



TEACHING OF LANGUAGE AND PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN'S READING READINESS IN HAMISI SUB-COUNTY, VIHIGA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

One of the four skills of language development is reading. It is a form of communication that can be used in both official and informal situations. Reading entails the decoding of communicative symbols in order to get meaning from them. Children's early experiences with language lay a strong basis for future reading achievement. This article presents findings from a study that was carried out in Hamisi Sub-County in Vihiga County. The goal of the study was to look at language instruction and pre-primary school children's reading readiness. The research was guided by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The study sample was 72 schools selected from a total of 238 to represent 30% of the school population. The schools were sampled using stratified random sampling to ensure that each division was represented by at least 18 out of the 72 schools sampled. Purposeful sampling technique was used to select two language teachers from each pre-primary school. One class was observed during a language session and five children were assessed in reading using the reading readiness assessment checklist in 30% of the sampled schools. On the study questions, headteachers and managers from the sampled schools were interviewed. Questionnaires, an interview schedule a reading readiness checklist and an observation schedule were used to collect data. Test re-test was used to establish whether the tools were reliable. The Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.9 from Cronbach's convinced the researchers that the instruments were reliable. Data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Findings revealed that the success rate of using the language teaching techniques was moderate, with only (47%) of students in the tested schools being well equipped in

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reading readiness. Findings further revealed that teaching strategy had little or no impact on learners' reading preparation. The most common teaching and learning resources, according to the study are those that are available locally (52.5 percent). The study also revealed that teaching the first language encourages the acquisition of a second language (85 percent). As a result, first language development must be nourished, nurtured, and improved in order to facilitate English learning, which has a significant impact on reading readiness. The study established that the learners' social environment, educational environment and family economic situation all had a significant impact on their language learning and eventual reading readiness (47 percent). The study concluded that the environment has the greatest impact on pre-primary school children's reading readiness. Parents are encouraged to enroll their children in pre-primary schools in order to get the benefits of the first level of education.

Keywords: reading readiness, teaching strategies, preschool, teaching resources

1. Introduction and Contextualization of Study

Studies have shown concerns on how to handle the challenges that pre-primary school children have in learning a second language. According to research conducted in European countries, children's learning outcomes are influenced by their environments outside of official schools, which are either literacy-rich or impoverished (Schwartz, 2006, Arnold, 2007, Behrman & Sabot, 2008, Burns, Griffins & Snow, 2009).

Although further research on the effects of these characteristics in environments without written books is needed, preliminary findings show that the home environment has a significant impact on pre-primary school children's reading outcomes (Burkhard & Jacquelynne, 2013). In their study of Hispanic learners, Garcia, Jensen, and Cuellar (2010) discovered that the formative years provide the best opportunity for refining a Hispanic's educational perspective. They also established that excellent pre-primary school education improves the school readiness of many learners from all cultural settings. They therefore argued that, for a high-quality education to be realized, teachers should have a better understanding of the language and culture of their students. These findings show that, while developed countries face few challenges in terms of reading readiness for their citizens, they have put in place sufficient mechanisms in the learners' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to monitor their citizens' literacy levels.

According to Abadzi (2010), if youngsters cannot read within their first three years of school, they may never be able to do so. They may be permitted to move from one class to the next and complete the school year, but they will remain illiterate. More than half of school graduates in Peru and Romania, both of which have automatic promotion laws, are functionally illiterate, according to studies (Nielsen, 2005). According to a study of literacy achievement in 549 Indian districts, 47 percent of class 5 students could not read a class 2 narrative (Pratham, 2010).

Enrolment of children by parents in urban pre-primary schools where English is the exclusive language of learning and teaching (LoLT) has increased in South Africa in the last 10 years (Duplessis & Naudé, 2008). These parents rely on instructors to teach English to their children. The abrupt switch from the student's first language (L1) to English, on the other hand, is a difficult task for both the student and the tutor. Teachers at pre-primary schools play a critical influence in their students' acquisition of the English language. Teachers spend the majority of their time with students. The development of children's English as a Language of Learning and Teaching (ELoLT) is influenced by their experiences under the mentorship of teachers. In the 1990s, South African schools grew more culturally integrated, becoming multilingual with English as the primary language (L1). Teachers in pre-primary schools were required to teach in English, despite the fact that some students could not understand the language (Mathews & Ewen, 2010). Pre-primary school teachers in South Africa are expected to be more knowledgeable, have a variety of teaching styles, and be conversant with theory, pedagogy, and curricular requirements. Teachers in South Africa are also required to have a multilingual and socio-cultural development background (Viljoen & Molefe, 2008). These teachers face a significant problem in multilingual classrooms as they are expected to create a classroom environment that caters for each student's individual needs. This data suggest that learning a second language in South Africa is difficult.

In Uganda, nationwide examinations assessment of learning report revealed that 46 percent of class 3 students and 50 percent of class 6 learners do not achieve the required literacy competency (National Assessment of Progress in Primary Education, 2006, as cited in Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, 2012). According to the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality in Africa, 1% of learners in Malawi and 2% of learners in Zambia achieve the required competences by the end of class 6 (QECD, 2009).

Mwoma (2017) did a study on children's reading abilities and established that all of the students tested were below-average readers. Boys outperformed girls in reading for both English and Kiswahili languages, according to the same study. The study further revealed that the disparities in performance between boys and girls could be attributed to societal influences, such as boys being given more educational preferences than girls. Mwoma's research was conducted in a rural area where the majority of the people are pastoralists. Children in such areas frequently miss school to help herd the animals. Children who live a long distance from school are more likely to arrive late every day. These could be factors that contributed to all of the children's poor performance on the reading tests.

Children who attended pre-primary school outperformed their peers in English language tasks (Mwoma, 2019). Mwoma's research also established that when teachers gave children who did not attend pre-primary school more time, their performance in Kiswahili subtasks improved dramatically.

In their study to evaluate the levels of reading skills among Grade three learners, Ngure, Mwoma, and Yattani (2019) found that the majority of the learners assessed from

public primary schools had very low word recognition scores. The study also indicated that the majority of the learners struggled to decipher sounds and letters and were below average in reading. The majority of the students in the study were unable to distinguish between letters and sounds, making reading words, phrases and paragraphs challenging and, as a result making comprehension problematic. This indicated that reading levels among third-graders were low.

A number of studies have been performed to address the problem of low reading uptake among students at various levels of school. Talley (2017) conducted one such study, findings in the study revealed that when a variety of instructional strategies are used, the reading outcomes of struggling readers increase significantly. The study also found that using games, group activities, and poems can improve reading outcomes for these students. Machira (2017) discovered that the teacher's expertise and usage of teaching/learning materials increased the learners' reading readiness in her study to determine factors that affect pre-primary school children's reading readiness.

Children should learn to read throughout their early school years, according to the Tusome Evaluation Report on early grade reading intervention in Kenya. Only 18% of children in lower primary could read texts in English fluently, according to the survey. The assessment also found that, while learners had made significant progress in all language subtasks, comprehension remained a challenge, with the lowest performance levels (Government of Kenya, 2017).

According to Uwezo (2014), only 14 percent of grade 3 children in Hamisi Sub-County could read a grade 2 English tale, while 21% could read a grade 2 Kiswahili story, compared to 17 percent in English and 22 percent in Kiswahili in Emuhaya Sub-County. In both languages, this was lower than the national average of 32%. While this is true, the researcher discovered that no research has been done in the field of language teaching and pre-primary school reading preparation. As a result, this study looked into the teaching of language and its impact on the reading readiness of pre-primary school learners in Hamisi Sub County, Vihiga County.

Reading skills have been highlighted in studies as a basis for good performance in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. Some parents in Sub-Saharan Africa opt to teach their children in English. This is due to the fact that the majority of exams are given in English, which is the language of global communication. Experts, on the other hand, suggest that children should be exposed to their native language early on as they gain reading abilities in it. If properly fostered through adequate teaching and the use of appropriate learning tools, reading information obtained in the first language can readily be transferred to the second language. This improves proficiency in both languages in the long run.

The implementation of the language of instruction policies in East African countries like Kenya and Uganda was influenced by this understanding. These countries' laws on the language of teaching support the mother tongue as the language of instruction in the lower primary grades. Reading in a second language is a challenging exercise for children. As a result, they'll need a variety of skills and abilities to complete

this mission. Comprehension is the most important language skill. For a long time, students' performance in reading assignments in Kenyan elementary schools has been dismal. This could be due to teachers' ineffective teaching practices.

Reading and writing skills are built on a foundation of spoken language proficiency. Teachers must therefore apply proper teaching strategies when teaching oral language. Children should learn to read throughout their early school years, according to the Tusome Evaluation Report on early grade reading intervention in Kenya. As a result, the teaching of language and its impact on the reading readiness of pre-primary school students in Hamisi Sub-county needed to be reviewed.

Many studies have been undertaken to address the difficulties of language reading and readiness. However, no study had been conducted on teaching language and reading readiness in pre-primary schools. The majority of the research looked at students who had been introduced to reading in primary school. The current study focused on pre-primary school students who had not yet grasped the notion of reading. The purpose of this study was therefore to fill this knowledge gap by examining language training and its effects on pre-primary school reading readiness in Hamisi Sub-county, County of Vihiga.

2. Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study was to look at language teaching and how it affects pre-primary school students' reading readiness in Hamisi Sub-county.

3. Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The research design was chosen because it enabled the researcher to collect data from many respondents within a short time. The respondents also contributed their opinions, attitudes, preferences and perceptions on the teaching of language and its effects on pre-primary school children's reading readiness (Creswell, 2012).

The research was conducted in Vihiga County's Hamisi Sub-County. There were 110 public primary schools, each containing a pre-primary school section, as well as 44 private and 84 feeder schools in the Sub-county (not attached to a primary school). 238 pre-primary schools were studied, with 422 ECDE teachers, 1274 grade one teachers, and 9892 pre-primary school students. The researcher focused on pre-primary schools in the sub-county because this is where children are prepared for reading before entering primary school. 30 percent of the school population was sampled for the study (72 schools out of the 238). There were four administrative divisions and six zones in the sub-county. To create two divisions for the study, the researcher employed stratified sampling of the divisions. The zones were carefully sampled in order to ensure that the four zones chosen fell inside the sampled divisions. The schools were chosen at random, with at least 18 of the 72 schools sampled representing each zone. The reading readiness checklist was used

to observe five students at random from each of the 72 schools. One language teacher from the primary section and two teachers from the pre-primary school section of the sampled schools were randomly selected for the study. Thirty-four headteachers and school administrators from the sub-county were also polled on their thoughts on the study's topics.

4. Instrumentation

The main data-gathering instruments in the study were questionnaires, interviews, observation schedule and a reading readiness assessment. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected using the devices.

The questionnaire was chosen as an appropriate tool for the study because of its potential to cover a large number of respondents in a short amount of time and its ease of administration (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). This was sent to the teachers of pre-primary schools. The purpose of the questionnaires was to determine the language used in instruction and its impact on reading readiness

The interview schedule gathered information from principals and teachers. The interview schedule determined the types of resources available and how they were used to promote reading readiness in pre-primary school learners from the respondents. In comparison to the questionnaire, which limited the respondent's options for what to say, the interview schedule provided in-depth information as a data collection tool (Cohen & Swerdlick, 2004). The interview schedule also gathered information on the effectiveness of various teaching styles in improving reading readiness.

The researcher employed an observation checklist to gather information on language teaching/learning resources. One language lesson was observed by one teacher in each of the sampled pre-primary schools.

During the school visits, the researcher utilized a reading readiness checklist to assess the readiness of the sampled pupils to read. The pupils were rated according to how best they performed in the reading readiness test, thus; Exceeding expectations (4), Meeting expectations (3), Approaching expectations (2) and Below expectations (1) were given to the students based on how well they scored on the reading readiness assessment.

5. Findings and Discussions

The purpose of the study was to examine language teaching and how it affects pre-primary school students' reading readiness. This was done by examining teachers' language teaching strategies, the impact of the environment on language learning and reading readiness, and the teaching of language in connection to children's reading readiness.

5.1 Strategies Used in Relation to Reading Readiness

The respondents were asked to rank the strategies and resources utilized by instructors in improving students' reading readiness on a scale of 1 to 5. Phonic, Look and Say, Sentence Substitution, Language Translation and Eclectic techniques are some of the strategies used. According to the study's findings, teachers use a variety of strategies to help learners improve their reading readiness. These findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Strategies Used to Teach Language

Strategies Used	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Phonic Method	44	22
Look and Say	32	16
Sentence substitution	22	11
Language translation	12	6
Eclectic Method	90	45
Total number of respondents	200	100

The survey established a number of ways that teachers were using to improve reading readiness, as shown in table 1. This was revealed in the following way: 22 percent strongly agreed that they use phonics, 16 percent look and say, 11 percent phrase replacement, 6 percent language translation, and 45 percent diverse ways to help learners improve their reading readiness.

These findings suggest that teachers did not use a single strategy to prepare pre-primary school learners for reading readiness. A mixture of various strategies, Eclectic teaching was favoured by 42% over-relying on a single teaching technique. This means that language teachers must use a variety of teaching strategies to help pre-primary school students become more ready to read.

These findings on the usage of different strategies are backed up by Talley (2017), who established that when a student with reading issues is exposed to a variety of reading strategies, vocabulary and comprehension, reading outcomes increase. Talley also highlighted reading-promoting activities such as poetry, games, riddles, and group work.

5.2 Success Rates on the Strategies Used

The researcher wanted to establish if the strategies used were effective, so he used a reading readiness checklist to measure the students' reading preparation. Based on the findings, it was determined that the strategies described in Figure 1 had limited success.

Figure 1 below presents the findings.

Figure 1: Reading Readiness

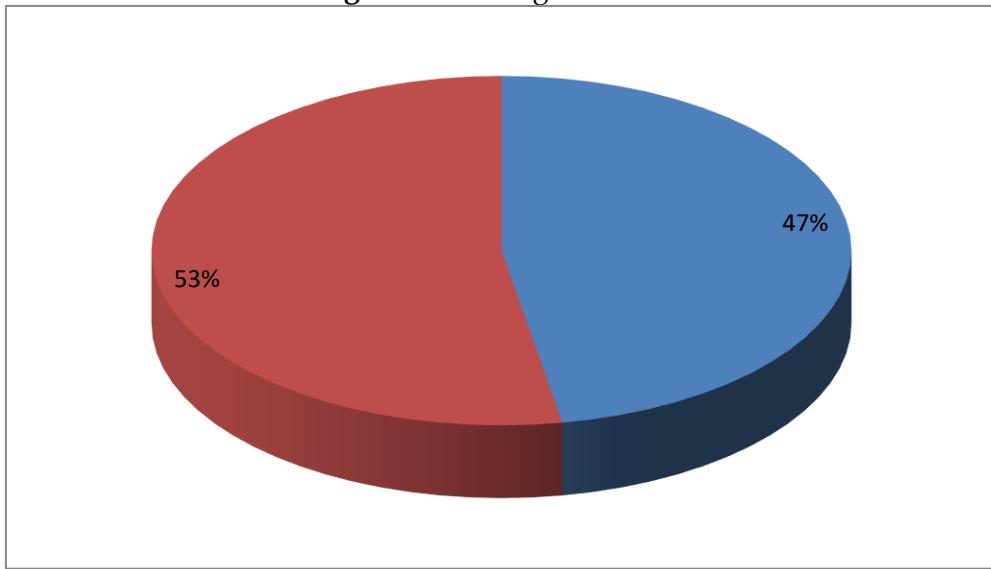


Figure 1 shows that despite the teachers' best efforts, 47 percent of the learners in the selected schools were unable to master reading skills. According to the conclusions of the Uwezo research (2014), reading readiness is still quite poor. This suggests that, in addition to teaching strategies, there are other underlying elements that influence pre-primary school learners' reading readiness. Apart from teaching strategies, the study indicated that teachers should ensure the provision of other crucial components to improve reading readiness. Mwoma (2017) supports these findings, stating that children's reading skills improve when they are exposed to reading resources. Gonzalez (2017) backed up the findings of the study by stating that, in addition to teaching expertise, a teacher should consider the history and needs of his or her students when selecting acceptable teaching strategies for them to profit from.

Teachers in the research area were well prepared to utilize the strategies taught to them at the college level, according to the data on their education level. As a result, the difficulties that learners face in establishing reading readiness are not due to lack of strategy. The study established that the learners, not the educators, are the ones who face difficulties. The learning environment, the inadequacy of teaching and learning resources, and learners' background information have all been identified as significant contributors. As a result of the aforementioned obstacles, learner reading readiness success rates are low (47 percent). The findings are consistent with Du Plessis (2016)'s analysis of the literature on the factors that determine children's reading readiness in a reception class. The study proposed eight primary elements that influence reading readiness, including learners' maturation levels, motivation to learn, sound awareness, activity levels, parental support, family economic situation, frequency of reading to the learner and developmental level of the learner.

There may be other factors that have a direct impact on the learner's reading readiness, but the strategy is not one of them.

5.3 Resources Used in Teaching Language

The study's second goal was to find out what resources teachers in the sampled schools utilize when teaching language to pre-primary school learners. Locally available materials such as clay, sticks, banana fiber and charcoal sticks were among the resources investigated. Crayons, books, pencils, balls, plasticine and wall charts, among other items, were also investigated.

The findings are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Resources used in Teaching Language

Resources	Frequency	Percentage %
Locally available materials	105	52.5
Manufactured (modern)		
Purchased by school	80	40
Purchased by parents		
Availed by the Ministry of Education	15	7.5
Total	200	100

Table 2 shows that 52.5 percent used locally available materials such as clay, banana fiber, pebbles, bottle tops, assorted seeds, woodblocks sand, locally made flashcards and charts, 40 percent used manufactured materials such as wall charts, flashcards, plasticine, crayons, letter and sound cards purchased by either the school or parents, and 7.5 percent are provided by the Ministry. Because they were the most common, this data suggested that using locally available materials in teaching language improved reading readiness. According to teacher interviews, the majority of teachers use locally available resources since they had this to say:

Teacher 7 noted: "*learners easily relate to shapes and numbers constructed using clay from their home. That way they can shape and reshape continuously in and out of school*" while Teacher 21 noted, "*Most parents do not pay fees for us to purchase teaching materials, we are therefore forced to improvise.*" Teacher 36, on the other hand, made an observation: "*Most of our learners are eager in contributing towards the assembling of the local materials, they feel elated when asked to do so.*"

More interviews with teachers demonstrated why, for example, improvising using locally accessible resources was warranted; Teacher 48 had this to say: "*My vast experience in teaching has taught me to put children's interests before my own, learners prefer exploring their environment collecting different objects to learn from, and who am I to stop them?*" while Teacher 55 observed "*children are generally curious, they feel less guilty when they break or damage a material made locally than when they damage those that are manufactured.* "and Teacher 78 says: "*the learning aids bought in shops are expensive and do not last*"

The inquiry discovered that the Vihiga County Government had once provided the teachers with crayons, manila paper and paint. It was time-intensive for the teachers, and they needed ready-to-use teaching tools. The study concluded that instructional resources were available in all schools based on the data, however, they were of poor quality. As a result, the data suggested that instructors' access to resources for teaching

and learning was not a problem. This indicates that children have a good understanding of the materials available to them. Teachers, on the other hand, desired more materials, particularly those that were ICT compliant in preparation for the learners' introduction to digital learning.

These findings are consistent with Ngure, Mwoma, and Yattani (2019), who stated that good use of relevant learning resources and teaching methods improves reading skills. The use of teaching tools and resources is critical in making difficult subjects easier to grasp. Kumar (2017) agreed, recommending that teaching/learning materials and aids be appealing, age-appropriate, long-lasting and diverse in order to drive children to study and improve their performance.

5.4 Environmental Influence on Teaching Language and Reading Readiness

The study's third goal was to determine the role of the environment in the teaching of language and reading preparation. The study looked at the school environment, such as the availability of classrooms, teachers, and school peers, as well as the learners' safety, play equipment availability and weather conditions. Social environmental aspects such as race and ethnicity were also observed. The language of the catchment area, playgroups, reinforcement of what is learned, modeling and support provided at home, and the socioeconomic status of the learners' home environment, such as family diet, ease of fee payment, and affordability of school uniform and stationery are all factors to consider. The findings on this goal are presented in Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6.

5.4.1 School Environment

The goal of the study was to figure out what characteristics in the educational environment influenced learners' reading readiness. These findings are presented in Table 3 below. Respondents were asked to identify and rank the school environmental elements that influenced pre-primary school children's reading readiness on a scale of 1-3.

Table 3: Effects of School Environment on Learning

Factor	Frequency	Percentage %
Availability of classrooms	8	4
Teachers	33	16.5
Peer influence	55	27.5
Safety of learners	41	20.5
Play equipment	58	29
Weather conditions	5	2.5
Total	200	100

Table 3 shows that 4 percent of respondents felt that classroom availability influences reading readiness, whereas 16.5 percent said teachers had the greatest influence. 27.5 percent chose peer pressure. The safety of students was cited by 20.5 percent as a critical

factor. Play equipment was emphasized by 29% of respondents, and weather conditions were cited by 2.5 percent.

From the responses above, it is obvious that having proper play equipment had the greatest impact on reading readiness (29%), followed by peer influence (27.5%). Learning was made easier for the students in a school with suitable play equipment, which resulted in lower absence of learners from school. Such schools had grounds that were excellent for outdoor play and learning activities. This means that, in order to improve reading readiness in pre-primary school children, more emphasis should be paid to the provision of suitable play and learning materials as well as the improvement of healthy peer contact.

The findings are consistent with those of Mwoma (2017), who found that both family and school play a role in the development of reading readiness in children. Mwoma went on to say that parental support, access to enough print and non-print materials and early schooling are all aspects that contribute to children's reading readiness development at home.

5.4.2 Social Environment

The study's second goal was to see how the environment in which learners interact with one another affects language and reading preparation instruction. The respondents were asked to rate the social elements indicated and their impact on pre-primary school children's reading readiness. Language of the catchment area, playgroups, reinforcement of what is learned, modeling and support provided at home were highlighted as factors that make up the social environment for pre-primary school children. Table 4 summarizes their responses.

Table 4: Effects of Social Environment on Learning

Factor	Frequency	Percentage %
The catchment area's language	60	30
Play groups	50	25
Repetition of what has been learned	43	21.5
Modelling	30	15
At-home assistance	17	8.5
Total respondents	200	100

Table 4 shows that the language of the catchment area has a 30 percent impact on reading readiness, playgroups have a 25 percent impact, reinforcement has a 21.5 percent impact, modeling has a 15 percent impact, and family assistance has an 8.5 percent impact. This means that information may be shared quickly in an environment that allows for free interaction among learners and reinforcement of what is learned. As a result, their vocabulary grows in preparation for reading. The learners who mingled freely were daring and rushed down the path of discovery. These findings confirm the findings of Shabani (2010), who found that children learn better in groups and with the help of teachers and adults when learning new concepts and skills.

To support these findings, Respondent 12, is quoted as having said "*when learners interact during play, both at home and in school, they share and create locally available materials for language development like toys, modeling of letters using clay and drawing and naming of pictures,*" Respondent 29, on the other hand, observed that "*exposure to the language of the catchment area facilitates the acquisition of the second language and reading readiness.*" "On the other hand Respondent 44 is quoted saying "*Children are more likely to repeat an act if reinforced through a pat on the back, a clap, a nice word or a token of appreciation.*"

From the interviews with managers and teachers, the researcher gathered that children's free interaction had an impact on their vocabulary as they prepared to read. The learners' levels of language acquisition are determined by their playgroup/play age mates, which includes the frequency and type of language used in the group. They further observed that the language of the catchment region had an impact on the learners' language and, in return, their reading readiness. This is because they speak in the prevailing language of the catchment area during their free time. This is the language that the children constructs. The environment in which the students grow has an impact on their mental and social stability. Respondent 53 is cited as saying in support of the home environment's role: "*The more disturbed they are in the home/social environment, the more violent/disturbed they are at school. Learners from broken and dysfunctional homes carry low self-esteem, bullying and theft with them wherever they go, hence disturbing the peace of the school.*"

The majority of the teachers interviewed stated that absentee parents did not have time to check on their children's progress, resulting in low performance and delays in reading preparation. They also claimed that due to the instability in their homes, children from single-parent and polygamous homes faired poorly on reading tasks. They also noted that some parents were anti-social/reserved to the point where they couldn't allow their children to participate in socialization, but the benefits, as indicated above, cannot be overstated. Parents that have recurrent confrontations with the school community, other parents, and teachers make it difficult for language teachers to achieve their objectives. Teachers spend their time settling disputes and nursing grudges rather than teaching. Children look up to their parents as role models. Parents' bad habits, such as drug abuse and self-centeredness, are imitated by their offspring. This obstructs language instruction. Some students come from low-income homes, which makes it difficult for them to socialize with students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. The amount of exposure that learners have to television, libraries, playgrounds, and museums is also determined by their families.

5.4.3 Family Economic Status

The family economic position is the third environmental element evaluated in goal three for its impact on reading readiness. The respondents were asked to rate the economic factors indicated and their impact on the reading readiness of pre-primary school learners. The goal of the study was to establish if the learners' family economic condition had an impact on language instruction and subsequent reading readiness. Tuition fees

payment, home diet, uniform, stationery, and instructor motivation were among the economic aspects identified. This data is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Influence of Family Economic Status

Economic Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fee payment	62	31
Poor diet at home	40	20
Uniform	33	16.5
Stationery	35	17.5
Teacher motivation	30	15
Total respondents	200	100

According to Table 5, fees payment was indicated by 31 percent of respondents as the main economic factor impacting reading readiness, followed by inadequate food (20%), uniform availability (16.5%), and proper stationery availability (17.5%) and teacher motivation (15%).

The data in Table 5 show that socio-economic circumstances have a significant impact on a learner's reading readiness in pre-primary school. When pupils are frequently sent home for fees, they get emotionally distressed and their absenteeism causes them to fall behind in class. Lack of cash to buy/produce enough food at home has an impact on the learners' diet, which has a negative impact on brain development. Children who are malnourished fall behind in school. Such pupils become bored and contribute less in class. Due to the parents' low socio-economic situation, the learners do not have uniform, books, or pencils. These were socio-economic issues that impacted all of the learners observed by the researcher, which accounted for 30% of the studied schools, impacting their performance in class. These economic issues have a direct impact on reading readiness. These findings are consistent with the literature reviewed by Akubuilo (2015), who suggested that in preparing a child for reading, the child's socio-economic background should be given priority. He went on to say that, in order for a child to learn to read, the home atmosphere must be safe and tranquil. As a result, family low economic position has a negative impact on children's reading readiness.

5.4.4 The Teaching of Language in Relation to Children's Reading Readiness

Finally, goal three was to determine whether there was a link between reading readiness and language instruction. The researcher examined on how language was taught by comparing first and second languages that learners are exposed to in the study area. The respondents were asked to rate their contributions to reading readiness in their native and second languages. Luhya is the most widely spoken language in the research region (Tiriki and Maragoli dialects). The study took into account English as a second language. Table 6 summarizes the findings.

Table 6: First and Second Language and Reading Readiness

Factor	Frequency	Percentage %
The achievement of the second Language is aided by the first language.	170	85
The second language has no relation to the first.	30	15
Total	200	100

Table 6 shows that 85 percent of respondents strongly agreed that the first language enhances reading readiness and achievement in the second language, whereas only 15 percent stated that the second language has no relationship with the first language. According to the data, there was a link between first and second language use and reading readiness. This means that transitioning from the first to the second language, or from known to the unknown, is easier for the teacher and their learners. The study established that some teachers were not fluent in the second language and hence used the first language as a bridge to help pupils achieve the second language, this is according to the observation of classroom instructions. Teachers in this situation require English language training, support and practice. They also agreed that the first language must be fostered, preserved and developed in order for English to be learned.

These findings support those of Wanjohi (2014), who discovered that teachers lacked proficiency in English, their mother tongue, or Kiswahili. Instead, they employ code-mixing and code-switching. The findings were also in line with Afandi (2018)'s analysis of literature, which established that teaching both first and second languages concurrently offers various benefits for both the learner and society as a whole. The justification behind the use of English in Kenya's education system, according to Afandi, is embedded in the National Language Policy, which supports the use of the mother tongue for teaching lower primary schools in places where the language is predominantly used, except in the teaching of English. The language to be used is determined by a variety of language types existing within Kenya's borders, which necessitates a rule to identify the language to be used in school and other social settings.

Teachers at two schools in town worried about the influence of sheng as the catchment area's language. Many of the teachers believed that learners who were proficient in their first language were able to transfer their skills to English and that parents or caregivers in the learner's surroundings should keep the first language alive and well. The study also established that, above all else, teaching pre-primary school learners to read properly was a noble undertaking, and that motivation levels needed to be raised upwards; otherwise, sending instructors to lower classes was becoming difficult even for headteachers to handle, as those teachers felt inferior. This is consistent with Mirima (2014)'s analysis of the research, which highlighted major elements influencing children's reading, such as instructional approach, teacher professional qualification, and learner class performance.

The study discovered that there were no textbooks for teaching the mother language, leaving the learner's catchment region as the sole source of information.

Teachers were pleased to report that learners who had achieved reading readiness were confident, eager to be given the opportunity to read, could perform tasks such as sentence substitution and could sing and recite poems in the second language.

5.5. Methods Used to Enhance Pre-Primary School Learners' Reading Readiness

The fourth objective was to examine the approaches employed by instructors to improve reading readiness in pre-primary school children. Discussion, demonstration, experimentation, child-centered groups, use of locally available materials and peer storytelling were among the approaches mentioned and assessed by the respondents to improve reading readiness in pre-primary school children. Table 7 summarizes the information.

Table 7: Methods Used to Enhance Pre-primary School Learners' Reading Readiness

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Discussion	14	7
Demonstration	20	10
Experimentation	20	10
Child centered groups	42	21
Use of locally available materials	50	25
Peer storytelling	54	27
Total Respondents	200	100

Table 7 shows that class discussion was identified by 7 percent of respondents as a means of improving reading readiness, followed by demonstration by 10 percent, experimentation by 10 percent, child-centered groups by 21 percent, use of locally accessible materials by 25 percent, and peer storytelling by 27 percent. This means that language teachers in pre-primary schools used a variety of methods to improve reading readiness. To build vocabulary in a language, the teachers used conversation, demonstration, experimentation, and child-centered grouping of learners. Flashcards made from manila papers, charts, crayons made from charcoal and dried clay, balls, ropes, counters made from sticks, and bottle caps were among the teaching/learning aids devised by the teachers. These are readily available in the learners' surroundings. Because youngsters can easily observe such objects while playing and walking around, the instructor should involve the students in collecting them. These attempts builds the learner's interest in acquiring new linguistic concepts. The teacher can also encourage child-to-child story-telling sessions, which is a child-friendly technique for the child to learn to construct sentences and read new words.

These findings are consistent with Mirima's (2014) evaluation of the research on teacher approaches for developing reading in pre-primary school students. Children should be introduced to excellent reading sessions early in their lives, according to Mirima, as this is crucial to the establishment of a strong reading culture. Mirima also highlighted critical aspects that influence children's reading, including instructional strategy, the teacher's professional qualification, the teacher's experience, and the

learner's class performance. Mirima recognized full word instruction and sound use as the two most effective ways for teaching reading to improve academic achievement in her research.

The methods described in the study findings reveal that the learner's environment influences their reading readiness, thus a closer examination of most of the methods to improve language and reading readiness training is required.

6. Conclusion

Based on the first objective of the study that focused on strategies used, the study concluded that Phonic, look and say, sentence substitution and eclectic approaches are the most widely used strategies in preparing children for reading. Very few teachers use language translation or code-switching. The large classes and inadequate resources greatly influence reading readiness. Reading readiness was still low despite the teachers employing a number of strategies in their teaching. The study, therefore, concluded that strategy has little or no impact on learners' reading readiness.

Based on the second objective of the study which focused on resources used by teachers, the study concluded that teaching/learning resources is not a challenge in the teaching of language and reading readiness. Most teachers prefer the use of locally available materials that are easily available.

Based on the third objective of the study which focused on environmental influence, the study concluded that the school environment is affected by the inadequacy of classroom space. The social environment of the learner dictates the stability of the learner in class hence reading readiness is affected. The family economic environment impacts heavily on low teacher motivation, poor fee payment, lack of uniforms and poor diet for the learners.

Based on the fourth objective of the study focused on the teaching of language, the study concluded that there is a connection between first and second language use in relation to reading readiness. The first language needs to be promoted, maintained and developed to ease the acquisition of English which in turn greatly influences reading readiness.

The environmental factors have the greatest influence on the reading readiness of the learner.

7. Recommendations

The following are the recommendations:

- 1) Objective one sought to establish the specific strategies teachers use when teaching language. Findings from this study indicated that strategy was not a factor in reading readiness. It is therefore recommended that proper sensitization of the school community on the factors that impact learners reading readiness be done.

- 2) Objective two sought to establish the resources teachers use when teaching language to pre-primary school pupils in the sampled schools. The findings indicated that resources for teaching and learning were not a challenge for the teachers. It is therefore recommended that there should be the provision of more resources, especially the ones that are ICT compliant in readiness for the learners' use of digital devices in the Competence Based Curriculum.
- 3) Objective three sought to establish environmental influence in teaching language and reading readiness. The findings indicated that environmental factors heavily impact the reading readiness of the learner at pre-primary school. It is therefore recommended that schools prioritize environmental factors that promote language acquisition.
- 4) Objective four sought to establish methods used by teachers to enhance reading readiness in pre-primary school children. The findings indicated that teachers of language at the pre-primary school level employed a variety of strategies to enhance reading readiness. It is therefore recommended that parents be sensitized on the value of investing in the early years of their learners and the provision of appropriate resources for learning.
- 5) The researcher also sought to establish if there was a relationship between the first language and the teaching of the second language. The findings indicated that there was a connection between first and second language use in relation to reading readiness. It was easier for the teacher and their learners to progress from the first language to the second language, i.e. from known to unknown. It is therefore recommended that the prioritization of teaching of the first language be done to promote the acquisition of the second language.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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