



**TERTIARY EDUCATION SERIES**

**Editorial Committee**

Professor L. A. Boadi — Chairman  
Professor J. N. Ayertey — Member  
Professor Ohene Adjei — Member  
Dr. G. Afeti — Member  
Mr. G. F. Daniel — Member  
Mrs. Hilda A. Asante — Secretary

© National Council for Tertiary Education 2017  
ISSN: 2026-6588  
Vol. 8, No. 2

Published by  
National Council for Tertiary Education  
P. O. Box MB 28  
Accra

Tel: 0209989429  
E-mail: [info@ncte.edu.gh](mailto:info@ncte.edu.gh)  
Website: [www.ncte.edu.gh](http://www.ncte.edu.gh)

**PRODUCED IN GHANA**

Typesetting by GertMash Desktop Services, Accra New Town  
Printing by Sealprint Limited, Accra

## CONTENTS

Exploring Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in the Context of Adult Learners: Challenges and Strategies <i>Dr. Isaac Kofi Biney</i> . . . . .	1
Orientation Programme at the University of Education, Winneba: Perspectives of Second-year undergraduate students at the Winneba Campus <i>Alfred Anovunga Alunga</i> . . . . .	21
Improving the Reading Comprehension of Lower Intermediate Learners of Spanish through Strategy Instruction <i>Isaac Osei</i> . . . . .	33

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

%	—	Percentage
A	—	Agree
ABE	—	Adult Basic Education
AIDS	—	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BECE	—	Basic Education Certificate Education
D	—	Disagree
EFL	—	English as a Foreign Language
F	—	Frequency
FL	—	Foreign Language
GLSS	—	Ghana Living Standards Survey
GOG	—	Government of Ghana
GSS	—	Ghana Statistical Service
HIV	—	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	—	Information Communication Technology
ILO	—	International Labour Organisation
JHS	—	Junior High School
LEAP	—	Livelihoods Empowerment against Poverty Programme
M	—	Mean
MSLC	—	Middle School Leaving Certificate
NGO	—	Non-Governmental Organisation
RC	—	Reading Comprehension
SA	—	Strongly Agree
SCDE	—	School of Continuing and Distance Education
SD	—	Standard Deviation
SD	—	Strongly Disagree
SFL	—	Spanish as a Foreign Language
SL	—	Second Language
SYR-2	—	Second year student (2 <sup>nd</sup> person interviewed)
SYR-4	—	Second year student (4 <sup>th</sup> person interviewed)
SYR-5	—	Second year student (5 <sup>th</sup> person interviewed)
SYR-10	—	Second year student (10 <sup>th</sup> person interviewed)
SYR-11	—	Second year student (11 <sup>th</sup> person interviewed)
SYR-13	—	Second year student (13 <sup>th</sup> person interviewed)
SYR-14	—	Second year student (14 <sup>th</sup> person interviewed)
U	—	Undecided
UEW	—	University of Education, Winneba
UNDP	—	United Nations Development Programme

**Exploring Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in the Context of Adult  
Learners: Challenges and Strategies**

**Dr. Isaac Kofi Biney**  
*College of Education, University of Ghana*

### Abstract

*This paper explores Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in the context of adult learners. It investigates the needs of adult learners that influenced their decision to pursue Adult Basic Education (ABE). The challenges adult learners' encounter in the process of learning to achieve their goals, and strategies adopted to address them, were also sought. An interview guide was developed and conducted to a sample of 50 students who were randomly selected. Thus 40 interview guides were used out of the 50 in the study. Purposive and convenience sampling procedures were adopted in selecting the sample for the study. Simple statistical tool in the form of percentages, analytical and descriptive-narrative approaches were adopted in presenting the results. It was found that adult learners prioritise their needs such as fulfilment, achievement and improved performance at workplace, in a bid to learn to achieve them step-by-step. The acquisition of vocational skills, personal development skills and social relationship skills compelled adult learners to get enrolled in ABE programme. It recommends that sufficient savings should be embarked upon by prospective adult learners to facilitate their participation in ABE programme.*

### Introduction

Chao (2009) observes that the emergence of the knowledge society, rapid introduction of technology, and the changing workplace has increased the importance of adult learning. Education is no longer just a matter of childhood schooling, but in Ghana it has become a lifelong, varied and stimulating activity with great influence in the lives of many men and women. This article focuses on the experience of one adult education school in Ghana to discuss issues around the motivation of adults involved in lifelong learning.

Currently, aside the regular and sandwich students pursuing Diplomas, Bachelors, Masters and Doctor of Philosophy degree programmes offered, there are other tailor-made programmes designed and offered at the School of Continuing and Distance Education (SCDE), and its twelve regional learning

centres. There are over 13,000 adult learners pursuing Adult Basic Education (ABE) programme at the School.

Existing research has not been conclusive as to whether some human needs take priority over others, but Myers asserts that "having all your biological needs satisfied, you seek increased levels of arousal. But let your need for water go unsatisfied, your thirst will preoccupy you". Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs Theory sought to paint a similar picture. Oishi *et al.* (1999, cited in Myers, 2011) observe that a life-satisfaction survey in 39 nations supports this basic idea that some motivations are more compelling than others. Maslow emphasised that an individual's needs must be satisfied sequentially, thus, an individual cannot satisfy any higher-order needs (love and belongingness, esteem, and self-actualisation) unless the lower-order needs (food, shelter and safety) are satisfied. This observation poses certain questions: What needs are to be satisfied sequentially by adult learners? How

should such needs be satisfied? This paper seeks to address these questions by examining data gathered from the specific context of a Ghanaian school for adult learning. The researcher first considers what learning and learning needs are.

Burton (1963, cited in Maslow, 1970) defines learning as a change in the individual due to the interaction of that individual and his/her environment, which fills a need, and makes him/her more capable of dealing adequately with his/her environment. In any case, every adult learner has the capacity to assume responsibility to satisfy his/her need. McClusky's (1971) faith in *limitless human potential* is seen in his thinking about adults as learners:

One can teach an old dog to learn new tricks! He may not want to learn new tricks or he may think that his old tricks are good enough, but an "old dog" can no longer hide behind an assumed lack of ability to learn as an excuse for not learning. In fact, because of his age, there are probably some tricks that an old dog can learn better than a younger

To Oishi *et al.* (cited in Myers, 2011), in poorer nations that lack easy access to money and the food and shelter it buys, financial satisfaction more strongly predicts feelings of well-being. In wealthy nations, where most people are able to meet basic needs, home-life satisfaction is a better predictor to learning. Self-esteem matters most in the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, Australia among others, whose citizens tend to

focus more on personal achievements than on family and community identity which tend to pertain in Africa (Oishi, *et al.* cited in Myers, 2011). That is not to say poverty is not found in developed countries but poorer citizens in such economies are largely cushioned by the welfare system. These systems could be in the form of feedback and determined instructor effort of reinforcement for each individual learner (Gredler, 2001).

The Government of Ghana has a critical role to play in the provision of education to the adult population. After all, it is the adult population that develops their communities and the society at large, and not children. Wickberg (1991, cited in Newsweek, 1991) asserts that in Sweden, you learn as long as you live. It means, therefore, that you are never too old to learn something new. Learning should be perceived, in our context, from a lifelong dimension, thus, learning from cradle-to-grave. For there is no better way to make good citizens, than educating able-bodied men and women to work. Hence, the provision of scholarship, study leave and financial support by government, employers and extended family to prospective adult learners' to engage in lifelong learning is a laudable decision to take. The government has not put in place solid systems and structures, to get the critical adult population educated. The reality is that there is poverty in Ghana, and adult learners are not cushioned by government, to motivate them to take to continuing education.

Ghana, on the average, has made some progress, however small it is, in the fight against poverty. The official poverty

rate was 51.7 percent in 1991 (GSS, 1991/92). The Headcount ratio measurement of poverty was used. This measurement of poverty actually gives the ratio of the population who are poor, thus, it establishes the poverty line. In Ghana, two poverty lines have been established—an upper poverty line of GH¢371 and lower poverty line of GH¢288. The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) conducts the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) at about five-year intervals to ask people about their incomes and other information that border on welfare or standards of living. Over the years, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) have conducted five of such surveys. Thus, GLSS I in 1982, GLSS II in 1989, GLSS III in 1991/92, GLSS IV in 1998/99 and GLSS V in 2005/06 (GSS, 2007).

Poverty, however, dropped to 39.5 percent in 1999 to 28.5 percent in 2006 (GSS, 2007) cited in (Biney, 2009). It further dropped to 26.5 percent in 2008. In addition, hunger was reduced from 34 percent in 1990 to 9 percent in 2008 (GoG/UNDP, 2010 cited in Amedehe, *et al.*, 2012). The introduction of the capitation grant, school feeding programme and the Livelihoods Empowerment against Poverty Programme (LEAP) culminated in the reduction of hunger. The latest figures indicate that over the past 17 years the average level of poverty in Ghana has reduced by half. This demonstrates firstly, the giant step made by the people of Ghana to overcome poverty and its debilitating effects on them. Secondly, it demonstrates the effort being made by individuals,

corporate organisations and governments toward halving poverty targets.

That notwithstanding, adult learners still need support to succeed in their learning endeavours. In Ghana, individuals' action and inaction have a bearing on the families, and communities they belong to. As a collective society, the norms, traditions and value systems of Ghana call for togetherness. Thus each is his/her brother's or sister's keeper. In such a situation, the success or failure of an adult learner may be seen as the responsibility of the family. The family is, thus, called upon to contribute in diverse ways to help the adult family member's education. However, the needs of adult learners in Ghana seem many and to examine these, Maslow's hierarchy of needs was adopted as a framework to examine and better understand what compels them to pursue Adult Basic Education (ABE).

### Statement of the Problem

Adult literacy activities by NGOs and the churches began in Ghana in 1948, though the pace of development quickened in the 1950s. Between 1952 and 1966, the government and NGOs educated a total of 225,000 (Bhola, 2000) to a level of functional literacy, but then the political will to eradicate illiteracy collapsed. Data from the Ghana Living Standard Survey Report of the Fifth Round (GLSS 5), indicates that about 31 percent of adults, which represents a little over four million people, have never been to school (GSS, 2008).

Meanwhile, functionally literate adults may use their literacy skills to

transact businesses and practice better environmental hygiene. Functional literacy skills acquired by adults may also be used to undertake income generating ventures. The literate population further uses literacy skills to improve performance and production not only at workplaces, but also positively influence community groups to initiate self-help development programmes, and projects to improve the quality of people's lives.

Many adults of the population in Ghana want to see positive changes in their lives and have thus taken up the challenge to get educated. There are, however, hurdles to be surmounted to meet this important need.

Financial difficulties, unemployment, lack of support from the immediate and extended families, workplace commitments, along with rapid changes taking place at workplaces as a result of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), make it imperative for the adult population to continue to learn to unearth their hidden potentials. This is significant, especially in Ghana, because children may not have an impact on much needed economic development for five, ten, fifteen or even twenty years. The improved knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes of adults, on the other hand, can have an impact now.

In the light of this supposition, the question raised is: what needs influence adult learners to take up ABE in Ghana? As well as addressing this question, the study on which this paper is based also identified strategies that could be adopted to address the challenges that confront adult learners in Ghana.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of the study were to:

- (i) Identify the needs of adult learners that led them to enrol in ABE.
- (ii) Find out the challenges facing adult learners in achieving these needs.
- (iii) Suggest strategies adult learners can employ to achieve these needs.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory***

This study is underpinned by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1970), which has had a considerable range of applications. He presents his view as a theory of motivation. His theory is simple in that it offers a hierarchy of prepotency. By this it is meant that a person remains under the control of the motive at the 'lower' level until the object of the motive is achieved or its satisfaction assured, as observed by Tennant (1993). As soon as this occurs the person comes under the sway of the motive force at the next (higher) level. When and only when this is satisfied the person becomes subject to the next, and so on. A motive of a lower level is always prepotent over one at the higher level. The near highest, which comes into operation only when all other forces are quiescent, is called the 'need for self-actualisation.' The details of the hierarchy is presented and discussed as follows:

### Discussion of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow talks first about *physiological needs*: hunger, thirst, sex, sleep, relaxation and bodily integrity. The most basic needs are associated with survival, physically and psychologically. These must be satisfied first before there comes into play what are called *safety needs*. Safety needs concern a predictable and orderly world; protection, security, law and stability. While these are not satisfied the person will be occupied in attempts to organise his/her world so as to provide the greatest possible degree of safety and security. If satisfied, he/she comes under the forces of *love and belongingness needs*. This need calls for one to seek for warm and fulfilling human relationships and is about the family, affection, relationship and the work group. *Self-esteem needs* are the desire for strength, achievement, confidence, mastery and competence, independence and freedom, adequacy, status, responsibility, reputation and prestige.

*Self-actualisation needs* concern meeting one's fullest and unique potential or potentialities, talents, capacities, personal growth and fulfilment. Thus, they are about becoming everything one is capable of becoming. Self-actualisation is, therefore, a healthy person's prime motivation and Maslow perceives self-actualisation as the ultimate aim of learning. Supporting Maslow's assertion, Desautels (2015), argues that self-actualisation is the level of self-evaluation related to service, adding that

to become creative thinkers, people have to begin discovering the problem, not just coming up with a solution. She also suggests that at this level, learners become self-assessors and self-reflectors. They are able to see and understand how their actions, thoughts and feelings affect all lives.

Finally, *self-transcendence needs*, which are associated with the need to find meaning and identity beyond the self, were the last of the needs to be added by Maslow towards the end of his life. He states that some people also reach a level of self-transcendence, thus, a stage in life whereby people strive for meaning, purpose, and communion that is beyond the self, that is transpersonal.

In Maslow's view, learners, and in this case adult learners, must satisfy their need for food before they can achieve their goal of securing academic achievement. His view also provides an explanation of *why* learners who come from poor homes are less likely to participate and achieve in educational programmes than those whose basic needs are met. More so, the idea that human needs are hierarchically arranged is appealing. The simple idea that some motives are more compelling than others provides a framework for thinking about motivation. These prospects notwithstanding, Maslow's hierarchy of needs appears somewhat arbitrary, especially if one considers it in adult learning situation, which this study seeks to investigate. This is because the ordering of such needs may not be universally fixed.

Myers (2011) observes that people

have even starved themselves to make a political statement. It is not always the case those raised in relatively luxurious homes go on to become creative, original and self-actualised people. Exceptions abound. There are some people, coming from poor homes, and who have worked hard to get to the highest level in life. Then again, for some adult learners, cognitive needs might be more fundamental than esteem needs. Other adult learners might meet their cognitive needs even though they have not experienced love and belongingness.

Added to these suppositions, not much research has been able to substantiate the idea of a needs hierarchy. Wahba and Bridwell (1979, cited in Cherry, 2015: 1) reported that there was little evidence for Maslow's ranking of these needs and even less evidence that these needs are in a hierarchical order.

Other critics of Maslow's theory note that his definition of self-actualisation is difficult to test scientifically. Maslow's research on self-actualisation was based on a very limited sample of individuals, including people he knew as well as biographies of famous individuals that he believed to be self-actualised, such as Albert Einstein and Eleanor Roosevelt (Cherry, 2015). Regardless of these criticisms, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory represents part of an important shift in psychology. Rather than focusing on abnormal behaviour and development, Maslow's humanistic psychology was focused on the development of healthy individuals (Cherry, 2015). His hierarchy of needs

theory has become well-known and popular both in psychology, education and many other disciplines.

### *Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning*

In a developing country like Ghana, continuing education and learning is an appropriate means to allow adults to acquire new knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and understanding of themselves. The quality of life of a society, accordingly, reflects the standard of education of the people. After all, education is instrumental in promoting growth and raising earnings. In global economy today, lifelong education and lifelong learning are accepted by many as overarching tools for human development (Sernau, 2009).

Illiteracy has been found as a major economic bane of Ghana. Data from the Ghana Living Standard Survey Report of the Fifth Round (GLSS 5) indicate that 17 percent which represents 2.3 million people attended school but did not obtain Middle School Leaving Certificate/Basic Education Certificate Examination (MSLC/BECE) certificate. About 39% of adults which represents 5.1 million people have the MSLC/BECE certificate, and only about 14 percent which represents 1.8 million adults obtained secondary or higher level qualification (GSS, 2008). Thus, about half the adult population, which represents 6.4 million people in Ghana neither attended school nor completed Middle School/Junior High School (GSS, 2008). The implication is

that many with poor literacy can neither take advantage of the opportunities in Ghana's thriving private sector nor secure jobs in manufacturing industries due to the low level skills as a result of illiteracy. This assertion reinforces the study of Crowther, Hamilton and Tett (2003) and Janks (2010) arguing that there is a relational flow between adult literacies education and empowerment with reference to theory such as the Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Their central argument is that an empowering literacies education offers learners opportunities to create their own identities and discourse regarding decisions about job, finance and access to education opportunities. They argued that this would in turn empower them to contribute to social and economic development of themselves and society as a whole.

It has been established that people's motives for participating in an organised learning experience are numerous and overlapping. In a comprehensive and scientific national survey of participation in adult education in the United States, Johnstone and Rivera (1965, cited in Jarvis, 1983: 66) discovered that in the United States the main motives for adult learning include: to become better informed; to prepare for new job; to obtain on-the-job training; to spend leisure time in an enjoyable and rewarding way; to meet new and interesting people; to become more efficient in carrying out tasks and duties either in the home or elsewhere; to escape from routine; to improve skills; to increase general knowledge; to increase income; to

develop personality and to improve interpersonal relations; and to develop some physical attributes. These motives can equally be grouped into three main categories: *vocational*; *personal development* and *social relationship*. If we take these three categories of motives and relate them to the concerns of the life cycle, we have an invaluable formula for determining adult learners' needs.

Knowles, Holton and Swanson (1998, cited in Nafukho *et al.*, 2005: 13) have stated that:

even though adults can be motivated by external factors such as higher salaries, promotions, better jobs in the future, they are more motivated to learn by internal pressures such as the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem and quality of life issues.

The other important factors that can motivate adult learners to learn as identified by Lieb (1999) include social relationships such as making new friends; external expectation; social welfare such as improving the ability to serve others; escape from boredom by providing a break from the routine of work or home; and cognitive interests, such as satisfying an inquiring mind and seeking knowledge for its own sake.

Snowman and Biehler (2006) indicated that the first four needs of Maslow hierarchy of needs (physiological, safety, belongingness and love, and esteem) are *deficiency needs* because they motivate people to act only when they are

to some degree unmet. Self-actualisation and self-transcendence needs by contrast, are often called *growth needs* because people constantly strive to satisfy them. This is basically because self-actualisation refers to the need for self-fulfillment—the need to develop all of one's potential-talents and capacities.

### ***Criticisms of Hierarchy of Needs Theory in an African Context***

Unfortunately however, Maslow's theory was not founded on any research evidence. From an African perspective, Gboku and Lekoko (2007) identified flaws in Maslow's theory. First, in many African societies, needs are not regarded in hierarchical terms with some achievable only after others have been satisfied. Consequently, people do not necessarily satisfy lower-level needs before moving on to higher-level needs. For example, a village chief may feel the same intensity for lower needs such as hunger, shelter and clothing, despite his elevated status within the community. Second, it is impossible for educational programme developers to ascertain the precise need level of individuals in order to tailor programmes based on that knowledge. Most individuals in African communities will not express their needs based on this hierarchical conception. Third, it is not clear where to place the learning need of a typical African adult learner in Maslow's hierarchy. Does it belong to the levels of safety, self-esteem, self-actualisation or self-transcendence?

A hierarchical approach to the

learning experience assumes that adult learners are essentially alike. This is clearly not the case. It is important to recognise that adult learners are unique in the different aspirations, values, knowledge, skills, experiences and problems they have. The socialisation they have had in their respective communities and families are different, and that in itself will influence their desires, interests and needs. As a result of these differences, adults' learning needs may differ greatly from one individual to another. Gboku and Lekoko (2007) concede, however, that the assumption of learner similarity would be appropriate for organised efforts addressing an identified national need, an instance being HIV and AIDS education programme to be rolled out across the country. At local and community levels, this may also apply if there is a common community education need, such as the need to know how to purify water from water sources, especially in the rural communities in Ghana where many of the community members have no access to potable water facilities (Amedzro, 2005).

### **Adult Basic Education (ABE)**

The School of Continuing and Distance Education (SCDE) which is at the centre of the study runs and coordinates ABE at an Adult Learning and Research Centre which was established in August, 2007. The Centre started its literacy programme with 27 participants. Table 1 provides details on seven years running of the Centre at SCDE.

**Table 1: Adults Learners Enrolled in Adult Learning Research Centre between 2007–2013**

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of Adult Learners Enrolled in ABE</i>	<i>Adult Learners who sat for Diploma Programme</i>	<i>Adult Learners Admitted into the Diploma Programmes</i>
2007	27	–	–
2008	69	5	4
2009	127	10	9
2010	137	20	14
2011	65	15	13
2012	112	20	18
2013	83	23	21

Table 1, shows that the number of adult learners enrolled in the literacy centre has kept increasing steadily from the commencement of the programme except for the 2011 and 2013 academic years.

The Centre is currently undertaking English and Basic Mathematics classes for out-of-school youth and adults. It can be argued that if this programme is expanded, it would help to address the challenges posed by illiteracy in Ghana. As Table 1 clearly demonstrates, some of the graduates from the ABE or literacy programme have managed to gain admission into the diploma programmes. Cummings and Jecks (2004) observe that in the global information economy in which information and knowledge have replaced financial and physical capital as the means of creating value, nations and enterprises are reliant on an educated and skilled workforce to maintain productivity in order to meet global market

challenges. Likewise, individual workers, and unemployed adults need to engage in continuing and lifelong learning to constantly upgrade their skills and qualifications to remain in employment. ILO (2002, cited in Cummings and Jecks, 2004: 16) re-states this understanding:

The citizens need now to enhance their capacity to take initiatives, and need now, to acquire new skills. It is necessary to provide learning opportunities for the present generation of adult men and women. Adult learning has become a central issue. It has become clear that the learning capacity of human beings, the unfolding of human potential and the opportunity to continue learning throughout life, are central to the task of shaping the new century and the new millennium. The autonomy, the creativity and the self-expression of all citizens are not only the objectives, but also the conditions of democracy.

On the basis of this kind of assertion, it becomes imperative for the Ghanaian government, and more especially educational institutions in Ghana, to focus attention and also place premium on ensuring that as much of the adult population as possible become literate. When the critical mass of Ghanaians is supported in one form or the other to become literate, it will go a long way to help promote sustainable development in not only their communities, but the entire economy of Ghana as well.

## Methods

Adult learners pursuing ABE formed the sampling units and unit of analysis in the design. A mixed design method was adopted. Thus, aspects of quantitative and qualitative characteristics were adopted at several stages throughout the study. Both purposive and convenience procedures were adopted in selecting the sample. The names of the accessible adult learners, who were 112 in number, were compiled and serially labelled on pieces of papers. They were put into a container and reshuffled and 50 adult learners were randomly selected for the study.

This sample size of 50 respondents out of the accessible population of 112 was representative in terms of the institution under study. The researcher's intention was to understand, analyse and describe the situation in which prospective adult learners identify their needs and embark upon ABE to achieve their goals. The researcher adopted sampling procedures to identify certain characteristics in the learners. In particular, the researcher decided that married and working respondents engaged in continuing education may have challenges in terms of planning, managing and utilising their time sufficiently, so as to gain from the ABE. Such respondents saddled with numerous productive and reproductive responsibilities can, perhaps, only succeed in ABE through effective planning and prioritisation of their needs. The researcher's intention was, therefore, to get a deeper insight into how these respondents managed to

unravel challenges involved in addressing their learning needs.

This was an exploratory study which gathered data through interviews and the results were presented qualitatively in terms of themes and quantitatively in terms of statistics. Thus, the data collected from closed-ended questions was analysed using percentages. The responses from the open-ended questions were summarised, organised and interpreted in the form of tables. A descriptive-narrative approach was also partially adopted to analyse some of the responses. The study sought the views of adult learners on the needs for enrolling in continuing education, and thus, identifies the challenges facing them in achieving their needs. Finally, suggestions on strategies to achieve the needs of adult learners in ABE were also sought. Probing questions were posed to the respondents to seek for clarifications and the study also yielded anecdotal evidence to triangulate and elaborate on the results. This also helped to extend the enquiry and to discover contradictions and supports.

## Results and Discussion

With a sample size of 50 adult learners in all, the majority (40) of them, constituting 80 percent of the respondents, participated in the study. Thus, 40 interviews were used out of the 50. Some 60 percent of respondents were female and 40 percent were male. The majority (70%) of the respondents were married, working and within the age range of 30 to 40 years.

### Needs of Adult Learners for Enrolling in Adult Basic Education

On whether the respondents have had any formal education before enrolling in Adult Basic Education (ABE) programme, the majority (70%) of the respondents were in the affirmative. In terms of the level of education attained by the respondents, less than half (45%) have had Junior High School (JHS) education as compared to 55 percent of the respondents who could not complete their basic education or JHS education. Even though more than half (55%) of the respondents could not complete basic education, they decided to continue their education through ABE programme and this is encouraging. The majority (70%) of the respondents were both married and working, yet they found time to continue their education. This result goes to confirm McClusky's (1971) assertion of the 'limitless human potential' when it comes to adult learning. As to what motivated the respondents to enrol in ABE, the responses offered are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Motives to Participate in ABE**

<i>Motives</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
To upgrade and empower ourselves socially and economically	64
Improve skills to meet market demand on employment	26
To fit perfectly into the society and secure better jobs	41
Gain mastery and improve productivity at workplace	25
Acquire certificate and gain promotion at workplace	20

**Note:** Multiple responses were made  
N = 40

The results as obtained in Table 2 confirm Johnstone and Rivera's finding (cited in Jarvis, 1983) that motives for adult learning include: to become better informed; to prepare for new job; to obtain on-the-job training among others. It can be deduced from the results that respondents participated in ABE to better position themselves to contribute to the society, and also increase their skills to improve productivity in workplaces. These motives can equally be grouped into three main categories, thus, vocational; personal development and social relationship as Johnstone and Rivera discovered in their study in America. In terms of ranking of deficiency and growth needs of adult learners that influenced enrolment in ABE, Table 3 provides interesting results.

**Table 3: Ranking of Hierarchy of Needs by Adult Learners**

<i>Ranking of Hierarchy of Needs by Adult Learners</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Self-actualisation (capacities, personal growth, fulfilment)	80
Esteem needs (achievement, competence, reputation)	80
Self-transcendence need (meaning, purpose, communion)	68
Safety needs (protection, order, stability, etc.)	60
Belonging and love needs (family, affection, relationship)	55
Physiological (lack of food, shelter and clothing)	40

**Note:** Multiple responses were made  
N = 40

The majority (80%) of the respondents ranked growth needs such as self-actualisation and self-esteem needs as factors that influenced their enrolment into ABE programme. The results contradict the assertion of Oishi, *et al.* (1999 cited in Myers, 2011) that self-esteem matters most in individualist nations such as the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, Australia among others, whose citizens tend to focus more on personal achievements more than on family and community identity which tend to pertain in Africa.

On whether adult learners prioritise their needs, the majority (88%) of the respondents were in the affirmative. This is the apt way a respondent put it:

because I know that my needs are many and cannot be satisfied or achieved in a day, I plan and prioritise them, so that I can judiciously utilise my limited resources to gain satisfactory results.

Upon further probing, a majority (65%) of the respondents who responded 'Yes' to the prioritisation of their needs revealed that they prioritise their needs to enable them make right choices, and also effectively manage their time so as to achieve their needs step-by-step. However, the remaining (35%) rather indicated that they prioritise their needs to enable them attain needs they consider most important first. Going by the results indicated in Table 3, many of the respondents actually want to realise growth in their endeavours—competence

in the manner in which they execute jobs at workplaces. As majority (70%) of the respondents were working, their enrolment into ABE was probably informed by improving their performance at workplaces. The latter were of the view that human motives are based on needs, whether consciously or subconsciously felt. Thus, the concept of a learning need has a strong link to the theory of motivation. The participants in the study were motivated in one form or the other to enrol and learn to address their needs, including achievement and improved performance at workplaces.

On what vocational needs influenced their participation in ABE, the majority (75%) of the respondents mentioned the acquisition of basic knowledge to enable them to become skilled in driving, filling forms and signing cheques when transacting business with the banking and financial institutions. They added that they stand to benefit from these skills acquired and also improve upon their reading and writing skills and also become self-employed, and by extension, to secure job opportunities in the private and public sectors. 25 percent of the respondents were of the view that the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills in reading, writing and calculation will aid them in their entrepreneurial activities. This was described by one of the participants:

The vocational skills and knowledge that I am currently acquiring, especially in entre-preneurship, will substantially help me create and

manage job avenues and opportunities for myself and many others.

In the case of personal development needs that influenced their enrolment in ABE, the respondents offered multiple responses to the rephrased probing question posed to them. Results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Personal Development Needs that Influenced Enrolment in ABE**

<i>Personal Development Needs</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Acquire basic knowledge and skills	63
Secure improved financial status	07
Improve communication skills to impact on their communities	17
Acquire problem-solving skills	18

**Note:** Multiple responses were made  
N = 40

From Table 4, more than half (63 percent) of the respondents said the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills in reading, writing and calculating basic sums such as bookkeeping was needed for small-scale businesses. Less than a quarter (18 percent) and (17 percent) each of the respondents respectively assert that they enrolled in ABE to improve communication skills so as to impact on their communities, and also acquire problem-solving abilities through the skills acquired from their learning. Table 5 sets out the relationship needs that influenced adult learners' participation in ABE.

**Table 5: Relationship Needs that Influenced Enrolment in ABE**

<i>Relationship Needs</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Improve on their marital status or relationship	50
Strengthen/solidify/increase chances of getting a good marriage partner	48
Communicate effectively with marital partner	25

**Note:** Multiple responses were made  
N = 40

From Table 5, it can be seen that all the results offered centred on love and belongingness. Words like 'improve', 'strengthen', 'increase' and 'solidify' were used by many of the respondents to qualify their love relationship. Half (50%) of the respondents reveal that relationship needs that drove them to continue their education were to improve on their marital status or relationship. Nearly half (48%) of the respondents also said that they enrolled in ABE programme to aid them to strengthen, solidify and increase their chances of getting good marital partners. Only a quarter (25%) of the respondents intimated that they enrolled in ABE programme to enable them to communicate effectively in their marital relationship. These results confirm Houle's (1964) assertion that adult learners enrol in learning programmes with the hope that they can enlarge the dimensions of their minds and increase their personal and social effectiveness. From the result so far, it appears that established or yet to be established social or marital relationship matter a lot to the adult learners in this

sample, which links to love and belongingness needs on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. That is to be expected because many of the adult learners enrolled in ABE were married couples. There is every cause for them to get educated formally, to help close any gap existing among them, and their partners in terms of educational level. This observation was amplified by one of the respondents who said:

I enrolled in ABE programme to help me solidify my marital life with my partner who is an educated person.

### Challenges Facing Adult Learners in Achieving their Needs

Notwithstanding the interest and desire of adult learners to engage in continuing learning activities such as ABE to better their lot, there are challenges that deter them from achieving their goals in life. When learners were asked to rank challenges that confront them, multiple responses were made. The results presented in Table 6 provide further explanation.

**Table 6: Challenges Facing Adults Enrolled in ABE Programme**

<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Financial difficulties	70
Inadequate knowledge in ICTs	58
Unemployment	50
Workplace commitments	43
Lack of spousal and extended families support	38

**Note:** Multiple responses were made  
N = 40

Deducing from Table 6, it is clear that the majority (70%) of the respondents were faced with financial challenges in pursuing ABE programme, which were ranked highest. More than half (58%) of the respondents responded that they had not got adequate knowledge of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), which is to be expected in a situation where about a quarter (25%) of the respondents were only then learning to read, write and calculate. The issue of unemployment came third (50%) in ranking the challenges confronting adult learners enrolled in ABE programme. Workplace commitments and lack of spousal and extended family support were ranked fourth and fifth challenges respectively. The findings confirm assertions made by Fasokun, *et al.* (2005) and Neff (1969, cited in Shaw, 1969). The former asserted that African adult learners are poor financially and that affects their desire to continue their education. This observation is real and it currently reflects in the staggering unemployment challenge confronting many Ghanaians. The latter argued that adults need the cooperation of their families to learn yet many of the ABE classes are organised in the evening, it means time spent away from home and the family.

### Strategies to Achieve the Needs of Adult Learners in Adult Basic Education (ABE)

On preparation to be made by adult learners so as to succeed in ABE, it was indicated by the majority (80%) of the

respondents that enough savings have to be made by prospective participants so as to have peace of mind to concentrate on their studies. The other 20 percent of the respondents suggested that prospective participants of ABE programme should be mentally and psychologically ready before they get enrolled into ABE programme, as one participant responded; “As I planned to enrol as an adult learner in the ABE programme, it became necessary for me to start studying hard so as to succeed. I have prepared myself psychologically and mentally. I have also decided to apply myself fully to the academic work. By so doing, I will be able to achieve the goal I have set, for myself.”

In terms of forms of support to be provided by spouses and extended families to prospective adult learners in ABE programme, multiple responses were provided as set out in Table 7.

**Table 7: Supports to be offered by Spouses and Extended Families to Adult Learners**

<i>Support to be offered by Spouses and Extended Families</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Provision of financial support to aid adult learners in their studies	83
Encouragement and spouses participation in house chores are requested	38
Moral and spiritual supports are to be offered toward adult learners studies	25

**Note:** Multiple responses were made  
N = 40

The majority (83%) of the respondents indicated that prospective adult learners must be supported financially to continue to learn to achieve their goals. 38 percent and 25 percent of other respondents responded that adult learners are to be encouraged and supported in their household chores and be offered moral and spiritual supports in their studies. The result confirms the assertion of Oishi, *et al.* (cited in Myers, 2011) that in poorer nations where some adults lack access to money to procure food and shelter they need, financial satisfaction predicts feelings of well-being. Considering the findings revealing that adult learners needed financial support to enable them to smoothly pursue their studies so as to realise their goals, it only makes a lot of sense that they are supported. More so, as society that buys into interdependence and extended family system, the only way out is for the spouses and related family members to financially support adult learners to participate in ABE programme. The support that is to be offered to female adult learners pursuing ABC programme should not only be limited to financial support offered, but the spouses should also help in household chores and provide moral and spiritual supports as well. This is significant because half (50%) of the respondents, who were female adult learners, asserted that they also had to undertake household chores after their study. The female adult learners already over-burdened with not only productive and reproductive responsibilities, but also undertaking academic work at higher

educational institutions, require the support to enable them to manage their time meaningfully for their academic work. This is also one of the surest ways for female adult learners to succeed in their academic endeavours.

On support to be provided by the institution itself, more than two-thirds (70%) of the respondents were of the view that they should provide appropriate and sufficient teaching and learning aids to make adult learners feel comfortable in their studies. The other 30 percent said that dialogical or conversational approach should be adopted in facilitating the teaching and learning endeavours. In the case of employers' support to be provided to prospective adult learners, nearly all (80%) of the respondents were of the view that adult learners are to be granted study leave with pay to ease the financial challenges adult learners go through during their studies. The majority (76%) of the respondents believed that scholarship facilities are to be provided to prospective adult learners to help them concentrate on their studies.

### Summary of Major Findings

1. Based on the findings of the study, adult learners engaged in ABE programme to upgrade and empower themselves socially and economically.
2. The acquisition of basic knowledge, skills, and improvement in marital relationships influenced adult learners participation in ABE programme.
3. Financial difficulties, inadequate knowledge in ICTs, unemployment, household chores and workplace commitments were the major challenges encountered by adult learners in ABE.
4. It was suggested that sufficient savings could be undertaken by participants.
5. It was again suggested that learning centres should provide sufficient teaching and learning aids to help adult learners learn.
6. It was further suggested that employers grant adult learners study leave with pay to enable them concentrate on their studies.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

1. Institutions providing ABE in Ghana should provide the needed orientation, teaching and learning aids to motivate adult learners to prioritise their needs, and learn to love and belong, and attain self-esteem and self-actualisation.
2. Prospective adult learners have to save sufficiently toward their studies, including ABE programmes.
3. Government should provide scholarship facilities, however rudimentary, to prospective adult learners to help them upgrade themselves socially and economically.

## Conclusion

The paper explored Maslow's hierarchy of needs in the context of adult learners, taking into consideration the challenges, and strategies to be instituted to entice many adult population to engage in learning. An adult education school in Ghana identified in 2007 the gap for the need to continuously build the capacity of people of all walks of life, through the establishment of Adult Literacy and Research Centre, to roll out ABE programme. Having operated for seven years offers the researcher the opportunity to explore and identify challenges and strategies that can be instituted to aid adult learners study to achieve their goals in life. The findings of the study indicate that adult learners were interested and desirous in engaging in ABE programme. They also prioritised their needs, as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory sought to demonstrate, to afford the learners step-by-step process in achieving them. The learners, however, were faced with financial challenges which need to be addressed to help entice many prospective adult learners to engage in ABE programme. Considering the pace of technological change in the global economy currently, it becomes imperative for both employees and employers to form

partnerships toward work and education. The prospective adult learners of ABE should equally learn to develop saving culture to become financially prepared for the ABE programme. Then again, when the critical mass of able-bodied adult population desirous to learn are offered support in the form of study leave with pay, and supported psychologically and spiritually by their employers and family relations, they will actively learn to prove equal to the tasks and responsibilities at home, communities and workplaces. Cherry (2015), referred to earlier in the study asserts that in a study published in 2011, researchers from the University of Illinois set out to put the hierarchy to the test discovered that while fulfillment of the needs was strongly correlated with happiness, people from cultures all over reported that, self-actualisation and social needs were important even when many of the most basic needs were unfulfilled. Thus, one of the surest ways to secure the full fulfillment of learners, is to offer them the opportunity to engage in ABC programme, to meet that need of acquiring skills through basic literacy. The adult education school, thus SCDE should, therefore, make available in sufficient quantities, the requisite teaching and learning aids to entice as many prospective adult learners as possible, to participate in ABE programme.

## REFERENCES

- Amedehe, F.; Adeku, K. A. and Hodzi, W. (2012). The relevance of university research within national innovation system in West and Central Africa. *Research Report*.
- Amedzro, A. D. K. (2005). *Globalization non-formal education and development*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.

- Bhola, H. S. (2000). "A discourse on impact evaluation: A model and its application to a literacy intervention in Ghana", *Evaluation, The International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 6 (2), 161–177.
- Biney, I. K. (2009). *Factors influencing participation in alternative livelihood programmes in the mining communities in the Western Region of Ghana*. (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Accra: University of Ghana, Legon.
- Chao, R. (2009). Understanding the adult learners' motivation and barriers to learning. *European Society for Research on the Education of Adults*. 6–8 November, 905–915.
- Cherry, K. (2015). Hierarchy of needs. Retrieved on 18/04/2015 from [http://psychologyabout.com/od/theories\\_of\\_personality/a/hierarchyneeds.htm](http://psychologyabout.com/od/theories_of_personality/a/hierarchyneeds.htm).
- Crowther, J., Hamilton, M. and Tett, L. (eds.) (2003). *Powerful literacies*. Leicester: NIACE.
- Cummings, S. I. and Jecks, N. (2004). *Skills development and productivity through social Dialogue*. Bangkok: International Labour Organisation.
- Desautels, L. (2015). Addressing our needs: Maslow comes to life for educators and students. Retrieved from [http://twitter.com/@desautels\\_phd](http://twitter.com/@desautels_phd) on September 2, 2015.
- Fasokun, T.; Katahoire, A. and Oduaran, A. (2005). *African perspective on adult learning—The Psychology of adult learning in Africa*. Cape Town: UNESCO.
- Gboku, M. and Lekoko, R. N. (2007). *African perspectives on adult learning—Developing programmes for adult learners in Africa*. Cape Town: UNESCO.
- Gredler, M. E. (2001). *Learning and instruction: Theory into practice* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- GMR (Global Monitoring Report) (2007). *Achieving education for all*. Geneva: UNESCO.
- GSS (1992). *Ghana living standards survey*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.
- GSS (2007). *Ghana living standards survey*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.
- GSS (2008). *Ghana living standards survey report of the fifth round (GLSS 5)*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.
- Houle, C. O. (1964). *Continuing your education*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company. ILO. (2002). Learning and training for work in the knowledge society. *Report 91 IV* (1) (Geneva, 2002).
- Janks, H. (2010). *Literacy and power*. New York: Routledge.
- Jarvis, P. (1983). *Adult and continuing education: Theory and practice*. New York: Croom Helm Limited.
- Knowles, M. S. (1990). *The adult learner: A neglected species* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Houston: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Knowles, M. S.; Holton, E. F. and Swanson, R. A. (1998). *The adult learner: The definitive Classic in adult education and human resource development* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Lieb, S. (1999). Principles of adult learning. Retrieved on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012, from <http://www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet>.
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and personality*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Harper and Row.
- McClusky, H. Y. (1971). "The adult as learner." In McNeill and Seashore (Eds). *The Management of Urban Crisis*. New York: The Free Press.
- Myers, D. G. (2011). *Exploring psychology* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Worth Publishers.
- Nafukho, F.; Amutabi, M. and Otunga, R. (2005). *African perspective on adult learning—Foundations of adult education in Africa*. Cape Town: UNESCO.
- Neff, M. C. (1969). Methods and materials for adult learners. In N. C. Shaw (Ed.). *Administration of continuing education* (pp. 316–341). Rockville: NAPSAAE.

- Newsweek (1991). The 10 best schools in the world: And what we can learn from them. *Newsweek*, pp. 38–50.
- Obour, S. K. (2011, December 29). Two-prong approach to maximising Ghana's oil benefits. *Daily Graphic*, p.10.
- Sernau, S. (2009). *Global problems: The search for equity, peace, and sustainability* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston: Indiana University South Bend.
- Shaw, N. C. (1969) (Ed.). *Administration of continuing education*. Rockville: NAPSAE.
- Snowman, J. and Biehler, R. (2006). *Psychology applied to teaching* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Tennant, M. (1993). *Psychology and adult learning* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Wahba, M. A. and Bridwell, L. G. (1976). Maslow reconsidered: A review of research on the need hierarchy theory. *Organisational behaviour and human performance*, 15, 212–240.
- Wickberg, B. (1991). "Adult education: In Sweden, you're never too old to learn something new". *Newsweek*, December, 1991, p.48.

**Orientation Programme at the University of Education, Winneba:  
Perspectives of Second-year Undergraduate Students at the  
Winneba Campus**

**Alfred Anovunga Alunga**  
*St. John Bosco's College of Education, Navrongo*

### Abstract

*This study explores the perspectives of second-year undergraduate students at the University of Education, Winneba on their orientation programme. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-method design, a structured questionnaire was administered to 290 second-year undergraduate students in the Faculty of Educational Studies of the Winneba Campus of the University who were purposively selected. Sixteen second-year undergraduate students were randomly selected within the same Faculty for interviews. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used for data collection. Mean and standard deviations, frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the research questions. The interview data were used to clarify the emerging results of the quantitative data. The study revealed that the orientation programme at the Winneba Campus of the University is more indoor in nature. Respondents were of the view that, there is the need for improvement in the orientation programme at the Winneba Campus of the University to facilitate the adjustment of first-year students. The study recommends that the University should include outdoor activities, online orientation programmes, orientation booklets, and more resource persons in the orientation programme to facilitate the adjustment of first-year students.*

### Introduction

Throughout the world, tertiary education is considered to be the most important development indicator of human resource for all levels of the economy. Tertiary education enables individuals to develop analytical minds and skills that will help them take responsibility of their lives. The opportunity to study at the tertiary level is exciting to both students and families. However, the first-year often appears to be stressful to the majority of students because gaining admission to the tertiary level comes with financial challenges, academic anxiety, the difficulty of departing from family and friends, adapting good study habits, security, how to adjust properly in the new environment and adapt good social life styles. Many students enter the universities/colleges of Education and find it difficult to integrate into the new environment due to these challenges (Rentz, and Associates, 1996).

There is the need therefore, for universities/colleges to pay attention to these challenges of first-year students and assist them through orientation programmes to enable them make a smooth transition to the university environment after gaining admission.

Despite the efforts made by the Winneba Campus of the University in organising orientation programmes for first-year students in every academic year, it appears the guidance needs of these students are not adequately met during the orientation programmes. Most of the first-year students after going through the orientation programmes still 'wander in the dark' for a long time before settling down. This is observed when students' are seen struggling to register their courses online, locate key facilities and resources on campus, adapt good interpersonal relationships, choose safe and secure accommodation among others which contribute to poor academic performance and dismissal. Therefore,

much need to be done to find out the possible causes of students' inability to properly adjust to the new environment.

The study is significant in three main ways. Firstly, it will expose the various natures/forms of orientation programmes to universities and colleges of Education to enable them organise an effective orientation programme in their institutions. Secondly, the study will be beneficial to university and college authorities in the development of orientation strategies for students. Thirdly, the study will deepen universities' and colleges' understanding of students' perspectives on the impact and effectiveness of their orientation programmes.

### Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Schlossberg, *et al.* (1995), *Transition Theory*. The Theory is an adult development theory which is focused on the transitions that adults experience throughout life and the means by which they cope and adjust (Schlossberg, *et al.*, 1995). Transition is defined as "any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles". There are four aspects of a transition that affect how well individuals deal with change. These aspects (named the 4S System) are *situation*, *self*, *support*, and *strategies* (Schlossberg, *et al.*, 1995). *Situation* examines the features of a transition and how they may influence its significance to the individual. The *self* variable is composed of a person's outlook on life,

as influenced by personal characteristics (including demographics, such as socioeconomic status) and psychological resources. *Support* refers to the resources available to people to assist them adjust. Finally, *strategies* are the actions that individuals take in response to transitions.

Schlossberg's *situation* variable offers the researcher the opportunity to better ascertain the circumstances and challenges that first-year students undergo in the process of transitioning after gaining admission to the University/College. Schlossberg *et al.* (1995) found that if students feel good about the transition and believe it is happening at an appropriate time, it will be easier for them to make the transition. However, if students feel transitions come with some difficult challenges and they are unhappy about having to attend school, their transition will be more difficult. Armed with this knowledge, the circumstances surrounding first-year students which may likely include financial challenges, the fear of making appropriate adjustment and academic anxiety can better be matched with the *situation* variable in the theory. Schlossberg's *self* variable can easily be incorporated into the challenges that first-year students go through because it is composed of "personal and demographic characteristics and psychological resources of students in the transition process" (Evans, *et al.*, 1998) which are in line with the mindset or psychological state as well as the personal and family background of first-year students who have gained admission to the University/College.

All these likely challenges discussed under the *situation* and *self* variables of Schlossberg's theory can be channeled through an orientation programme to provide support and strategies for first-year students to better manage and cope with challenges in the process of adjusting to the new environment. The concept of orientation programme directly correlates with **Schlossberg's** *support* variable. Schlossberg (1995: 67), states, "The importance of social support is often said to be the key to handling stress". Evans, *et al.* (1998) describe the types of support that adults need as "affect, affirmation, aid, and honest feedback". This support can come from a variety of sources, including intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and institutions and communities. Schlossberg's *strategies* variable can be merged with this phase of providing orientation programme to educate students to effectively handle challenges they may experience as they go through the transition process. Schlossberg (1995), if individuals want to change their situation or reduce their distress, they can choose from among four coping modes: information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, and intra-psycho behaviour which refers to the mindsets individuals employ to resolve problems that arise. These mindsets include denial, wishful thinking, and distortion, which enable people to carry on.

By incorporating the 4S System from Schlossberg's (1995), Transition Theory into first-year students' orientation programme, it exerts a significant and positive impact on students' social and

academic lives on campus as they are exposed to various strategies and support systems.

### Research Design

A mixed method approach, specifically thesequential explanatory mixed-methods design was employed. This design occurs in two distinct interactive phases within one study: the quantitative phase followed by the qualitative phase (Creswell, *et al.*, 2007).

### Population and Sampling Procedures

The study population consisted of all the 2014/2015 academic year's second-year undergraduate students in the Faculty of Educational Studies of University of Education, Winneba (UEW)—Winneba campus who were 944 (UEW Annual Statistical Report, 2011). From this population, 165 were males and 125 females. The sample size for the study was 290 students; thus, 274 for the quantitative phase and 16 for the qualitative phase. A stratified sampling technique was used to group the population into strata according to Departments within the Faculty. Then, a simple random sampling strategy was used to select 80 respondents from the Department of Early Childhood Care and Development, 25 respondents from the Department of Psychology and Education, 80 from the Department of Special Education, 80 respondents from the Department of Basic Education and 25 from the Centre for Speech and Hearing Service based on the student enrolment in each department. Stratification was used in selecting the sample for this study

because the respondents share common characteristics. Stratified sampling ensures that resulting sample will be distributed in the same way as the population in terms of the stratifying criterion (Ofori and Dampson, 2011).

### Data Collection Methods

A structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were the instruments used for data collection in this study. The questionnaire was used to gather data for the quantitative phase, while the interview schedule was employed to gather data in the qualitative phase.

### Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

In order to establish the face validity of the instruments, colleagues with knowledge in Guidance and Counselling services were given the instrument for face validity. To grant the content validity of the instruments, they were given to Guidance and Counselling Professors, Lecturers and Supervisors to scrutinise them.

To establish the internal consistency of the questionnaire instrument, ten questionnaires were pre-tested among first-year undergraduate students at the UEW, Kumasi Campus. The data obtained was subjected to Cronbach's alpha analysis to determine the reliability of the instrument. The coefficient obtained was 0.8. According to Bryman and Cramer (1999), any calculated Cronbach's alpha at 0.8 is acceptable and as such reliable. The interview instrument was validated

through the expert opinions of other Professional Counsellors and Researchers.

Kumasi Campus was used for the pre-test because the first-year students at Kumasi Campus had similar characteristics with the first-year students at the Winneba Campus.

### Data Analysis

The results from the quantitative survey were analysed with the aid of SPSS, version 19 developed by Hull and Nie (1986, cited in Dampson and Mensah, 2012). The mean and standard deviation scores and frequency were generated through the use of the software. According to Burns and Grove (2001), descriptive research provides an accurate portrayal or account of characteristics of a particular individual, situation or group for the purpose of discovering new meaning, describing what exists, determining the frequency with which something occurs and categorising information. These authors state that the purpose of descriptive research is the exploration and description of the phenomenon in real-life situation.

The interview data was transcribed and used by means of verbatim quotations to elaborate on the findings of the quantitative data and integrated in the interpretation of findings of the study.

### Results and Discussion

#### *Nature/forms of Orientation Programmes*

The following constructs about the nature

of orientation programmes were drawn from the interview and questionnaire.

1. Indoor
2. Outdoor
3. Departmental
4. Individual/online

**Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of the Various Identified Nature/Forms of Orientation Programmes**

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Mean (M)</i>	<i>Standard Deviation (SD)</i>
Indoor	10.55	3.14
Outdoor	6.77	2.4
Individual/online	2.59	1.31
Departmental	4.07	1.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 shows the means and the standard deviations of identified nature/forms of orientation programmes for first-year students. The respondents rated the 'indoor' part of the programme as the highest ( $M = 10.55$ ,  $SD = 3.14$ ) nature of the orientation programme used at the Winneba Campus of the University. The 'indoor' nature of the orientation was followed by 'outdoor' nature as shown on the table ( $M = 6.77$ ,  $SD = 2.4$ ). The next highest rated nature of the programme on the questionnaire instrument was the 'departmental' nature of the orientation programme with the  $M = 4.07$  and  $SD = 1.76$ . Then finally the students rated the 'individual/online' part of the programme as the lowest ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ) on the questionnaire.

The study revealed that, University of Education, Winneba employs some forms/nature of orientation programmes to facilitate the adjustment of first-year students. These included: Indoor, Outdoor, Departmental and Individual/online nature of orientation programme. This confirms what Robinson (1996: 25) said about the nature of orientation programmes for first-year students, "new students' orientation programmes can take many forms, from online versions, to on ground, traditional day events, to outdoors or wilderness experiences". The aim of all of these forms of orientation programmes is to assist students in their transition into the university, generate a higher degree of learning both in and out of the classroom, aid in social integration, and help students find their niche in the campus community (Robinson, 1996).

The various natures of the programmes did not assume equal attention from the school authorities as evident in the analysis. The 'indoor' nature of the programme was highly rated by the respondent ( $M = 10.55$ ,  $SD = 3.14$ ) as being the one which was given much attention followed by the 'outdoor' ( $M = 6.77$ ,  $SD = 2.4$ ), then 'departmental' ( $M = 4.07$  and  $SD = 1.76$ ) and finally the 'individual/online' nature was rated as the least nature which was carried out ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ). For example, SYR-1 remarked;

For this orientation, we did everything indoors. I will say it was organised like a lecture because all the first-year students were put in different lecture halls and someone

from the administration came to talk to us.

In addition, SYR-5 also shared his view;

I was expecting that the University authorities will take us round to see and know the University's facilities but we were only told about them during the lecture-like presentation we had at the old pavilion.

The comments suggest that, the indoor nature of orientation programme is mostly used by the Winneba Campus of the University to facilitate the adjustment of first-year students. It therefore appears that, the needs of first-year students are not met to some extent as SYR-10 said;

I did not meet my expectation during the orientation programme. I thought the orientation programme was going to be done like the way it was done in my former school where we were taken round the four corners of the school to see the facilities. There was nothing like field trip so it was not exciting at all.

Commenting on the 'outdoor' nature of orientation programme during the interview session, one of the interviewees said;

The orientation was done indoors with the exception of library orientation where we were taken round the various sections of the

library. After the general orientation, the church that I attend also organised another orientation programme for new members. It was there that we were told the history of the church on Campus and taken round to see the church's facilities (SYR-2).

On the part of 'Departmental' orientation programme, a female respondent from the Department of Psychology and Education had this to say,

There was departmental orientation in my department after the general orientation programme by the University. Our lecturers and administrators were introduced to us as well as the level two and three students. Each first-year student also had the opportunity to introduce himself/herself. However, we were not taken round to any place, it was done in a conference hall in the department (SYR-4).

On the contrary, some first-year students seem to be satisfied with the manner in which the University authorities organise the orientation programme at the Winneba Campus of UEW as interviewee SYR-13 shared her view;

To me, the orientation programme was well organised because the presenters were punctual and what they presented was ok. However, I think they should have included outdoor orientation activities where all first-year students could be taken

round to see the important facilities and offices in the University for them to know where to go and who to contact when the need arises. I think this will help reduce the anxiety of first-year students.

With a careful look at the emerging results from the analysis and the confirmation from the verbatim quotations from interviewees, it appears the Winneba Campus of the University of Education, Winneba relies mostly on indoor orientation strategy to welcome first-year students and assist them adjust to the new environment. This seems to be inadequate since the University has a number of resources that are located in various parts of the Campus.

This is a confirmation of the claim that, less attention is given to other ways/nature of orientation programmes in the University of Education, Winneba. Even though, educational authorities and researchers are of the view that outdoor and adventure orientation programmes typically possess many of the same goals as most traditional programmes (Gass, 1999), they are also of the view that in the 21st century, orientation programme should mostly take the outdoor nature and should involve adventure experiences combined with reflection activities (Vlamiš, 2002). Finally, authorities are of the view that, to accomplish orientation goals and for it to have a positive impact on retention, it is imperative that orientation be considered a comprehensive process rather than a single event (Mullendore and Banahan, 2005). The

implication of this is that, the University must try to adopt more modern nature or form of the orientation programmes in order to increase participation, interest and retention of the first-year students. This position is held by Gass (1999) as he asserted that first-year students' orientation does not have to take only one form if the institution really wants the students to be well acclimatised with the university environment and resources.

### **Perspectives of Undergraduate Students on Orientation Programme**

Based on the answers provided by the respondents on the five-point likert scale, an item analysis was carried out to ascertain the extent to which the students perceive the orientation programme.

It is clear in Table 2 that, the respondents had diverse views/perspectives on the orientation programme at the Winneba Campus of the University of Education, Winneba with most of the respondents strongly agreeing to the items in the likert scale. Item 1 for instance, as many as 142 respondents representing 51.4 percent strongly agreed, 42 respondents representing 15.2 percent agreed, 7 respondents representing 2.5 percent were uncertain, whereas 42 respondents representing 15.2 percent were not in agreement with the statement that 'I think the duration for the orientation was too short' while only 43 respondents representing 15.6 percent strongly disagreed. However, the results indicated that the respondents were to some extent divided on some of the items on the instrument. For example, on the issues of

**Table 2: Distribution of Perceptions of Second-year Undergraduate Students on the Orientation Programme in UEW**

<i>Statement</i>	<i>SA F (%)</i>	<i>A F (%)</i>	<i>U F (%)</i>	<i>D F (%)</i>	<i>SD F (%)</i>
1. I think the duration for the orientation was too short	142 (51.4%)	42 (15.2%)	7 (2.5%)	42 (15.2%)	45 (15.6%)
2. In my view, the orientation programme was the beginning of campus life	92 (33.6%)	138 (50.4%)	16 (5.8%)	20 (7.3%)	8 (2.9%)
3. The orientation activities were boring because students were not involved	67 (24.3%)	66 (32.9%)	59 (21.4%)	63 (22.8%)	21 (7.6%)
4. There was no opportunity for me to share my frustration during the orientation	97 (35.1%)	79 (28.6%)	25 (9.1%)	58 (21.0%)	17 (6.2%)
5. There was nothing new to learn from the orientation programme	82 (29.7%)	29 (10.5%)	12 (4.3%)	98 (35.5%)	55 (19.9%)
6. I think there was the need to take all first-year students round the campus to expose them to the important facilities of the University	129 (47.3%)	106 (38.8%)	9 (3.3%)	18 (6.6%)	11 (4.0%)
7. The orientation programme made provision for special students (hearing and visual impairment)	92 (34.1%)	85 (31.5%)	53 (19.6%)	27 (10.0%)	13 (4.8%)
8. I think the venue was conducive for the programme	70 (25.8%)	76 (28.0%)	21 (7.7%)	67 (24.7%)	37 (13.7%)
9. In my view, there was no opportunity for first-year students to ask questions for clarification	92 (34.6%)	60 (22.6%)	20 (7.5%)	45 (16.9%)	49 (18.4%)
10. The orientation programme was a measure that reduced the anxiety level of first-year students	96 (35.6%)	109 (40.4%)	22 (8.1%)	24 (8.9%)	19 (7.0%)
11. In my view, orientation should help students feel wanted and fit to make their own decisions	86 (32.0%)	109 (40.5%)	36 (13.4%)	19 (7.1%)	19 (7.1%)
12. I think the orientation programme provided the basic knowledge to students about the available resources in the University	93 (34.2%)	106 (39.0%)	37 (13.6%)	19 (7.0%)	17 (6.3%)
13. I think there was no adequate information about the orientation so the attendance was not encouraging	71 (26.3%)	52 (19.3%)	33 (12.2%)	71 (26.3%)	43 (15.9%)

‘There was no opportunity for me to share my frustration during the orientation’, respondents were divided on the issue. This was because some of the respondents perceived that there was no need to be given the opportunity on such a platform while others thought otherwise, this therefore brought up the division. Another twist of event was that a few also attracted a strong opposition from the respondents. A typical example was the item which stated ‘There was nothing new to learn from the orientation programme’, this in the researcher’s view implies that most of the respondents had learnt something new or have been exposed to something enlightening. As many as 142 representing 51.4 percent respondents were also of the view that the duration for the orientation programme was too short.

This suggests that first-year students have different expectations about orientation programmes which the University authorities need to take into consideration in order to facilitate their integration in the new environment. This is in line with Tinto’s (1993) revised model on Student Integration. In this model a more explicit discussion of student perception and its importance to learning more about student integration within the social and academic environments are discussed. Tinto found that student perceptions are paramount to any study of student persistence and that no study of the roots of student departure is complete without reference to student perceptions.

Based on these diverse views of respondents on their perspectives of the orientation programme, the researcher

conducted interview to substantiate the findings. A female interviewee (SYR-14) shared her view;

when we talk about orientation programme, what I know is that, the newly admitted students are expected to be introduced to the facilities in their new environment so that they can effectively adapt well to the environment. But the orientation programme that was organised for us was somehow different because we were not introduced to the University’s facilities. It was about how to manage campus life and how to study.

In addition, a male interviewee was of the view that,

I was expecting that the University authorities will take us round to see and know the University’s facilities but we were only told about them (SYR-5).

Despite these collective views, a female interviewee between the age group of 21–25 had a different view about the orientation programme that was organised for them. She said,

I was satisfied with the orientation programme because I had the opportunity to meet with the University authorities and student leaders. I also got to know the rules and regulations of the University through the orientation programme.

I made so many friends too. So after the orientation programme I had a wide network of friends (SYR-11).

The second-year undergraduate students had diverse perceptions about orientation programme at the University of Education, Winneba. This presupposes that students perceive orientation programme based on their individual needs on Campus. Once the programme meets the needs of an individual student, he/she perceives that the orientation was good. From the verbatim quotation of interviewees, it could be realised that there is no one way by which students perceive an orientation programme, and this confirms the rating of respondents on the five-point likert scale.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The study revealed that orientation programme for the first-year students at the Winneba Campus of the University of Education, Winneba is mostly indoor in nature which does not adequately help first-year students to resolve the difficulty of locating important offices and facilities/landmarks on campus. Therefore, it is recommended that the office of the Director, Office of Institutional Advancement and the Publication Unit should combine forces to provide road maps and directions to important landmarks, buildings and offices in the university as part of the orientation activities.

The study also highlighted that students at the Winneba Campus of the

University of Education, Winneba have diverse perspectives as far as their personal needs are concerned. It is recommended that, the Office of Student Affairs should introduce those optimal activities students perceived to be useful, enjoyable and helpful to their adjustment into the university by liaising with the Office of the Deputy Registrar Academic Affairs to extend invitations to more resource persons and student leaders to assist in the dissemination of information during orientation programmes.

The study revealed that orientation materials for the first-year students at the Winneba Campus of the University of Education, Winneba are not usually adequately designed. It appears orientation programme at UEW could be better organised if well-designed written orientation materials are provided in advance to students. It is therefore recommended that, the Office of Students Affairs should ensure that the materials for the orientation programme such as brochures, magazines, pamphlets and student handouts are readily available and dispatched in advance with the admission letter. When this is done, students are likely to come to the University with well-framed minds and understanding of campus life and this will help them adjust quickly to the campus environment.

It is revealed in the study that, orientation programme at the Winneba Campus does not provide adequate information for first-year students to help them in the online registration of courses and easy navigation in the student portal. It is therefore, recommended that, the

Division of Academic Affairs through the Unit for Management Information Systems should provide practical and adequate explanation of students' information online portal registration to first-year students as part of the orientation activities at the Winneba Campus of the University of Education, Winneba.

## REFERENCES

- Bryman, A., and Cramer, D. (1999). *Quantitative Data Analysis with SPSS Release 8 for Windows: A Guide for Social Scientists*. London: Routledge.
- Burns, N., and Grove, S. K. (2001). *The Practice of Nursing Research*. Philadelphia: WB Saunders Company.
- Creswell, J. W., and Clark, V. L. P. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dampson, D. G. and Mensah, D. K. D. (2012). *A practical guide to action and case study research*. Payless Publication: Amakom-Kumasi.
- Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., and Guido-Dibrito, F. (1998). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gass, M. A. (1999). Adventure programs in higher education. In J. Miles and S. Priest (Eds.), *Adventure Programming* (pp. 373–384). State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Mullendore R., Banahan L. (2005). "Designing orientation programs" in *challenging and supporting the first-year student*. Upcraft, Gardner, Barefoot and Associates. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- National Education Association (NEA) (1960). *The NEA research bulletin*, Vol. 38.
- Ofori, R. and Dampson, D. G. (2011). *Research methods and statistics using SPSS*. Kumasi: Payless Publications LTD.
- Rentz, G. and Associates (1996). *Student affairs and practice in higher education*. Illinois: Charles Thomas Press.
- Robinson, D. A. G., Burns, C. F., and Gaw, K. F. (1996). Orientation programs: a foundation for student learning and success. *New directions for student services*, 75, 55–68.
- Schlossberg, N. K., Waters, E. B., and Goodman, J. (1995). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking theory to practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Springer Publishing
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- University of Education, Winneba (2011). *UEW Annual Newsletter*, p.4. Winneba: M Press.
- Vlami, E. (2002). *The effects of an adventure orientation program on incoming first-year students* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of New Hampshire, Durham.

**Improving the Reading Comprehension of Lower Intermediate  
Learners of Spanish through Strategy Instruction**

**Isaac Osei**  
*Ghana Institute of Languages*

### Abstract

*This paper reports on a small-scale investigation of reading strategy application in a lower intermediate Spanish classroom in Ghana. The focus of this study was formulating a training model of reading strategies, putting such training into practice and analysing the effects on learners' development. Using retrospective interviews, class diaries and self-evaluation methods, the researcher identified the learners' existing strategy awareness and use, and trained them with a view to improving on their reading comprehension. Qualitative analyses suggest that strategy instruction improved the comprehension proficiency of learners, resulted in changes in, and greater awareness of strategy use, and more importantly, a shift from the complete reliance on the dictionary for word meaning to use of strategies.*

### Introduction

In today's globalised world reading in a second language (SL) or foreign language (FL)<sup>1</sup> is a necessary skill in many fields of our daily life and is probably the most important skill for learners in academic contexts. According to Giovannini *et al.* (1996), "he who learns to read efficiently and does so constantly, contributes to the development of his thoughts (...) therefore, in learning, reading becomes transcendental for training and intellectual growth of the person" (p.25).

This investigation emerged upon a reflection by the author, a teacher of Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) with the Ghana Institute of Languages. He observed that the students at the lower intermediate level were deficient in reading comprehension (herein called RC), contrary to the other skills-listening comprehension, oral and written expressions.

In order to find solution to this

deficiency, intervention studies which revealed the contribution of strategies to learning in general on one hand (Martín, 2009; Oxford, 1990; Chamot, 2004) and, on the other hand, studies specifically directed at reading as a language skill (Ikeda, and Takeuchi, 2003) were considered. A classroom action research was carried out which had its hypothesis that the reading comprehension difficulties the students faced were due primarily to the limitation in reading strategies and skills. This hypothesis was as a result of observation during the time dedicated to teaching SFL.

### Context and Population of Investigation

Our investigation was carried out within an intensive course with a total of sixty hours divided between thirty classes of two hours during a six-week period. The study was undertaken with a total of seven students, two males and five females, aged between 24 and 38 years: all were pursuing a BA course in Translation at

<sup>1</sup> We support the conceptual dichotomy between a second language (L2) and foreign language (FL), but for simplicity we will use the term "second language" to refer to both foreign and second language, without distinction.

the Ghana Institute of Languages except one, who registered at the language proficiency course at the School of Languages of the same Institute. In spite of the fact that their First Language (L1) is Akan, they all had a very high level of English which is the official language of Ghana and all had studied Spanish for, at least, between two and three academic years. Additionally, they had a high level of French and none had visited any Spanish-speaking country.

### Literature Review

Not many action research studies with reference to a programme of strategy instruction on RC have been conducted, contrary to the abundance of quantitative experimental studies on this same reading skill. This may be due, in part, to lack of time, incentives, professional support skills and inherent difficulties in carrying out classroom research (Dörnyei, 2007; Chamot, 2005).

### Descriptive Studies

These group of studies are dedicated to identifying strategies which learners normally deploy with the intention of determining whether there are differences in their use according to individual variables (age, L1, level of proficiency etc.) of the learners.

Yang (2006) employs a quantitative method with a *one short* design to identify the relationship between reading strategies and comprehension monitoring strategies, and how the two sets of strategies function to help readers in the

comprehension process. Yang concludes that the participants (Taiwanese university students of EFL) use the two strategies to help in their reading and interpretation and that by engaging in reading strategies learners solve their problems resulting from insufficient language knowledge in understanding textual information, but they deploy the comprehension monitoring strategies to integrate, monitor and control their reading processes. One important implication for teachers, according to Yang, should be the emphasis on instruction of comprehension monitoring knowledge and strategy training since as he puts it, “it not only plays an important role for readers in achieving the success of reading comprehension but also promotes them into critical readers” (p.339).

Zare-ee (2007) intends to examine the relationship between the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, on one hand, and EFL reading achievement on the other hand, with Iranian university students. Results show that the use of metacognitive strategies can explain variations in reading achievement and needs to be promoted by instructors. For further insight see Grabe (2004; 2009; Chamot (2005) Erler and Finkbeiner (2007).

### Strategy Based Instruction Studies

This category of studies aim at teaching strategies often used by successful language learners and are characterised by raising awareness of the strategies learners are already using, teacher

presentation and modeling of strategies, multiple practice opportunities and self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategies (Rubin *et al.* (2007).

Wright and Brown (2006) undertake an explicit instruction of reading strategies with young English learners of Spanish or French as foreign language. The objective consists of raising learners' awareness of reading strategies, extending the range of strategies they employ to include both lower-processing and higher processing, and encouraging learners to monitor and reflect upon their reading. At the end of the intervention (twenty-two weeks) the researchers conclude that there is greater awareness of the strategies and an improvement on ability to reflect on their reading. However, they suggest carrying out further studies to measure the RC of learners before and after the intervention to validate the claim of improved reading ability.

Similarly, Macaro and Erler (2008) conduct a quasi-experimental, longitudinal study with pre- and post-test designs involving adolescent students (L1 English) of French as Second Language. Its objective is to investigate if a different approach in the teaching of RC will result in accelerated development of this skill and generate greater motivation in the learners. The researchers conclude, among others, that "low input but high-scaffolding over a comparatively long time may be an effective form of instruction for young-beginner readers"; that to take advantage of the combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies, there is the need to encourage learners to

put into practice the use and evaluation of the combination.

Another study of RC strategy instruction is by Ikeda and Takeuchi (2003) involving 210 Japanese university students learning EFL. In this quantitative study with pretest and posttest designs, the authors aim at investigating the long-term effects of explicit instruction on strategies at different levels of learners' competence. Their main findings are that: i) both explicit and intensive instruction change the frequency of use of strategies by students; ii) L2 learners' level has an influence on the effectiveness of instruction on strategies, i.e. bottom-up processing strategies are effective at low levels, while the top-down processing promote high levels; and iii) the effects of the instruction on strategies remain five months after the treatment. Ikeda and Takeuchi recommend further studies to clarify the influence on the effectiveness of strategy instruction of certain variables such as cultural background and vocabulary knowledge level of participants.

From this literature review, we conclude that there has not been any study on RC strategies in the teaching of SFL with Ghanaian learners, in particular, and Africans, in general, contrary to recommendations which will help provide more data on the effects of strategy instruction learning on performance and proficiency (Grabe, 2004; Chamot, 2005). Our research therefore, with a qualitative methodology, a few in this line of study, is to fill this gap within the research literature by

shedding more light on the students' reading competence, through effective strategy-based instruction and proposing a model of strategy training which RC in the teaching and learning of Spanish in a linguistically complex context like Ghana may need.

### Theoretical framework to Reading Processes

Views of L2 reading are based on investigations on L1 learners (Carrell, 1998; Grabe, 1991, 2004, 2009) partly because L1 research has a long history with much more stable student population, among other reasons. Reading is considered a multidimensional process and constitutes one of the most essential and complex modalities of linguistic activity in which variables of many different kinds (cognitive, textual linguistics, sociocultural, biological etc.) intervene (Urquhart and Weir, 1998; Grabe, 2009).

According to the *bottom-up* model (Gough, 1972 cited by Acquarone, 2004) reading is conceived as a sequential process organised hierarchically in which the reader applies his decoding skills and initiates an ascending and unidirectional lineal trajectory of visual discrimination. With respect to the *top-down* model of reading, comprehension is arrived at chiefly through the knowledge, experiences and expectations of the reader (Smith, 1971 cited by Carrell *et al.*, 1988). The reader is the real protagonist who initiates an ascending lineal trajectory. The level of RC depends on

the ability of the reader to actualise their appropriate mental schema at the time of making significant inferences from the text (Hernández Martín and Quintero Gallego, 2001). The interactive model has its foundations on the unsatisfactory inability to explain the two earlier models and constitutes a new explanatory model that tries to reconcile, overcome and integrate the more positive and necessary aspects of the previous postures with the aim of creating an acceptable theory that considers the complexity of the reading process globally. In this model, the interaction between text and reader, in which the latter relates the information in the written materials with prior knowledge and experience gained is the basis of understanding. In support of this point Alderson (2000: 6) notes:

A text does not 'contain' meaning which is waiting to be discovered by an able reader. Rather, meaning is created in the interaction between a reader and a text: the text has (...) **meaning potential** and the potential is realised—in the product of understanding—only by readers reading.

### Reading Strategies and Skills

Research on strategies in the field of foreign language acquisition has been accompanied by a discussion about the deliberate consciousness involved in actions like 'strategy' and 'skill' (Carrell, 1998, Grellet, 1981). Contributing, Paris *et al.* (1991: 610–611), posit that:

Skills refer to information-processing techniques that are automatic, whether at the level of recognizing grapheme-phoneme correspondence or summarizing a story. Skills are applied to a text unconsciously for many reasons including expertise, repeated practice, compliance with directions, luck, and naive use. In contrast strategies are actions selected deliberately to achieve particular goals. An emerging skill can become a strategy when it is used intentionally. (...) strategies are skills under consideration ....

### Methodology

We selected Elliot's model (1993) aimed at teaching within the classroom action research because it suits the necessities of our study, as it employs qualitative data collection methods including participants' observation and informal interviews, and more importantly, it is flexible with respect to the revision of the general idea at the end of each cycle. Finally, this model does not seek to establish rules but rather analyse and interpret what happens in the classroom from the point of view of those who act and interact in the situation-problem, in relation to subjective meanings which the participants ascribe (Madrid, 1998: 17).

### Variables in the Study

- (a) *Learners' reading comprehension*  
We begin by reflecting on the importance and difficulties of this

skill as well as the initial diagnosis of the level of the students.

In spite of the fact that the bibliography advises developing RC as a linguistic skill in conjunction with the other skills (Acquaroni, 2004), we support its independent practice as an end in itself. Therefore, it is treated separately from the others, always from the perspective of considering reading as a process, more than as a product.

- (b) *Model of reading strategies training*

Our model adopted the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (Chamot *et al.*, 1999), and incorporates the steps proposed by Martín (2009) in relation to strategies training integrated into the teaching of SFL course. These include adjusting to the needs of the learners, dealing with individual differences, determining the purpose and objectives of the training and establishing the phases of the training, among others. Similarly, attention has been paid to opinions by Erler and Finkbeiner (2007) concerning participants' level of competence, context of study, immediate needs of learners, available time and logistical problems.

We reproduce below the phases followed:

- Preparation phase
  - I. By the teacher (before the commencement of the course)

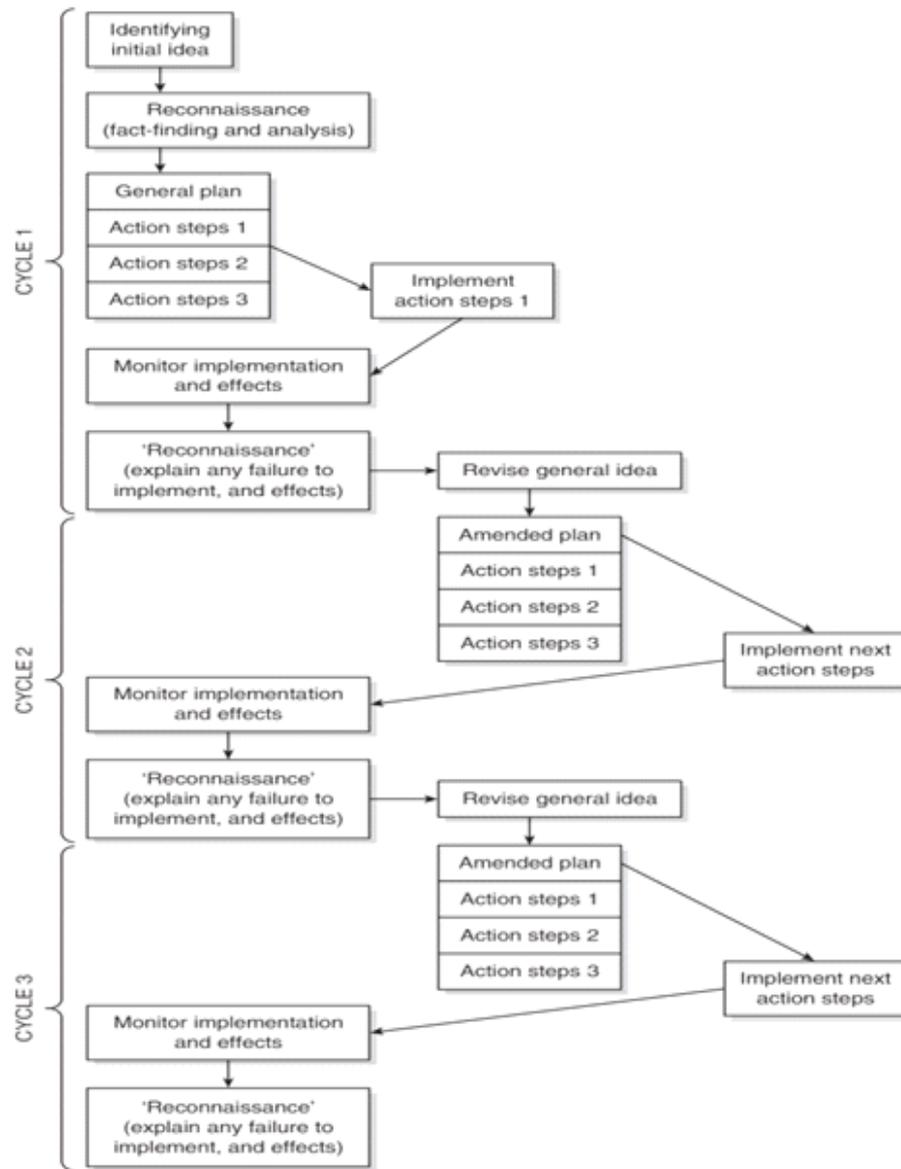


Figure 1: Elliott's action research model (1993: 90)

- (a) Specification of students' needs
  - (b) Determination of available time
  - (c) Selection of strategies
  - (d) Integration of strategies into the programme
  - (e) Selection of materials and designing activities
- II. Preparing the students (first days of the course)
- (a) Psychological
    - i. Discussions on beliefs and attitudes
    - ii. Explanation of contribution of strategies
  - (b) Methodology
    - i. Activation of meta-cognitive awareness on the processing and production processes of language
    - ii. Gathering of strategies and techniques already used
- Presentation phase
    - i. Presentation of the strategy
      - (a) Prior selection of the strategy by the teacher
      - (b) Presentation of the strategy through the following stages:
        - i. Naming the strategy
        - ii. Identifying activity it can be used for
        - iii. Modeling by teacher or learner.
  - Practice phase
 

Practice of selected strategies by students leading to teacher's diminished role in encouraging independent use of the strategy by learner.
  - Evaluation phase
    - i. Final evaluation of strategic competence of each learner.
    - ii. Evaluation of motivation, beliefs and attitudes concerning strategies.
  - Expansion phase
 

There was not sufficient time for this phase.

Materials used include specific texts for SFL classrooms, textbooks *Ejercicios de comprensión lectora* (Hernández Martín y Quintero Gallego, 2004), *Español sin fronteras Nivel intermedio* (Sánchez Lobato *et al.*, 2000), *Materiales, estrategias y recursos para la enseñanza del español 2/L* (Moreno García, 2011), *Estrategias de lectura. Una propuesta práctica para el aula de E/LE* (Miñamo, 2000), *Las palabras y el escrito* (Cassany, 2004), as well as authentic texts from the print media (*El País, El Mundo, ABC, Marca, Sport*).

### Teaching Procedure and Methodology

Students are informed of the objectives of the task as well as what it seeks to achieve through the use of strategies at all times. The preferred form for working in class is pair work, although instructions, assessment/evaluation of task and explanation of grammar are done with the whole group. In accordance with Chamot *et al.* (1999) and Chamot (2005), we initially selected English as the language of instruction in the teaching of the reading

strategies, since both students and teacher were competent in it. Account was taken of proposals by Giovannini *et al.* (1996), the illustrative scale for competence demanded of the reader at the B1 level according to Council of Europe (2006) and recommendation by the Curricular Plan of the Cervantes Institute.

### Data Collection Methods

Attention was paid to RC skill which is the object of our study and the information we intend to collect, variables and peculiarities of each instrument, concerns over viability and validity of the selected instruments, and more importantly, budgetary and time constraints (Cohen, 1998; Mackey and Gass, 2005).

In the light of the foregoing, the following were selected for the observation of the different variables during the action cycles:

- (a) *Reading comprehension*
  - Initial diagnostic and final evaluation tests

Two tests from the RC section of DELE (Diploma of Spanish as a Foreign Language) examination organised by Cervantes Institute on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2009, for B1 level.

  - Initial strategy questionnaire
  - Retrospective interview on reading processes
- (b) *Training model*
  - Final self-evaluation questionnaire

- Semi-structured self-evaluation interview on RC
- Teacher's diary
- Student's diary

### Developing the Action

#### *Cycle 1: Need analysis*

Action Step 1:—Collection of information on students' reading strategies/techniques, their attitude and their reading competence.

This was carried out in week 1. Data collection instruments were integrated into the linguistic activities and results were presented in the second week for the students to observe the direct relationship with their learning process. Questionnaires and interviews were administered in direct and straight-forward manner in both English and Spanish.

Action Step 2:—Review-Processing data collected

Analysis of data on participants

In the first place, it is observed that the main reasons for learning Spanish are desire to know the Hispanic culture and prospect for job. Secondly, participants are all unanimous in aspects of the language they need to improve: grammar and oral expression. Thirdly, their preferred mode of learning are speaking, and watching TV, followed by reading and writing. Finally, with respect to working in class, the students prefer working principally in this order: in groups, individually with the teacher and the whole class with the teacher.

- i. Analysis of questionnaire on difficulties, needs, objectives and motivation on RC.

It was considered advantageous to introduce the initial strategy questionnaire after the students have read a text without forcing them to be examined as advised (Auerbach and Paxton, 1997 and Rubin *et al.*, 2007) for two reasons. First, participants were adults with much experience in language learning, and second, we wanted to move away from the many tests in which students are involved during the regular courses at the centre. All the participants (100%) declared practising the RC because it helped them to learn vocabulary better while at the same time 86 percent did so because it was compulsory.

- ii. Analysis of initial questionnaire of strategies/techniques.

Firstly, the strategy frequently used before starting to read is skimming (71%), while the least practiced is using title to make hypothesis (43%). Secondly, the students declared resorting to translating each sentence into the L1 almost always during reading, while they rarely deployed strategies like paying attention to expressions and clauses. Thirdly, with respect to the presence and difficulty of a task, our participants acknowledged putting the following into practice: identifying the meaning of unknown words or expressions through background knowledge of the topic (71%), reading difficult parts

several times (71%), using background knowledge on the topic (57%), creating a mental image of what the text says (57%), and taking notes of key words (57%). Finally, concerning the final phase (after reading), and the corresponding strategy of making a summary of the text in one's own words only 2 students reported to have used it. What we deduce from this analysis, contrary to the initial hypothesis is that the students are, one way or the other, acquainted with reading strategies/techniques, perhaps due to their experience in language learning.

- iii. Analysis of retrospective interview on reading processes.

Each learner had an introspective individual interview with the teacher based on the guidelines in Hosenfeld cited by Oxford, 1990. They had to read a short text—*La mano*—by Ramón Gómez de la Serna, which facilitates the application of reading strategies due to its linguistics and content features and then answer questions related to their reading processes. This approach offered the researcher some indications of how the learners approached texts, their strategies and their abilities to speak on how they read.

Action Step 3: Reflection—Arriving at conclusions and preparing activities for Cycle 2.

The approach cited above revealed that the students resorted, principally, to

lower-level processes (translating into the L1, trying to understand each word in a text, paying attention to parts of sentences, identifying referents, reading questions and then text etc.). Analysis of the questionnaires also revealed that before reading, the strategy which they utilised was making a quick reading of the whole text—skimming—followed by an intensive one, while the least used strategy was using the heading to make hypothesis on what they would be reading. During reading, the preferred strategies included translating each sentence into L1 and paying attention to the beginning and ending of each paragraph, while the least used were beginning reading from the first paragraph until the last and paying attention to parts of the sentences such as expressions and clauses. Only 43 percent of the respondents declared making summary of the text in their own words after reading.

On one hand, the personal interview partially confirmed the conclusions of the initial questionnaire. They valued the use of lower-level processing (identifying word category and recognising cognates). We reproduce some responses below:

**Student F:** ‘I know *murió* is the preterite for *morir*’,

**Student A:** ‘And when I saw the verb *murió*, that made me realised...’

**Student D:** ‘...then I got to know the meaning of words like *vigorosa*, meaning vigorous...’

On the other hand, even though the use of

background knowledge was a dominant strategy, the students did not realise it until the teacher gave them a clue:

**Question:** What do the questions tell? What is the importance of the questions?

**Student F:** It’s about the interview. The police are doing the investigation, asking questions. So these questions helped them to get to the assassin.

**Question:** Okay, you didn’t get a lot of words but the police coming, and normally what happens?

**Student C:** They investigate.

In sum, it could be said that the students relied on lower-level processes as is normal with many L2 learners and deployed few strategies and techniques related to higher-level processes unknowingly (Auerbachy Paxton, 1997). The number of strategies presented in class was not limited, basically, with the aim of attending to individual learning styles and objectives of the learners.

Additionally, considering that their metalinguistic awareness, strategic competence and language learning experience were developed as adults (Martín, 2009), a wide repertoire of strategies was left in their hands for selection. Finally, we were not oblivious of the fact that they were well-motivated due to their objectives for studying Spanish as outlined by Erler and Finkbeiner (2007).

All this led to the selection of reading strategies which include those

from the different levels of processing. We reproduce below those selected for the next phase:

1. I use the title to help predict the contents.
2. I consider what type of text it is, such as a newspaper article, a scientific paper, or a novel.
3. I pay attention to sentence structure, such as subjects and objects.
4. I skip unknown words.
5. I link the content with what I already know.
6. If I don't understand something such as a word or phrase, I guess its meaning using clues from the text.
7. If I don't understand something such as a word or phrase, I guess its meaning using information I know about the topic.
8. I check what each pronoun refers to.
9. I mark important parts, using coloured pens or drawing stars.
10. I go over difficult parts several times.
11. I make a picture in my mind about what the text is saying.
12. I try to understand the meaning without translating the text into my native language.
13. I predict what will come next.
14. I pay attention to linking words such as "however" and "besides" so that I can understand the structure.
15. I write down key words.

16. I summarise the text in my own words.

*Cycle 2: Introduction of strategic activities*

Action Step 1:—Designing activities.

Action Step 2:—Undertaking the activities  
A dossier with all the activities they would have to undertake in class as well as at home during the course was given to the learners in the first week.

Action Step 3:—determining effects of the teaching intervention

This was done during the last two weeks and, as in Cycle 1, data collection instruments are administered in Spanish as well as in English to facilitate a better comprehension and resolution.

**Data Collection Procedures**

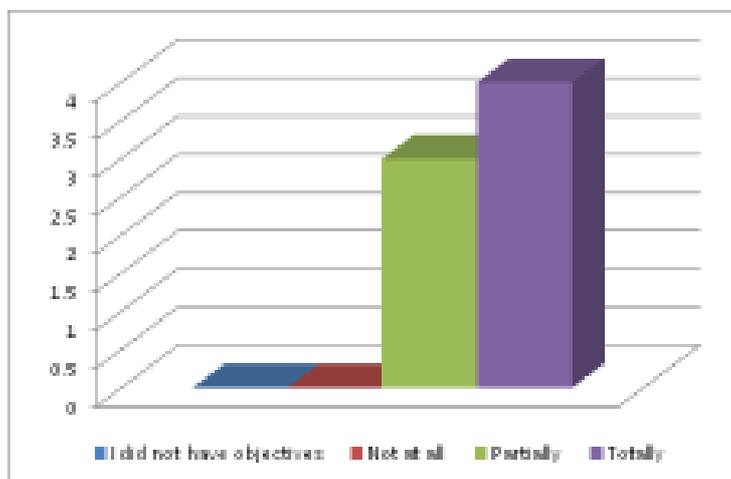
- Final self-evaluation questionnaire on RC (Oxford *et al.*, 2004).
- Self-evaluation semi-structured interview on RC (Martín, 2007).
- Final evaluation of RC (taken from DELE, 2009).

Action Step 4:—Processing data in step 3

**Analysis of self-evaluation questionnaire and final interview on RC**

- (a) Have you achieved your objectives for this course?

As observed in Fig. 2, there is a positive agreement on fulfillment of objectives of



**Figure 2:** Have you achieved the objectives for this course?

the course. This opinion is also reflected in the interview. We reproduce the most important ones:

- (a) Have you achieved your objectives for this course, why?

**Student C:** *Sí*, because at first, when I took any text anything in Spanish to read, I wasted so much time looking for individual words, but through this course, it has helped me a lot. I've improved a lot because I try to apply the strategies to get the meanings without looking for words in the dictionary too often.

**Student D:** I've learnt how to read, how to write...My objective was to learn more vocabulary and I've achieved it since we always jot down new words, not all, but at least...

- (b) Which aspects of the reading comprehension have you improved upon in this course?

Firstly, the most significant responses to this question, before they begin to read are using heading to make hypothesis, recognising textual genre and making a rapid reading (Fig. 3). Secondly, with respect to strategies deployed during reading, improvement is recorded in 1) continue reading even if I have difficulty 2) I link the content with what I already know and 3) If I don't understand something such as a word or phrase, I guess its meaning using clues from the text (Figs. 4, 5 and 6). Finally, concerning the strategy of summarising of text in one's own words after reading, a favourable response is recorded (Fig. 7).

- (c) Do you think you are now a strategic reader?

With this question we intended finding out knowledge of conscious use of the

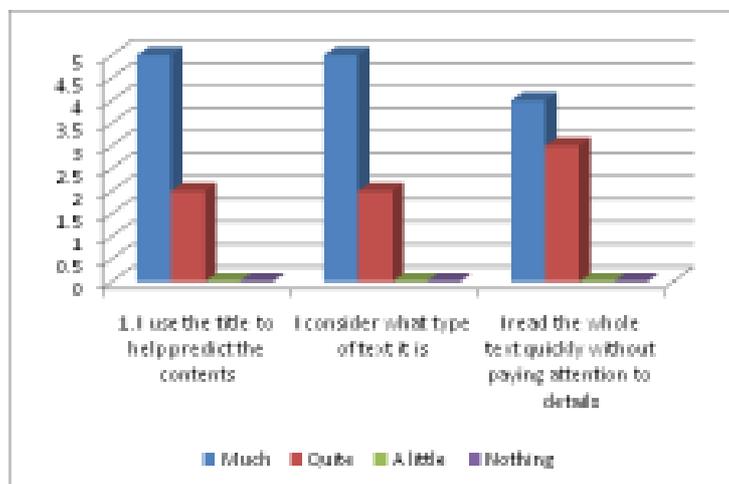


Figure 3: Before reading

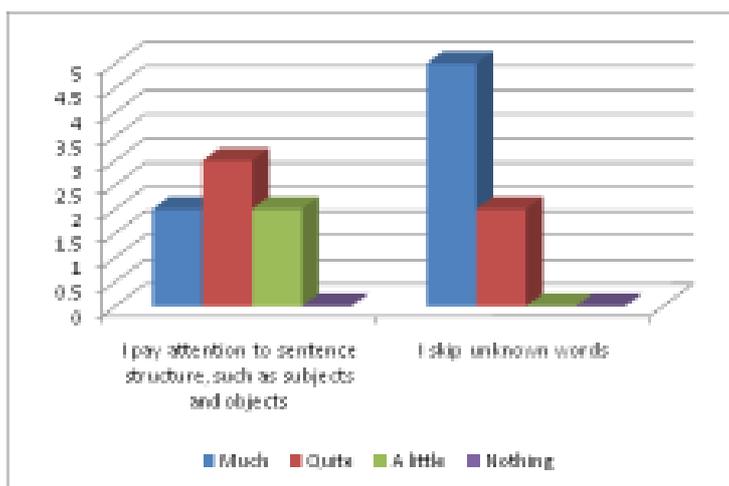


Figure 4: During reading

strategies studied in the course among others. As can be observed in Figs 8 and 9, almost all the learners declared to have tried new strategies although five practice them only when the teacher or activities explicitly directs them to.

Curiously, a contradiction is observed when 43 percent respond that they do not identify the strategies they use. The predominant opinion is favourable on

the use of strategies even though they are not sure of their strategic ability.

These observations are supported by statements in the final interview some of which are reproduced below:

**Student A:** Still in the Spanish. It was just a short text. I look up for the important words and try to work around it.

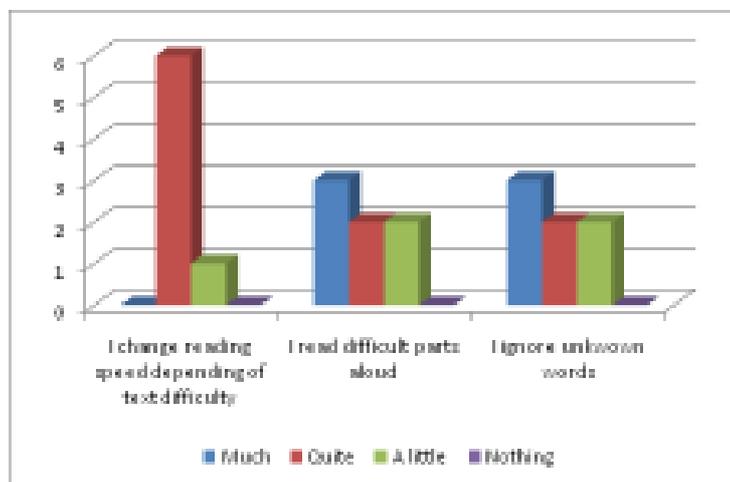


Figure 5: Effects of presence and difficulty of task on strategy use (1)

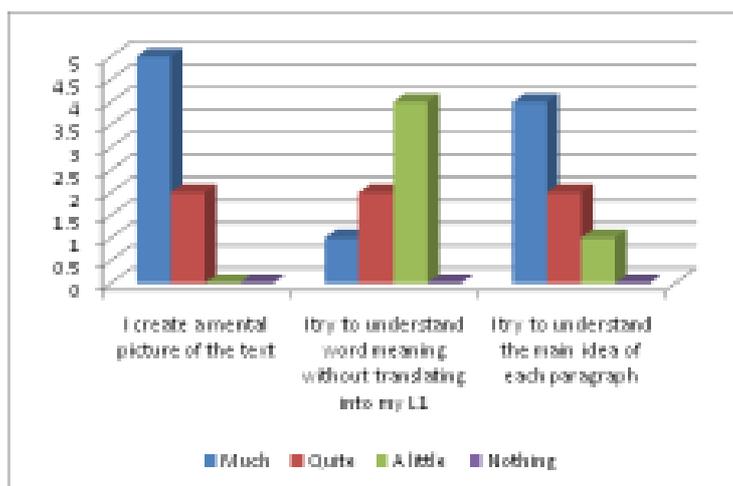


Figure 6: Effects of presence and difficulty of task on strategy use (2)

**Student E:** Reading. Sometimes I want to get particular information. So I don't have to read everything. I only have to skim through to get...

**Student G:** *Sí el periódico de El País, por ejemplo, con las estrategias puedo leer... y sin el senario, puedo*

*comprender sin el senario. Por ejemplo, uso del título para interpretar y me ha ayudado mucho...*

**Student A:** The use of vocabulary and expressions.

(d) Would you like to continue working on your reading comprehension strategies?

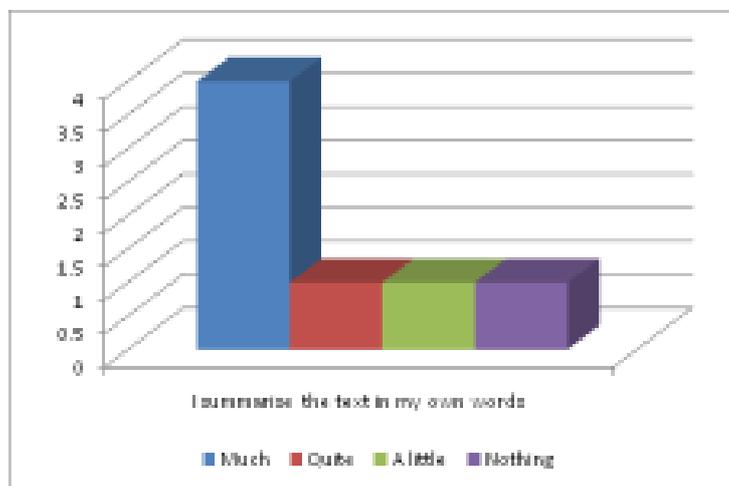


Figure 7: After reading

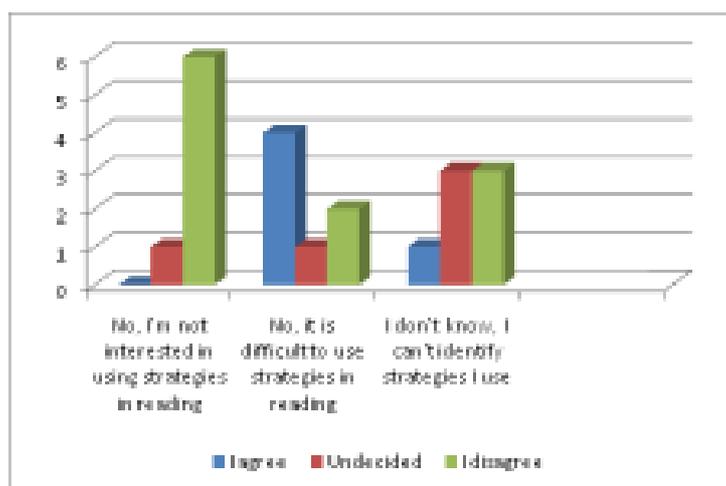


Figure 8: Do you consider yourself a strategic reader? (1)

As far as their interest in continuing working on their reading strategies, an overwhelming response (100%) wish to continue working (Fig. 10). Similarly, favourable responses in favour of the training are recorded in the final interview.

**Student E:** *I think that every year, not every year, every holiday, something should be*

*organised like what you have done. It will help some of us beginners.*

**Student G:** Para mí, pienso que las estrategias son buenas, pero lo que es muy buena para mí es utilizar el título. Antes de la clase no sabía cómo leer bien, comprender las ideas generales de un texto. Pero gracias a las estrategias.

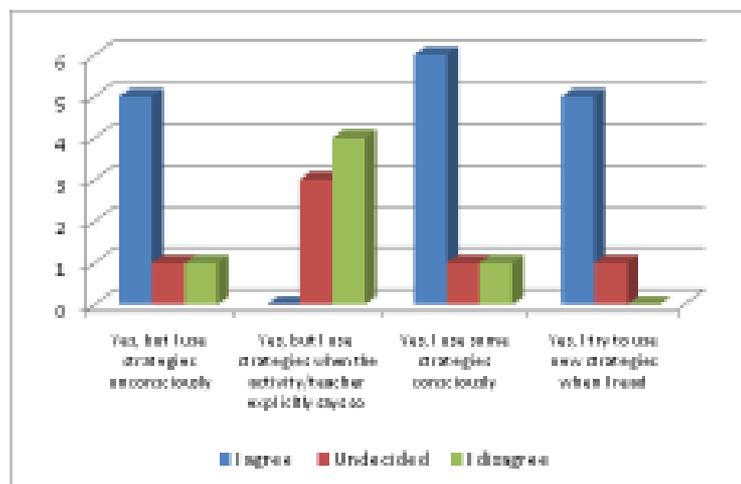


Figure 9: Do you consider yourself a strategy reader (2)

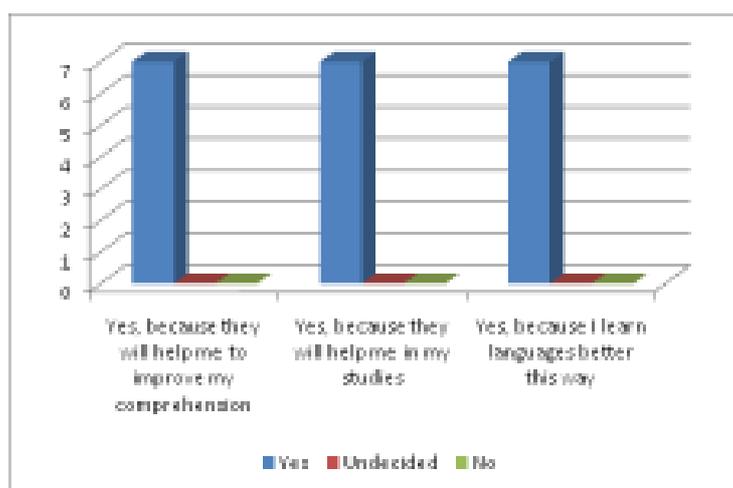


Figure 10: Would you like to continue working on your reading comprehension strategies?

**Student D:** *Yes, me va a ayudar para hacer mi traducción.*

Action Step 5:—Reflection—Arriving at conclusions

First of all, considering the favourable response to the continuation of the reading

strategy programme, and consequently, the need for more practice, we believe that the intervention should not be limited to only a “short” course like ours, but rather integrated into the normal course.

Secondly, for the students to take maximum advantage of the strategy training, we concur with previous studies

that support interventions focused on reduced number of strategies so that there could be enough time for practice and expansion.

Finally, it is observed that the occasional use of the mother tongue (in this study, English and Akan), reduces the level of anxiety and takes away possible differences among the students, as indicated in the following comments from the learners.

**Student A-Diary:** *After today's lesson, I feel more confident than ever in the Spanish language class. This is because he (the teacher) has really come down to our level to communicate effectively with us. And so we were able to fully participate in this session.*

**Student B-Diary:** *Hoy me gusta mucho como el profesor explica las*

*instrucciones, especialmente, él utiliza la lengua materna (akan).*

### Conclusions of the Action Research

There are three aspects in relation to this action research: evolution of the RC of the learners, their strategic competence in reading and efficiency in the strategy training model.

#### (a) Reading comprehension

The highlight of this linguistic skill is the improvement in all the learners (none of them scored more than 35% in the initial test, however, the worst score in the final evaluation improved to 40%—Student E), but in accordance with Wright and Brown (2006), we are conscious of the possible effect the training in the use of the strategies and the instruction might have had on the participants.

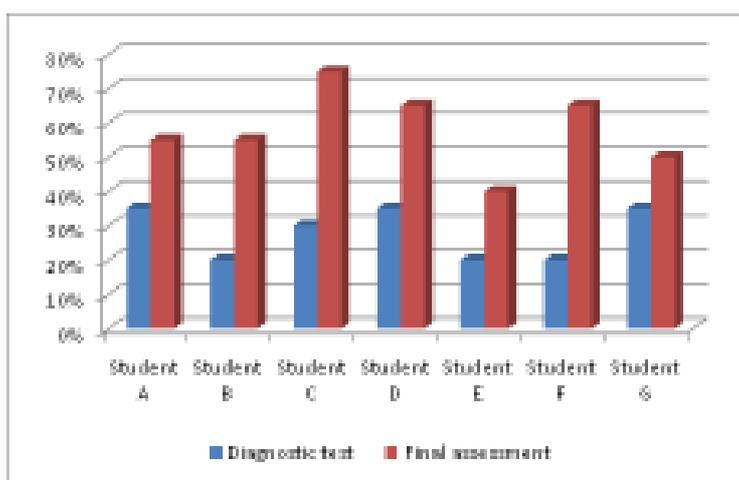


Figure 11: Evolution of Reading Comprehension

The ideal would be to measure the effect on the other skills (listening comprehension, written and oral) in the face of the training, but our intervention lacked the capacity for this objective.

Regarding learners' reading competence vis-à-vis RC, a positive change in their reading conceptions is observed on one hand; and on the other hand, a change in favour of deployment of strategies instead of dependence on the dictionary is also observed as highlighted in some responses in the final interview.

**Student A:** Now if I get a text, I'll be able to read and understand it because I'm able to get the main ideas without necessarily looking through the dictionary.

**Student B:** ...I've realised that I have to ignore those things (words) and search for the important, and those ones will let me understand what the text is about.

**Student C:** ...at first, when I took any text, anything in Spanish to read, I wasted so much time looking for individual words, but through this course, ...I try to apply the strategies to get the meanings without looking for words in the dictionary too much.

#### (b) Strategy training model

Regarding the preparation and presentation, which aimed at raising awareness of the strategies students

already employed and prepare them psychologically, among others, it seemed that the learning experience that our learners had prior to this study contributed to the rapid awareness of their strategic consciousness as observed along the course.

Similarly, the fact that they are quite motivated because learning Spanish is related to their career goals, they are more prepared to learning to learn, i.e., they are willing to learn strategies to improve their learning. From this we observe that the students respond favourably to strategic awareness through the initial questionnaire and the use of diary as advised by Rubin *et al.* (2007). However, it should be noted that not all trainees were able to write the diaries appropriately as anticipated.

With reference to the implementation and evaluation phases, which targeted promoting self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategies worked on and their transfer to new strategies, the students were able to express their thought processes and worked independently by taking advantage of their rich experience as language learners. Therefore, through their learning diaries and their responses in the final interview, a positive impact on most of the students on the need to set targets before facing specific tasks, identifying appropriate strategies and determining the criteria for assessing the success or failure is observed.

#### Conclusions

Our research aimed at studying reading comprehension of students through

strategies and techniques that they display when faced with this linguistic skill, with the subsequent aim of designing and implementing training strategies to address inherent difficulties. And in accordance with the fundamental premise underlying action research in the classroom, conclusions reached have to enhance a better understanding of object being studied.

With respect to the reading comprehension variable, our intervention was fruitful, so long as all students recorded an improvement at the end of the study period, as in Akkakoson and Moyra Sweetnam (2010) and Martin (2009).

Regarding the strategic competition (which also includes reading techniques), as in previous studies (Macaro and Erler, 2008, Martin, 2009, Ikeda and Takeuchi, 2003), ours suggests, first, a change in the use of reading strategies related to lower processing (bottom-up) to the higher processing (top-down); second, a greater awareness of conscious and explicit use of reading strategies. A possible interpretation would be that, with strategic awareness related to unknown words, our students already had a higher capacity for short term memory that enabled them to direct their attention to higher processing as happened in other studies (Acquaroni, 2004).

Concerning the strategy training the fact that the students accepted and appreciated the explicitness and its integration into the usual programme of course, supports the previous related studies. Coincidentally, our participants

evaluated the positive influence of this training on the way they handle the RC skill, not only in Spanish but also in other languages they learn. Also reported are greater awareness of the strategies and an improvement in the ability to reflect on the reading by participants like similar interventions (Wright and Brown, 2006; Auerbach and Paxton, 1997).

In conclusion, our study supports previous interventions which emphasise that teaching has an influence as far as to raising critical factors in carrying out strategy training. With respect to what we intended to achieve by undertaking this research, it seems appropriate to end with the words of one participant:

In conclusion, I really like the course. I would like to do the course forever. The truth is that I can now understand any text and in nearly all languages, thanks to the techniques and strategies we have learned.

We would like to note, however, that despite achieving our overall objectives, our research has suffered some limitations, inherent characteristics in any empirical study, that must be considered in its reading and possible interpretation.

The first to be noted was the lack of a control group with which to compare the effects of treatment on teaching. However we must not forget the difficulties that are specific to research in the classroom (Chamot, 2004; Mackey and Gass, 2005; Pica, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007).

Another limitation relates to the short duration of our intervention, in such a way

that the significant effects that have been achieved in the short term in the RC could not be repeated if the assessment were to be undertaken after some time:

Similarly, we were unable to analyse

the effect of the intervention on each participant, and especially with reference to the use of a set of reading strategies throughout the study with the view to designing specific RC activities.

#### REFERENCES

- Acquaroni Muñoz, R. (2004). "La comprensión lectora". In J. Sánchez Lobato and I. Santos Gargallo (eds.): *Vademé comparala for mación de profesores. Enseñar español como segunda lengua (L2)/lengua extranjera (LE)*. Madrid: SGEL, 943–967.
- Akkakoson, S. & Moyra Sweetnam, E. (2010). "A reading intervention for Thai undergraduates". *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 16, Nº 2, 53–72.
- Alderson, J. C. (2000). *Assessing reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Auerbach, E. & Paxton, D. (1997). "It's not the English thing: Bringing reading research into the ESL classroom". *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 31, Nº2, 237–261.
- Carrell, P. I. *et al.* (1988). *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carrell, P. I. (1998). "Can reading strategies be successfully taught?" *The language Teacher* [on-line version] Vol. 22, No. 3 (March 1998). Retrieved August 25, 2010, from: [http://www.jalt-publications.org/old\\_tlt/articles/1998/03/carrell](http://www.jalt-publications.org/old_tlt/articles/1998/03/carrell).
- Cassany, D. (2004). "Las palabras y el escrito". En *red ELE*, Nº 0. [en línea] Retrieved June 10, 2010, from: [http://www.educacion.gob.es/dctm/redele/Material-Red\\_Ele/Revista/2004\\_00/2004\\_redELE\\_0\\_05Cassany.pdf?documentId=0901e72b80e0c73c](http://www.educacion.gob.es/dctm/redele/Material-Red_Ele/Revista/2004_00/2004_redELE_0_05Cassany.pdf?documentId=0901e72b80e0c73c).
- Chamot, A. U. (2004). "Issues in language learning strategy research and teaching". *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, Vol. 1, Nº 1, 14–26.
- Chamot, A. U. (2005). "Language Learning Strategy Instruction: Current Issues and Research". *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 25, 112–130.
- Chamot, A. U. *et al.* (1999). *The Learning Strategies Handbook*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. London: Longman.
- Council of Europe (2006). The Common European Framework, Retrieved May 15, 2010, from: [http://www.lrc.columbia.edu/sites/lrc/files/The % 20 Common % 20 European % 20 Framework % 20 of % 20 Reference % 20 for % 20 Languages % 20 Presentation.pdf](http://www.lrc.columbia.edu/sites/lrc/files/The%20Common%20European%20Framework%20of%20Reference%20for%20Languages%20Presentation.pdf)
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Elliott, J. (1993). *El cambio educativo des de la investigación acción*. Madrid: Morata.
- Erler, L. & Finkbeiner, C. (2007). "A review of reading strategies: focus on the impact of first language". In A.D. Cohen and E. Macaro (Eds). *Language learner strategies: 30 years of research and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 187–206.
- Giovannini, A. *et al.* (1996). *Profesor en acción*. Vol. 3. Madrid: Edelsa.
- Grabe, W. (1991). "Current developments in second language reading research". *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 25, Nº 3, 375–406.
- Grabe, W. (2004). "Research on teaching reading." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 24, 44–69.
- Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language. Moving from theory to practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Grellet, F. (1981). *Developing reading skills*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ikeda, M., & Takeuchi, O. (2003). "Can strategy instruction help EFL learners to improve their reading ability? An empirical study." *JACET Bulletin*, 37, 49–60. Retrieved on October 10, 2011 from: [http://ci.nii.ac.jp/els/110006318183.pdf?id=ART0008322956&type=pdf&lang=en&host=cinii&order\\_no=&ppv\\_type=0&lang\\_sw=&no=1325250193&cp=](http://ci.nii.ac.jp/els/110006318183.pdf?id=ART0008322956&type=pdf&lang=en&host=cinii&order_no=&ppv_type=0&lang_sw=&no=1325250193&cp=)
- Macaro, E. & Erler, L. (2008). "Raising the achievement of young beginner readers of French through strategy instruction". *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 29, 1, 90–119.
- Mackey, A. & Gass, S. M. (2005). *Second language research. Methodology and design*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Madrid, D. (1998). *Guía para la investigación en el aula de idiomas*. Granada: Grupo Editorial Universitario.
- Martín, S. (2009). *Competencia estratégica para la comprensión auditiva en español como lengua extranjera*. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación.
- Miñamo, J. (2000). "Estrategias de lectura. Una propuesta práctica para el aula de E/LE". En *monográfico de la revista Carabela*, 2ª etapa, Nº 48, 25–43. Madrid: SGEL.
- Moreno García, C. (2011). *Materiales, estrategias y recursos para la enseñanza del español como 2/L*. Madrid: Arco Libros.
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: what every teacher should know*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Paris, S. G. et al. (1991). "The development of strategic readers". In R. Barr, M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (eds.), *Handbook of reading research*, Vol. II, New York: Longman, 609–640
- Rubin, J. et al. (2007). "Intervening in the use strategies". In A. D. Cohen and E. Macaro (Eds.): *Language learner strategies: 30 years of research and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 141–160.
- Urquhart, A. H. & Weir, C. J. (1998). *Reading in a second language: process, product and practice*. London: Longman.
- Wright, M. & Brown, P. (2006). "Reading in a modern foreign language: exploring the potential benefits of reading strategy instruction". *The Language Learning Journal*, Vol. 33, Nº 1, 22–33.
- Yang, Y. (2006). "Reading strategies or comprehension monitoring strategies?" *Reading Psychology*, Nº 27, 313–343.
- Zare-ee, A. (2007). "The relationship between cognitive and meta-cognitive strategy use and EFL reading achievement". *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 2, Nº 5.