, and is influenced by, the social, political and psychological development of learners. And that pedagogy, taken as an academic discipline, is the study of how knowledge and skills are imparted in an educational context, and it considers the interaction that takes place during learning. Both the theory and practice of pedagogy vary greatly, as they reflect different social, political, and cultural contexts. Pedagogy is often described as the act of teaching.

RQ 2: The Effectiveness of such Strategies to the Teaching of Reading

Table2, showed that the actual strategies (traditional methods such as whole-word, letter names, rote learning and others) used in teaching reading in the present-day classroom are not effective these include; skipping in decoding process, lack of proper pronunciation, limitation in vocabulary and others. This finding is confirmed by Perie, Grigg and Donahue (2016) who posited that pedagogical strategies, also known as instructive strategies are governed by the pupil's background knowledge and experience, situation, and environment, as well as learning goals set by the student and teacher. One example would be the Socratic Method.

RQ 3: The Levels of Teacher-Talk Time in the Classroom

Table 3 showed that the level of teacher-talk time in the classroom was very high; the teachers spend more time talking and giving instructions to the children without giving enough time for the children to participate, it is more or less teacher centred. The class is not interactive, the children have less opportunity to talk and participate in learning. This explains why Geske and Ozola(2008) emphasize that actions taken by teachers at pre-school age are of great importance in pupils' reading attainment Also, teaching to read in the classroom supposed to be pupil's centred rather than teacher-centre. This is based on the existing belief that reading children become reading adults. When children do not read regularly, they experience reading problems; it thus, affects their intellectual development.

RQ4: The Challenges Children Face in Reading in a Traditional Classroom Setting

Table4 revealed that the challenges children face in reading with these traditional method include: Skipping in decoding process, pronunciation and reading unfamiliar words, selection of age appropriate books, spelling, asking questions, limited vocabulary, unable to comprehend text and others. In tandem with this findings, Tomlinson (2014) observed that teachers   challenges in selecting achievable books based on a child's level of development, rate of development, and varying interests in order for the child to receive maximum benefit from his/her experiences with literature.

RQ5: Other Current Interactive Strategies Teachers can employ in the Teaching of Reading

Table5 revealed that other interactive strategies that teachers can employ in the teaching of reading include: Synthetic phonics, Demonstration method, Picture book reading, Picture crossword and others. These strategies helps the learners to think-aloud experiences that are concrete, it builds comprehension with a mental map, and others. In confirmation to this finding, Tompkins (2013) further stated that there is no consensus among researchers about the best way to teach reading, but most agree that teachers should use direct and indirect instruction. Children should be involved in real reading and writing activities as they learn. Teacher's emphasis should be that children can decode words fluently when reading and spell words conveniently when writing.

Conclusion

Based on the conclusion envisaged of this study so far, teachers play a crucial role in developing learners' reading competencies. However, the teachers must be knowledgeable, have a good understanding of their reading instructional environment and ready to up-date themselves on the latest reading instructional strategies if effective reading instruction is to be possible in the Nigerian classrooms today. Successful efforts to improve reading achievement should emphasize identification and implementation of evidence-based practices that promote high rates of achievement when used in classrooms by teachers with diverse instructional styles with children who have diverse instructional needs and interests.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that:
1.   Teachers should utilize appropriate tactics in order to improve the achievement in reading skills for early learners.
2.   Personal development by attending conferences, seminar and workshops is also another way a teacher can build his or herself in improving readings skills. This will be beneficial to teachers in terms of words pronunciation.
3.   Early learners are usually motivated by what they see, hence, teachers should be careful of their behaviour; and demonstration is also another way of motivating early learners reading skills.
4.   Curriculum planners should improve more on picture materials especially at the early learning stage for early learners to improve in their learning skills.
5.   Teacher motivation by government and stakeholders is another factor that stimulates and motivates teachers in utilizing appropriate and diverse methods of instruction especially at the early learning years. Hence, government should put

in machinery in place that will motivate, promote and add more incentives to encourage the teachers. This can be done by paying salaries promptly to teachers of early learning classes.

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