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**Juliet Amaka Okonkwo**

Department of Early  
Childhood Education, Alvan  
Ikoku University of  
Education, Owerri.

**Queen Obinaju**

Department of Early  
Childhood and Primary  
Education,  
University of Uyo.

**Esther Chidimma Okwu**

Department of Education,  
University of Pretoria, South  
Africa.

**Bertha C. Ori**

Kingsley Ozumba  
Mbadiwe University,  
Imo State

**Correspondence:**

**Juliet Amaka Okonkwo**

Department of Early  
Childhood Education, Alvan  
Ikoku University of  
Education, Owerri.

## Exploring the Impact of Teacher-Pupil Interaction on Pre-Primary School Pupils' Initial Reading Proficiency

**Juliet A. Okonkwo, Queen Obinaju, Esther C. Okwu, Bertha C. Ori**

### Abstract

This study investigates the influence of teacher-pupil interaction on the initial reading achievement of pre-primary school pupils, focusing on the Owerri Education Zone in Imo State, Nigeria. Through a quantitative analysis of data gathered from institutional pre-primary schools, the study establishes a positive and significant relationship between teacher-pupil interaction and pupils' performance in initial reading. Findings reveal that effective interaction, characterized by shared joy, mutual respect, sensitivity, encouragement, and incorporation of children's ideas and interests into lessons, play a crucial role in fostering language development among pre-primary pupils. Additionally, the study identifies a significant relationship between the sex of teachers and pupils, with same-sex interactions yielding higher performance levels in both interaction and initial reading. Notably, differences in teacher-pupil interaction and initial reading scores are observed between children of staff and non-staff in institutional pre-primary schools. In light of these conclusions, the study offers several recommendations to enhance teacher-pupil interactions and, consequently, improve pre-primary pupils' reading outcomes. Stakeholders in education are urged to implement training programs emphasizing the importance of positive and warm interactions in the pre-primary environment. Curriculum planners are advised to integrate interaction-focused elements into pre-primary school curricula, while educational administrators should devise effective methods for monitoring and evaluating classroom instruction to optimize teacher interaction outcomes. Finally, the study proposes avenues for further research, suggesting investigations into teacher-pupil interaction and achievement disparities in public and private pre-primary schools, as well as experimental studies exploring the effects of specific interaction strategies on academic achievement among pre-primary pupils. These suggestions aim to expand understanding and inform practical interventions to promote effective teacher-pupil interactions and enhance pre-primary pupils' reading proficiency.

**Keywords:** Teacher-pupil interaction; Pre-primary education; Language development; Educational interventions.

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### 1. Introduction

Reading is the most fundamental skill for acquiring knowledge at all levels of education. Teaching reading early to pupils in the pre-primary school has become a source of great concern among educators around the world as success in reading determines success in school. Yet, observations, experience and research have revealed that this skill of language learning is highly neglected in the pre-primary levels of education, thereby resulting in many pre-primary pupils' inability to read. Reading is a language skill that aims at facilitating the acquisition and development of literacy skills needed for effective communication. As the Nigerian society continues to change to a technological society, the need for communication becomes vital in all spheres of life. The early years of a child's life are very critical. They influence how the rest of childhood unfolds. During the pre-primary school level, pupils are in the stage of rapid language development. The skills of language which include reading get enhanced as children interact with people and the environment in which they find themselves.

However, it is observed that most adults do not allow children to express verbally their wants, feelings, desires and expectations. This is because some adults find it disturbing and noisy. Teachers in the pre-primary classes make every effort to reduce and sometimes subdue the quantity of words, questions and discussions these pupils make in the classroom. They see these pupils' interactive styles to be a form of noise making and therefore shut the children up with words like pin your mouths, put your heads down on the table and close your eyes, keep quiet and the like.

Furthermore, research tells us that teacher-pupil interactions in the classroom are foundational to creativity, deeper understanding and related to pupils' academic performance. However, teaching is a profession which demands a large amount of time being dedicated to interaction. Interaction is an important word for early childhood/pre-primary teachers. This is because interaction is central in day-to-day activities of the teachers and their pupils. In the era of communicative language teaching, interaction is the heart of communication; it is what communication is all about. Teacher-pupils' interactions are the heartbeat of activity in a pre-primary school classroom. They can be defined as the relationship between the teacher and the pupils in the teaching and learning process. Interaction can also be defined as the learner's connection with the content of course, other learners, the instructor, and the medium of technology in certain course which all result in a close exchange of thoughts and ideas. The two qualities of interaction are reciprocity and mutual influence. Interaction is considered as a means of the language use for keeping communication among people. It is a central factor that creates communication through speaking, debates, questions, and discussions.

Consequently, after several decades of research on teaching and learning languages, it has been discovered that the best way to learn to interact is through interaction itself. It is also worth mentioning that studies conducted on classroom interactions have shown that pupils' talk accounts for an average of less than 30 percent of talk in 'teacher fronted' classrooms. Yet studies on language and learning have shown that children not only learn to talk but they also talk to learn. This can be seen from the fact that children are persistent questioners. It is by asking questions that they explore and learn about the world around them. Children in the pre-primary age level of education 0-5 years are at the language acquisition stage and this can be achieved through the effort of a more knowledgeable adult or teacher as the case may be.

Furthermore, it is worthy to note that the goal six of Education For All (2000) is to improve all aspects of the quality of education, and ensuring excellence for all, so that recognized and reasonable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. Additionally, beginning or initial reading has become a pivotal component of all programs serving children and a developmentally appropriate practice in most pre-primary schools. In spite of the fact that a growing awareness of the phenomenon of reading has been one of the most persistent aspects of the educational debate, analysis based on the performance of Basic One pupils in Imo State has shown that majority of them still battle with the accomplishment of identification and recognition of letters of the English alphabet talk less of Igbo language. This could be attributed to the weak or poor foundation in reading when they were in

pre-primary level of their education.

However, initial reading efficiency is crucial to academic achievement and lifelong learning and it cuts across the school curriculum. In functional literacy, reading is not only crucial for educational achievement, but critical for survival even when the child's academic endeavour terminates at the primary school level. In view of the importance of reading as a language skill and as a tool subject, adequate teaching emphasis should be given to it in order to effectively equip pupils to learn to read and also to read to learn. In view of this, it is pertinent to identify factors that can enhance pupils' early reading performance. Since children in the pre-primary age are at the language acquisition age and language is pervasive in almost everything children do, it must then be central to every pre-primary program. In school, children are constantly involved in listening, speaking, reading and writing. This means that all forms of language surround them as they interact with each other, with adults, with media, with activities and with varied material in the classroom. This inevitably enhances performance in the four skills of language and especially in initial reading. Initial reading is the point where a beginning reader is able to read two and three phonic letter words in a sentence.

After years of trying to figure out what qualities of a teacher have the most impact on pupils' achievement in learning, researchers are discovering that if we want to improve children's academic performance, we need to focus on how teachers use their daily interactions to instruct and relate with children in the classroom. The fact remains that a teacher that is just implementing the 'best' evidence-based curriculum, prepared with the activities, but however teaches the curriculum without shared joy, mutual respect, sensitivity or encouragement, effective, positive, interaction with the pupils or doesn't incorporate pupils' ideas and interest into her lesson will not achieve good level of academic and language development in them.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The debate over reforming early childhood education will continue to be in the focus of stakeholders. The issue of best educational practices is the order of the day in the Nigerian educational system. One of the most pressing issues in this debate for reform is the overwhelming presence of seemingly poor readers despite vast resources and continuous efforts of pre-primary school owners in the provision adequate environment in the schools. In the process of teaching, everybody interacts one with every other person involved in the process. Teachers in the pre-primary school interact with their pupils through discussions, delivery of lessons, asking questions, giving directions etc. The pupils also react to the teacher's interactions and give their responses. Interaction is all of the ways in which action and reaction among individuals is organized. The success of a teacher may be judged through the degree of effectiveness of his teaching method which may be objectively assessed through his interaction with the pupils in the classroom. Therefore, a systematic or objective analysis of teachers' classroom interaction can provide a reliable assessment of the quality and extent of interaction that goes on inside the classroom that impacts on academic performance especially in reading.

Consequently, studies have shown that the number of questions asked by children drop significantly as soon as

they enter school. Most children in the pre-primary schools are deficient in the use of letters and sounds in initial reading. Similarly, there are also speculations that pupils' inability to read two letter words, three letter words and their general poor performance at reading in the pre-primary school are connected to teachers' poor interactions with the pupils. At the heart of all teaching are interactions with pupils realising that teachers through their methods and personal examples may influence their pupils in overall language skills development especially in reading. Therefore, it is vital to find out whether teacher-pupil interactions really relate with pre-primary pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools.

In summary, what is the relationship between teacher-pupil interactions and pre-primary pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone?

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to determine the influence of teacher-pupil interaction on the initial reading achievement of pre-primary school pupils. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

- (i) Assess the relationship between teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) and initial reading performance of pupils in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone;
- (ii) Ascertain the relationship between same sex teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) with same sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone;
- (iii) Ascertain the relationship between opposite sex teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) with opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone;
- (iv) Find out whether there is any difference in teacher-pupil interactions between scores of children of staff and non-staff in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone
- (v) Find out whether there is any difference in initial reading performance between scores of children of staff and non-staff in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.

### 1.4 Research Questions

1. How does teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) relate with pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone?
2. How does same-sex teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) relate with same sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone?
3. How does opposite sex teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) relate with opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone?
4. How does teacher-pupil interaction (TPI) of staff and non-staff children differ in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone?
5. How does initial reading performance of staff and non-staff children differ in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone?

### 1.5 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) and initial reading performance of pupils in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.
2. There is no significant relationship between same sex teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) and same sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary school in Owerri Education Zone.
3. There is no significant relationship between opposite sex teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) and opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.
4. There is no significant difference between staff and non-staff children's teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.
5. There is no significant difference between staff and non-staff children's performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.

### 1.6 Significance of the study

This study will be highly important to the government and private parastatals at all levels, educational planners, decision and policy makers as well as other stakeholder in the educational sectors, because government and private parastatals will be able to make use of the results in this study in the daily educational planning and decision making about pre-primary schools.

The study will provide an insight into the management of pre-primary schools as it leads us to know the influence of teacher-pupil interaction in initial reading achievement of pre-primary school pupils. It is also hoped that the analysis which the present study provided will give a clear understanding of the relationship that teacher-pupil interaction has with pupils' performance in reading. Teachers will find this study very important because it will equip them with a deeper understanding of the influence of teacher-pupil interaction. With this, teachers will be able to promote and foster high-quality interactions with pupils. The findings of the study will also be beneficial to education administrators who will be more decisive on the issue of what type of interaction to recommend in schools. Teacher educators will find this study significant for trainee teachers, orientation would be made for them on the type of teacher-pupil interaction to be emphasized in the classroom.

### 1.7 Basic Assumptions

This research relies on some basic assumptions. These assumptions made the work more meaningful and provided the basis for the hypotheses which have been postulated. It was assumed that language acquisition especially initial reading skill in the pre-primary level is influenced by responsive, warm, direct interaction between the teacher and the pupils. The study also assumed that teachers in institutional pre-primary schools were qualified and trained in teaching initial reading to their pupils. Reading lays the foundation to the entire lifelong academic process such that if reading is achieved the entire academic process is enhanced. The sample for this study were kindergarten children who were assumed to have been taught the initial

sounds of the English alphabet and should be able to read two and three phonic words as this is the requirement from their syllabus.

### 1.8 Delimitation of the Study

This study was delimited to Owerri Education Zone which is among the three education zones in Imo State. The researcher has delimited the study to institutional schools in Owerri Education Zone. Owerri Education Zone comprises nine local government areas namely: Owerri Municipal Council, Owerri North, Owerri West, Ikeduru, Mbaitolu, Ahiazu Mbaise, Aboh Mbaise, Ezinihite-Mbaise, and Ngor Okpala local government areas. The study was further delimited to the pre-primary institutional schools excluding the primary section. Moreover, there are also some other factors exerting influence on initial reading achievement of pre-primary pupils but the study was restricted to difference in teacher- pupil interaction. Furthermore, despite the fact that reading is taught in the whole of pre-primary schools, the study used only pupils in Nursery 3 (transitional class) as subjects, because those pupils are supposed to have achieved more reading skills in initial reading of three letter phonic words than the Nursery 1-2 pupils.

### 1.9 Operational Definition of Terms:

**Teacher-pupil Interaction:** A mutual and reciprocal verbal action between the teacher and pupils in the classroom. It is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas verbally between teacher and pupil.

**Interaction:** This refers to mutual and reciprocal action between teachers' and pupils' verbal exchange in the classroom.

**Initial Reading:** This refers to a child's ability to read two and three phonic letter sounds when used in a sentence in English language.

**Gender:** This refers to the pre-primary school boys and girls used in the study.

**Institutional Pre-Primary Schools:** These include all nursery schools which are owned by institutions of higher learning like colleges of education, polytechnics, and universities in Imo State. They are open for admission for children and wards of teaching staff, non-teaching staff and the entire public.

**Teachers:** teachers and caregivers that teach or assigned to the nursery classes used for the research.

**Same sex:** Teachers (including caregivers) and Pupils in the class that are of the same gender.

**Opposite sex:** Teachers (including) and pupils in the class that are of opposite sex.

**Staff children:** Pupils of the institutional pre-primary school that one or both parents are staff of the institution where the school is located.

**Non-staff children:** Pupils of the institutional pre-primary school that none of their parents are a staff of the institution where the school is located.

## Review of Related Literature

### 2.1 Preamble

This chapter reviewed literature on teacher-pupil interactions, and initial reading achievement of pre-primary pupils. This review was done under the following headings and sub headings: Theoretical Framework, conceptual Framework, empirical Framework, summary of Literature Review

#### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study has theoretical base on the following theories:

Social Development Theory and Interaction Analysis Theory.

#### 2.1.2 Social Development Theory

Social development theory is one of the foundations of constructivism. Constructivists believe that we learn by mentally and physically interacting with the environment and with others. This theoretical framework holds that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. It states that every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (inter psychological) and then inside the child (intra psychological) (Vygotsky, 1978). The basic position of these theorists is that interaction with adults play an important part in children's language acquisition. According to Vygotsky (1978), much important learning by the child occurs through social interaction with a skilful tutor.

#### 2.1.3 Flanders Interaction Analysis Theory

The major features of this theory lie in the analysis of initiation and response which are the characteristics of interaction between two or more individuals (Flanders, 1970). Flanders interaction analysis theory assumes that a teacher is the influential authority in the classroom, because teacher talks and what he says determines to a large extent the reactions of the pupils

### 2.2 Conceptual Framework

#### 2.2.1 Concept of Classroom Interaction

Classroom interaction refers to the whole range of activities and experiences through which teachers' curriculum, materials, and learners interact. It has to do with the interactive processes through which teachers implement the curriculum and impart learning to students using available materials (Goh and Fraser, 2008).. The interaction between the teacher and pupils during teaching-learning process modifies behaviour, helps pupils to socialize, develops desirable attitude and interest, helps in identification of process and creates an atmosphere for the development of problem-solving skills (Uzuegbunam, 2005). David (2007) maintained that classroom interactions help in improving classroom participation and involvement during teaching-learning processes. According to Ghosh (2004), classroom interaction is a practice that enhances the development of the two very important language skills which are speaking and listening among the learners. Kontos (2009) wrote that teachers can use a variety of classroom strategies to build positive interaction with their pupils. However, Pianta (2006) observed that teachers in preschools and kindergarten levels of education are not provided with the training and support needed, either during pre-service or in-service, for them to provide effective social and instructional interactions. Malaguzzi (2010) stated that interaction among children is a fundamental experience during the first years of life. Other researchers also considered such relationships to be the fundamental organizing strategy of an educational system for young children. A nurturing environment in which children learn through meaningful interactions with other children, adults and materials will satisfy their innate yearning to know, to learn, to explore and to discover. Other related studies are observed by (Kontos, 2009 and Kalu, 2008).

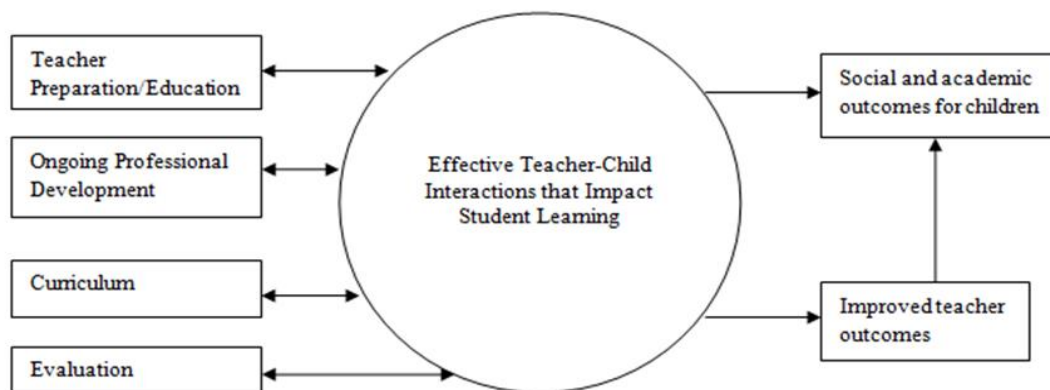
#### 2.2.2 Objectives of Teacher-pupil Interactions

Chaudron (2008) stated that interaction is significant because it is only through interaction that the learner can decompose the teaching learning structures and derive

meaning from classroom events. Moreover, Allwright and Bailey (2001) stated that through classroom interaction, the classroom plan produces outcomes (input, practice opportunities, and receptivity). **Simpson and Galbo (2006) also viewed teacher-pupil interactions as not merely a factor in enhancing learning, an external force that improves the instructional process; it is central to the/a learners learning process. Mason (2004) mentioned that interaction benefit learners at the affective level leading to increased motivation and interest in the subject. In training contexts, there is evidence that teacher-learner interaction helps to increase the speed of assimilation and the length and degree of retention of information.**

Hamre and Pianta (2001) believed that the teacher's relational quality interaction with students has an important

role in effectiveness of teaching and the standard for measuring the effectiveness of the teachers that is creating the learning. Good quality interactions between the learner and the teacher bring hope-inspiring horizons of friendship, equilibrium, support, security, success, honour and prosperity as some gifts (Christie, 2011). According to Thompson and Anderson (2008) and Reynolds and Peter (2009) one of the most basic characteristics of good teachers is the ability to establish interaction in the classroom. They opined that most of the observed stresses in the classrooms come from lack of desired interaction between the teacher and pupils. Focusing on this issue, Brower *et al.* (2001) also remarked that teaching takes place when the teacher interacts positively with one or more learners.



**Fig 1:** The Role of Effective Interactions in Creating Opportunities to Improve Children's Outcomes.

Source: Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning  
Charlottesville, Virginia  
[www.curry.virginia.edu/castl](http://www.curry.virginia.edu/castl)

### 2.2.3 Teacher-Pupil Interactions and Academic Achievement

Interaction between the teacher and the pupil in the school is a very important variable that impacts on academic performance of the pupil. In as much as other classroom variables such as the curriculum, the class arrangement, teachers' qualification and parental involvement, teacher pupil interaction is viewed as the most effective aspect of the teacher that impacts most to academic achievements. Pianta (2004) posited that teachers shape student experiences in school. Other similar studies are observed by (Hamre and Pianta, 2001; Obinaju, 1995; Birch and Ladd, 2007; Hamre and Pianta, 2001; Younger and Warrington's, 2009; Jones and Gerig, 2004; Onuigbo, 2008; Snow and Burns, 2008).

### 2.2.4 Concept of Reading

Reading is simply put as your brain decoding the text in front of you, so that your mind can register it (Guthrie, 2011). Reading is a process of interaction between the author and the reader (Chijioke, 2010). According to Burns (2011) in Wordu (2012) three basic definitions of reading have driven literacy programmes: learning to read means to pronounce words; learning to read means learning to identify words and get their meaning, learning to read means to bring to a text in order to get meaning out of it. Obinaju (2012) asserted that reading is part and parcel of language development. It involves looking at and being able to understand print. Reading means looking at symbols (letters and pictures) and being able to decipher what they represent. However, learning to read comes in different stages.

### 2.2.5 Learning to Read

Learning to read is a gradual but complex process. During the process of reading the reader is actively trying to make sense of the written or printed text by integrating his previous experiences with the text information. Oyetunde in Chijioke (2010) opines that competence in reading does not happen spontaneously. However, Kolawole (2007) observed that in English language there are more than 500 rules that constitute blending of words. According to Robert (2004) vocabulary in a language and phonological awareness are powerful components of the toolkit of an initial reader. However, Izuagba *et al* (2013) asserted that becoming a reader is a continuous process that begins with the development of oral language skills and leads, over time, to independent reading. According to Fountas & Pinnell (2011), reading comes in the following stages and is identified through some characteristics. According to the researchers, some of these stages include: Emergent Readers, Beginning /Initial Readers (Izuagba *et al* 2013; Machado 2010; Fountas and Pinnell 2006; Machado 2010); Transitional Readers, Fluent Readers (See Fountas and Pinnell (2011; Jewell and Zintz 2006)

### 2.2.6 Teacher-Pupil Interactions and Initial Reading

Interaction is an important word for language teachers. Brown (2008) opined that in the era of communicative language teaching, interaction is the heart of communication; it is what communication is all about. After several decades of research on teaching and learning languages, it has been discovered that the best way to learn

to interact is through interaction itself. Theories of communicative competence emphasize the importance of interaction as human beings use language in various contexts to negotiate meaning (Rivers, 2007). Wells (2008) emphasised on linguistic interaction. According to Guthrie (2011), a literacy-rich environment provides students with opportunities to engage with and see adults interact with print allowing students to build their skills. Other related studies are (Machado, 2010; Rohnshine and Stevens, 2002; Rohnshine and Stevens, 2002; Clay 2001; Barnes 2008; Machado, 2010; Rivers, 2007; Birch and Ladd, 2007; Barnes, 2008; Rivers, 2007; Pavlidou, 2003; Chaudron, 2008; Allwright and Bailey, 2006; Allwright & Bailey, 2001; Nunan 2001; Chaudron 2008; Brown (2008) Nunan (2001) Holmes (2004) Goodman (2000) Ur (2000)

### 2.2.7 Gender and Teacher – Pupil Interaction

Within the classroom context, gender plays a significant role, as teachers are believed to often respond differently to different student according to their gender. Howe (2007) observed that teachers often act in ways that sustain the gender roles taught at home. He believed that boys are often praised for their knowledge and girls for their obedience. More of the teacher's time in the classroom is also spent interacting with boys than girls, with teachers likely to interrupt girls more than boys during conversations. Duffy (2001) supported that this can impact on girls' development in certain subject areas as well as in the development of their self-esteem. Although girls seem to be more susceptible to teacher expectations compared to their male counterparts, girls perform better in classroom environments in which they have private and personal contact with the teacher. Dabiri, (2006) observed that the classroom interactions between teachers and students are influenced by teachers' attitude and expectations from genders, and that teachers change their behavior, expectations, and teaching style according to students' gender. Sunderland (2008) maintained that teachers vary considerably in the quantities of interactions they have with individual students, with males receiving a higher proportion of contacts from teachers across subject areas. In other words, teachers initiate more contacts with males than with females and males initiate more contacts with teachers and they criticize and praise males more often than females.

There are certain fundamental issues which are vital to the understanding of teachers' behavioural differences in relation to their interaction with their learners, and the reflection of gender-based social divisions in such interactions. Duffy (2001) concluded that the role of teachers in providing and distributing equal interaction opportunities for all students regardless of their gender is very vital because they not only offer language practice and learning opportunities but also help the process of language development itself.

In addition, Dabiri (2006), Salaka (2004), and Koca (2001) suggested that from the very early grades through the university level, female students have been the victims of hidden bias in teacher interactions although they sit in the same classroom and are expected to learn the same material. Streitmatter (2004) illustrated the fact that the quantity and quality of teacher interactions varies by student gender and through their interactions they allow for male dominance in classrooms. Similarly, Koca (2001) also indicates that female and male teachers interact more frequently with males, and this interaction is influenced by

gender-stereotyped beliefs of teachers and students.

While Younger, Warrington and Williams (2009) found that during classroom interactions more girls than boys take the opportunity to initiate questions seek clarification on work-related matters, make best use of the support of the teacher. Pavlidou (2003) and Shomoossi, Amouzadeh and Ketabi (2008) indicated that girls participated less in class than boys and took less verbal initiative in their interaction with the teacher. They are more passive than boys in the classroom and less persistent than boys in their non-compliance with the teacher. Kramer (2005) indicated that high-achieving girls avoided answering teachers' questions in class and offered comments less frequently than boys. Sadker & Sadker, (2005) found that teachers respond differently to boys and girls in the class, with boys tending to dominate classroom interactions and teachers accepting their dominance, others Comfort (2006) indicated that girls received more positive feedback from their teachers. Although she found that teachers initiated more contact with, and directed more questions to boys than girls, they criticised and disciplined boys more. In fact, girls received more positive reinforcement.

There are also some qualitative differences in how teachers interact with their students with regards to students' gender. This differentiation, on the part of many teachers, has to do with expectations that are largely based on the acceptance of gender stereotypes. Dabiri, (2006) believed that qualitative differences of teacher interactions according to the gender of students are generally manifested through the intensity of academic interaction between teacher and student. Jones and Dindia (2004) observed that female and male teachers tend to have more interactions of all kinds with male students than do female students. According to the researchers, males get more instructional contacts, more high-level questions, more academic criticism and slightly more praise than females – all of which would be valuable in facilitating learning.

### 2.2.5 Initial reading

As children learn to read, they progress through a series of stages. These stages are named and described in different ways by different reading specialists, but they are essentially the same. In the earliest, pre-reading stage, children mimic the reading process without actually reading. They begin to understand what reading is about and how it works. According to Izuagba *et al* (2013), children who successfully learn to read in the early primary years of school are well prepared to read for learning and for pleasure in the years to come. On the other hand, children who struggle with reading in Primaries 1 to 3 are at a serious disadvantage. Academically, they have a much harder time keeping up with their peers, and they increasingly fall behind in other subjects. Young children, when learning to read, not only internalise sound-letter relations, but human relations that they associate with reading. A teacher who works systematically, a home environment where the school work is overseen and strengthened, and a school where learning is valued are essential ingredients of a young child's formal education life. When most children fail to learn to read it is almost always because school, or home, or both have failed them. Howes *et al* (2002) asserted that print language and oral language connections have to be practised laboriously through interactions for them to become solid. When they are established, the speed of recognition of letters increases and whole words and phrases are recognised in tandem.

### 2.3 Empirical Studies

### 2.3.1 Teacher-Pupil Interactions

Studies have been carried out on teacher-pupil interactions. Some studies have reported that the quality of interactions between teachers and students was associated with student academic performance. Among them is the study carried out by Obinaju (1995) in Akwa-Ibom State. The researcher studied teacher-pupil interactions in field independence development among primary school children in Akwa Ibom State. The study used the ex-post factor correlational survey. Samples used for the study include 1994 pupils and 72 teachers drawn from 1215 schools in Akwa Ibom State. Also, the study by Kalu (2008) on classroom interaction patterns and students learning outcomes in Physics was to observe and code the interaction patterns during Physics lessons and to relate the identified patterns to students' post-instructional attitude towards. Chukwuma (2007) carried out a study on influence of teachers' interactions on emotional development of primary school children in Anambra State. Odu, Odigwe and Ekpenyong (2013) carried out a study entitled 'interaction pattern of economics teachers in Cross River state Secondary Schools, Nigeria. A sample size of 400 consisting 350 students and 50 teachers was used for the study. Stratified random sampling was adopted as a sampling technique. Birch and Ladd (2007) found that kindergarten students who had a close and positive interactions with teachers performed better on the Metropolitan Readiness Tests (MRT), which measured the students' letter recognition, visual matching, school language and listening and quantitative language skills. Burchinal *et al* (2011) examined preschool through second grade students and found that the correlation between close relationships and higher language skills occurred only for African-American children and only for children with authoritarian parents. Perry *et al* (2007) examined the effect of average classroom positive interactions on first grade achievement. Using classroom as the unit of analysis. Phuong (2009) carried out another study on the influences of classroom characteristics and teacher-student relations on student academic achievement.

### 2.3.2 Reading and Academic Achievement

Ezeokoli and Ezenandu (2010) carried out a study on the effects of students' preferred text genres and literacy activities on their attitude to and achievement in reading comprehension Abeokuta North local government area. A quasi-experimental research design was used in the study. The sample consisted of 120 senior secondary students randomly selected from three arms of SS1 (arts, science and of commercial) classes in each of the two senior secondary schools in Abeokuta North local government area. Data collection was by means of Achievement test on Reading Comprehension (ATRC) and Students' Attitude to Reading Questionnaire (SARQ). Data was analysed using ANCOVA. The five null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that students preferred text genre had significant effect on achievement in reading. The study therefore concluded that when students are involved in making a choice of what they want to read and are given opportunities to engage actively in reading activities of their choice, they perform better than those who are denied the opportunity to make these choices. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers should use students' preferred texts in teaching reading. (Awodeyi, 2008, Wordu, 2012)

### 3.4 Summary of Literature Review

The review of literature has brought to light the influence of teacher-pupil interactions on academic achievement of students. It was discovered from the literature reviewed that most researches on teacher-pupil interactions have been on primary, post-primary and tertiary levels. The present research work is therefore a necessity because no study was made on the influence of teacher-pupil interactions on pre-primary pupils' achievement in initial reading. However, it was observed that teacher-pupil interactions are precursor to academic achievement in reading as a whole.

### Research Methods

This chapter describes the research design, the area of study, population of the study, Sample and Sampling technique, instruments for data collection, validation of Research Instruments, reliability of the Instruments, and administration of the instrument. Finally, statistics used in analysing data obtained from the field are highlighted

#### 3.1 Research Design

The research is primarily a correlation survey research design to examine the relationship between teacher-pupil interactions and children's academic achievement in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State. It is further designed to ascertain the difference in teacher-pupil interactions in institutional pre-primary schools. In so doing the research would be able to examine teacher-pupil interactions in institutional pre-primary schools and compare it with pupils' achievement in initial reading.

As a variation in interaction which may bring disparity, teacher-pupil gender was introduced. This is because same sex teacher-pupil interactions and opposite sex teacher-pupil interaction could have influence interaction and therefore bring difference in initial reading achievement of pre-primary pupils. The study further examined whether there is any relationship between a teacher's sex and pupils' achievement in initial reading. In the course of the research, classroom observations were made, and tests on initial reading administered to the pupils.

#### 3.2 Area of the Study

The area of study was Owerri Education Zone of Imo State, Nigeria. The zone comprises nine local government areas; namely Owerri Municipal Council, Owerri North, Owerri West, Ikeduru, Mbaitolu, Ahiazu, Aboh Mbaise, Ezinihite and Ngor-Okpala. Geographically, the state is bounded in the north by Anambra state, in the South by Abia State, in the East by Enugu State and in the West by Rivers State.

Owerri zone is bounded in the North by Njaba local government area in Orlu Zone, in the East it is bounded by Okigwe local government area in Okigwe Zone, in the West, it is bounded by Oru West local government area and in the South, it is bounded by Owerri local government area in Abia State.

The inhabitants of Imo State are Igbos and their official language is English. Presently, most parents in Imo State are predominantly civil servants and business men and women. In the state, parents derive joy interacting with their children. Through such interactions parents feel that they can assess early the level of development, intelligence and academic achievement of their children. This interaction is mostly in the official language which is English language. Parents also feel fulfilled sending their children to quality schools from an early age in order for their children to learn English. However, parents in Imo State rate children who can interact in English language as high achievers in academic work.

Furthermore, in Imo State, all the academic institutions are located in Owerri Education Zone and all the institutional pre-primary schools are located there too. These institutional pre-primary schools are adequately staffed with qualified and certificated teachers. Most of the teachers in the pre-primary classes have at least Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). Teachers in these institutions are occasionally given workshops and seminars on teaching strategies and methodologies. They are also being monitored by the appropriate authorities. The teachers were given a workshop in 2012 on strategies for teaching initial reading in pre-primary and primary schools by the International Readers Association.

These schools however, are being managed and funded by the owners of the institutions or the institutions, themselves. Parents see these institutional schools as model schools where there are adequate facilities and qualified teachers who are informed in best practices in education. Due to some of these facts, there is always an outstanding request for admission by parents for their children and wards into these schools each year. The general trend also among staff and non-staff parents and guardians in communities in and around areas where these institutional pre-primary schools are is to send their children to no other school except these institutional schools. Their argument includes that there is more interaction between teachers and pupils which according to them, results in better performance in the

academic achievement of the pupils. Teacher-pupil interactions in these schools are geared towards the achievement of oral and written language skills in pupils early. Where this objective is not achieved in the pupils the school is rated as not performing. If there is no performance in the language achievement of the pupils, parents agitate and clamour to change their children either from the class teacher or that the class teacher should be changed.

However, the class teacher allocation for most of the pre-primary teachers in the schools is mostly one teacher assisted by one or two caregivers. These teachers and care givers are expected to teach the pupils throughout the session. This is to allow a good relationship, understanding, acceptance and familiarity to exist among the teachers, and the pupils. It is also in consideration of the fact that children at this age (5-6years) need warm and responsive relationship between them and their teachers or significant adults. Children at this age also see adults as their role models especially in the use of language and interaction.

### 3.3 Population of the Study

The population used in the study comprises all the 1440 institutional pre-primary school pupils and their 107 teachers and caregivers in the four (4) institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State. The breakdown of the population is shown on the table below.

**Table 3.1:** Table showing Population of Institutional Pre-Primary Schools and number of pupils in Owerri Education Zone.

Schools	Total Number of Pupils	Number of Pupils in Nursery 3	
		Total number in class	Total selected
1	645	63	31
2	478	55	25
3	124	42	20
4	193	50	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>101</b>

### 3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

Out of the 1440 pupils in institutional pre-primary schools in Imo State, purposive sampling technique was used to select 101 pre-primary school pupils. Pupils from Nursery 3 classes for 2013/2014 academic session in the four (4) institutional pre-primary schools were purposively sampled. This ensured uniformity within the schools used since all the institutional pre-primary schools have nursery three as the last class in the nursery school. They are the transitional class which pupils will be promoted to Basic One by the next session. Moreover, it was assumed that at this level of education, pupils in pre-primary institutional schools would be able to read two and three-letter phonic words and interact fluently in English or language of their immediate environment. Moreover, the classes and their teachers were block sampled. As observed under the study area, pupils in the institutional pre-primary schools interact mainly with one class teacher throughout a school year. The teacher takes the pupils in all the school subjects. The pupils at this stage are in the language acquisition stage whereby they see teachers use of language as a model.

Therefore, intact classes of Nursery 3 classes in the four (4) pre-primary institutional schools were observed. With the above consideration, it becomes evident that a class taken with their teacher would be most appropriate. Data were obtained during the last term of the school year. This is in order to give enough time for the Nursery 3 pupils to go

through most of the activities and steps in learning initial reading.

### 3.5 Instruments for Data Collection

There were two (2) instruments used for the collection of data. Adapted Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (AFIAC) used to code teacher-pupil interactions using observation method. This instrument was adapted from Ned Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIACS) which Ned Flanders developed in 1970. Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories System has been used extensively in various studies regarding classroom interaction. It seeks to record teachers' verbal behaviour in classroom interaction. The adapted instrument consists of ten categories; seven (7) of these categories reflect teacher talk (category 1-7), two (2) reflect pupil talk (category 8 and 9), and the last category indicates silence or confusion. (See appendix) These items were represented in an observation sheet called a coding chart.

The second instrument is a researcher developed test titled 'Initial Reading Achievement Test (IRAT) that was used to assess achievement of pupils in initial reading. It was made up of two and three letter phonic words. There were fifty words in the each of the reading passages. Each pupil was expected to read the passage within five minutes. Each word correctly pronounced/read is scored 2 marks. A child who reads all the words correctly scores 100% while the one who cannot pronounce/read any of the words would score 0. On



this consideration, different pupils scored different marks depending on the number of words he/she could pronounce/read correctly within the stipulated time. (See appendix)

**3.6 Validation of Instruments**

Flanders Interaction Analysis System have been found valid by many researchers; however, a pilot assessment of the Adapted Flanders Interaction Categories System was carried out on the list by three experts in the areas of psychology and test and measurement. These experts include two (2) senior lecturers in educational psychology and one in tests and measurement from the University of Uyo and One senior lecturer in Tests and measurement from Alvan Ikoku University of Education, Owerri. Their corrections, comments and alterations were used to improve the final version of the instrument.

The Initial Reading Achievement Test was subjected to expert scrutiny by two experts in Early Childhood, and one expert in English Language from the University of Uyo and one expert in measurement and evaluation from Alvan Ikoku University of Education, Owerri. The experts evaluated the lists and recommended for modifications where necessary. Based on their recommendations some items were modified and some changed. Copies of the instruments were also given to the researcher’s supervisor.

**3.7 Reliability of Instruments**

The Adapted Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories System was tested for reliability using the Scat formula. The least calculated Scat coefficient for observers was 81% which is a high reliability. To also ascertain the validity of the Initial Reading Achievement Test (IRAT), the instrument was trial tested using two Pre-primary schools in institutional schools in Orlu Education Zone. It was administered to the pupils two times in an interval of two weeks. The scores obtained from the first and second administration were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. A reliability coefficient (r) of 0.82 was obtained.

**3.8 Data Collection Procedure/Administration of Instrument**

Before carrying out the observation, the researcher collected letter of introduction from the Head of Department Early Childhood Education which granted the researcher access to the school authorities. This enabled the various participants to give the researcher high level of cooperation. On the observation, the researcher observed the nursery three (3) pupils in their classes. Each class and their teachers were observed for twenty minutes of class interactions during activities. They were observed three (3) times each. With the help of the class teachers the pupils’ chairs had been labelled previously with seat numbers for easier identification. The researcher began coding the interactions that occurred approximately three minutes after the day’s lesson began. At an interval of 15 seconds, the researcher decided which of the categories of AFIACS best represented the interacting events just completed and then coded them with a tally in the observation form.

After the three times observation in the school, the Reading Achievement Test was administered one on one to the pupils by the researcher and carefully scored immediately. Each correctly read word was scored 2 marks.

**3.9 Method of Data Analysis**

Mean (x) and standard deviation (SD) were used to interpret the results of the research questions; while Pearson

Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and independent t-test were used for the statistical analysis of the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

**Data Analysis and Discussions of Findings**

**4.1 Data Analysis**

The focal question in this study is to examine the relationship between teacher-pupil interactions and pre-primary pupils’ academic achievement in initial reading in institutional schools in Owerri Education Zone. This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from the study and discussion of the findings. The analysis and discussion of findings go in the order of the earlier stated research questions and hypotheses formulated to guide the study. These were presented under the following sub-headings: Answering of the Research Questions, testing of the Hypotheses, Findings of the study, Discussion of findings and Summary of Findings.

**4.1: Answering Research Questions**

**4.1.1: Answering Research Question 1:**

How does teacher-pupil interactions relate with pre-primary pupils’ performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone?

**Table 4.1:** Correlation between teacher-pupil interactions and pre-primary pupils’ performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri education zone using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Nr</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<b>Teacher-pupil interaction</b>	1010.681	moderate positive
<b>Performance in initial reading</b>		relationship

From the data analysis in Table 4.1, the computed correlation coefficient (r) between teacher-pupil interaction and pupils’ performance in initial reading is 0.681. This shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between teacher-pupil interaction and pupils performance in initial reading among pre-primary pupils in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri education zone.

**4.1.2 Answering Research Question 2:**

How does same sex teacher-pupil interactions relate with same sex pupils performance in initial reading in institutional Pre-Primary schools in Owerri Education Zone?

**Table 4.2:** Correlation between same sex teacher-pupil interaction and same sex pupils performance in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<b>Same sex TPI</b>	49	0.722	high positive relationship
<b>Same sex performance</b>			

From the data analysis in Table 4.2, the computed correlation coefficient (r) between same sex teacher-pupil interaction (TPI) and same sex pupils’ performance in initial reading is 0.722. This shows that there is a high positive relationship between same sex teacher-pupil interaction and

same sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.

**4.1.3 Answering Research Question 3:**

How does opposite sex teacher-pupil interactions relate with opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone?

**Table 4.3:** Correlation between opposite sex teacher-pupil interaction and opposite sex pupils' performance in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.

Variable	N	r	Interpretation
Opposite sex TPI	52	0.733	high positive
Opposite sex performance			relationship

From the data analysis in Table 4.3, the computed correlation coefficient (r) between opposite sex teacher-pupil interaction (TPI) and opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading is 0.733. This shows that there is a high positive relationship between opposite sex teacher-pupil interaction and opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.

**4.1.4: Answering Research Question 4:**

How does teacher-pupil interaction (TPI) of staff and non-staff children differ in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone?

**Table 4.4:** Mean and Standard Deviation for mean scores of teacher-pupil interactions between staff children and non-staff children in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
Staff Children	49	21.23	14.58
Non-staff children	52	28.53	13.53

From the data analysis in Table 4.4, the staff children obtained a mean of 21.23 with standard deviation of 14.58 in teacher-pupil interaction while the non-staff children obtained a mean of 28.53 with a standard deviation of 13.53. Based on this, it can be said that non-staff children had a higher teacher-pupil interaction than the staff children.

**4.1.5: Answering Research Question 5:**

How does initial reading performance of staff and non-staff children differ in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone?

**Table 4.5:** Mean and Standard Deviation for mean scores of initial reading performance between staff children and non-staff children in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
Staff Children	49	36.8	27.2
Non-staff children	52	46.2	28.6

**Table 4.7:** Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis of the relationship between same sex teacher-pupil interactions and same sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools with corresponding t-test analysis of level of significance

Variables	N	r	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Same sex TPI	42	0.722	47	7.147	200	significant
Same sex performance						

Significant p < .05

**Table 4.7** above shows that the correlation coefficient

From the data analysis in Table 4.5, the staff children obtained a mean of 36.8 with standard deviation of 27.2 in teacher-pupil interaction while the non-staff children obtained a mean of 46.2 with a standard deviation of 28.6. Based on this, it can be said that non-staff children had a higher initial reading performance than the staff children.

**4.2 Testing of Hypotheses**

Five null hypotheses were tested at alpha level of .05 and corresponding degree of freedom as follows:

**4.2.1 Testing Hypothesis One:**

There is no significant relationship between teacher pupil-interactions (TPI) and initial reading performance of pupils in institutional Pre-primary school in Owerri Education Zone. Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypothesis and (r) subjected to t-test for a test of significance. Summary of data is expressed in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation of relationship between teacher-pupil interactions and pupils' performance in initial reading with corresponding t-test analysis of level of significance.

Variables	N	r	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
TPI	101	0.681	99	9.24	2.00	significant
IRP						

Significant p < .05

The correlation coefficient (0.681) between Teacher-Pupil Interaction and Performance in Initial Reading was subjected to t-test for a significant relationship. Results of data analysis in table 4.6 show the table calculated value (t-cal) of 9.24; the table critical value (t-crit) of 2.00 and the degree of freedom (df) of 99 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the t-cal value of 9.24 is greater than the t-crit of 2.00, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between teacher-pupil interaction and performance in initial reading.

**4.2.2 Testing Hypothesis Two:**

There is no significant relationship between same sex teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) and same sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional Pre-primary schools. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesis and (r) subjected to t-test for a test of significance. Summary of data is expressed in **Table 4.7**.

(0.722) between same sex teacher-pupil interactions and

same sex pupils' performance in initial reading was subjected to t-test for a significant relationship. Results of data analysis in Table 4.6 show the table calculated value (t-cal) of 7.147; the table critical value (t-crit) of 2.00 and the degree of freedom (df) of 47 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the t-cal value of 7.147 is greater than the t-crit of 2.00, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between same sex teacher-pupil interaction and same sex pupils' performance in initial

reading.

**4.2.3 Testing Hypothesis Three:**

There is no significant relationship between opposite sex teacher-pupil interactions and opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesis and (r) subjected to t-test for a test of significance. Summary of data is expressed in **Table 4.8**.

**Table 4.8:** Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis of the relationship between opposite sex teacher-pupil interaction and opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional schools with corresponding t-test analysis of level of significance.

Variables	N	r	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Opposite sex TPI	52	0.733	50	7.61	2.00	significant
Opposite sex IRP						

Significant p < .05

Data in table 4.8 above shows that the correlation coefficient (0.733) between opposite sex teacher-pupil interactions and opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading was subjected to t-test for a significant relationship. Results of data analysis in table 4.6 show the table calculated value (t-cal) of 7.61; the table critical value (t-crit) of 2.00 and the degree of freedom (df) of 50 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the t-cal value of 7.61 is greater than the t-crit of 2.00, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a

significant relationship between opposite sex teacher-pupil interaction and opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading.

**4.2.4 Testing Hypothesis Four:**

There is no significant difference between staff and non-staff children's teacher-pupil interactions (TPI) in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone. Independent t-test statistics was used in testing the null hypothesis and summary of data shown in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9:** t-test analysis of difference between staff and non-staff children's teacher pupil interactions (TPI) in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	decision
Staff children	49	21.23	14.58	47	-2.60	2.00	significant
Non staff children	52	28.53	13.53	50			

Significant p < .05

From the data analysed, the table calculated value (t-cal) is -2.60 whereas for 99 degrees of freedom .05 level of significance the table critical value (t-crit) is 2.00. Since the t-cal of 2.60 is greater than t-crit of 2.00, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in teacher-pupil interactions of staff and non-staff children.

**4.2.5 Testing Hypothesis Five:**

There is no significant difference between staff and non-staff children's initial reading performance in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone. Independent t-test statistics was used in testing the null hypothesis and summary of data shown in Table 4.10.

**Table 4.10:** t-test analysis of difference between staff and non-staff children's initial reading performance in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	decision
Staff children	49	36.8	27.2	47	-8.94	2.00	significant
Non staff children	52	46.2	28.6	50			

Significant p < .05

From the data analysed, the table calculated value (t-cal) is -8.94 whereas at .05 level of significance for 99 degrees of freedom the table critical value (t-critical) is 2.00. Since the t-cal of -8.94 is greater than t-crit of 2.00, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in staff and non-staff children's performance in initial reading.

**4.3 Findings of the Study**

Findings based on research questions answered showed the following findings:

1. There is a moderate positive relationship between teacher-pupil interactions and pupils' performance in initial reading among pre-primary pupils in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri education zone.
2. There is a high positive relationship between same sex teacher-pupil interactions and same sex pupils'

- performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.
3. There is a high positive relationship between opposite sex teacher-pupil interactions and opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.
4. Non-staff children had higher teacher-pupil interactions than staff children.
5. Non-staff children had higher initial reading performance than staff children.

**Findings Based on the Null Hypotheses**

The hypotheses tested revealed the following findings:

1. There is a significant relationship between teacher-pupil interactions and performance in initial reading.
2. There is a significant relationship between same sex teacher-pupil interactions and same sex pupils'

- performance in initial reading.
3. There is a significant relationship between opposite sex teacher-pupil interactions and opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading.
  4. There is a significant difference in teacher-pupil interactions of staff and non-staff children.
  5. There is a significant difference in staff children and non-staff children's performance in initial reading.

### Discussion of Major Findings

The finding of the study in hypothesis 1, Table 4.6 showed that teacher-pupil interactions have a significant relationship with achievement in initial reading. The above finding is in consonance with the findings of Kalu (2008) who stated that a significantly positive relationship exists between teacher-pupil interaction pattern and students' academic achievement in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. The finding also corroborates with the finding of Brown (2008) who found that it is mainly through interactions with significant adults that children start the process of language learning and communication. In his study, while all other classroom variables are important, teacher-pupil interaction is the most essential key to language learning. This also agrees with Rivers (2007) that acknowledged that through interactions, students increase their language store as they listen to discussions, questions and readings of teachers. The above finding is also in harmonious agreement with the studies of Morrow (2000) which indicated that classrooms with greater teacher facilitation through interaction enhance literacy behaviours. He asserted also that verbal interactions within the classroom improve reading skills.

2. The finding of the study on hypothesis 2, Table 4.7 showed that there is a significant relationship between same sex teacher-pupil interactions and same sex pupils' performance in initial reading. The above finding is in absolute agreement with the findings of Dabiri (2006) who reported that interactions between teachers and students are influenced by teachers' attitude and expectations from genders, and that teachers change their behaviour, expectations, and teaching style according to students' gender. Krupnick (2014) in his study concluded that male students talked much longer in the predominant classroom circumstances, i.e., the situation in which the instructor is male and the majority of the students are male. The presence of female instructors apparently had an inspiring effect on female students. However, this is contradicted with the findings of Cook (2005) who postulated that teacher-pupil interaction in early childhood classes does not depend either on the gender of the teacher or the gender of the children.

3. The result of the findings of the study on hypothesis 3, Table 4.8, showed that there is a significant relationship between opposite sex teacher-pupil interactions and opposite sex pupils' performance in initial reading. This finding is in complete agreement with the view of Sunderland (2008) who maintained that teachers vary considerably in the quantities of interactions they have with individual students. He contended that male students receive a higher proportion of contacts from female teachers across subject areas. In other words, female teachers initiate more contacts with male students than with females and male students initiate more contacts with female teachers.

4. The result of the study in hypothesis 4, Table 4.9, showed that there is a significant difference in teacher-pupil

interactions of staff and non-staff children. This finding is supported by Obinaju (1995) who reported that there are differing interactional approaches depending on the type of school and motivation of teachers. She purported that teacher-pupil interactions also differ according to the learner's abilities and circumstances surrounding him/her. This view is further corroborated by the views and work of Flanders (1970) who contended that no two classrooms are the same in interaction.

5. The result of the findings of the study in hypothesis 5, Table 4.10 showed that there is a significant difference in initial reading performance of staff children and non-staff children. There is no evidenced research work on this variable; however, the finding revealed in this study could be attributed to the fact that the parental occupation, economic status and family background of staff children differ from that of non-staff. Non-staff parents give their children much encouragement and motivation to do well in institutional schools. They see their admission into an institutional school as a sort of lucky privilege and therefore motivate their children and wards to work very hard; while staff parents see the admission as a right and therefore do not put in much effort in preparing their children for much academic work. Due to non-staff parents' motivation and view about the institutional schools, these parents interact frequently with the teachers and their children. These interactions influence the non-staff children's zeal to do well by asking and answering teachers' questions which impact on their general interaction with teachers.

From the data analyzed in respect to the five research questions (tables 4.1, 4.3, 4.4 4.5, and 4.6) and the five null hypotheses (Tables 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11), it was revealed that teacher-pupil interactions significantly influence initial reading performance of institutional pre-primary pupils. It can then be concluded that pre-primary pupils who have positive, quality and frequent interactions with their teachers will however achieve more in initial reading.

### Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents the summary of the study, aided by the results of the data analyzed and the hypotheses formulated to guide the study. It also presents the conclusions drawn in relation to the findings; the recommendations made; as well as suggestions for further related studies.

#### 5.1 Summary

The issue of best educational practices is the order of the day in the Nigerian educational system starting from the pre-primary school level. There is also the compelling need to make children read early in these days of emergent literacy. There are demands by stakeholders in education for improvement in the reading standards of children early. Based on these, one of the most pressing issues in this debate for reform is the overwhelming presence of seemingly poor readers despite vast resources and continuous efforts of pre-primary school owners in the provision adequate environment in the schools. Teacher pupil interaction is so vital at the pre-primary level. If the goals of reading skills at the pre-primary level should be achieved, teacher-pupil interactions at this level should be assessed. This research work was prompted by the above stated problem. The researcher therefore decided to carry out this research in order to find out the relationship between teacher pupil interaction and achievements in initial reading of pre-

primary school pupils. It is believed that the findings of this research would educate pre-primary school teachers and other children's educators on the need for effective interaction among children and teachers.

The research work employed the correlation design to examine the influence of teacher pupil interaction on the initial reading performance of pre-primary pupils in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State.

To carry out this study, five specific objectives were stated; five research questions and five hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

Out of the population of 1440 institutional pre-primary school pupils in Owerri Education Zone and their 107 teachers a sample size of 101 pre-primary school pupils and Eight (8) teachers were purposively drawn. Two instruments were used: Adapted Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (AFIAC) used to determine the quantity of teacher-pupil interaction in the class and a Researcher-set Initial Reading Achievement Test (IRAT). Data obtained were analysed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and independent t-test. The results showed a positive significant relationship between teacher-pupil interaction and achievement in initial reading on the variables tested at .05 level of significance. The major findings of the study are that:

1. Teacher-pupil interaction has a significant relationship with pre-primary pupils' performance in initial reading.
2. Gender has a significant relationship with pre-primary pupils' performance in initial reading in institutional pre-primary schools.
3. Parental status as it relates to being staff or non-staff has an influence on teacher pupil interaction.
4. Parental status as it relates to being staff or non-staff has an influence on performance of pre-primary pupils in initial reading.

### 5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are hereby made:

Teacher-pupil interaction has been found to have a positive significant relationship with pupils' performance in initial reading. Based on this, a teacher that is just implementing the best, evidence-based curriculum, prepared with the activities, but however teaches the curriculum without shared joy, mutual respect, sensitivity or encouragement, effective interaction or doesn't incorporate children's ideas and interest into her lesson will not achieve good level language development in children in the pre-primary level of education. Teacher-pupil interaction is an effective platform on which initial reading should be developed. However, there is a significant relationship between sex of a teacher and sex of a pupil in performance in teacher-pupil interaction. Same sex pupils performed higher in interaction and initial reading when they interacted with same sex teacher. Based on this therefore, there is a significant difference in teacher-pupil interaction and initial reading scores of children of staff and non-staff in institutional pre-primary schools in Owerri Education Zone.

### 5.3 Recommendations

It has been observed that pre-primary pupils in Imo State and indeed Nigeria as a whole need a break through in reading early in order to meet up with the global best practices. Teacher pupil interactions on its own part have been found

to correlate positively with achievement in initial reading. Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made: Stake holders in education should institute a training programme for all teachers in the pre-primary schools that will educate them on the need for effective, positive, and warm interactions in pupils' environment; Curriculum planners should include areas to in the curriculum of pre-primary schools aspects that will involve adequate teacher-pupil interactions; Educational administrators should design an effective ways of monitoring and evaluating classroom instruction in order to enhance teachers' interaction outcomes; Head teachers and school supervisors should regularly observe teachers' classroom teaching and video tape interactions in classrooms for teachers to assess and access their interactions in the classroom; Effective interactional patterns should be modelled, videotaped and played occasionally for teachers in the pre-primary schools. This will help them to access themselves and impact positively on their teaching methods.

### 5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This research study tried to determine the influence of teacher-pupil interaction disparity on the initial reading achievement of pre-primary school pupils. In the course of this study, it was discovered that more research studies on teacher-pupil interaction and its influence on achievement of pre-primary pupils. The researcher therefore makes the following suggestions: There should be similar research on teacher-pupil interaction and pre-primary pupils' achievement in public and private schools; There should be similar research that would carry out an experimental study on effect of teacher-pupil interaction on pre-primary school pupils' academic achievement.

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