

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Assessing Reading Competence Between Sexes Using a Literature Teaching Approach

**Aiah Frank Mbayo**

[kaiwambayo@gmail.com](mailto:kaiwambayo@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0009-009-2406-2402>

Institute of Languages and Cultural Studies, Njala University, Sierra Leone

**Philip Foday Yamba Thulla**

[pythulla@njala.edu.sl](mailto:pythulla@njala.edu.sl)

(Corresponding Author)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4207-4238>

Institute of Languages and Cultural Studies, Njala University, , Sierra Leone

**Samuel M. B. Senesie**

[smbsenesie@gmail.com](mailto:smbsenesie@gmail.com)

Institute of Languages and Cultural Studies, Njala University

## Article History

Received 2024-12-15

Revised 2025-02-12

Accepted 2025-03-20

Published 2025-04-30

## Keywords

Reading,

Comprehension

Reading poverty

Literature circles

Independent reading

Comprehensive reading tracking approach

## Abstract

The study aimed to address the prevailing reading poverty crisis in Sierra Leone, with a focus on gender and reading and comprehension competence. Several teaching methods have been employed as intervention strategies to address the existing reading gaps; however, the reading crisis remains unresolved. The study, therefore, compared two literature-based independent reading methods: (I) the Traditional Literature Circle and (II) the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach. Literature teaching methods were used to assess reading competence between male and female readers in Junior secondary schools. This research employed a quantitative research approach, which involves the random selection of participants and assigning them to control and experimental groups. The study was conducted in the Kono

**How to cite**

Mbayo, A. F., Thulla, P.F.Y. & Senesie, S. M. B. (2025). Assessing Reading Competence Between Sexes Using a Literature Teaching Approach. *Adom Social Science and Humanities Journal*, 1(2): 304-325.

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s)



district, and a sample size of 375 participants was obtained from the study population of 17,821 JSS1 pupils. The study employed a multistage sampling technique, randomly selecting six cluster chiefdoms — Tankoro, Gbense, Fiama, Nimikoro, Kamara, and Lei — along with 16 schools in the district. Comprehension Test Questions were answered to compare the learners' comprehension abilities based on sex. The findings showed that the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach was more appropriate for teaching reading than the Traditional Literature Circles. The study's findings showed no significant difference in the mean scores between male and female readers. The findings also showed that neither sex reads and comprehends better than the other when following the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach model.

---

## INTRODUCTION

Literacy has been improving globally. However, despite several intervention strategies that have been used and based on global literacy score sheets, more needs to be done, as 7 out of 10 sub-Saharan children will become semiliterate when they become adults, unable to read fluently with automaticity (Vijil et al., 2024). Sierra Leone is not an exception, as Vijil et al. (2024) state that while some countries have reached the 100% literacy achievement threshold, Sierra Leone has yet to achieve a literacy rate of 50%, currently standing at 48.3%. Tagar et al. (2019) consider it unfortunate that children are becoming increasingly resistant to reading. In other words, children of both sexes are slowly abandoning reading. The argument surrounding whether girls are better readers than boys has been highly debated, as studies by several scholars, including Yambwana & Kalapa (2022), OECD Indicators (2011), and Reilly et al. (2019) suggest that females read and comprehend more effectively than male readers. Gender disparity has been observed throughout sub-Saharan Africa; female literacy can predict the quality of preparedness of the future labour force and can also be used as a proxy for the effectiveness of the education system (Baten, 2021). The country with the lowest literacy rate is Niger. With just 19% of adults who can read and write. One-quarter of the males are literate, and only 11% of females are literate. To address this reading crisis, this study created and compared the effectiveness of two Literature-based independent reading methods: the existing Traditional Literature Circle Method and the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach Through Literature. The aim is to address the reading crisis in schools in Sierra Leone. Reilly et al. (2019) presented various biologically based and socio-culturally based theoretical explanations, as well as combinations of both, for the emergence of gender differences in reading. Some scholars have given preferences to females performing better than males in reading comprehension, while others take the opposite view. This research will assess the reading and comprehension competence of male and female readers using a literature-based teaching approach.

### The literature circle approach and the comprehensive reading tracking approaches

Daniel's Literature circle approach was built in opposition to the teacher-centred learning approach. Much criticism has been raised by researchers who have questioned the credibility of the teacher as the sole transmitter of knowledge to learners. Jacobs (2016), citing Freire, refers to this approach as "banking" or "transmission ideology," which he considers the teacher pouring knowledge into the empty minds of students. A method which informs the students but does not provide a forum for them

to explore or construct their knowledge. They do not fully participate in the learning process. Since learners are not allowed to share their experiences and prior knowledge, they are not considered a dominant part of the learning process.

However, with the objections raised about the teacher-centred approach, critics have also raised concerns about the effectiveness of the literature circle approach. For instance, many teachers reported feeling obligated to grade student performance. Thomas (2013) claims that because learners are in total control, teachers do not see the need to follow testing procedures, as they are not as practical as administering traditional classroom tests. Thomas (2013) further states that, despite the circles promoting critical thinking and responses, administering practical tests is beneficial in assessing the child. The role sheets appear to be mechanical and have the potential to skew the pupils' concentration on satisfying the assigned roles rather than contributing to the circle conversations.

The proposed Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach through Literature was designed to address the gaps that the Literature Circle Method has not addressed. One major factor observed is the teacher being given a passive role in the learning process and the use of language that is convenient for the learners to teach reading.

### **The Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach**

The Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach assigned a comprehensive role to the teacher. Rather than being a passive observer, the teacher's new roles were divided into the pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading roles. Firstly, both participants and pupils were allowed to use the language commonly used in the community (Krio or the local community language). His first role was research-based. He researched the background of the text and author, which included the historical and cultural background (time and space). In presenting his introductory lesson during every meeting and in collaboration with the learners, he asked prompting and predicting questions, both in English and the suitable community language, to bring out what the learners already knew and how they predicted the plot and vocabulary of the text. During the lesson, the teacher listened to the presentations of the participants, which were delivered in English and the suitable community language concurrently, and added content to their presentations. The new words presented by the vocabulary tracker were explained in Krio, the community's familiar language, and used correctly in sentences in both English and the community's common language. The participants were allowed to ask questions about areas they did not understand during the presentations, and they were also allowed to answer the questions. The teacher then added content to the correct answers and provided feedback on the incorrect ones.

The new roles for the comprehensive reading tracking approach included the following roles:

- The teacher's/facilitator's role
- The group lead and personal response tracker
- Scribe and summariser
- Character tracers/trackers
- Setting tracker
- Plot tracker
- Vocabulary usage tracker.

### **Research Hypotheses**

$H_0$  = There is no significant difference in the Pre-Test and post-test mean achievement scores between Male and Female junior secondary school pupils in terms of the effects of the Traditional Literature Circle Method and the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach method.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Reading and Gender

There have been many concerns about whether males and females differ in their reading abilities. This concern has resulted in considerable research in recent years. Based on findings from a wide array of research, scholars such as Clark, Clark, Douglass, Arellano, Hedges, and Nowell, as cited in Yambwana and Kalapa (2022), have all revealed that girls have a greater interest in reading and their resilience to read for more extended periods exceeds that of boys, consequently outperforming boys in reading.

Yambwana & Kalapa (2022) noted that two significant factors that influence the performance of readers are the availability of reading materials both at home and in school and the relationship between the pupil and teacher and the pupil and parent. This study, conducted through the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach (CRTA), incorporates both factors, as individual copies of the text “Chike and The River” were provided for all participants, and the teacher was given an active participating role during the CRTA sessions.

Putri and Melani (2022) also claim that females perform better than males in reading. The study by Putri and Melani assessed the five levels of reading comprehension (literal, reorganisation, inferential, organisation and appreciation). When the individual levels were assessed, females demonstrated better reading skills than males in all five levels. The overall scores for both male and female readers were 53.5 and 66.16. Respectively. This suggests that female students outperformed male students in reading comprehension.

Similarly, Amri et al.(2021) also agree that female readers perform better than their male counterparts in reading. The study found that the reader’s preference for reading materials motivates them. The female readers had a more positive attitude towards reading than the male readers.

Tagar et al. (2019) consider it unfortunate that children are becoming increasingly resistant to reading. In other words, children of both sexes are slowly abandoning reading. The argument over whether girls are better readers than boys has been highly debated. The female sex has been persistently marginalised. Gender disparity has been observed throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Female literacy can predict the quality of preparedness of the future labour force and can also be used as a proxy for the effectiveness of the education system (Baten et al., 2021). The country with the lowest literacy rate is Niger. With just 19% of adults who can read and write. One-quarter of the males are literate, and only 11% of females are literate. Researchers have demonstrated that females have biological advantages in reading compared to their male counterparts. Despite this trend, females continue to be disadvantaged in assessing improved reading and comprehension abilities compared to males.

Reilly et al. (2019) presented different biologically based or social explanations or combinations of both for the emergence of gender differences in reading.

Differential rates of maturation,

Gender differences in lateralisation of brain function,

Gender differences in variability,

Gender differences in externalising behaviour and language competence,

Gender-stereotyping of reading and language as feminine traits. Differential.

### Maturation and its Impact on Male and Female Readers.

Vlachos & Papadimitriou (2015) classified maturation into physical and cognitive maturation. Vlachos & Papadimitriou defined physical maturation as the distinct physical development a child undergoes, which involves hormone changes, increased flexibility, the development of motor skills, and changes in body structure, including height and weight. Cognitive maturation, on the other hand,

involves the child's processing of information, language development, reasoning skills, and the development of intellect and memory. As children develop cognitively, they display specific benchmarks that teachers should focus on to chart the child's cognitive maturity.

Although maturity and learning are distinct, they are, however, interrelated. According to Thakker, learning originates from experiences and practice, and maturity develops through individual growth, independent of external stimuli. We can say that maturation is essential for learning skills. Attaining maturity enables the learning of new skills. Learning and maturity should proceed on a balanced scale; if learning proceeds with maturity, the adverse effect will lead to what he considers a wasted effort (Vlachos & Papadimitriou, 2015). Reilly et al. (2019) agree that Girls have a faster rate of maturation and may, therefore, be attaining greater proficiency than similarly aged boys, making reading easier and more enjoyable. Such an explanation holds that boys are merely delayed (developmental lag), and boys would attain an equivalent language proficiency if given sufficient time.

### **Lateralisation of Brain Function and Its Impact on Male and Female Readers**

Researchers have also proved that females perform better in reading than their male counterparts. One responsible factor for this claim is the lateralisation of the brain. Brain lateralisation shows that the left and the right sides of the brain carry and regulate a variety of different functions and behaviours. (Fletcher & Morris, 2014) describes lateralisation as a process where the brain is divided into the left and right hemispheres, connected by fibres. Zaidi, as cited in Reilly et al. (2019), supports the argument that the regions of the brain responsible for visual processing and storing of language and personal memories appear to differ between the sexes at the microscopic level. Fewer synapses to other regions may represent increasing specialisation of the temporal cortex for language processing in females, and this may be related to their overall better performance on language tasks. According to Zaidi (2010), the brain of women processes verbal language simultaneously in the two sides (hemispheres) of the frontal brain, while men tend to process it on the left side only. Studies have shown that both areas of the brain associated with language work harder in girls than in boys during language tasks and that boys and girls rely on different parts of the brain when performing these tasks. Both sexes rely on different parts of the brain when performing linguistic functions, with females generally exceeding males. Putri & Melani (2022) also claim that females perform better in reading comprehension than males.

### **Gender Differences in Externalising Behaviour and Language Competence**

The study by Chen (2010) shows that the construct of externalising behaviour problems refers to a grouping of behaviour problems that are manifested in children's outward behaviour and reflect the child negatively acting on the external environment. Chen (2010) affirms that the maladaptive behaviour of students affects the child's academic performance, and this can become severe as the child progresses into adulthood. Reilly et al. (2018) assert that gender differences in externalising behaviour may also partly explain a greater female language competence. Reilly et al. (2018) confirm that Clinicians have identified more boys than girls with externalising behaviour and attention disorders. Buil et al., as cited by Reilly et al. (2018), also agree that boys generally exhibit more conduct problems than girls and one basic reason for this is being poorly liked by peers, which is evident in the classroom. Oppositional behaviour predicts poor appraisal by peers, which in turn leads to the development of conduct problems. According to them, this link tends to be stronger for boys than for girls. Based on the diver's views on reading performance between male and female readers, this research will be appropriate to address this gap.

### **Impact of the Active Role of Teacher /Facilitator**

Researchers have investigated the effects of various reading-teaching models and their impact on learners' reading skills. The findings suggest that reading strategy instructions can help struggling readers improve their reading comprehension abilities (Samar & Dehqan, 2013). It is, therefore, essential for teachers to employ the most effective teaching approach when teaching reading. Hayes, as cited in Tanjung, Saragih, and Pulunga (2021), stated that to teach reading effectively in schools, teachers must possess the knowledge and ability to enhance students' achievement by utilising modern teaching strategies. This suggestion justifies the use of the learner-centred method by teachers. The study by Tanjung et al. (2021) found that students were not interested in reading classes because the teachers used a teacher-centred method, which involved only explaining and assigning tasks to students. The students were just passive listeners. Tanjung et al. (2021), citing Zouhor et al., confirm that the success of students' performance in reading comprehension depends on the appropriate teaching strategies and methods used by teachers in the classroom. Davis (2010) also projects that "Learners' thoughts, feelings, and actions are heavily influenced. Davis (2010) accounted that student-centred activities, which she labelled as open tasks, were more effective in promoting reading tasks. Shakoor, Iiyas, & Iqbal (2019) also suggest that the strategies employed by teachers facilitate readers in building and maintaining meaning. Effective reading strategies enhance students' reading comprehension.

Reading has been classed into two. The teacher-centred or traditional teaching method/approach and the learner-centred teaching method. All other teaching strategies can be implemented using either of the two primary approaches. Baghoussi (2021) projects that there has been a paradigm shift from traditional teaching methods to learner-centred teaching methods. According to Baghoussi, this shift should have a direct impact on classroom management by teachers. The two approaches are grounded in theories from educational psychology. According to Lawless (no date available), the teacher-centred approach is based on the behaviourist theory, which presents the learner as a blank slate. The core element in the theories mentioned above is the teacher. Therefore, her/his presence in the learning environment is crucial and necessary. Brophy, as cited by Baghoussi (2021), states that teachers primarily transfer information to students through lecturing and strategies that place students' behaviour under the stimulus. A view held by the behaviourist theory. "A Theory which was based on the idea that behaviour changes are caused by external stimuli (Skinner, p.165, as cited in Sering,2018). According to the theory, students are passive and respond to environmental stimuli. The learner-centred approach, on the other hand, is based on the constructionist theory. How children interpret and experience literacy teaching in the classroom has consequences for their achievement and motivation.

However, the role of the teacher in both teaching methods is quite significant. Sering (2018) describes the roles of both teachers as strategic. Sering (2018) says that the diminishing role status given to teachers in a learner-centred classroom is a false assumption because they serve as facilitators. Students do not construct meanings independently; instead, they depend on the teacher's guidance.

### **The Choice of Krio (Indigenous Language) in Teaching English.**

Krio is an English-based creole spoken primarily in Sierra Leone, West Africa. The use of Krio as a lingua franca in Sierra Leone has established the language as a symbol of national unity (Finney, no date available), as it serves as a common method of communication among the diverse tribes. Dauda (2022) describes Krio as a language which bridges the linguistic gap between ethnic groups in Sierra Leone. The language has been considered an inferior form of the English language, which is the official language and language of academic instruction in Sierra Leone. Approximately 97% of the country's 7.4 million citizens speak the Krio language.

The language borrows most of its lexical items from the English language (Dauda, 2022). Dauda further states that because they are linguistically related, users of both languages unconsciously employ Krio lexemes and structures in place of English. This relationship has greatly influenced the correct use of spoken and written English in schools. Krio has, therefore, been selected as one of the languages that should be taught in schools. Selinker, as cited in Dauda (2022), asserts that this interlanguage transfer has been responsible for the pronunciation error.

There has been considerable controversy over the choice of Krio for teaching English in schools. Phillipson, as cited by Dauda (2022) in his work “Linguistic Imperialism,” holds the view that the English language should be taught exclusively in English. Teachers should not use any other medium of instruction to teach English. Using any other medium of instruction will hinder the correct use of written and spoken English. Turnbull, McDonald, & Krashen, as cited in Bruggink et al. (2022), have all rejected the use of a lingua franca and mother language in teaching the English language.

The use of the mother tongue (L1) and the use of the second language (L2), specifically English, has been a topic of controversy among scholars. The fact is that the use of English has been considered advantageous because it is seen as a conduit to success in attaining education and employment. Despite the influence of Anglicisation on most African cultures, some schools of thought have argued that English should not be the medium of teaching in schools. Almoayidi (2018) states that some researchers believe that the use of the mother tongue is not helpful or useful for second language learning, particularly English.

Almoayidi (2018) presents one such argument from a study conducted in Saudi Arabia, where students who were taught in Arabic while learning English did not perform as well in all skills as students who were taught in English only. (Turnbull & Arnett, Levine, Nation, Scott & de la Fuente, Littlewood & Yu, as cited in Almoayidi, 2018) all believe that using any other language in Teaching English (the second language) will hinder second language learning.

Krashen’s “comprehensible input” hypothesis, cited in Almoayidi (2018), also rejects the idea that the mother tongue should not be used in teaching a second language. This hypothesis contrasts with the Linguistics Interdependence Hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that languages are linguistically interdependent, as one helps to understand the other. Cook, as cited in Almoayidi (2018), says that given the correct environment, the two languages are so interdependent that they are like “two lungs” Bruggink et al. (2022) also assert that students found it easier to cope with the L2 teacher if he/she can speak their mother tongue because this indicates how such a teacher appreciates the students’ mother tongue. The view explains that when the teacher uses the English language as the only medium of instruction, learners will feel hesitant to participate in class discussions, especially when they are not well-equipped (Bruggink et al., 2022).

### **Establishing the Link between Reading and Literature**

The decline of literature and the tendency to convince critics about its viability in academia has been a matter of concern. This decline has subjected the literary to its three traditional genres (prose, drama and poetry). However, literature has been moving away from the path of scholars who consider literature inappropriate in the teaching of English, as more reasons and values have been propounded and forwarded by Mustakim et al. (2014) and Calia (2009) to show the importance of literature in teaching in an English classroom. Mustakim et al. (2014) consider literature as an efficient medium to enhance students’ language proficiency by not only addressing the intrapersonal, informational aesthetic value of learning but also learning the English language as a whole as literature will help to improve and develop each of the language skills (writing, speaking, and reading) separately. Calia (2009) supports the notion that literature is an appropriate tool for teaching reading, as it is essential in enriching vocabulary and language content. In support of literature as an appropriate tool for addressing reading gaps, Irawati (2016), Saeid & Alamroni (2019), Nusrat (2015), Bobkina (2014),

Marlina (2018) and Lazar (2015) have all highly acclaimed literature as an effective tool for teaching reading. These scholars argue strongly that literature is an appropriate tool worth considering for teaching reading in most academic institutions, ranging from pre-primary to tertiary levels. Irawati holds that, despite the several advantages reading has, learners comprehending what they read has been the major problem faced by teachers in learning institutions and in countries where the English language is a second language and see literature as a medium through which learners can develop their comprehension strength, understanding pronoun referencing, drawing inferences determining subject matters and identifying implied meanings.

### **Intervention Strategies to Assess Reading in Sierra Leone**

To address this global problem in Sierra Leone, several intervention assessment tools have been employed by organisations, such as the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). EGRA's assessment tools have been accepted and sponsored by the Learning Metrics Task Force 7, UNICEF, the World Bank, USAID, the Centre for Universal Education, and the Global Partnership for Education within the context of the Education 2030 agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and these tools were tested in countries like Liberia in 2015 and in the West Bank in 2015 (EGRA) targeting decoding, phonics, and phonemic awareness acquisitions in beginning readers by conducting an assessment on the most basic foundation skills for literacy acquisition in early grades focusing on the three early stages of reading acquisition: the emergent literacy (birth to grade 1), decoding (beginning grade 1) and confirmation and fluency (end of grade 1 to end of grade 3). The assessment required about fifteen minutes to administer per child. One key task required the child to read aloud for one minute and then answer questions based on that reading. The EGRA assessment focuses on early-grade readers because it reveals the discrepancies present in the early years of primary education. In 2017, the government of Sierra Leone developed the Sierra Leone Early Grade Learning Assessment Tool 2017 through the Leh We Learn project to assess learners' English Language and Mathematics (reading, comprehension, and numeracy) skills (Leh We Learn, 2017). The tool was divided into four different bands, ranging from band 1, which focuses on basic language skills such as naming everyday objects like "cup", to band 4, which is linked to relatively advanced skills that require inference and reasoning. The performance of all the tested bands was not satisfactory. In JSS 1, the scores for bands 1, 2, 3, and 4 were 8%, 42%, 43%, and 7%, respectively. In SSS 1, for bands 1, 2, 3, and 4, the scores were 4%, 35%, 48%, and 13%, respectively. (Leh We Learn 2017).

Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), pioneered by the Indian Non-Governmental Organisation Pratham, which was still in its pilot phase in Sierra Leone, also helped alleviate reading problems in Sierra Leone. The TaRL assessment approach used Master trainers who were engaged in practice sessions. The learners, generally in Grades three to five, were divided into different groups based on their learning needs rather than their age or grade. The approach assesses the learner's competence rather than the completion of the curriculum. Similarly, it also emphasised regular assessment rather than the normal end-of-year examinations by administering a one-to-one oral assessment for each child. This one-to-one step helps the instructor connect to the child's reading level. The TaRL approach begins with the instructor asking the child to read a whole paragraph. If the learner cannot read the paragraph, they are asked to read the words, and if they still cannot read at least four words, they are then asked to read the letters. If the learner cannot read the letters correctly, they are marked as beginners. The learners are then placed into one of the four levels: sound, word, paragraph, or fluent reader, based on their performance.

From 2016 to 2020, the Association of Language and Literacy Educators-Reading Sierra Leone (TALLE-RSL) with the vision to promote the Philosophy of teaching for learning to build the literacy potentials of pupils to enable them to read to learn meaningfully to build and lead the future, Implemented Reading Sierra Leone (RSL) 2020 Project in three chiefdoms in Port Loko district.

Twenty-five schools in upper-grade levels (classes 4-6), targeting 100 teachers/head teachers, were selected. The project scope included conducting baseline assessments for pupils and learners, as well as training workshops on improved teaching methods and observation (TALLE-RSL 2022).

The EGRA 2021 report on Sierra Leone states that the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) conducted a national Reading and Mathematics baseline Assessment in 2021 to identify learners' competencies in key foundational skills in literacy and numeracy. The assessment results showed a significant improvement in oral fluency from grade 2 to grade 4, with the share of non-readers in grade 4 substantially reduced compared to grade 2. Findings from the assessment results showed that there have been positive improvements in non-readers in grades 2 and 4 from 2014 to 2021, with an apparent decrease in the number of learners unable to read a single word or letter. However, approximately 64–73% of these readers were unable to comprehend the text they read (Sierra Leone EGRA 2021). These findings suggest that while learners are increasingly able to identify words and read text fluently, their understanding of those words and content is limited, as is their ability to apply the skills they have learned to other tasks conceptually. To improve the state of children's developmental reading outcomes in Sierra Leone, baseline assessments were established in phonemic awareness, alphabetic principles, vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Results from these baseline assessments served as a basis for informing the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education in the training of new teachers for effective teaching, aiming to increase equitable access and outcomes for boys and girls in pre- and primary schools (Sierra Leone EGRA, 2021).

Similarly, Thulla et al. (2022) provided quantitative evidence of reading poverty in Sierra Leone. The study assessed the post-covid-19 reading ability of pupils; the results established that out of the 10 schools assessed, five from the Southern Region and the Western Area assessed, 88% of the pupils tested from the Western Area could separate lower case from upper case letters with only one school in the Southern Region falling below 50%. 20% of the pupils from the south could not join speech sounds together to form words mentally, and 38% of the pupils from the west could not join speech sounds together to form words mentally, "49.8 of pupils in the schools in the Southern Province mispronounced or skipped five or more words in the reading test" compared to 21.4% in the Western Area, Pupils in two of the schools assessed in the south could not read 50% of the text given to them with all of the schools in the south scoring over 70% in their reading test. The study suggested that very few schools in lower primary education can read simple texts, and this is notably worse in the provinces (Thulla et al., 2022).

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a quantitative research approach, which involves the random selection of participants and assigning them to either a control or experimental group. The research approach also manipulates an independent variable to observe its effects on a dependent variable. This study employed an actual experimental research design, which requires the use of a control group that is not subjected to changes and an experimental group that experiences the changed variables. The design also enabled the researcher to statistically analyse the research data to prove or disprove the research hypothesis. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to participants in the experimental group (A) and the unrelated control group (B), aiming to determine the effects of the proposed comprehensive Reading and Tracking approach on the existing Literature Circle in addressing the reading comprehension and retention proficiency gap.

## Study Area

The study was conducted in the Kono District, located in the Eastern region of Sierra Leone. The average performance of 2021 NPSE (National Primary School Examination) candidates in the Eastern region was 49.39%. (Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, BECE, 2021 Report) The Kono District has performed poorly in the 2020 and 2021 National Primary School Examination (NPSE) exams. Using the multistage sampling technique, six cluster chiefdoms — Tankoro, Gbense, Fiama, Nimikoro, Kamara, and Lei — were randomly selected, along with 16 schools in the district. These study areas consisted of six rural towns and one amalgamated urban city (Njagbwema Fiama, Jaima, Kombayendeh, Tombodu, Yengema, Bumpe and Koidu City).

## Population of the Study and Sample Size

The study population consisted of 17,821 JSS1 pupils in Kono District. Pupils in JSS 1 (Junior Secondary School) were selected for the study based on the recommendations by Babalola (2020), who found that most students in junior secondary school do not perform well in reading comprehension and therefore recommends that special attention should be given to the class. A study by Anyaegbu, Aghauche, and Nnamani (2016) also found that poor reading habits negatively impact the academic performance of junior secondary school students. This also justifies the use of JSS classes for this study. Sholihah (2013) also justifies that most pupils in Junior secondary schools find it challenging to comprehend what they read. Six (6) cluster chiefdoms, Tankoro, Gbense, Fiama, Nimikoro, Kamara and Lei, Chiefdoms and 16 schools in the district were randomly selected. The study areas consisted of six rural towns and one amalgamated urban city (Njagbwema Fiama, Jaima, Kombayendeh, Tombodu, Yengema, Bumpe and Koidu City). Using the Krejcie and Morgan sample size formula and table to determine the sample size for 17,821 JSS1 pupils, a sample size of 375 participants was arrived at. However, the sample size was rounded up to 378 because the respondents exceeded the 375 required for the study. Moreover, because the research instrument to be tested required 7 participants per circle for both experimental and control groups, the research sample size was increased to 378 respondents.

## Sampling Procedure

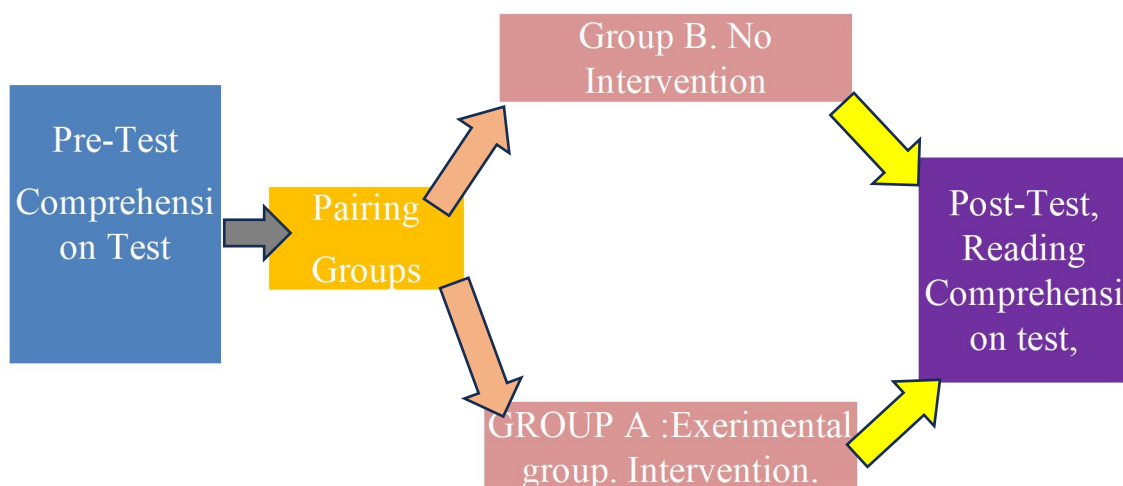
Simple random sampling and multistage sampling were the two primary random sampling techniques used to select the chiefdoms and schools for the study. The sample population of the chiefdoms used in the study was obtained through a multistage sampling approach. The chiefdoms and towns were selected through a random sampling procedure. This first stage of multistage sampling formed the Primary Sampling Units (PSUs). In the second stage, from the 10 Primary Sampling units (PSUs) previously collected, six (6) clusters of chiefdoms (Tankoro, Gbense, Fiama, Nimikoro, Kamara and Lei) consisting of five (5) rural towns and one amalgamated urban city (Njagbwema Fiama, Jaima Nimikoro, Kombayende, Tombodu and Koidu city) were selected. The 16 schools were selected using the non-probability purposive sampling technique. The study's objective focused on rural and urban settings, as well as private and government-assisted schools, including the district headquarters city, which satisfied all the variables selected for the study. The population of each stratum is homogeneous in terms of characteristics, including urban and rural, private and public schools, and boys' and girls' schools. The participants from these selected schools were selected using the Random lottery sampling technique. Pupils were asked to pick out papers with numbers from a basket.

## Instruments for Data Collection

Copies of the text “Chike and the River” literature Circle Role sheets, and the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach through Literature role sheets and Comprehension Test Questions were the instruments used to collect the research data. The research participants were asked to take a comprehension pre-test and post-test on the book they had read. The questions were designed in line with the Qualitative Reading Inventory to address the research objectives. A set of 75 open-ended and closed-ended questions was designed from all 18 chapters in the text.

## Methods of Data Collection

Fifteen research volunteers collected the data. The 15 research volunteers were enough to collect the targeted data from the 16 selected schools. Each volunteer was assigned to a selected school, and all the research volunteers hold bachelor’s degrees in English or linguistics. The research assistants were trained during the pilot study of this research. They were exposed to comprehension questions. Using these trained research volunteers, pre-test and post-test questionnaires were administered to the treatment, experimental groups, as well as the control group. The experimental group was subjected to treatments and interventions that were believed to influence the outcome of interest, whereas the control group was not. This involved using the proposed Comprehensive Reading Approach through Literature tracking.



*Figure 1: Data collection procedures /methods*

For this study, the theoretical frameworks on literacy were used. Prominent among these theories are the Simple View of Reading and constructivism.

### *Constructivism*

The theoretical framework that guided this investigation of reading interventions and gender-based comparisons in literacy development was the cognitivist theory. MacLeod et al.’s (2023) central idea about constructivism holds that human learning is constructed because learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning. This view differs from the passive teaching view of learners because, while the passive view of teaching sees learners as “empty vessels” to be filled with

knowledge, constructivism, on the other hand, states that learners construct meaning only through active engagement with the world. The cognitivist approach to learning differs from the behaviourist approach, which focuses on observing the learner's behaviour during the learning process.

Constructivism can be subdivided into two main branches: cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. Cognitive constructivists view learning as a relative stage of cognitive development, which is based on the individual's existing knowledge. Social constructivism, on the other hand, views learning not as an abstract concept but as a social activity where learners interact in collaboration with one another. Lev Vygotsky views learning as a social activity. - something we do together in interaction with each other rather than an abstract concept. MacLeod et al. (2023) view the constructivist approach as assigning the teacher primary responsibility for creating a collaborative problem-solving environment where students become active participants in their learning. The theory, as advanced by Vygotsky, emphasises the zone of proximal development. From this perspective, a teacher acts as a facilitator of learning rather than an instructor. The teacher ensures that the learner understands the students' pre-existing conceptions and guides the activity to address them, then builds upon them. The teacher adjusts to the learner's level of response, otherwise known as scaffolding. The learner's interaction also helped them gain a better understanding of what they read.

### **Validation and Reliability**

To ensure content validity, the research tools were distributed to lecturers from the School of Education's Teacher Education Department and the Institute of Languages and Cultural Studies (INSLACS) at Njala University's Bo campus. The lecturers of the Institute of Languages and Cultural Studies (INSLACS) were consulted about the appropriateness of the comprehension questions, and their responses helped in restructuring the research instruments in the required directions.

To ensure the credibility of the instruments, rigorous techniques are used to gather the data. These techniques involved multiple data collection instruments, including separate tests for vocabulary and comprehension assessment, as well as oral retention assessment scores. Peer debriefing was also used to ensure the credibility of the tool. Experts with theoretical knowledge and colleagues who shared their expertise with the researcher were consulted, which enabled an overall review of the instruments to minimise potential bias. Through Member Checking, pilot study participants were also asked to provide feedback on the instruments for accuracy.

As face validity projects the extent to which a test measures what it is intended to measure, the researcher established and ensured that all questions on the research instruments (questionnaire, focus group discussion items) were logically linked to the research objectives.

To ensure the reliability of the research instruments, they were retested in a second pilot study conducted in the same schools. The results obtained during the first pilot study were retested to check their consistency. The results of the retest aligned closely with those of the first pilot study, which indicated the instrument's reliability.

### **Ethical considerations**

The following Ethical Considerations for the study were observed.

Full consent was obtained from the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and all heads of the selected schools. It was also ensured that the research participants were not exposed to any harm. As the research was educational and conducted in classrooms, it was ensured that no toxic materials were used; only safe, fundamental teaching materials were employed. The classroom was the environment where research was conducted. The dignity of research participants was respected by valuing their views, providing positive and motivating responses to incorrect answers, and refraining from arguing with or denying what respondents felt or expressed. Participants were assured that their

views would remain private and confidential. The participants had to spend more than two hours answering the questionnaire. Lunch was provided for all the participants, and transportation compensation was offered to take them to their various homes.

**Limitations of the Study**

Several factors, including the selection of schools, participant selection, and time constraints, limited the scope of the study. Certain restrictions on research or available procedures might affect the final results or research outputs.

The Literature circle reading groups were supposed to exceed the number of circles used for the research. This was due to the unavailability of the participants, as most of them had gone on holiday. The study would have generated more results if more circles were used.

The reading ability of some of the targeted respondents was a limitation. Selecting the participants who could read and perform some of the circle roles was a limitation. Much time was allocated to the slow readers to cope with the fast readers.

The time allocated for this study was limited, which made the time frame a significant limitation that affected the study and its findings. This was because the respondents had to go on their third-term holiday during July, August, and September, which interfered with the consistency of the study, forcing the researcher to select respondents for the literature circles and work with them during the holiday.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**i. Results**

**Table 1: Pre-test experimental group**

		Mean	SD	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
				F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
											Lower	Upper
Pre-Test Comprehension Experimental Group	Males	38.79	13.679	1.044	.308	-1.064	187	.289	-1.993	1.873	-5.688	1.701
	Females	40.78	11.980									

This table displays the Comprehension Pre-Test Experimental Group findings for male and female respondents.

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the comparative use of the traditional literature circle method and the Reading Tracking Approach through Literature and how it effects changes in reading habits between sexes in terms of the Comprehension Pre-Test for males and females in the Experimental Group, as shown in Table 1. There is no significant difference ( $t(187) = .329, p = .743$ ) in the scores with mean score for males ( $M = 38.79, SD = 13.79$ ) and females ( $M = 40.78, SD = 11.980$ ). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference =  $-1.993, 95\% CI: -5.688$  to  $1.701$ ) was minimal. Hence,  $H_0$  (Null Hypothesis) was supported.

**Table 2: Pre-Test Control Group**

		Mean	SD	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
				F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
											Lower	Upper
Pre-Test Comprehension Control Group	Males	31.15	15.060	.081	.777	-1.788	187	.075	-3.830	2.142	-8.056	.396
	Females	34.98	14.388									

This table displays Comprehension Pre-Test control Group findings for male and female respondents.

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the use of the traditional literature circle method and the Reading Tracking Approach through Literature and how it affects changes in reading habits between sexes in terms of the Comprehension Pre-Test for males and females in the Control Group. There is no significant difference ( $t(187) = -1.788, p = .075$ ) in the scores with mean scores for males ( $M = 31.15, SD = 15.060$ ) and females ( $M = 34.98, SD = 14.388$ ). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference =  $-3.830, 95\% CI: -8.056$  to  $.396$ ) was minimal. Hence,  $H_0$  (Null Hypothesis) was supported.

**Table 3: Post-test experimental group**

		Mean	SD	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
				F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
											Lower	Upper
Post-Test Comprehension Experimental Group	Males	71.88	14.436	2.540	.113	.667	187	.506	1.327	1.989	-2.597	5.250
	Females	70.55	12.829									

This table displays the Comprehension Post-Test Experimental Group findings for male and female respondents.

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the use of the traditional literature circle method and the Reading Tracking Approach through Literature and how it affects changes in reading habits between sexes in terms of the Comprehension Post-Test for males and females in the Experimental Group. There is no significant difference ( $t(187) = .667$ ,  $p = .506$ ) in the scores with mean score for males ( $M = 71.88$ ,  $SD = 14.436$ ) and females ( $M = 70.55$ ,  $SD = 12.829$ ). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 1.327, 95% CI: -2.597 to 5.250) was minimal. Hence,  $H_0$  (Null Hypothesis) was supported.

**Table 4: Post-test control group**

		Mean	SD	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
				F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
											Lower	Upper

Post-Test	Males	50.99	14.729	.141	.707	.005	187	.996	.010	2.157	-4.245	4.265
Comprehension												
Control												
Groupes	Femal	50.98	14.922									

This table displays Comprehension Post-Test Control Group findings for male and female respondents.

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the use of the traditional literature circle method and the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach through Literature and how they effect changes in reading habits between sexes in terms of comprehension. Post-Test for males and females Control Group. There is no significant difference ( $t(187) = .005$   $p = .996$ ) in the scores with mean score for males ( $M = 50.99$ ,  $SD = 14.729$ ) and females ( $M = 50.98$ ,  $SD = 14.922$ ). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference =  $.010$ , 95% CI:  $-4.245$  to  $4.265$ ) was minimal. Hence,  $H_0$  (Null Hypothesis) was supported.

**ii. Discussions**

Tables 1 and 2 show a comparative pre-test result for the control groups and experimental groups. When the control group and experimental groups were subjected to the pre-test, the null hypothesis was accepted. This indicates that when participants used the traditional literature circle, there was no significant difference in comprehension competence between male respondents and female respondents. Similarly, when the independent-sample t-test was again used to compare the comparative use of the traditional literature circle method and the Reading Tracking Approach through Literature projecting how it effects changes in reading habits between sexes during the post-test as shown in tables 3. and 54, the result did not show a significant difference between the male respondents and the female respondents.

This result explains that unguided independent reading, as suggested in the Traditional literature circle, makes the teacher redundant and makes the learner unwilling to accept reasonable authority but allow their impulses to action, which in turn drives them to neglect teachers' roles and the lack of recognition of instructions (Shah & Kumar, 2019)

The findings reject the views of several scholars who hold the view that reading comprehension competence is based on sex. For instance, Amri et al. (2021) project that female learners tend to have more positive attitudes and are more motivated towards reading academic materials than male learners. This attitude is generated in male readers because they consider reading academic materials too dull and time-consuming; therefore,

they tend to focus on reading for amusement, in contrast to female readers, who often have a quest for knowledge (Amri et al., 2021).

This result also rejects the views of Reilly et al. (2019), who justify their claim that females learn to read faster than their male counterparts. They based their argument on maturation, brain lateralisation and externalisation of behaviour between male and female readers. Reilly states that because girls mature at a faster rate, they attain a higher rate of reading proficiency than similarly aged boys, which implies that maturity is essential in learning new skills and acquiring new knowledge.

Similarly, Zaidi, as cited in Reilly(2019), also claims that female readers perform better than male readers because the regions of the brain responsible for visual processing and storing of information are present on both the left and right sides of the brain(hemispheres) while the male sex has it present on only the left side. Zaidi projects that the brain of women processes verbal language simultaneously in the two sides (hemispheres) of the frontal brain, while men tend to process it on the left side only. Both areas of the brain associated with language work harder in girls than in boys during language tasks. Putri & Melani (2022) also claim that females perform better in reading comprehension than males. The study further contradicts Chen's (2010) views. Chen claims that boys tend to engage in antisocial behaviour, especially in class, and this will, in turn, affect their academic performance. Putri and Melani (2022) also claim that females perform better than males in reading. The study's findings also contradict those of UNICEF (2020), which stated that gender disparity in favour of male students was a central fault line in sub-Saharan education. The UNICEF report projected that the performance of girls in lower secondary education was lower than that of boys because boys benefited disproportionately from emerging educational opportunities compared to girls. The findings of this study imply that when learners were provided with equal learning materials and opportunities, the girls' vocabulary performance outperformed that of the boys. (Amri et al. 2021) also posit that male learners are more reluctant to do work than female learners and that male learners prefer to read English materials that contain simpler words rather than complicated vocabulary, while female learners prefer the opposite.

There have been many concerns about whether males and females differ in their reading abilities. This concern has resulted in considerable research in recent years. Based on findings from a wide array of research by Clark, Clark & Douglass, Arellano, Hedges, and Nowell, as cited in Yambwana & Kalapa (2022), have all revealed that girls have a greater interest in reading and their resilience to read for more extended periods exceeds that of boys and consequently outperforms boys in reading. Yambwana & Kalapa (2022) further noted that two significant factors that influence the performance of readers are the availability of reading materials both at home and in school, as well as the relationship between the pupil and teacher and the pupil and parent. This study, employing the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach (CRTA), incorporates both factors, as individual copies of the text "Chike and The River" were provided for all participants, and the teacher was given an active participating role.

The study also does not align with the Views of Putri and Melani (2022), who claim that females perform better than males in reading. The study by Putri and Melani assessed the five levels of reading comprehension (literal, reorganisation, inferential, organisation and appreciation. When the individual levels were assessed, females demonstrated better reading skills than males in all five levels. The overall scores for both male and female readers were 53.5 and 66.16, respectively. This indicates that female students outperformed male students in reading comprehension.

Similarly, Amri et al. (2021) also agree that female readers perform better than their male counterparts in reading, which contradicts the study's findings. Amri et al. found that the preference for reading materials motivates the reader. The female readers had a more positive attitude towards reading than the male readers.

The study also contradicts the concept of Linguistic Imperialism, as identified by Phillipson, as cited in Dauda (2022). This concept posits that English, the official language, is the most suitable medium for teaching learners to comprehend what they are taught.

The study aligns with Bruggink et al. (2022), who hold the view that learners will learn a second language more quickly if the instructor speaks and code-switches between languages, as this builds their confidence in learning and retaining. The view explains that when the teacher uses the English language as the only medium of instruction, the learners will feel hesitant to participate in class discussions.

The views of Turnbull, McDonald, and Krashen, as cited in Bruggink et al. (2022) and Almoayidi (2018), have all been rejected. They view the use of indigenous languages or mother tongues in teaching reading as a flawed teaching approach, arguing that using any other language in Teaching English (the second language) will hinder second language learning. Finally, the study also demonstrated that the teacher's active role during the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach contributed to the participants' success. This agrees with Lev Vygotsky's theory (1978) of zonal proximity involvement. The learners interacted with one another during the reading circles, benefiting from each other and the teacher's necessary guidance.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **i. Conclusions**

The following conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the study.

- i. The study's statistical findings indicated no significant difference between the sexes when the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach (CRTA) was compared with the Traditional Literature Circle Approach (TLCA). This indicates that neither sex supersedes the other in reading when they are exposed to independent reading platforms. The language of their convenience is used rather than being forced to use a specific medium of communication. The teacher provides collaborative assistance to the learners rather than a passive role.

- ii. The Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach proposes that reading ability cannot be determined by sex but by the availability of equal and impartial learning facilities and environments for both sexes.
- iii. Both sexes have the same chances of reading and comprehending a text, with no one sex superseding the other, when they are exposed to independent reading facilities, the provision of reading materials, absolute freedom in interacting with their peers, and the teacher forming part of the class, as supported by the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach.

## ii. Recommendations

- i. The relevant authorities should discuss the implementation of the pilot phase of the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach as a trial teaching method in schools.
- ii. The Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach should be recommended for future curriculum development, and the use of indigenous languages should be incorporated into reading classes, not only in junior secondary schools but also in the entire school system, ranging from primary to senior secondary schools.
- iii. Introduction of the independent group reading circles as proposed in the Comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach method of learning in reading in schools. This can build learners' confidence, which in turn improves their reading performance in class.
- iv. The government provide specific literature-based reading material for all learners in the country.
- v. Further research should be conducted to adapt the comprehensive Reading Tracking Approach for use in primary schools.

## REFERENCES

- Amri, N. A. A. A., Fauzi, N. F. M., Zaid, N. N. M., & Mee, R. W. M. (2021). Gender Differences in Academic Reading Attitudes among Undergraduates. *Selangor Humaniora Review*, 5(2), 190-207.
- Anyaeibu, M. I., Aghauche, E. E. & Nnamani, E. (2016). Poor reading habit and the academic performance of junior secondary school students in Enugu South local government area of Enugu State. *Education Research Journal*.
- Almoayidi, K. A. (2018). The effectiveness of using L1 in second language classrooms: A controversial issue. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 8(4), 375-379.
- Baten, J., De Haas, M., Kempter, E. & Meier zu Selhausen, F. (2021). Educational gender inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa: a long-term perspective. *Population and Development Review*, 47(3), 813-849.
- Bobkina, J. & Dominguez, E. (2014). The use of literature and literary texts in the EFL classroom; between consensus and controversy. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 3(2), 248-260.
- Bruggink, M. Swart, N., Van der Lee, A., & Segers, E. (2022). Putting PIRLS to use in classrooms across the globe: Evidence-based contributions for teaching reading comprehension in a multilingual context (p. 110). Springer Nature.
- Calia, B. A. (2009). Establishing Infant Reading Habits: Introducing Literature to Baby Boy. Suite101. Com. [Online] Available: <http://infanttoddlerdevelopment.suite101.com>.

- com/article.cfm/developing\_the\_male\_reade (2 January, 2010).
- Chen, J. J. L. (2010). Gender differences in externalising problems among preschool children: implications for early childhood educators. *Early Child Development and Care*, 180(4), 463-474.
- Dauda, J. (2022). Impact of Krio Language on the Use of English as a Foreign Language: A Case Study of Senior Secondary Schools Pupils in Sierra Leone. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 4(3), 106-113.
- Fletcher, J. M. & Morris, R. D. (2014). Reading, laterality, and the brain: early contributions on reading disabilities by Sara S. Sparrow. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 44, 250- 255.
- Irawati, D. (2016). Effectiveness of literature circles on students' reading comprehension. *ijotl-tl: indonesian journal of language teaching and linguistics*, 1(3), 179-192.
- Jacobs, M. (2016). Using literature circles to increase reading comprehension and student motivation. Rowan University.
- Lazar, G. (2015). Literature and language teaching. In the *Routledge handbook of language and creativity* (pp. 468-482). Routledge.
- Leh Wi Learn Sierra Leone Secondary Grade Learning Assessment (2017). Secondary learning assessment.pdf.
- MacLeod, A., Burm, S. & Mann, K. (2022). Constructivism: learning theories and approaches to research. *Researching medical education*, 25-40.
- Marlina, R. (2018). Revisiting the pedagogy of English as an international language. *Relc Journal*, 49(1), 3-8.
- Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) Report (2021). [https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/BECE-2021\\_Report\\_v3-1.pdf](https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/BECE-2021_Report_v3-1.pdf).
- Mustakim, S. S., Mustapha, R. & Lebar, O. (2018). Teacher's approaches in teaching literature: Observations of ESL classroom. *MOJES: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 2(4), 35-44.
- Nusrat, D. (2015) Incorporating Literary texts in Language Classroom <https://socialscienceresearch.org/index.php/GJHSS/article/view/1585>.
- OECD (2011). "How do girls compare to boys in reading skills?" in *PISA 2009 at a Glance*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Putri, D. S. & Melani, M. (2022). The Comparison Between Male and Female Students' Reading Comprehension at IAIN Bukittinggi. *Indonesian Journal of Learning Studies (IJLS)*, 2(1), 1-9.
- Reilly, D. Neumann, D. L., & Andrews, G. (2019). Gender differences in reading and writing achievement: Evidence from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). *American Psychologist*, 74(4), 445.
- Saeid, F. & Alamroni, S. (2019). The Effect of Teaching Literature on Learning English Language: A Study on ESL and EFL Classes in Al-abyar.
- Shah P. D. & Kumar, R. (2019). Child-centered education: Criticisms. *International*

- Journal of Education, 8(1), 22-37.
- Sholihah, L. (2013). Comparative Study on Reading Comprehension Between Students of Junior High Schools In City And Rural Area (A Comparative Study at Smpn 1 Cilegon, Smpn 1 Serang And Smpn 1 Picung, Smpn 3 Banjarsari). Muhammadiyah University of Metro, 2(2).
- Sering, H. (2018). A comparison of teacher-centered and student-centered approaches in educational settings. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 5(1), 164-167.
- Sierra Leone National Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Assessment Baseline Study November 2021. <https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Sierra-Leone-National-Early-Grade-Reading-and-Mathematics-Assessment-Baseline-Study.pdf>.
- Tagar, H. K., Abro, L. T., Chandani, A. M., Khoso, Z. A. & Sohoo, M. N. (2019). The low female literacy trends: A critical challenge of human development in Pakistan (Major obstacles and way forward). *Archives of Business Research*, 7(6), 88-97.
- Thomas, D. M. (2013). The effects of literature circles on the reading achievement of college reading students. Middle Tennessee State University.
- The Association of Language and Literacy Educators - Reading Sierra Leone Annual Report on Implementation of Project Activities January – December (2023) [https://tallersl.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/annual\\_taller-sl\\_activity-report-2023.pdf](https://tallersl.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/annual_taller-sl_activity-report-2023.pdf)
- Thulla, P. F., Moriba, S., Adom, D. & Mensah-Gborie, M. N. (2022). The Rate of Reading Poverty After the COVID-19 Pandemic School Shutdown and Specific Intervention Strategies for Lower Primary School Pupils in the Southern Province and Western Area of Sierra Leone. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 13(4), 689-696.
- UNICEF (2020). Gender and education. UNICEF Data (accessed 20 May 2020) <https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/gender-disparities-in-education/>.
- Vijil, A., El-Serafy, Y., Adam, T. & Haßler, B. (2024). Data collection and visualisation tools in the education sector in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. EdTech Hub.
- Yambwana, T. & Kalapa, (2022) e. A Comparative Study on the Reading Levels Between Boys and Girls: a case of Mukola primary school, Kalabo district, western province.

ASSHJ is co-published and affiliated to the Centre for History, Culture, Arts, Languages and Innovative Education (CHCALIE) of the Pangasinan State University, Philippines



### Our Affiliate Partners



Philippine Association of Research Practitioners, Educators and Statistical Users, Inc.



Department of Sculpture Technology, Takoradi Technical University, Ghana



Indonesia Scholar Research & Publishing, Indonesia

CHCALIE, Pangasinan State University, Philippines



World Federation of Zervas Art Clubs, Greece



Club for UNESCO Arts and Letters in Achaia, Greece



Department of Educational Innovations in Science & Technology, KNUST, Ghana



Department of Indigenous Art & Technology, KNUST, Ghana