READERS' THEATRE TECHNIQUE; RELEVANCE OF NATURE OF CLASS FOR ENHANCING READING SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KISUMU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:
Learners in secondary schools ought to be provided with a learning environment which results in effective reading skills. Nature of class facilitates achievement in reading skills through group work, scaffold, motivation and enacting scripts. This study adopted social constructivism in a quasi-experimental design to establish influence of nature of class on achievement in reading skills in secondary schools. Data was collected from learners, n=205 (experimental groups), n=221 (control groups) and 19 teachers for a period of 8 weeks. Reading skills assessment tests, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions were used to collect data. The findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between nature of class and achievement in reading skills with p=0.00. The findings in regard to statistical analysis revealed nature of class had a significant impact on achievement in reading skills and interactive classroom environment would be valuable in the teaching and learning of reading skills.

Keywords: enacting scripts, group work, motivation, nature of class, reading skills, scaffold

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1. Introduction

Competency in reading results from learner ability to read fluently and comprehend information from literary texts. Competency in reading can be realized by nature of class, an aspect of readers' theatre technique which Hannah (2013) viewed as learner interaction and class environment. In the same vein, Mucherah and Herendeen (2013) in an article on reading achievement in primary schools observed that classrooms which had teacher support provided an inspirational learning environment. Providing a supportive class environment whereby learners participate actively and freely would definitely enhance achievement in reading skills. On the contrary, Maingi (2015) reported that teachers in secondary schools English classrooms rushed through reading skills instruction which negatively impacted on achievement in reading skills. However, Nopa and Leni (2017) posited that readers' theatre technique class activities enable learners of different reading ability participate actively in reading resulting in effective reading fluency and comprehension. In support, Kulo, Odundo and Kibui (2019) observed learners improved in reading skills when engaged in adapting scripts, a strategy of readers theatre technique.

According to Black and Stave (2007), readers' theatre technique class activities promotes an organized setting for reading instruction since it includes various strategies. On the other hand, Young and Nageldinger (2014) posit that readers' theatre technique class activities involve dramatic reading of a script in groups of learners. Moreover, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), argued that for learners to come up with a meaningful interpretation of literary texts, there is need for an interactive practice which would scaffold the reading process. Ideally, meaningful interpretation of the texts involve interaction through cooperation amongst learners. Since learners in secondary schools still struggle with reading as observed by Athiemoolam and Kibui (2012), reading through a collaborative approach is advisable. This can be realized when teachers engage learners in group work, scaffold, motivation and enacting scripts during reading skills instruction.

In essence, the nature of class involves readers collaborating and working actively in groups by receiving and interpreting information. Activities that involve interaction among class members are motivational towards reading in secondary schools because they provide opportunities for supportive, meaningful interaction and active learning. In addition, readers are supported to activate existing background knowledge through scaffold from teachers who model effective reading and also motivate them to read independently. However, Piper, Shcroeder and Trudell (2016) reported that learners read fluently yet failed to gain comprehension. On the other hand, an interactive classroom through group work and scaffold would enable learners participate actively in class besides building confidence in reading. In this regard, empirical evidence was needed to determine the influence of nature of class on achievement in reading skills in English language among secondary schools in Kenya. Considering the works of Mucherah and Herendeen (2013) and Nopa and Leni (2017), this study focused on group work, scaffold,

motivation and enactment of scripts as elements of nature of class. Thus, the study sought to establish the influence of nature of class on learner achievement in reading skills in secondary schools.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Group Work and Achievement in Reading Skills
According to Rahman (2014), group work promotes a social perception in learning. When learners in secondary schools read in groups, cooperation is encouraged during reading instruction enabling proficiency in reading skills. Bwire and Roy-Campbell (2015) writing on teaching adolescents who struggle with reading ascertained that group work is valuable for both teachers and learners. Moreover, engaging learners in group work promotes effective reading because the focus is to achieve a common goal as far as comprehension is involved. Besides realizing a common goal, Bwire and Roy-Campbell (2015) revealed that during group work learners cooperatively produce varied ideas from the literary texts they are reading. This implies that group work renders learning to be more diversified and informative. Supporting this argument on cooperative learning, Raja and Saeed (2012) posit that group reading is a step to learner centred teaching. Therefore, this study contemplated reading in groups a strategy of nature of class for readers to collaborate and work towards a common understanding of literary texts.

According to Rosenblatt (1978), each reader experiences different reading encounters because of individual schema. Thus, learners may come up with varied interpretations of the text if there is no common agreement on the elements in the text. However, Tugman (2010), asserted that group discussion enabled learners to practice dialogue amongst themselves. On the other hand, Hausheer, Hansen and Doumas (2011) argued that interaction in groups during reading instruction enables learners to develop cognitive comprehension strategies to interact deeply with the text. Practicing dialogue through group work enables learners to become more responsible resulting in enhanced reading skills from a collaborative and learner centred approach. In regard to this argument, Gabl, Kaiser, Long and Roemer (2007) in an article on guided strategies on enhancing comprehension and fluency suggested creating flexible groups in the classroom for establishing a positive learning atmosphere. Accordingly, Hausheer et al. (2011) posited that by teachers working with groups of fewer learners would increase individualized reading skills. The argument being smaller groups would result in learners getting more personalized attention and relationship with teachers strengthened. This study found prudent to establish the role of group work in enhancing reading skills among form three learners in secondary schools in Kisumu County.

2.2 Scaffold and Achievement in Reading Skills
According to Abdul-Majeed and Muhammad (2015), scaffold as a reading strategy supports performance of reading skills among learners. Appropriate scaffold from teachers and peers stimulates learners towards reading in secondary schools' English

classes. However, Roberts (2012) in an article on effects on factual and inferential comprehension observed learners' reading attitude was affected by anxiety. On the other hand, Young and Rasinski (2017) in an article on effects of readers' theatre on word recognition, automaticity and prosody, reported many ways to utilize scaffold depending on age group and level of difficulty of the reading material. Similarly, Abdul-Majeed and Muhammad (2015) posits that there are specific strategies which should be deliberately adopted to scaffold reading skills. In essence, teachers should scaffold learners through direct instruction (Strachan, 2015). This would result in a positive attitude to reading.

Wilawan (2012) posits that learners need the necessary support to develop processing at both cognitive and metacognitive levels. Indeed, various strategies can be adopted by learners under the guidance of teachers during reading skills instruction. According to Young and Rasinski (2017), rehearsals of script reading in groups scaffold development of reading fluency. This is facilitated when teachers model accurate reading when learners practice to read scripts. On the other hand, Strachan (2015), suggested the use of questions act as scaffold to comprehension. According to Olson (2011), questioning technique as a scaffold boosts learners' self-esteem and confidence in reading. Salavati and Tabatabaei (2018) reported that whichever scaffolding strategy is adopted, reading skills instruction should be conducted in the three phases which are: before reading, during reading and after reading phases. Therefore, the role of the teacher is to provide appropriate activities at all phases. This study acknowledged the critical role of support for comprehension and fluency development among learners in secondary schools.

2.3 Motivation and Achievement in Reading Skills

According to Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick and Littles (2009), motivation facilitates learners to regard literary texts as valuable during reading skills instruction. Motivation plays a significant role in reading by encouraging learners to dedicate more time to read which positively impacts on academic achievement. In essence, considering literary texts as valuable materials makes learners read frequently ahead of the class lesson. However, Akande and Oyedapo (2018) writing on developing reading habits in secondary school in Nigeria observed learners lacked enthusiasm to read which contributed to lack of processing information in literary texts. On the other hand, Stuz, Schaffner and Schiefele (2016) reporting on the relationship between motivation and comprehension proposes that teachers need to find ways of fascinating learners into reading. In support, Kabilan and Kamaruddin (2010) argued that motivation should be used as a strategy to enjoy learning literary texts. Therefore, teachers have a role to motivate learners to read by providing connections between learner interests and reading instruction through assigning tasks which create purposes for reading.

Smith (2011) in an article on effectiveness of readers' theatre approach in improving reading fluency acknowledged that lack of motivation may lead learners not be focussed during reading activity in class. In response to Smith (2011) report, this study contemplated Kabilan and Kamarudin (2010) contention that interest in reading and motivation can be prepared by teachers engaging learners in experiential learning such

as adopting readers' theatre technique to facilitate reading skills in class. On the other hand, Nopa and Leni (2017) proposes students learning evaluation should be monitored from strategies presented in class. Practically, when learners' progress in reading skills is monitored, they feel motivated and regard reading an interesting venture. This study looked at the effect of motivation in enhancing reading skills among learners in secondary schools.

2.4 Enactment of Scripts and Achievement in Reading Skills

Enactment of scripts as a strategy of readers' theatre technique permits teachers and learners to use scripts adapted from literary materials to enhance reading fluency and comprehension. According to Smith (2011), enacting scripts engages learners to read, interpret and also experience being the character in literary texts through prosodic reading. On the other hand, Keehn, Harmon and Shoho (2008) observed that enactment of scripts guides learners to discover authors intended meaning and develop better comprehension through individual or group interpretation. Readers are able to inflect voices to convey the author's intended meaning. However, Goering and Baker (2010) writing on oral reading in secondary school reported learners were extremely self-conscious which thwarted willingness to read aloud. On the other hand, Chan and Chan (2009) writing on learning through readers' theatre technique observed fear to read aloud was reduced through group reading. Group reading enables learners to break between readings thus reduces fear, because during readers theatre instruction, no individual is required to read the entire script alone.

According to Visser (2013), enactment of scripts as readers' theatre strategy enables learners to develop literal understanding and discover a deeper meaning of the text. Furthermore, enacting scripts enables learners to make connections of their own experiences with information depicted in the literary texts by portraying responsibility of the characters (Alshehri, 2014). Kabilan and Kamaruddin (2010) reported that learners' thoughts come alive while using voice inflection to read in order to relay characters' emotions. Depicting the emotions of characters enables learners to have a better comprehension of literary texts because they relate with characters. Tsou (2011) observed, enacting scripts in groups provided a pleasure for reading among learners. Similarly, Karabag (2015) in a study on opinion of secondary school learners on readers' theatre technique observed participants enjoyed the cooperation among classmates which was associated with enactment of scripts. This study recognized that self-consciousness could hinder secondary school learners' presentation before peers in class and sought to establish the role of enactment of scripts in building confidence in reading among secondary school learners in Kenya.

2.5 Theoretical Perspective

The study was guided by social constructivist theory by Vygotsky (1896-1934) and schema theory by Bartlett (1932). Social constructivism encourages social interaction and active involvement during the reading process while schema theory supports building

background knowledge and utilizing it during the reading process. The two theories complement each other in terms of scaffold and interaction during reading skills instruction.
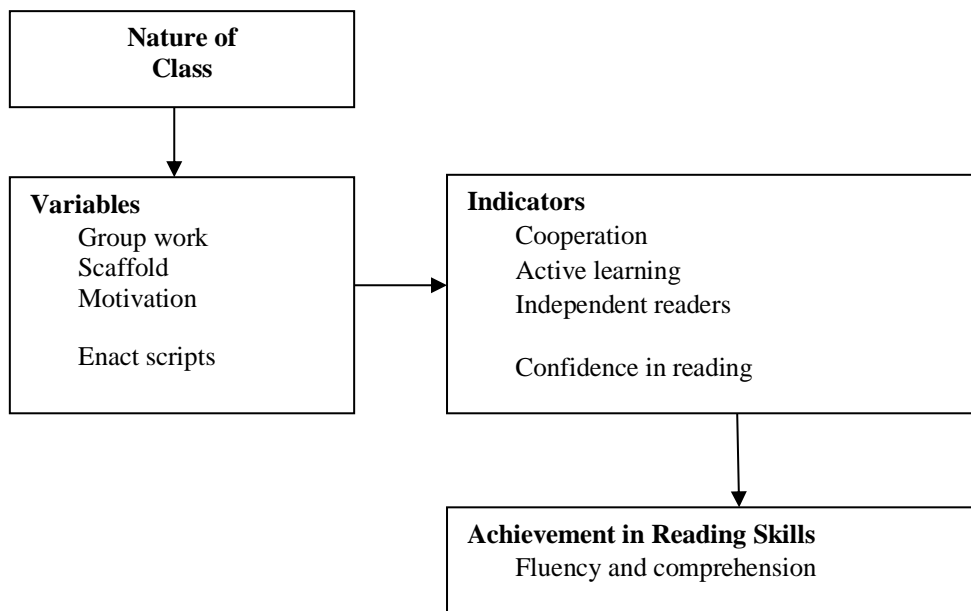

Figure 1: Perceived framework of nature of class and achievement in reading skills

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted quasi-experimental pre-test post-test control group design. The target population was learners in form three and teachers of English in mixed day public sub county secondary schools. Purposive sampling was used to arrive at eight schools within the boundaries of Kisumu city to guarantee homogeneity. Four schools were randomly assigned to control with 221 participants and four to experimental study groups with 205 participants. Purposive sampling was used to arrive at 19 teachers of English. Mixed method approach was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Research ethics was taken into consideration by acquiring a permit and informed consent sought from participants and confidentiality observed.

3.1 Data collection procedure
At first participants in experimental and control groups sat for the pretest and teachers filled questionnaires before embarking on treatment in experimental groups for a period of eight weeks.

A 40-minute designed lesson plan was used in experimental groups four lessons in a week. During instruction, participants discussed and worked in groups after the reading phase to adapt scripts from the text, Blossoms of the Savannah (2017), a recommended class set text for form three learners in Kenya secondary schools. Thereafter, the scripts were read by group members to the rest of the class who acted as the audience. During reading, teachers scaffolded reading fluency, asked questions at all

phases of reading to scaffold comprehension. Moreover, participants were given tasks as assignments to read chapters where scripts would be adapted to enable familiarization of content. In the course of the study, teachers were interviewed and participants in experimental groups participated in focus group discussions to give their opinion on the effectiveness of nature of class. Lessons were also observed to ascertain strategies used in class. At the end of the study, a posttest was administered to both groups and only learners in experimental groups filled questionnaires. The tools were tested for validity and reliability. The reading skills assessment tests had three sections testing on comprehension skills, vocabulary and prosodic skills.

3.2 Data Analysis
Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis. Frequency tables and means were generated in descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was reported according to themes of the study. On the other hand, inferential statistics was used to determine statistically significant levels at $\alpha = 0.05$ to establish how each variable predicted achievement in reading skills and differences in achievement between the two groups.

4 Results and Discussions

4.1 Effectiveness of Nature of Class and Achievement in Reading Skills
The study examined the influence of nature of class on achievement in reading skills amongst learners in secondary schools. Nature of class was exemplified by group work, scaffold, motivation and enacting scripts.

4.1.1 Group Work and Achievement in Reading Skills
The study sought to establish if teachers engaged learners in group work. The findings are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Rating of Group work

Study groups	Occasionally	Frequently	Total
Control	-	9	**9**
Experimental	2	8	**10**
Total	**2(10.53%)**	**17(89.47%)**	**19**
Mean			**3.07**

The results in Table 1 indicate that 89.47% (n=17) teachers frequently used group work, while 10.53% (n=2) occasionally engaged learners in group work. With a mean M=3.07 indicates that using group work frequently enabled learners to work collaboratively to a common understanding of the text by exchanging ideas. The findings are supported by 90.73% of learners, who agreed that group work enhanced achievement in reading skills. This was attributed to revelations by participants that group work created a relaxed atmosphere amongst participants making them participate actively in groups. Moreover,

working in groups of four to six as observed in class activities enabled teachers to reach individual levels and guide them appropriately.

The study findings are in tandem with Rahaman (2014) who reported that reading by sharing in groups enabled effective comprehension of content in the text because learners were able to socialize and exchange views. The findings coincide with Raja and Saeed (2012) contention on group work being a learner centred method when learners socialize and cooperate towards a common understanding. Ideally, group work builds a social perception in reading which makes learners interact freely by sharing varied views on the literary text. This promotes dialogue and reduces teacher talk resulting in a learner centred class.

4.1.2 Scaffold and Achievement in Reading Skills

The study established if teachers scaffold fluency and comprehension during reading instruction as depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Teachers' Rating of Scaffold

Study groups	Occasionally	Frequently	Total
Control	5	4	9
Experimental	5	5	10
Total	**10(52.63%)**	**9(47.37%)**	19
Mean			**2.63**

Table 2 reveals that 52.63% (n=10) teachers used scaffold occasionally during reading instruction while 47.37% (n=9) frequently used. The mean M=2.63 portrayed that teachers occasionally modelled fluent reading and guidance on appropriate reading strategies. However, findings from the learners revealed that 82.93% (n=170) learners agreed that scaffold from teachers and classmates enabled them to realize better scores in reading skills, while 17.07% (35) disagreed. The findings are supported by reports from the field in experimental groups where teachers helped learners arrive at proper pronunciation by modelling proper intonation in reading and engaged learners in varied reading strategies like discussions and questioning during reading instruction. Furthermore, learners were enthusiastic about the support given by teachers during reading instruction especially group discussions which enabled activation of background knowledge for effective comprehension and word recognition.

The findings of the study are in agreement with Abdul-Majeed and Muhammad (2015) who revealed that performance in reading skills was enhanced due to scaffold strategy. Similarly, Al-Thiyabi and Al-Bargi (2015) observed improvement in reading skills due to participant's readiness to learn because of scaffolding. The findings indicate that better achievement in posttest mean was realized because scaffold enabled learners participate actively in class which supported fluency and comprehension.

4.1.3 Motivation and Achievement in Reading Skills

The study found out whether teachers encouraged learners to practice independent reading. The results are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Teachers' Rating of Motivation

Study groups	Occasionally	Frequently	Total
Control	3	6	9
Experimental	3	7	10
Total	**6(31.58%)**	**13(68.42%)**	19
Mean			**2.92**

The results in Table 3 show that 68.42% (n=13) teachers frequently encouraged learners to read independently, while 31.58% (n=6) occasionally did. The rated mean M=2.92 revealed that learners were motivated to read because of encouragement from teachers. In support, 86.82% (n=178) learners agreed that reading independently ahead of the lesson enabled them to participate actively in class, thus improving in reading skills, while 13.18% (n=27) disagreed. Reading ahead of the lesson enables familiarization with language structures and elements in the text. The findings are supported by teachers reports and observed lessons which revealed teachers assigned chapters to be read in preparation of another lesson. On the other hand, learners reported that lessons were enjoyable because they were aware of what they were to cover in the lesson. This is because a purpose for reading had already been set and extraction of materials to adapt scripts for enactment was made easy. The findings indicate that motivation given by teachers enabled learners to read on their own thus building background knowledge of the task at hand.

The findings corroborate with Mucherah and Herendeen (2013) observation that reading motivation significantly predicted academic achievement in reading. The study findings support Stuz et al. (2016) who reported that teachers used intriguing ways to motivate learners to read, thereby impacting positively on reading skills achievement. The findings imply that giving a task encouraged learners to read because it creates a purpose for reading. Findings of the study reveal that better scores in the post- test was as a result of learners' interest to practice independent reading which was influenced by motivation from teachers' assignments.

4.1 4 Enactment of Scripts and Achievement in Reading Skills

The study established if teachers engaged learners in enacting scripts as displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Teachers' Rating of Enacting Scripts

Study groups	Occasionally	Frequently	Total
Control	9	-	9
Experimental	10	-	10
Total	**19(100%)**	**-**	19
Mean			**1.37**

The results in Table 4 established that all teachers, 100% (n=19) occasionally engaged learners in enacting scripts adapted from literary texts. The mean M=1.37 depicts that learners rarely practiced group reading. Teachers reported that they commonly used dramatization and role play rather than enacting scripts. However, enacting scripts is advantageous as it enables learners attain reading fluency for confidence is built because learners do not have to memorize their scripts and lines like in dramatization. Additional results from learners revealed that enacting scripts enhanced achievement in reading skills as 92.2% (n=189) learners agreed, while 7.8 % (n=16) disagreed. The results were supported by learners who expressed that enacting scripts enabled them to connect with experiences of characters' actions and emotions through prosodic reading resulting in effective understanding of information. In addition, teachers reported that learners were engaged actively in the reading process and were willing to read whenever appointed to read aloud in class. This was attributed to the fact that since they did not memorize lines, they were relaxed which built confidence in reading.

The findings are in tandem with Nopa and Leni (2017), who observed that all participants enjoyed group reading which improved achievement in reading skills. The results also confirm Jeon and Lee (2013) findings that enacting scripts increased motivation for learning because the class created an environment which supported and improved attitude among low achievers. This is due to the fact that enacting scripts is a collective reading exercise, which raises learner's affective domain. The findings thus indicate that participants achieved reading fluency and comprehension because information in the text was explored from their own level of interpretation.

4.1.5 Relationship between Nature of Class and Achievement in Reading Skills

The study tested the null hypothesis, there is no statistically significant relationship between nature of class and achievement in reading skills. Multiple linear regressions were run to predict reading skills from group work, scaffold, motivation and enacting scripts as portrayed in Table 5.

Table 5: Computed Model of Nature of Reading Class

Model	Multiple weights		Regression			Correlation with Reading skills
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	
Constant	9.049	2.574		3.515	0.001	
Group work	4.017	0.454	0.434	8.844	0.000	0.550
Scaffolding	2.205	0.612	0.181	3.606	0.000	0.325
Motivation	2.326	0.616	0.213	3.779	0.000	0.506
Enactment	3.275	0.635	0.282	5.157	0.000	0.517

Notes R^2 =.551 (p<.05)

The findings in Table 5 show a linear and positive relationship between reading skills with group work, scaffolding, motivation and enacting scripts. The multiple linear regression established a statistically significant regression of F (4,200) =61.383 p<.000 with an R square of 0.551. This revealed that participants predicted reading skills is 9.048+

4.017(group work) + 2.205(scaffold) + 2.326(motivation) + 3.275(enacting scripts). The findings reveal all four variables added statistically significantly to the prediction, p<.05. The R-square statistic being 0.551 revealed that the model explained 55.1% of the reading skills scores. The study revealed a statistically significant relationship between nature of class and achievement in reading skills, since p was< p.05. The findings imply that engaging learners in group work, scaffold, motivation and enacting scripts creates a conducive reading environment which will result in better scores in reading skills. Teachers are encouraged to create an environment that would enhance achievement in reading skills because positive results will be realized from the way the class is organized.

4.1.6 Descriptive Statistics for Study Groups

The study established descriptive statistics for both study groups as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Study Groups

| | Pretest | | | | Posttest | | | |
| | Mean | Std. deviation | 95% confidence interval level for mean | | Mean | Std. deviation | 95% confidence interval level for mean | |
			Lower	Upper			Lower	Upper
Experimental	38.6	10.625	18	68	46.0	7.226	32	70
Control	37.8	10.141	15	67	43.3	7.833	26	66

The findings in Table 6 reveal a mean M= 38.61 % (n=205), for experimental groups and mean M= 37.87% (n=221) for control groups in the pre-test. On the other hand, a mean M=46.08% for experimental groups and a mean M= 43.33%for control groups were established in the post test.

Table 7: T-Test Results for Posttest

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Post- test	Equal variances assumed	3.738	424	0.000	2.743	0.732

Notes: p=.05.

The findings of the T-Test in Table 7 show t (424) =3.738, p =0.00. indicating a statistically significant difference between the two study groups. The findings reveal that the experimental study groups performed better than the control groups. Similar findings were observed by Jeon and Lee (2013) where participants registered a significant improvement when teachers were committed to the intervention.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that there is a statistically significant relationship between nature of class and achievement in reading skills. Engaging learners in group work, scaffold, motivation and enacting scripts creates a classroom environment that may enable improvement in reading skills. The study shows that group work

promotes socialization in class when learners cooperate towards a common understanding of the text. On the other hand, scaffold enables learners to become active in class because comprehension and fluency is supported by various reading strategies. Moreover, learners become motivated to read independently whenever the teacher assigns a task which gives them a purpose for reading, and enacting scripts builds confidence in the learners because reading the script is not a one-man show. For teachers to realize a productive reading class, a learning environment that supports and motivates learners through collaboration boosts the affective domain of the learners enabling processing of information, resulting in success in reading skills. The study recommends further research in other school categories.

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