ONLINE NEWS PATRONAGE AMONG STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, AND ITS PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract:

There are studies on Students' Internet use within the framework of online news reading, however, none seems to have effectively explored the practice for teaching. Recognising this gap, this study assessed the online news patronage among students of UDS-Ghana with the aim of galvanizing the practice for pedagogical gains. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 180 students selected randomly from six faculties, followed by an interview of 10 language teachers chosen from the Department of Languages. The quantitative data was interpreted descriptively using percentages, while content analysis was adopted for processing the qualitative data. The findings showed that online news reading was high among students. Out of 180 participants, 127(71%) read online news daily or weekly and Operanews.com, Ghanaweb.com, and Myjoyonline.com were the most preferred sites. Most participants, 49(27%), read news online for entertainment and fashion, while a few read it for language acquisition and other purposes. The teachers interviewed concerning possible exploits of the practice, indicated that they knew of it, however, they could not effectively explore it in classroom teaching. They did, however, acknowledge that the practice could be useful as basics for teaching vocabulary, reading comprehension, and others. In view of the findings, it is recommended that stable Internet is ensured on campuses to enhance students' good use of the practice. Teachers are also urged to explore the practice in language teaching activities and educate students on the benefits of reading online news.

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1. Introduction

Today, the Internet is one of the most powerful tools that have changed not only the communication behaviours of society but also affected every tenet of information acquisition and dispensation. It has aroused great avidity among the youth who surf every day in search of information. The internet also has brought about avenues that enable online readers to get more valuable information, either about entertainment, politics, sports, music or any current affairs from any reading sites of their choice (Rangaswamy & Sampath, 2017). Thus, the Internet and online news are currently synonymous in the sense that both have gradually gotten much patronage and continue to shape individuals' daily events. Most importantly, the internet has offered a great number of classroom resources for teaching/learning and there have been several online resources yet to be explored for pedagogical gains. This study examined how online news reading (also referred to as online journalism) which currently seems to be the norm all over the world could be harnessed by language teachers for teaching and learning purposes.

2. Advent of Digital Journalism

Digital journalism, also known as online journalism, is a contemporary form of journalism where editorial content is distributed via the Internet, as opposed to publishing via print or broadcast. The World Association of Newspapers reported that the global readership for online newspapers increased by more than 200 percent between 2001 and 2005 (Asia Media, 2006). It was also estimated that the total U.S. daily newspaper circulation (print and digital combined) in 2020 was 24.3 million on weekdays and 25.8 million for Sundays (Alliance for Audited Media (AAM), 2015-2020). In Ghana, over more than a decade, since the repeal of the criminal libel law, the activities of media and digital journalism and its related patronage have been rapidly on the increase (Karikari, 2000). It is, therefore, not an overestimation to indicate that online news reading has become a very important global habitual phenomenon which could be explored for many meaningful and useful gains including teaching and learning instructional strategies.

Reading becomes a habit in terms of likeness or taste for it (Sangkaeo, 1999). Digital reading has attracted the attention of many students as its patronage has become higher than paper-based reading (Tanjung et al., 2017). It is estimated that the Internet allows 92% of Americans access to information in many formats: online newspapers, news blogs, news videos, live news broadcasts etc (Shearer, 2021). Several researches conducted online demonstrated that the advent of the internet with supporting technological tools such as laptops and cell phones has given readers, especially students,

the ability to choose online reading materials of their interest at any time and at their own convenience. (Lynch, 2002). It has also been found out by Woodcock, Middleton and Nortcliffe (2012) that students perceived the smartphones, for instance, as the tools that helped them improve their reading. In the context of Ghana, Darko-Adjei (2019) also elaborated in his study that students use their smartphones to download and watch online lectures, news and also to read e-books. These activities have all been found to be result oriented as they have positively affected students' learning performance and, moreover, improved their academic well-being.

2.1 Utility of Online News

Online news reading has also become a new trend of development for internet users. Reading news online, to a large extent, exposes individuals to a variety of contents and broadens their intellectual horizons. It informs individuals about recent news, innovations and inventions as well as problems happening globally. Chettri and Rout (2013) stipulated that reading is the very foundation on which the edifice of the individual is built. It paves way for individuals to come up with brilliant and ingenious ideas that can be useful for the society, after they consume online news content. Oluwaseyi and Abomoge (2013) also argued further that reading online has become an important part of college students' lives not only in studies and daily routine but as a tool for getting to know other people and the rest of the world. Murray (2008), however, observed that students read just very little online but rather engage in web-based media more for entertainment and making friends. Notwithstanding his argument which portrays online reading as time wasting and an activity of futility, one cannot also lose sight of the general skills that are acquired through extensive reading and rapid communication through dialogues: texting and chatting. According to Schmidt et al. (2002), developing the ability to read is a critical component of school success and there is a strong correlation that exists between poor reading habits and school failure. Thus, the ability to read is recognized to be the most stable and durable of the second language learning modalities (Bernhardt, 1991). This implies that learners may augment both receptive and productive skills as they read online news. They would also acquire an additional ability to comprehend texts or information with some degree of proficiency. Reading is, therefore, fundamental to success in formal education and the key to developing other language skills. Readers make use of both linguistic information from the external printed text (Langer et al., 1990) as well as their own internal background knowledge (Coiro & Dobler, 2007) to construct their path for greater things. These virtues could be attributed as well to online news reading; readers will not only get informed but also get acquainted with various language structures and language use as they read online news.

2.2 Theoretical Underpins of the Study

This study has been examined through the lens of social constructivism theories. Constructivism emphasizes the construction of one's knowledge and experiences to make

meaning (Derry, 1994; McMahon, 1997), which is intimately connected with many constructivist theorists, such as Vygotsky, Bruner and Bandura's social cognitive theory. Constructivists hold the view that humans actively construct or make their own knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner (Elliott et al., 2000). In elaborating constructivists' ideas, Arends (1998) underscores the fact that constructivism believes in personal construction of meaning by the learner through experience, and that meaning is influenced by the interaction of prior knowledge and new events. For Wilson cited by Shah (2019), constructivist learning environments evoke a place where learners can work together and support each other as they use a variety of tools and information resources in the guided pursuit of learning goals and problem-solving activities. Online news reading is an attempt to get information in and about the society and this information is conveyed by the use of a language. As indicated by Vygotsky (1978), all kinds of education that the learner undergoes including formation of concepts first originate from other humans and later the internalisation takes place. For Flavián et al. (2008), there are three basic desired results of online news reading: a) to search for specific information, b) to search for updated news and c) for leisure-entertainment. Moreover, online news reading is more of interactive services that have allowed views on blogs, news chat, accepting videos and audios from viewers and aiding them to be more participative by giving them the platform to give their opinions and views on the news they consume. Online news reading has aided students in fast learning pace by supporting them to read more as far as motivation and education is concerned (Yuliani & Barokah, 2017). According to Mohammadi et al. (2011), online news reading broadens students' minds by developing a mode of thinking creatively and critically. The more students engage in reading online news, the more the habit of reading can aid in greater achievements in the educational field and beyond.

Listening and reading are receptive skills and to a language teacher, reading is paramount to developing other useful skills (Perfetti, 2007). Students who are successful at reading comprehension, understand at the sentence level as well as understanding the text as an integrated whole (Perfetti, 2007). For an active and cleverly brain, students must constantly update themselves by cultivating the habit of reading especially on useful contents (Azikiwe, 1998). Online news consumption, in a long run, boosts students' performances in academic field. A study by Mohammadi et al. (2011) proves how online news reading broadens students' knowledge by developing their mode of thinking creatively and critically and how online information has gradually enhanced students' creative thinking skills in their educational activities.

It has been observed that there is a growing enthusiasm among students of all campuses of UDS towards the use of online information (Fiadzawoo et al., 2018) which can be considered as positive. Boateng, Abdul-Rahaman and Mohammed (2021) also highlighted how online news reading has become a habitual activity at UDS, Nyankpala campus. Students are often seen surfing the internet in search for current news or updates for their consumption. This implies, the phenomenon has become prominent among students. Therefore, it can be posited that online news patronage, if properly propelled,

could become a fulcrum for academic work on campuses. This study explored the practice for teaching and learning of languages at UDS, Nyankpala Campus and the entire university at large. The study, therefore, accessed the level of online news patronage of the students, their preferred sites, their related challenges and how the practice could be harnessed for teaching, especially, by language instructors. To ensure language proficiency of the students at UDS, they are made to take communication skills course to enhance both verbal and non-verbal communication. In addition, French language has been integrated into most of the programmes with the ultimate goal of making the students bilinguals. Therefore, exploring new avenues to enhance language instructions could be of great significance for language proficiency and literary competence among the students of the university.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey method. As indicated by Baran (1999), surveys give a true meaning of opinions and characteristics of a sample of an entire population. A mixed research approach was also used. Both quantitative and the qualitative data were used to harness better results of the study. The quantitative method ascribed to the collection of data so that information can be statistically quantified and subjected to support or refute knowledge claims (Apuke, 2017). The quantitative approach tends to be most appropriate for this study because it facilitated the orderly and comprehensive presentation of objective data. The qualitative method, on the other hand, allowed for the collection of information from the language teachers to generally assess their view points on the pedagogical underpins of students' patronage of the online news.

3.2 Participants in the Study

The sample of the study comprises students and lecturers at the University for Development Studies, Ghana, at the Nyankpala Campus. One hundred and eighty (180) students were randomly selected across levels (from year 1 to year 4) while ten (10) teachers were purposely selected for the qualitative study of the issue. The teachers were selected from the Faculty of Communication and Cultural Studies which offers courses in humanities in the university. The students, on the other hand, were a combination of those pursuing programmes in the sciences, social sciences and humanities. The University for Development Studies, Nyankpala Campus has two schools and four faculties and about five thousand one hundred and thirteen (5,113) students constituting the target population of the study. The sample size of the students was derived from Yamane's sample size determination formula with the total populace base of 95% confident level and 0.5% margin of error (Adam, 2020). This sample was made up of a set of thirty (30) students randomly selected from the four faculties and the two schools which include: Faculty of Biosciences; Faculty of Communication and Cultural Studies;

Faculty of Natural Resources and Environment; Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Sciences; School of Applied Economics and Management Sciences; and School of Engineering.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The instruments for data collection were questionnaire and interview guide. The structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the students while the interview guide was employed in collecting data from the teachers. The information derived from the questionnaire includes demographic and those based on activities related to online news reading. Some of the questions provided open-ended responses while some were just simple choices. The demographic data included their age, programme of study and years spent at the university. The teachers were however, interviewed on their general knowledge about students' patronage of online news and whether they explore the activity for teaching and learning purposes. They were also asked about how online news patronage by students could be harnessed for teaching and learning strategies.

The questionnaires were distributed to the students during their lecture sessions. Lottery method permitted every student's participation; however, those who chose affirmative responses were allowed to participate. The questions were in line with the objectives and research strategies with the aim of obtaining accurate responses related to the study. The interview data were obtained from the lecturers during their free periods to avoid obstructing their work activities. All participants, both the students and the teachers, were assured of their anonymity and were consequently informed about the goal of the exercise which was for the sake of research only.

The data obtained were analysed descriptively. Thus, numbers and simple percentages were used to present the results in tables for easy comprehension and interpretations. On the other hand, the results of the interviews were used to consolidate the opinions expressed by the students and to concurrently present the pedagogical basis of the studies as a whole.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The distribution of the participants in terms of gender was as follows:

Table 1: Gender of Participants

Gender	Number of students	Percentage
Male	99	55%
Female	81	45%
Total	180	100%

The results in Table 1 indicate that the male participants outnumbered the female participants. The results confirmed the state of affairs of the proportion of male and female in some of the universities in Ghana. Thus, despite positive affirmative actions

that encourage the admission of women to universities, the male population still dominates that of female population in some of the academic programmes.

Table 2: Ages of Participants

Ages	Number of students	Percentage
Below 18	3	1.7%
18-24	110	61%
25-30	66	38.0%
Above 30	1	0.6%
Total	180	100%

As shown in Table 2, the age ranges of the participants were as follows: 1.7% was below eighteen years; 110 (61%) participants were between the ages of 18 to 24; 66 participants (38%) were between the ages of 25 to 30 and only one participant (0.6%) was above the age of 30. The implication of this analysis is that most of the participants were young adults with the majority at ages ranged from 18 to 24.

4.2 Online Reading Effects
According to the majority of respondents, online news reading has influenced them positively.

Table 3: Influences of Online News Reading on Students

Influences	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Good	48	27.0
Very Good	55	31.0
Excellent	29	16.2
Neutral	37	21.0
Bad	—	—
Very Bad	2	1.1
Extremely Bad	—	—
No Comments	7	4.0

The first three sections of Table 3 indicate the positive influence of online news reading on the students. This influence is in relation to how students are influenced academically by what they read on the internet. The question and the related responses were based on the background that some students learn new expressions, vocabulary, new language structures as well as few styles of writing while reading online news. In the first three sections, 48 (27%) participants rated the influence as good, 55 (31%) participants rated it as very good, and 29 (16.2%) indicated it is excellent. The second section shows the neutral influence of the online news reading. Thirty-seven (15.3%) participants rated it as neutral meaning they did not want to make any judgment about the issue. The last three sections show the negative influences online news reading has on the participants. However, 2 (1.1%) participants rated the influence as negative. Those who indicated negative said that online news reading is sometimes a waste of time and they are usually

only misinformed by issues of public opinion. This set of participants did not look at the learning aspect of reading and its benefits; they rather concentrated on the content of the information they read. Seven (4%) participants did not have any comment in relation to the sort of influence the online news reading has on them. Generally, the results indicate that online news reading has influenced or impacted students positively as the number of the participants who chose positive influences outnumbered those who indicated negative.

To find out the online news reading routines of participants, a question about the frequency of reading of online news was asked. Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4: How Often Students Read Online News

Frequency	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Daily	46	26.0
Weekly	81	45.3
Twice a Week	17	9.4
Occasionally	23	13.0
Never	7	4.0
Not consistent	6	3.3
Total	180	100

As shown on Table 4, 81 (45.3%) participants specified that they read online news weekly, 46 (26.0%) indicated daily and 23 (13%) participants said that they read online news occasionally. Also, 17 (9.4%) participants confirmed that they read online news twice a week while 7 (4%) indicated they never read news online and 6 (3.3%) said they were not consistent. Thus, they read online news only during their leisure times. Most of the lecturers interviewed also confirmed that they usually see students engrossed in reading news online. The general indication, therefore, is that the majority of the participants read online news at least weekly which is an essential development for information acquisition and reading skills enhancement. As posited by Tien (2015), extensive reading is essential for the enhancement of reading skills and acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, reading in all its forms, regardless of content, is an essential skill; it is also fundamentally linked to the instructional process and to students' academic success (Scott & Saaiman, 2016). However, these findings are slightly different from Ismail (2018) at Bayero University of Nigeria. His study indicated that the majority of students read online news daily. The problem of the students of UDS Nyankpala campus as is presented under their challenges is poor network and high data consumption.

The next question that was asked was about the preferred sites that the students mostly visited. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Preferred Online News Sites of Participants

Preferred news site	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Operanews.com only	35	19.4
Ghanaweb.com and Operanews.com	31	17.2
Ghanaweb.com only	29	16.1
Myjoyonline.com only	19	11.0
Ghanaweb.com and Myjoyonline.com only	14	7.8
Betway.com only	9	5.0
Yen.com only	2	1.1
Others	8	4.4
Operanews.com and Myjoyonline.com	7	4.0
Operanews.com and Peaceonline.com	1	0.5
Betway.com and Adomonline.com	1	0.5
Operanews.com and Pulse.gh.com	4	2.2
Ghanaweb.com and Yen.com	4	2.0
Myjoyonline.com and Adomonline.com	1	0.5
Myjoyonline.com and Peaceonline.com	1	0.5
Myjoyonline.com, Peacefmonline.com and UDS 360	4	2.0
Operanews.com, Adomonline.com and Yen.com	2	1.1
BBC	5	3.0
VOA	5	3.0

According to Table 5, participants ranked Operanews.com, Ghanaweb.com, and Myjoyonline.com at the top because to them, information, vocabulary and general language used on these sites are usually reliable and educating, for that matter, they are very satisfied with the sites. Thirty-five (19.4%) participants chose operanews.com only as their favourite site, 31 (17.2%) participants indicated Ghanaweb.com and operanews.com only, 29 (16.1%) selected Myjoyonline.com only and 14 (7.8%) chose Ghanaweb.com and myjoyonline.com only. Also, 5(3%) chose BBC and VOA respectively as their most preferred sites. The majority of participants said they were satisfied with Operanews.com and Ghanaweb.com because of the reliability of information and good use of expressions. Most of the lecturers interviewed mentioned similar sites indicated by the participants but declined to state those that carry news that are either reliable or unreliable. Their general comment was '*it depends on the type of information one is searching for*'. In terms of the use of language, the interviewees pointed out that most of the news sites have good vocabulary, grammar and general expressions which are suitable to the level of the students and the general public. As indicated by one interviewee: "*generally, all these online news sites are enriched with good vocabulary and several expressions that students could learn; but occasionally, some of them fall short of good language usage due to lack of thorough editing*". However, the study of Fatamus (2020) ranked Ghanaweb.com, Myjoyonline.com, Betway.com, Yen.com.gh and Peacefm.com as the five most preferred online news sites in Ghana he, however, failed to assign reasons for this ranking; therefore, the findings of this study are slightly more specific.

Table 6 examined the participants' purpose of reading online news in relation to its utility for their studies.

Table 6: Participants' Purposes for Reading Online News

Purpose	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Vocabulary and language structure	28	16.0
Sports only	41	23.0
Entertainment and fashion	49	27.2
General information and entertainment	23	13.0
Figurative and idiomatic expressions	5	3.0
History and general events	6	3.3
Current affairs and new discoveries	22	12.2
Others	4	2.2

As shown on Table 6, out of 180 participants, 49 (27.2%) read online news for entertainment and fashion, while 41 (23%) read on sports only. Twenty-eight (16%) of the participants intimated that they read online news to get good vocabulary and language structure, 22 (12.2%) stated that they read online news for current affairs and new discoveries. Six participants (3.3%) indicated they read online news for history and general events and 5 (3%) also indicated they read online for learning both figurative and idiomatic expressions. However, 4 (2.2%) participants indicated that they read online news for other purposes like general skills acquisition, politics and information based on the programmes they pursue. Most of the lecturers stated clearly that they were not actually very sure of the reasons why students read online news. The implication is that they do not mostly question students on information they derive from reading online news and this also means they were less interested in online news reading activities of the students.

Table 7: Challenges Students Encounter when Reading Online News

Problems	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Poor network only	95	53.0
Data consumption only	70	39.0
Unavailability of smartphones	5	3.0
Poor network and data consumption	7	4.0
Data consumption and unavailability of smart phones	1	0.5
No comments	7	4.0
Total	**180**	**100**

Table 7 portrays that the main hiccups for the patrons of online news at UDS Nyankpala Campus are poor network services and high data consumption. Ninety-five (53%) participants said poor network services is a serious hindrance to their access to online news. Seventy (39%) of the participants said data consumption is a problem for them when accessing news online. Five (3%) indicated they did not have smart phones to access online news and 1 (0.5%) of the participants indicated unavailability of smart phones and data consumption were the cause of their inability to access news online. Seven (4.0) participants, however, did not give any comments. This finding agrees with

Ismail (2018) which rated network problem as the major problem that prevents students from accessing the online news.

The other issue assessed was students' perceptions about online news reading. This question was in line with students' general perceptions of the credibility and utility of online news.

Table 8: Students' Perceptions on Online News Contents

Perceptions of online news contents	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Easy to access news	112	62.2
Credible source of news	37	18.0
Reliable source of news	13	7.2
Easy to access and credible source of news	7	4.0
Easy to access and reliable source of news	4	2.2
Easy access to language forms and structures	7	4.0
Total	180	100

Table 8 shows students' perceptions on reading online news contents. Hundred and twelve (62.2%) participants perceived online news as easily accessible. Thirty-seven (21%) participants perceived it as credible, 13 (7.2%) participants perceived online news reliable, 7 (4%) thought online news are both credible and accessible and only 4 (2.2%) participants perceived it as both accessible and reliable. Seven (4%) participants also believed that online news reading makes them have easy access to language forms and structures. One of the lecturers interviewed maintained that online news has a lot of advantages in terms of its availability, accessibility, cost effectiveness and language use. However, for the contents' credibility, he maintained that some of the sites could be occasionally biased and that reader's discretions are very important.

Table 9: Measures to Encourage Online News Reading

Respondents' views	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Provision of Wi-Fi and data	59	33.0
Stable and fast network services	17	9.4
Educating students on the benefits of online reading	60	33.3
Examining students on current affairs	22	12.2
Lessen data consumption	5	3.0
Providing students with smart phones	9	5.0
Others	13	7.2
No comments	3	2.0
Total	180	100

As shown in Table 9, the participants gave various measures that could encourage the practice of reading online news for getting information and access to general language items. Fifty-nine (33%) participants suggested that the policy of providing students free Wi-Fi and data should be encouraged. Seventeen (9.4%) participants thought that if the school authorities improved the stability of power and fastness of the network on campus it would encourage them to read more of online information while 22 (12.2%) participants

believed that if lecturers examined them regularly on current affairs it would encourage them to read online news. Sixty (33.3%) participants rather thought that if lecturers educate them regularly on the benefits of online news reading, it would encourage them to read more of it. However, 5 (3%) participants insisted that reading online news is costly so if the cost of data is reduced, it would encourage them to always read online news contents. However, 9 (5%) participants maintained that they lack smart phones and thought that if smart phones could be given to students, probably at low cost, it would help them frequently read on online news contents. However, 3 (2%) participants declined to share their views on this issue.

When the lecturers were asked to state what could be done to encourage students to read online news items, most of them indicated that online news reading remains supplementary to academic work, and since they do not control what students read, they could not easily explore contents for teaching and learning. However, they believed that those activities could be harnessed for teaching/learning purposes; therefore, they would adopt new strategies to redirect students' attention towards reading online news. The measure of reorientation of students towards reading of online news for worthwhile activities especially for language acquisition, the teachers believe, would encourage students to continue reading online materials; not only for news but for other academic exigencies.

5. Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

The principal intent of this study was to find out how online news reading activities of students could be harnessed for pedagogical purposes especially for teaching language items. This discussion therefore focused on the relevance of reading online news and possible perspectives for teaching, particularly by language teachers.

5.1 Relevance of Online News Reading and Perspectives for Teaching

In teaching and learning processes, learners do both intensive and extensive reading. Online news reading falls directly under extensive reading which is meant for search of general information, enjoyment and development of general reading skills. In an extensive reading, students explore large quantities of materials, generally, at a level that allows learners to gain at least a good understanding of what they read without outside help (Jacobs & Gallo, 2002). Thus, according to Harmer (2007), to get a maximum benefit from students' study, they need to be involved in both extensive and intensive reading. Therefore, to embark on a successful extensive reading, teachers need to encourage and assist students through occasional classroom and take-home assignments such as summaries (oral or written). This measure could help students to understand what they read online. As indicated by 60(33.3%) participants, if lecturers educate them regularly on the benefits of online news reading, it would urge them to read more. The findings of the study revealed that students gain information from various news websites: Operanews.com, Ghanaweb.com, and Myjoyonline.com and others. These large

quantities of online news reading materials provide large amounts of comprehensible input in students' new language repertoire to enable them progress toward overall command of that language (Krashen, 1988). In Krashen's (1988) estimation, learners improve and progress along the "natural order" when they receive language "input" that is one step above their current level of language proficiency. As most of the teachers interviewed indicated: "*students are not only exposed to a variety of reading materials, but also acquire vocabulary and become acquainted with unfamiliar language structures, thereby strengthening their information literacy and linguistic repertoire*". In essence, the online news information provides students linguistic inputs that augment their current language proficiency levels.

5.2 Tasks of Teachers

The tasks of teachers or lecturers in empowering students to use online information for learning purposes should be one of scaffolding. Thus, in a learning environment, scaffolding can include modeling a skill, providing hints or cues, and adapting material or activity to enhance students' comprehension (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Alfassi (2004) suggests that students are required to understand the meaning of the information they read, critically evaluate the message, remember the content, and flexibly apply the newly acquired knowledge. Students seeking information through online news need to be oriented. Williams (1986, p. 42) posits that there is the need to "*ask them what they like reading…*". It is believed that all types of reading take into consideration the following six parts: (i) title of the item: text, news or article, (ii) prediction of content based on the title, (iii) an intriguing sentence or passage, (iv) inferential or critical questions, (v) opinion about the information and (vi) summary or plot (Campbell, 1989; Davis, 1995; Bamford & Day, 1997). Teaching the basic literacy skills and strategies could be fundamental for online reading activities (Coiro, 2003). Therefore, language teachers can take advantage of students' use of online news to enhance the teaching of the basic literacy skills: vocabulary and expressions, spelling, and comprehension.

Similarly, in the instructional reading skills, teachers view reading as a 'tossed salad'; mixture of different ingredients, which embraces decoding, vocabulary and comprehension (Ocran & Etsey, 2017). Making use of the online news items as extracts for instructional purposes; discussion points; phonetics drills and information sourcing could provide students with a holistic learning and enhance their valid interpretation of any new information that they read.

In addition, the language teacher can design exercises to develop reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, writing skills, grammar skills, vocabulary and literary skills through the exploration of online news. Most of these skills could be taught both in and outside classroom and could be most convenient ways of dealing with problems of large class sizes (Ocran & Etsey, 2017) which recently characterize various institutions of instruction in Ghana.

5.3 Guides to Students for Worthwhile Online News Reading

Teachers' guidance to students in the search of worthwhile or relevant news is paramount. This stems from the question, what is the reading meant for? Teachers need to emphasize the interrelationships between different Internet sources. Online news is an invaluable source of authentic materials that can create interest among readers and to motivate them. As pointed out by Sanderson cited in Jose and Raja (2011), people learn through reading. Reading about new things in one's preferred sources, undoubtedly helps in motivation. However, as lamented by the teachers interviewed, credibility of information must be safeguarded. To them, developing universal knowledge through online news reading is essential for intellectual development. However, it is essential to ensure accuracy of information. Teachers must therefore, lead the way for possible genuine information sites. As admonished by some of the teachers interviewed: *"limited websites should be selected for proper exploitation in the classroom"*. This implies that, although any text or information can be used in teaching certain aspects of language, the authenticity of any online information must also be guaranteed to ensure its worthwhileness. As intimated by Arnould and Price (2001), an authenticity of information is about its quality of being genuine, real and true. However, this suggestion does not in any way imply that fictitious news items could not also be explored for worthwhile activities to achieve pedagogical gains. Thus, some of the online news contents could be utilised as authentic materials for realisation of some language structures and forms. Authentic material connotes any material composed in English or any other language that was not created for intentional use in the language classroom. However, using this content in teaching can make the learning process even more engaging, imaginative and motivating for students (Zazulak, 2017). In essence, authentic materials have the advantage of encouraging the teacher to vary the materials in such a way as to motivate, interest, and create amazement on the minds of the learners, as well as to expose them to language and its forms and expressions. Authentic materials are also very essential in all other course contents at the university because they make teaching less abstract or more concrete like life itself. Students at the university take a required communication skills course to strengthen their language skills and improve their reading and writing abilities. Online news reading, when encouraged, could be used to transfer offline writing skills across academic spheres to enhance students' linguistics competence.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study call for reorientation of students towards the sites they visit for online news, purposes of reading online news and the relationship of what they read and their programme of studies. Also, the findings give credence to the fact that language teachers should always think beyond textbooks to embrace new technological developments for enrichment of their teaching strategies. Institutions of instruction must also upgrade their infrastructure to accommodate new technologies for teaching and

learning. Further studies should also make enquiry into other innovative ways to constantly update students on current affairs within and across the globe to help them develop and sustain their avidity for reading online information.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest so for this paper is concerned.

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