



UNIVERSITY of
RWANDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

**CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF POOR ENGLISH READING SKILLS OF
PRIMARY THREE LEARNERS**

A CASE STUDY OF TTC NYAMATA DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS

BY:

RODRIGUE KARAMAGE

Student number: 221028337

A dissertation submitted to the University of Rwanda-College of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in English-Education

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and has never been submitted to any other university as a product for the award of a degree. In case other authors' ideas were necessary, in-text references have been provided to authenticate their credits on the topic, and plagiarism check has been applied for this purpose.

Rodrigue Karamage; Student Number: **221028337**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Karamage', is centered on the page.

March 17, 2024

Supervisor: Dr Patrick Ujwiga Anguru

March 17, 2024

SUPERVISOR'S APPROVAL

I, Dr Patrick Ujwiga Anguru, acknowledge that this dissertation was completed under my supervision as the University of Rwanda Supervisor and has been submitted with my approval.

Dr Patrick Ujwiga Anguru

Signature:

Date: March 17, 2024

DEDICATION

The present work is dedicated to:

The Almighty God

My parents

My younger brother Papias Mukundiyukuri

My close friend Amina Uwibutso

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This dissertation would not have been successfully completed without support from the people and institution mentioned below.

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ABSTRACT

Literacy in reading is essential for all learning particularly in the information age. According to the report of National Examination and Schools Inspection Authority in 2022, primary three learners in Rwanda do not meet the standards of English literacy. This study, therefore, sought to assess the causes of poor English reading skills and the effects they impose to reading performance of primary three learners of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools in Bugesera District of Rwanda. Mixed methods were used to gather information on the study with quantitative as the major. Two hundred and thirteen (213) learners were randomly selected out of a population of four hundred and forty-five (445) learners from five schools under this study. Ten English teachers willingly agreed to take part in this research study. Thus, questionnaires, reading sub-tasks and classroom observations were analysed using SPSS to show respondent frequencies, mean and percentages. Regression analysis was also used to show the correlation between causes and effects of poor English reading. Qualitative data, on the other hand, came from semi-structured interview that were analysed thematically to verify information from quantitative data.

The results show that, learners from private Demonstration schools performed better than those from public Demonstration schools of TTC Nyamata with the mean score of 7.23 for private schools and 2.03 for public schools in reading comprehension task which was graded out of 10. Poor English reading skills in specifically in public schools are caused by lack of English teachers' relevant qualification, low teaching of foundational reading skills, namely; phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension; motivation and the unavailability of reading materials which also were more significant in public schools, whose materials availability mean is 2.04 than that of private schools which is 2.83. Further effect is that most of the assessments are administered in a form of text. As a result, learners' school achievement in both English and other courses are significantly impacted by poor reading skills in English. Based on these results, English teachers should give priority to effective teaching of reading skills and reserving enough time for reading. Parents should support children at home in their reading tasks, and the Ministry of Education should emphasize much on the training of both in pre-service and in-service teachers, providing reading materials and assigning qualified literacy teachers in lower primary including primary three level.

Key words: *causes and effects, foundational reading skills, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.*

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

TTC: Teacher Training College

ESSP: Education Sector Strategic Plan

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

NESA: National Examination and Schools Inspection Authority

GPF: Global Proficiency Framework for Reading

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CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a general overview of the research. It describes the study's background, the problem statement. The chapter also discusses in detail the research purpose, objectives, research questions, significance of the study and rationale; scope and delimitation as well as the structure of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Success in today's interconnected and information-driven culture depends on one's ability to read and understand what they are reading (Yildirim & Rasinski, 2014, p.18). The objective 4.6 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is that, by 2030 young people and significant part of adults both males and females acquire literacy and numeracy skills (Murray, 2017). Increasing body of research is showing that, reading fluency is crucial for success in all perspectives of life (Yildirim & Rasinski, 2014). In addition, concerns have been voiced throughout the years about children's reading skills all across the world, especially in Ghana (Greaney, 1980; Morrow & Weinstein, 1986), and the effects that attitude has on children's future academic performance. Reading is possibly the most important skill that children learn in primary school (Spaull, 2013). In both local and international education literature, the importance of learning to read before the end of the third year of primary school is well understood and accepted (Spaull, 2013). It is well acknowledged that sub-Saharan Africa faces the greatest literacy problem because both access to education and quality continue to be a serious issue (Chansa-Kabali, 2017).

Rwanda Ministry of Education introduced the 7-year Education Sector Strategic Plan to increase access to high-quality education across all levels of education and give young Rwandans skills they need to participate actively in global economic activities. One crucial goal to achieve this program is, giving priority to enhance high quality education beginning, with the development of fundamental skills in schools to promote literacy in English language. According to the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) of 2013-2018, which was elaborated in the lens of Vision 2020, the Competence Based Curriculum rolled out in schools in 2015 credited the importance of improving literacy by developing key reading and writing abilities in the early grades. Through consistent use of Learning Achievement of Rwandan Schools (LARS), efforts focus on monitoring and confirming that learning occurs.

LARS test learners' both Kinyarwanda and English literacy so as numeracy skills with an emphasis on P3, P6, and S3” (p.23).

Moreover, a decade ago, the government of Rwanda successively improved language policies, especially, the language to use as a medium of instruction in lower primary level. For example, the medium of instruction for nursery and first three years of primary school was changed from English to Kinyarwanda in March 2011 (Rurangirwa, 2012). This was done in line with UNESCO's regulation about children's education in their native language as the medium of instruction (Habyarimana, 2015). Late in December, 2020, the government of Rwanda instructed primary school teachers to teach subjects in English. This change raised English up to become the language of instruction in lower primary level (Williams, 2020).

The learning of English in lower primary schools, however, may have suffered as a result of these language policy changes because, according to Williams (2020), a large number of English teachers were impacted by the new language policy. Teachers use code-switching, language matching, and subject simplification since student engagement is very low in the English language as means of instruction. Consequently, interactions in the classroom are primarily made up of drilled repeats following the teacher's instruction in English, with very little comprehension of the context, which hinders learners' deep understanding and their ability to receive high-quality education (Sibomana, 2022).

Following the credit to English as the major language of instruction, learning outcomes and monitoring findings reveal a significant gap in primary three learners' skills of English reading. For instance, in the monitoring reports of TTC curriculum implementation, which include pre-service teaching practices, 90% of student-teachers in TTC Nyamata indicated a significant gap when teaching English reading (NESA, 2022). NESA's report equally states that just 10% of primary three students perform at or above the required level on the literacy test (pp.10-25).

According to researchers, there are some interventions that teachers and other educators can employ to promote reading abilities of students (Madolimovich, 2022). When the school is provided with reading materials like books, it develops learners reading fluency (Akyol, 2014). According to USAID (2018) “In addition, using a variety of reading activities directs students' reading and fosters their enthusiasm in reading” (p.6). Teachers should also direct students as they acquire various reading techniques. The research demonstrates the usefulness of informing children about their issues and implementing strategy-based programs with the involvement of the teacher and family (Akyol, 2014).

With this background, it is worth getting insight into the underlying causes of poor English reading abilities and their effects on English literacy performance, specifically in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools, where the problem was daily experienced by both student teachers and teachers themselves.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Rwandan Ministry of Education placed a high premium on early grade English literacy. Its Education Sector Strategic Plan seeks to meet the goal of having lower primary leavers attain a high level of literacy in both English and Kinyarwanda (MINEDUC, 2023). It is crucial to develop literacy in the early grades as these abilities lay the groundwork for all future learning. “Without this foundation, learners are unable to move through the education system, continue to be useful in the workforce, and subsequently contribute to the country’s economy” (MINEDUC, 2023, p.45). The Ministry of Education's associated body, the National Examination and School Inspection Authority (NESA), has established the literacy proficiency standards. The benchmark reads that Primary 3 learners whose scores are between fifty and one hundred score of performance in literacy qualify to meet expectations of English literacy proficiency (NESA, 2022, p.16).

However, the Learning Achievement in Rwandan Schools report of 2022 indicates that P3 learners’ performance in English literacy was low, with just 10.08% of the learners fulfilling curricular goals which expected above 66% on the test. According to NESA (2022) Eastern province of Rwanda, where TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools are located, is ranked last among other provinces in terms of Learning Achievement in Rwandan Schools with a percentage of 4.19 of the only students who met the benchmarks (p. 17). The same problem of poor reading skills was experienced by the author during Teaching Practice for TTC student teachers when teaching reading lessons at TTC Demonstration Schools. Learners seem not to read the words or passages that their student teachers instruct them to read. This dissertation has raised interest in the magnitude of poor English reading skills of Primary Three learners. The guiding light of this dissertation has been the causes and the effects of the poor English reading skills.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1. Overall objective

The overarching goal of this research is to investigate causes and effects of poor reading skills among primary three learners of English in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- To verify the English reading skills level of primary three English learners of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools
- To investigate the causes of poor reading skills among primary three English learners of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools
- To explore the effects of poor reading skills in English literacy performance and other subjects performance among primary three learners of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools
- To devise strategies of improving English reading skills among primary three learners of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools

1.4 Research questions

This dissertation sought to answer the following questions

- What is the reading comprehension level of primary three English learners of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools?
- What are the causes of poor English reading skills of primary three learners in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools?
- What effects do poor English reading skills have on English literacy and other subjects performance of primary three learners in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools?
- How can English reading skills be improved among primary three learners of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools?

1.5 Significance of the study

Many studies have revealed results about reading fluency in Kinyarwanda. To that end, there is a need also to assess reading fluency of learners who learn English as second language for the sake of correlating the causes and the related effects of reading performance in English.

By identifying the causes that affect the development of English reading skills, this study is a tool that assist in addressing the problem of learners leaving primary three grade without being skillful in in reading English.. More precisely, the results of this study will be useful to the following practitioners in early grade literacy:

1.5.1 The researcher himself

This study will not only aid the researcher in his academic advancement but it will also alter his better teaching methods of reading skills on a daily basis. The findings from this inquiry will be taken into consideration as a pre-service teacher trainer to enhance English teaching approaches, particularly in teaching reading skills.

1.5.2 The Ministry of Education

This research takes much concern about MINEDUC ESSP with regards to literacy in primary education. The study will examine reading skills in depth, focusing on factors and causes of poor reading skills, and findings will be a useful guide for MINEDUC as it develops policies that will strengthen early grades (including primary three) reading foundations. More precisely, the Ministry of Education will be informed about how to develop the primary three teachers' capacity in terms of English literacy teaching.

1.5.3 The community

The findings of the study will be helpful to stakeholders, including parents and guardians, so they may decide how to best support children outside of the classroom regarding reading competency as the foundation for all learning.

1.5.4 Other researchers in education

The study adds to the current literature on teaching of reading skills in early grades. Additionally, other researchers will expand on the study's findings and go beyond its purview to address the issue of inadequate English reading abilities and many other issues not discussed in this study.

1.6 Scope and delimitation of the study

The study was conducted in Demonstration Schools of Nyamata Teacher Training College namely GS Mayange A, Gitwe Primary School, GS Maranyundo, Sainte Thérèse Primary

School and Bright Right Primary School. These are the neighbouring Primary Schools where the student-teachers conduct their teaching practices. The study involved 213 learners and 10 teachers from the schools mentioned who all study and teach English respectively in primary three. The scope of the study was to investigate causes and effects of poor reading skills among learners. Therefore, it was not possible to investigate the causes and effects of learners' poor English reading in all eastern province schools as it was ranked last in the literacy achievement. For the sake of research TTC Nyamata was chosen.

1.7 Structure of the study

The research is organised into five chapters. The first chapter offers a general introduction to the research topic. More particularly, the researcher presented the research background, problem statement, purpose, objectives, research questions, significance and rationale of the study as well as its scope. The second chapter is devoted to a literature review that includes the theoretical review, the empirical review, and the theoretical framework of the study. The third chapter is the methodology that describes the study paradigm, the population of the study, sample and sampling procedures, instruments used to collect data, data collection and treatment and trustworthiness of the research. The fourth chapter is about data presentation, data analysis, and interpretation and discussion. The fifth chapter, which is the last chapter, is about the conclusion after discussion of findings and recommendations to different concerned people and institutions

Summary

The introductory Chapter was aimed at providing the reader with enough background information which roused the interest of the researcher to conduct the study. The introduction provides information about the English reading problem in primary three learners of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools. It highlights the research problem, formulated guiding objectives to target and research questions to be answered. The significance of the study was thoroughly outlined. The following chapter of this research is the review of the related literature.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides literature about dependent variables which are reading skills and independent variables which are causes and effects of poor reading skills. The first section is about review of reading theories. The second section is about the empirical review mainly concepts of reading, foundational reading skills and factors affecting reading proficiency. The third section is about conceptual framework that guides the study. The fourth section summarizes the gap analysis i.e what misses in the literature that prompted and strengthens my study.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Review of reading theories

The theories described are those that explain reading in terms of learning how to read. According to Gumede (2018) many theories attempt to define the reading phenomenon. The first theory to discuss is bottom-up theory of reading. Gumede (2018 citing Flesh, 1955, Gough, 1955 and LaBerge & Samuels, 1985), the bottom-up theory is a traditional theory of reading. Its proponents are of the view that reading occurs when a reader serially processes reading by recognizing letter by letter. Gough (1971) referred to this as phonemic encoding. Before developing a text's meaning, readers first decipher the letters, words, and grammatical structures in it. Readers primarily rely on the text, disregarding any prior or background information of the reader (Suraprajit, 2019). According to this theory, reading is the process of organising linguistic signals (letters, morphemes, syllables, words, phrases, and discourse producers) by utilising a mental data-processing apparatus disregarding any prior or background information of the reader (Suraprajit, 2019 citing Brown, 2007). However, the bottom-up theory is criticized for being inadequate and flawed because it is based on a language's formal elements, notably words and structures. It also makes it difficult for readers to understand lengthy passages of a language because it just uses the sounds of words.

The top –down theory, developed by Goodman (1971) and supported by Smith (1978) is the second theory to be examined. According to the theory, meaning is driven and goes from whole to component. The readers merely identify letters and words to support their presumptions regarding the meaning of the text. According to Smith (1978), in this model, the reader adds meaning to the text rather than drawing it out of it. Readers have schemata or

background knowledge that they use to interpret what they read. It implies that, the teacher should assist learners in using their prior understanding of the subject matter they read. Marnelli et al., (2011), however, disagrees with this idea since it ignores letter sound correspondence, yet; it is essential for learning to read.

Interactive model of reading is the third theory reviewed in this study. The theory was postulated by Rumelhart (1972) and reviewed by Ruddel and Speaker (1985) and later it was reviewed by Bar, Sadow and Blachowicz (1990). It has revolutionized the bottom-up theory by bringing the proponent that both reader's knowledge and the knowledge from the text are combined to successfully read. In order to create meaning, readers combine information from the text with information from what they already know (reader-based inference). By reflecting on what they already know, readers might predict what the text will say (Walker, 1989). However, the theories discussed above were reviewed by (Cullinan, 2000), who claimed that, with those theories; there is no reading activity that a learner in lower primary school can perform on his or her own. They are all dependent on the teacher's direction to be completed. Additionally, the theories do not show how readers who are learning a second language can adjust. Primary three learners in the context of this research learn English as their second language and might have a gap in the knowledge they can get from the text or in the prior language knowledge they may bring to it.

2.1.2 Theoretical framework underpinning this study

The Simple View of Reading theory developed in 1986 by Gough and Tunner and supported by Hoover and Gough (1990) serves as the basis for this study. According to the Simple View of Reading, a reader must have adequate decoding (phonemic, phonological awareness and fluency) and linguistic abilities which are vocabulary and comprehension (Drayer & Kaz, 1992). The theory directs teachers' decisions when they are making reading instructions (Drayer & Kaz, 1992). This was one of the decisive reasons for the theory because the ones that were reviewed did not provide guidance for teachers on how to deal with second language learners. Reading's ultimate goal is to generate meaning from text for a particular purpose. The theory suggests that, reading comprehension for third through fifth grade students, regardless of age or aptitude, depends on both decoding and linguistic comprehension. Reading comprehension skills must be taught explicitly and with modelling to show how reading activities can be completed by a good reader (Lai et al., 2004). This very important proponent of the theory echoed how reading is challenging for ESL learners,

including those who are the subject of the study. The theory also specifies reading instruction methods and the usage of reading resources as important factors in the successful and effective teaching of reading skills (Ligembe, 2014, p.14).

2.2 Empirical review

2.2.1 The concept of reading

Reading is a concept that has been given great attention by many researchers (Gumede, 2018). When trying to review reading literature one can say that its concept has evolved. The first definition of reading was postulated by Huey (1908) who defines reading as the process of gathering or choosing from what is written. Thorndike (1917) later on characterised reading as reasoning and an active process related to the problem solving from prints. Huey and Thorndike's views inspired current models that characterise reading as more than the understanding of orthographic symbols (Tamrackitkun, 2010). On the other hand, other conventional scholars consider reading to be a concept that cannot occur without comprehension (Gumede, 2018). Reading happens when it occurs word recognition and comprehension (Hoover & Gough, 1990). The current definition of reading includes other components. For instance, Desta, (2020) defines it as the action of quickly recognizing and comprehending word groups. It is a thorough procedure that encompasses oral fluency and engagement.

These definitions of reading show that reading involves spoken language because a person must first develop oral language to begin reading fluently. This is because when someone decodes loudly, oral language gets employed. Therefore, a child must first develop oral language so for them to be able to articulate sounds when reading.

2.2.2 Foundational reading skills in English

There are grounded, foundational skills of learning that early readers should develop and use them interchangeably. Those abilities must be mastered, combined, and used so for a learner to read properly. In a report, the National Reading Panel (NRP) of the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) listed phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as the five reading skills components that were essential for effective reading instruction (NICHD, 2000,pp.7-45). Each of these abilities is required to read or learn to read. In addition to that Leung (2021) has demonstrated the efficacy of

teaching English as second language students through direct instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing.

USAID (2018, p.34), however, adds on two skills of reading, namely; concept of print and oral language. The former is added since a learner should possess the skills of seeing and manipulating materials like cards, books that enable them to train reading early and develop oral language as talking about them. The latter is added since reading cannot occur if a child's language is not developed. To that end, the two skills of reading added are of paramount role to confirm that an English reader is well equipped with foundational skills.

Phonological awareness is defined as the ability to recognise that words are made up of a range of sound components. In other words, phonological awareness refers to a set of sound-related abilities necessary for reading development (Kim & Piper, 2019). Some of the phonological awareness practices in the classroom are like *alliterative language, rhyming, sound patterns*. Identifying rhymes and isolating and enunciating the first sounds of words while receiving encouragement and prompting.

This is a very crucial skill and the starting point for reading. Indeed, learners should know that written words are first uttered and can be segmented into phonemes and those phonemes will be represented by syllables.

Phonics and word recognition: The goals of phonics and word study training are to teach learners letters that sounds have systematic relationships with written words, the made up relation is letter patterns that represent the sounds of spoken words, that word recognition is a method of understanding words quickly and accurately, and that they can blend sounds to read words and segment words into sounds to spell as (Kim & Piper, 2019) elaborate it. Phonics training begins by associating the letter names and letter sounds. Following that, teachers should teach children to develop the ability of decoding (combining sounds to read words) and encoding (write the letters that represent each sound) (USAID, 2018, p.45).

This procedure signals a very big concern with primary three learners. To be able to understand passages they are given in later years, learners should have received significantly more training in this area in earlier grades. In addition, to be able to read texts at their level in reading classes, third-grade learners should be able to combine sounds and symbols for them to read English alphabet, syllables and words.

Vocabulary: Vocabulary is the collection of words a reader has in a language that they can use to communicate verbally or in writing. Numerous research studies have discovered that readers' word banks play a role in reading fluency and comprehension, which is the primary goal of reading (Sue & Fiona, 2019). Blocking words in texts reduce how well readers understand what they are reading. Thus, words that are unfamiliar to early readers are frequently encountered when they start reading. Some people change their activities when they feel they are reading unusual language texts (Ibrahim et al., 2016).

For students in early grade, vocabulary skill is crucial, when they learn to read in a second language. According to UNESCO (2019), “Learners still have a limited vocabulary and need a lot of exposure to it” (p.46). The learners in primary 3 under this study may have had an impact on the limited English vocabulary and block their reading comprehension as UNESCO (2019) proclaims that, if students do not steadily expand their vocabularies throughout their education, reading comprehension and learning will be affected.

Oral reading fluency: Although other definitions of reading fluency stand out, the fundamental concept is that reading fluency refers to the ability to read a text with accuracy, proper speed, and expressiveness (Xin & Yunus, 2020). Fluency is defined as the level of reading competence at which textual material can be effortlessly, smoothly, and automatically understood (Xiangying & Jiang, 2016). The major indicators of oral reading fluency are usually speed rate (words per minute) and accuracy (number of correctly identified words), with an emphasis on the students' ability to recognise words quickly and accurately.

Reading comprehension also depends on oral reading fluency. It is harder for children if not impossible to comprehend what they read when they do not take the time to try to pronounce words. This study raises serious concerns because it is possible that primary three students of TTC Nyamata do not have enough time to practise oral reading in class, which has impacted their reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension: Reading comprehension is the process of extracting and building meaning while engaging and interacting with written language. Its goal is to educate understanding of what is read (Reading Study Group, 2002). In effect, understanding writings in a given language involves using two cognitive processes, that is, the reader's building of ideas out of pre-existing notions, and the reader's engagement with the writer's ideas as they are expressed in the text. It appears that, a reader reads words on a page and mentally decodes

their meaning in their mind. Kim et al., (2016) add an insight that, reading comprehension as an ultimate goal of reading involves decoding printed words and interpreting their meaning. These are two skills that are necessary for reading comprehension. Therefore, reading comprehension cannot be achieved without proper development and coordination of these processes (K. et Al., 2016). UNESCO (2019) easily clarified this definition by exemplifying taking the words "woman desk flower family box"; you may read each word and comprehend what it means on its own. However, you cannot deduce the meaning from reading it as a sentence. This is the relationship between word recognition and comprehension.

2.2.3 Factors affecting reading skills

2.2.3.1 Reading materials

A series of literature stipulate that, reading skills depend on the print environment (environment in which there are print materials) that a learner is exposed to. For their reading skills to develop and advance, children need to have access to high-quality print. When there are lots of books and prints around, children learn to read well. In practice, this entails a sizable collection of books in a school library that are arranged for both instruction and independent reading (Ames, 1969). This also means that a classroom should be well-stocked with printed resources, including cards, alphabet charts, and a wide variety of reading materials which learners can explore to continually improve their reading skills. Desttefano et al., (2012) appreciated the use of educational resources. More precisely, if a school has a book storehouse that is also routinely used, learners perform a little bit better in reading. Missing out the chance to interact with texts when they are still young makes it difficult for students to develop strong reading habits as they grow adult, and their performance in reading is poorer than that of those who carried out several readings from the library (Owusu, 2014, p.50). Owusu (2014) also attributes low reading ability to learners who do not systematically use a good series of textbooks and readers in class since it creates a good pedagogical pathway from the teacher to a learner and vice-versa.

Children in underdeveloped countries do not have access to printed materials like small books containing stories. The advantage of reading stories is that, they provide a wealth of linguistic material including new vocabulary words, phrases, idioms, and grammar. Most significantly, storybooks can be rich sources of *alliteration*, *rhymes*, *word families*, and other *literacy principles* for young children as they build their emergent literacy. These are the cornerstones of the growth of early literacy as Gezer (2021) argued. This may have had an

impact on this research study participants since in primary three classrooms at TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools there is little to no print, such as storybooks, cards, or charts, where students can regularly practise reading. They might consequently lack adequate reading comprehension skills and vocabularies.

2.2.3.2 Teaching of foundational reading skills

Education scholars have reviewed in this section that strong reading abilities depend on the quality of classroom learning techniques that teachers provide. The teacher needs to be competent and well-prepared to instruct students effectively (Lumadi, 2016). Thus, the majority of the available research provides compelling evidence for the association between teachers' qualifications and effective delivery of various instructions (Moosa & Shareefa, 2019). Indeed, qualification is not a guarantee to teach reading skills. However; performance that demonstrates competence is the complement to ensure qualification. Some teachers may qualify for the teaching of reading jobs, but fail to deliver effectively. Reading sub-skills practice is the activity that benefits from organized pedagogy since it is one of the most successful and efficient methods for assisting students in acquiring new, fundamental reading skills (Kim & Davidson, 2019).

Kim & Snow (2021) emphasise the necessity of instructors' professional abilities to support young readers who rely on school time for study. For them collaborative duty of numerous stakeholders is to educate the youngsters to be a proficient reader. For children who are more reliant on school-based experiences to develop adequate literacy skills, general knowledge, and critical thinking, teachers play a particularly important role. Reading instruction necessitates a high level of competence. This concerns with employment of a wide range of highly skilled teachers and educators who have received reading skills (Kim & Snow, 2021). Reading instruction delivered by teachers with more specific understanding of reading development and teaching reading is of greater quality, which in turn predicts students' literacy outcomes (Kim & Snow, 2021).

In addition to what has already been discussed. The development of students' core reading abilities depends heavily on assessment. According to USAID (2018), evaluating students' reading skills is a crucial step in identifying impediments and figuring out how to overcome them. USAID (2018) described how to assess foundational English reading skills among early grade learners as follows:

Giving students assignments such as counting the number of phonemes in a word, recognizing specific phonemes, deleting/adding a phoneme to construct a new word, or substituting a phoneme to create a new word can all be used to assess a student's phonemic awareness.

Learners' letter knowledge can be tested by giving them a list of letters both capital and lowercase and asking them to name each one or identify the sound that each letter makes. In addition, teachers might instruct students to recognize the letters in a stack of letter, number, and symbol cards. Students can distinguish and group letters into uppercase and lowercase. However, nowadays, many young learners even university students ignore the use of capital and small letters in their daily writing of names and any other writing that requires correct usage of capital (uppercase) and small letters (lower case) because of poor teaching of reading skills at their primary schools. It is regrettable to see that many teachers may fail to understand the appellation; *grass letters*, *ground letters*, and *sky letters* that are crucial in calligraphy as it is a skill that is neglected in many schools.

Decoding is the process of identifying words by using letter-sound correlations. One illustration of this kind of assessment is having the student read a list of isolated words for a certain competency. A student's ability to read a related text (passage or story) with accuracy, speed, and appropriate expression is evaluated orally using a timed reading task.

The reasoning presented in this section suggests that good instruction of the fundamentals of reading is required. Its absence clearly has an impact on students' reading abilities. This study has closely looked at whether or not lack of teaching capacity affects the students of TTC Demonstration Schools.

2.2.3.3 Reading motivation

Motivation is one of the most crucial factors in successful teaching and learning (Hayikaleng et al., 2016). Researchers outlined in this section concluded that, reading comprehension (as the ultimate skill goal of reading) correlates with motivation. In his research, Dara (2019) identified motivation as the primary cause of poor reading comprehension. Low English reading comprehension and lack of language proficiency in general were mostly caused by motivation, learner's personality, learning strategies, and teacher personalities trailing closely behind (Dara, 2019). This adds to Fitria (2019) who postulated a positive correlation between reading interest and reading comprehension. Obviously, the more students become highly motivated in reading, the greater their score in reading comprehension increases (Fitria,

2019). Reading skills are improved when learners demonstrate a fancy of reading over time (Aldhnhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020). The students' performance in reading can be influenced by their desire to read, their fear of making mistakes, and the feedback they received from their classmates when they read in class (Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash, 2020). Sari (2020) concludes from his research on assessing the degree of students' reading comprehension ability that lack of hobbies and reading comprehension challenges, and lack of smooth reading (running into challenging words while reading) contributes to learners' inadequate reading comprehension (Sari et Al., 2020). In their report, UNESCO (2019) takes a great deal of importance of motivation when instructing foundational reading skills. According to UNESCO (2019), there are several ways to encourage students to read including giving them the freedom to select books of their choice, scheduling opportunities for independent reading and classroom reading for enjoyment, arranging reading competitions and giving out praise. Thus, there is a need to examine the impact of motivation on all foundational reading skills particularly in early grade learners including those in primary three.

2.2.4 Similar studies in other countries

2.2.4.1 Teachers Practices of Teaching Early Reading and Practical problems in Its Implementation in Ethiopia

The purpose of the study which was carried out by Minwuyelet Andualem Desta in the academic year 2019–2020 was to look into the strategies for teaching early reading in English and the difficulties that teachers have when putting them into reality in primary schools of Ethiopia. The research was conducted in two hundred twenty-four government-run primary schools in Ethiopia's Amhara National Regional State's west Gojjam zone. Both qualitative and quantitative were collected by employing descriptive research design. One hundred and twelve (112) English language teachers working at the primary schools in the west Gojjam zone's Dembecha, Jiga, Jabitehinan, and Bure woredas were participants of the study. The researcher used interviews, questionnaires and classroom observation to collect data.

The results showed that teachers did not implement early reading instruction in accordance with its goals and guiding principles. Teachers taught reading using a traditional method of instruction like the teacher only modeling to students or translating in other languages. The research demonstrated also that teachers lack enough training in areas like phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, oral fluency, and vocabulary. In addition, lack of resources, and unrelated educational backgrounds were important obstacles while

implementing the teaching of early reading (Desta, 2020). Finally, teachers were advised to acquire English language teaching methodologies training in general and early reading instruction in particular.

The procedures used for data collection, the results, and the recommendations made in this study put a lot of pressure on some of the variables being studied in this research (teaching strategies of fundamental reading skills). The present study does not limit to the strategies of teaching fundamental reading skills. Rather, it assesses the extent to which those strategies contribute to English academic performance.

2.2.4.2 Successful reading instructional practices for African American male third-grade learners

Whaley et al., (2019) investigated the teaching approaches and tactics associated with these students' exceptional reading attainment of grade three learners in three Title I schools in East Texas. Social and cognitive theory of Vigotsky and Ladson-Billings' about culturally appropriate teaching were based on to examine the educational methods and procedures utilised on each school that might have contributed to such high reading achievement.

The key elements were consistently present throughout the investigation. The first one was solid relationships between teachers and learners. The second one was the collaboration among teachers of English literacy and lastly helping learners setting high expectations. The study concluded that relationships should be developed and strengthened on the basis of respect and understanding for one another (Whaley et al., 2019). The best support for this set of learners comes from the careful blending of a supportive emotional or affective climate with a strong academic atmosphere. They say that student's actions start to alter when they feel confident and safe. Learning can start when a student is at ease and confident. These students are willing to take chances in order to succeed.

2.2.4.3 The root factors influencing students' inadequate reading abilities at Elsie Lund Basic School in Tamale, Ghana

The research was conducted by Mohammed and Ofori Amponsah in 2018 to find out the root causes that contribute to poor reading skills of Elsie Lund Basic School in Tamale Metropolis, Ghana. Twelve English teachers from that school were selected to participate in the research. The data was gathered via a one-on-one in depth individual interviews and were thematically analysed. The underlying factors that came out of the study were learners' inadequate reading motivation, lack of pre-reading materials in and outside the school,

students' lack of phonemic awareness and insufficient expertise in phonemic awareness instruction. Some students struggle to read fluently because of laziness, inability to make reading interesting, and lack of enthusiasm in reading classes. Poor confidence of learners in English reading classes, low motivation of both teachers and absence of parents' will to encourage learners to read are factors found out to contribute to low reading abilities of learners under this study.

The empirical findings of this study attracted the researcher even though it was not conducted in grade three, which is the subject of the study. This is because results of this study proclaim that low reading ability is primarily caused by teachers' and students' lack of enthusiasm. The research being carried out goes deeper into this matter by evaluating the implications of the causes and effect of poor reading proficiency of grade three learners.

2.2.4.4 Factors influencing learners' reading ability in English at Bulawayo Central District schools in Zimbabwe

This study sought to examine the reading proficiency level of senior 2 students in Bulawayo Central District of Zimbabwe. It also investigated the factors that influence reading level. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed to gather data for the research topics. There were 48 and 22 students respectively from government and private schools who were selected for this study (Gumede, 2018). Teachers from government and private schools filled out the questionnaire to answer the question about what factors contribute to the reading proficiency of the learners under the study. The researcher selected twelve and nine teachers from public and private schools respectively.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse the quantitative information from the questionnaires. The t-test was employed to analyse the test results and find any correlation between the test results from public and private schools (Gumede, 2018). The t-test results were also interpreted using histograms. The study concluded that the private school students demonstrated reading fluency which is higher than one of public schools due to the availability of books and intensive reading practices in the latter schools (Gumede, 2018).

As the absence of reading resources, which is also cited frequently in the literature for this study, is identified as the primary cause of public education, the researcher will need to determine whether or not learners in grade three classes at the schools under investigation also lack access to reading materials and if it affects their reading skills.

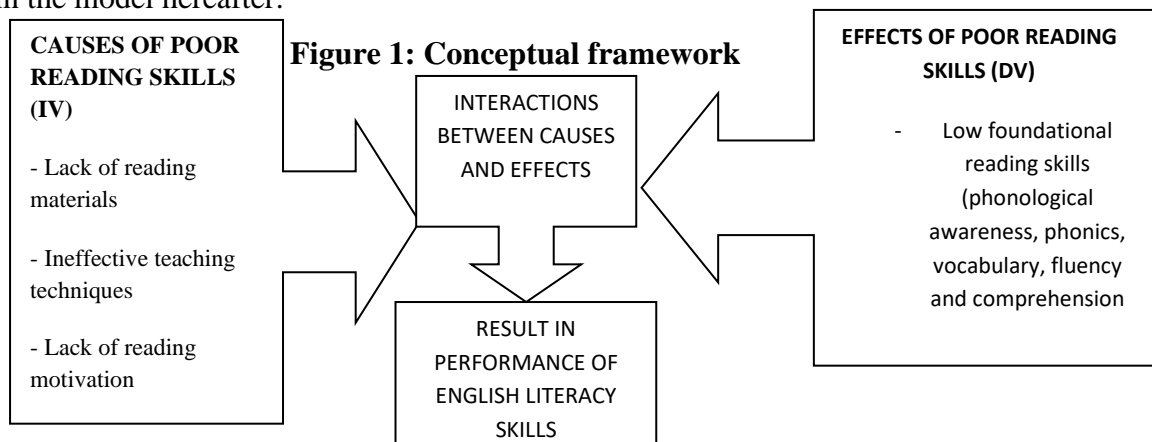
2.2.5 Reading skills and academic performance

Proficient readers have an impact on scholastic success in courses like English (Nyarko et al., 2018). Early elementary students in public schools who have a hard time reading books fare poorly academically in English and other areas as Nyarko and their co-authors elaborated. In addition, Khamkhong (2018, cited in Par et al, 2020) acknowledges that knowledge from textbooks is the resource for academic performance. For students to be successful and productive in classroom, they must read widely and proficiently for knowledge and information from textbooks, research articles, and other important sources.

Though the above scholars looked into the correlation between reading and academic performance, there is no deep analysis of the effect of basic reading abilities such as phonics, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Alonge et al., (2017) examined the role of effective teaching of phonics to the effective success in EFL literacy. The results showed that students who were taught using a differentiated phonics teaching technique fared exceptionally well on the ESL achievement test. This suggests that the students' learning outcome in English literacy abilities was positively correlated with the differentiated phonics instructional technique.

2.3 Conceptual framework underpinning this study

The study's conceptual framework underlies a premise that inefficient reading materials, inadequate implementation of suggested teaching strategies for reading and reading motivation (which are regarded as causes) as independent variables while low foundational reading skills namely phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (which are regarded as effect) are the dependent variables is as demonstrated in the model hereafter:



Source: Primary data, 2023

2.4 Gap analysis of reviewed literature

Reviewed literature mostly turned around variables like motivation, reading materials and the teaching of reading skills as they correlate with reading skills. However, many findings did not seek to assess the effect they impose on English performance of primary three learners who learn English as a second language. In Rwandan context, and region, not so many interventions are put in early grade literacy assessment in English to see the extent to which causes outlined in literature correlate with reading performance. That is why there is a need to go deep into this matter by testing reading comprehension level (which is the ultimate skill of English literacy) and correlating it with causes that are identified.

Summary

This chapter has focused on the relevant literature which provides foundation of the knowledge on the topic under study. It highlights key terms that guide the topic under investigation (reading and foundational reading skills). The literature has been thoroughly reviewed on key factors that affect reading skills in primary three learners. It has taken readers through empirical studies that relate to the problem under investigation. It ends with the review of reading theories, the theoretical and conceptual framework that the study is underpinned by. The subsequent chapter is all about methodology that will be employed in the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research paradigm, design and methodology that were employed to look into the phenomenon under study which is entitled causes and effects of poor reading skills among primary three learners in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools. Thus, Population under this study, techniques of sampling, research instruments used, validity, and reliability of instruments, data analysis methods, trustworthiness and ethical consideration are discussed.

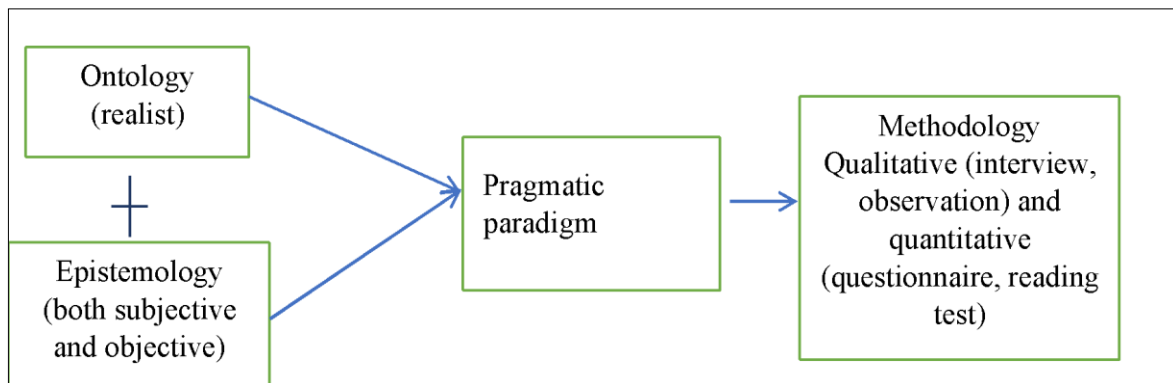
3.1 Research paradigm

According to Khan (2014), a paradigm is a framework or set of assumptions and ideas that provides a way to see how the world appears when its scientific component is linked to its premises. Understanding the research paradigm is essential for conducting research since it informs the investigation of the research questions and objectives (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). A paradigm provides a researcher's worldview. It comprises the overarching beliefs and assumptions that influence how a researcher perceives the field, how they interpret it, and how they behave within it. Numerous researchers have attempted to postulate philosophical worldviews, however only four are appropriate for the modern trends of research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The first to be outlined is the post-positivism paradigm. This kind of thinking is commonly referred to as the scientific method for conducting scientific research. In other words, its epistemological assumption is to empirically conduct an experimental relationship between variables and come to a decision (Creswell, 2014). This worldview is not applicable in this study since it will be interested in collecting both qualitative and quantitative data.

The second paradigm is social constructivism which, according to Creswell (2014), combines interpretivism with constructivism. According to this worldview, one can understand the environment in which they live and create their own interpretations of their experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this regard, qualitative data collection fits this paradigm. This paradigm does not fulfill the problem under investigation since the researcher did not spend time studying the society to be studied. In this case data collection was both qualitative and quantitative.

Another research team subscribes to the transformative paradigm. This viewpoint was developed to criticise post-positivism for ignoring disadvantaged social groups. In order to address social inequality at every level that it manifests itself, according to Martens (2010 as referenced in Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), political agenda and political inquiry must be linked with inquiry. So, the fourth paradigm which is pragmatic underpins this study and is sketched out below:

Figure 2: Paradigm diagram



Source: Creswell, 2014 (p.16)

The above depicted paradigm is made up of components that follow: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods (Scotland, 2012). Epistemology focuses on the nature and origins of knowledge. In other words, epistemological assumptions are concerned with how knowledge can be produced, acquired, and transmitted (Cohen et al., 2007). Ontology, according to Heidegger (2013, as referenced in Junjie and Yingxin, 2022), is the essence of truth. Ontology is, thus; concerned with defining the nature of an object's existence (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022). Ontology studies the nature and organization of human beings and how they are and what they are with their beliefs, strengths and weaknesses that are genetically given at conception. Current study is underpinned by the pragmatic paradigm since it tries to emphasise the research problem (causes and effects of poor reading skills) from the field by carefully collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. The importance of this paradigm is that the researcher gives attention to the root causes of poor English reading of primary three learners by using multiple techniques such as classroom observations, reading test, semi structured interviews and questionnaires to derive knowledge about the problem (Creswell, 2014).

3. 2 Research design

Research design is defined by Claire et al., (1962, cited in Akhtar, 2016:68) as an arrangement of conditions for data collecting and analysis that aims to balance relevance to the study purpose with economy and method.

To gather and analyse data, this study used a mixed methodology. This design integrates both qualitative and quantitative procedures for data collection. It entails making philosophical assumptions, applying both qualitative and quantitative methods (Wisler, 2009). According to Creswell (2012), neither the quantitative nor the qualitative approach, is adequate to capture the patterns and specifics of the situation when it is taken separately. He explains that, quantitative and qualitative are put together to produce a more thorough analysis of the situation. Precisely this study employed a mixed method to triangulate findings by collecting qualitative data through semi structured interviews with primary three English teachers and quantitative data by administering the reading test to primary three learners, giving questionnaires to teachers to fill and classroom observation using the checklist.

3.3 Population, sample, sampling procedure and data collection methods

3.3.1 Population

Population of this study are English teachers and learners in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools in Bugesera District as (Creswell, 2012) advised that everyone involved and share the same characteristics qualifies for the study. To correctly identify the target population, all boundary issues and attributes must be iteratively examined to ensure that the final target population definition is broad enough to provide appropriate data for the study (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). As a result, the researcher selected this group after compiling a number of reports and observing the English literacy gap in the population being studied. This has been explained by Creswell (2012) who claim the researcher's own experience as one of the criteria in selecting a research design and population. The target population for this study is five (5) Demonstration Schools which is populated by four hundred fifty five primary learners and ten English teachers for those learners.

Table 1: Distribution of target population of learners

School	Target population per school	Sample size per school
GS MAYANGE A	212	99
GS MARANYUNDO	79	37
EP GITWE	105	49
SAINTE THERESE SCHOOL	25	12
BRIGHT LIGHT SCHOOL	34	16
TOTAL	455	213

Source: Primary data, 2023

3.3.2 Sampling procedure and data collection methods

The sample in research is known as the particular group of units usually humans that will be asked to participate in the study (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). The sample size was obtained from the population of both primary three teachers and learners of English in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools namely GS Mayange A, Gitwe primary school, GS Maranyundo, Bright Light School and Sainte Thérèse School. To calculate the sample size, this study used a 10% of margin error and a confidence level of 95%. The study applies the formula of Madow (1968) to determine the sample size. The calculated sample of 213 (out of the total population of 445) primary learners to be administered to the reading comprehension test was used. This is how the sample size was calculated in the following formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + [N * (e)^2]}$$

Where: n = Sample Size, N = Study Population, e = Margin of error

$$\text{Thus, } n = \frac{455}{1 + [455 * (0.05)^2]} = 213$$

Random sampling was applied to get primary three English learners from GS Mayange A, Gitwe primary school, GS Maranyundo, Bright Light School and Sainte Thérèse School to be involved in this research. Depending on the number of learners in each demonstration school, the researcher calculated a proportional number of learners that was employed for the study.

Besides, a purposeful sampling method was used to get primary three English teachers for the study. Purposeful sampling permits the researcher to have a deep understanding of the phenomenon in the study by intentionally selecting appropriate participants (Hamee & Taherdoost, 2016). Thus, ten (10) teachers who teach English at TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools were purposefully sampled.

3.3.3 Methods of data collection

The study used triangulation technique to collect data for the researcher to come up with reliable information about causes and effects of poor English reading primary three learners of TTC Demonstration Schools.

3.3.3.1 English reading test

The English reading test was administered to primary three learners to assess their reading skills. The test was taken from UNESCO's Global Proficiency Framework for reading (GPF) document. The goal of the GPF is to give countries' assessment organisations with a consistent reference for assessing readers' fluency and comprehension levels from grade one to grade nine (Cason, 2020). The story was selected from the UNESCO's Global Proficiency Framework for reading (GPF) in which grade three reading text examples to be referenced in the assessment are provided. Each learner was given time to read the whole story, but the assessor counted a number of words the learners had read accurately to assess the reading phonics and fluency ability. Five comprehension questions were asked to check their comprehension level which according to USAID (2019) is the ultimate goal of reading.

3.3.3.2 Semi-structured interview

The researcher chose the use of this instrument to collect data as it is the most effective tool to gain a deep insight into the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2014). All primary three English teachers from TTC Demonstration Schools were interviewed about how they view teaching reading in their classes, the causes of poor reading skills, and the effect of it in English literacy performance and how reading skills can be improved. Teachers were asked probing questions whose answers thoroughly explained the issue.

3.3.3.3 Questionnaire

Questionnaire comprising close ended questions about English teachers' demographic information (mainly their teaching experience, English level and training about English reading techniques); opinions about strategies used to teach reading skills in English, English

reading materials availability and use in their classes and primary three learners' reading motivation. The questionnaire administered is attached to the study appendix number one.

3.3.3.4 Classroom observation

Classroom observations were carried out by using a structured observation checklist in order to witness reading lessons practices in primary three classes. In addition to that, the primary three English Teachers were observed to see whether or not their responses to questionnaire and interview questions corresponded to what they actually do in the classroom. The classroom observation checklist can be referenced as appendix two of this research.

3.4 Instrument validity and reliability

Questionnaire, interview questions and classroom observation checklist were validated and checked if they are reliable. After elaborating them, they were submitted to the experts in the field such as lecturers to validate both their language and contents if they are linked to the research questions and objectives and can be easily understood by participants. The questionnaire comprised both English and Kinyarwanda versions for the respondent to provide valid information. The researcher was mindful that some primary three teachers in this study were unable to fully understand the statements on the questionnaire because they were unfamiliar with the technical terms utilised.

To ensure quantitative reliability, the questionnaire was tested and re-tested among five respondents (primary three English teachers) and the reliability was determined by the consistency level of 0.7 observed. This is an acceptable consistency level because a ratio of 1 and less than that is hundred percent reliable (Ranjit Kumar, 2011). On other hand, the reading test administered to primary three learners, the reliability was determined by consistency level of 0.4 after giving the test twice to the same thirty learners.

In order to confirm that the transcription did not distort the respondents' intended meaning, the interview script was given back to them. This increased the reliability of the qualitative data.

3.5 Method of data analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software was used to analyse and present quantitative data. Primary data for close-ended questions from the questionnaires and classroom observation checklist were presented in the form of tables showing frequencies and percentages for easy analysis. To determine the extent of variability, means and standard

deviations were utilised as measures of dispersion. Means interpretation based on mean actual limitations in the interpretation of five-point Likert scale answers (Bizimana & Orodtho, 2014) where the mean within 4.21-5.00 is very high, 3.41-4.20 is High, 2.61-3.40 is Neutral, 1.81-2.60 is Low and 1-1.80 is classified as Lower. Internal consistency of research instruments was labelled to control independent variables in this study. Skewness was used to show the normal distribution of reading scores and compare the reading performance by school type. This was presented because data normality is effectively determined using skewness (Hatem et al., 2022).

Data analysis for semi-structured interview and open-ended questions from questionnaire were analysed as qualitative data. Considering the nature of open-ended questions, answers were systematically gathered and arranged. This was done into the following steps:

Step one was about transcribing the interview data or/and collecting the responses from questionnaires. For the second step, the researcher initially gathered a general comprehension of the data and considered its overall ideas. The third step involved using Microsoft Excel to code, categorise and create themes that were narrated. The fourth step was the writing of all findings, and demonstrating how they are related.

3.6 Trustworthiness and ethical consideration

The investigator requested authorization from Bugesera district to collect data from the selected schools. The authorization letter then was presented in the respective schools and teachers were informed about the whole process. The researcher acknowledges that participants are independent individuals who should be eager to give information which is true and bring to the natural process of the research enterprise. That means participants had certain rights, such as the right to consent freely, the right to information about the study, and the respondent had the option to leave the study at any time without penalty. To produce accurate and beneficial outcomes, the data analysis was carried out rigorously to ensure trustworthiness. By adhering to the pragmatic paradigm to let the reader properly comprehend the phenomenon, the researcher made sure that data analysis is carried out in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner. Data gathering was preserved electronically utilising a range of techniques, including retaining them on personal computers, flash drives, external hard drives, and email for securing storage and retrieval.

Kinds of challenges that may hamper the efficacy, validity and credibility of the study are also anticipated. To avoid that, enough information was provided to participants about why

the study is being carried out and why they are actors in the process. It was also made certain that the research findings could be applied to diverse contexts or situations with varied respondents.

Summary

This chapter has detailed the methodology utilised to carry out the study. Philosophical worldview that guides the study (regarded as paradigm) was explained with the research design. Research population (which is primary three learners and teachers of English in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools) was also outlined. Sample size and sample procedures were discussed. The section also described the instruments (thematic analysis and with descriptive statistics). Validity and reliability of data collection instruments were discussed. Finally, trustworthiness and ethical consideration were explained.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

The data and a discussion of the results are presented in this chapter. The study includes both quantitative and qualitative data. The former involves a reading test given to primary three learners in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools, teacher questionnaire responses, and classroom observation. The latter is made up of responses from semi-structured interviews with teachers. The reading test served to determine learners' reading proficiency level in primary three grade of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools. It was administered for the researcher to answer the first question about verifying the reading proficiency level of primary three English learners. The questionnaire, interview and classroom observations were used to answer the remaining three questions, namely; the causes and effect of poor reading skills and how English reading skills can be improved.

4.1 Analysis of demographic characteristics of primary three English teachers

To determine if primary three English teachers at TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools have any bearing on the issue under investigation, information on their demographic characteristics including gender, age, type of school attended, educational background, and teaching experience was gathered. The table 2 below summarises information about the informant teachers.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of primary three English teachers

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	4	40
	Female	6	60
Age	Between 20-25	3	30
	Between 26-30	2	20
	41 and above	5	50
Type of Institution	Public	6	60
	Government Aided	2	20
	Private	2	20
Qualification	A2 Normale Primaire	3	30
	TTC LE/TML or ECLPE/ECE	2	20
	Others	5	50
Teaching experience	Between 5 to 15 years	2	20
	Over 15 years	8	80

Source: Primary data, 2023

The table shows that 60% of English teachers are females while the rest 40% of them are males. Fifty (50%) which is equal to half of the respondents are aged 41 and beyond while 30% and 20% range between 20-25 and 26-30 respectively.

According to the school types 60% of the schools included in this study are public and the remaining 40% are split equally between government-aided and private schools. This shows that most of the schools where the research was carried out are public.

In terms of teaching experience, 80% of teachers have more than 15 years of experience. Those who have over 15 years of teaching experience are those ones who studied when French was used as a medium of instruction. Five teachers also (which is equal to 50%) are the only qualified in teaching while the rest of others studied other options far different from teaching. Teachers were also requested to list any English reading training they had taken. Ten percent of teachers, or one out of ten, attended the reading training. This is the research's stance of how primary three students have suffered as a result of instructors' ineffective reading instruction at TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools. When instructors are not given the chance to exchange excellent practices with their fellow educators, there is definitely a gap.

The prevalent conclusion drawn from the demographic data is that reading competency has suffered as a result of issues like teacher irrelevant background in teacher education which could be the result of their inaptitude in teaching English reading in early years of schooling including primary three grades.

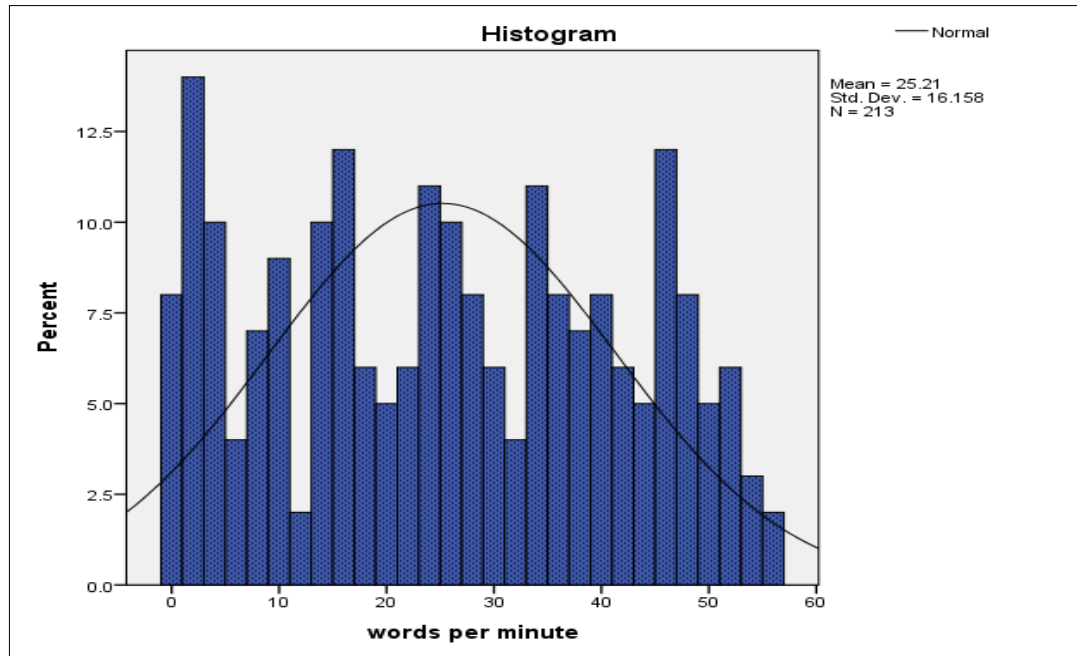
4.2 Analysis of English reading sub-skills test results

4.2.1 Total word read correctly and comprehension scores

As mentioned in the research methodology, a reading test was administered to primary three learners at TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools. The test was adapted from the UNESCO global proficiency Framework for reading (2020) in grade three reference stories. The reading test consisted of sub-tasks such as the words that a learner can read out of the total words that comprised the story and five comprehension questions. The sub tasks were decided referring to UNESCO (2020) indicative reading subtasks, that is, reading fluency and comprehension. The sub-tasks were also decided in the lens of the Simple view of reading theory (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) guiding this study which postulates the interdependence between word recognition and comprehension for EFL learners. Learners were given time to read the story, which according to UNESCO was supposed to be at the learners' level. After reading, students were quizzed on their comprehension using Bloom's taxonomy-level

questions of remembering. The researchers presented the reading test findings using statistical charts that display student performance scores and their corresponding percentages to make them easy to understand.

Figure 3: Normal distribution of the total words read correctly



Source: Primary data, 2023

This figure 3 shows that a great part of the 213 students to whom the test was given were able to read only 0–10 of the total of 55 words that made up the story. It is observed that a great percentage of learners scored below 30 out of 55 points. The mean point was around 25.3 while the standard deviation is around 16.1. This shows that a significant portion of learners attending TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools did not read even half (twenty-eight) of the words that made up the entire text.

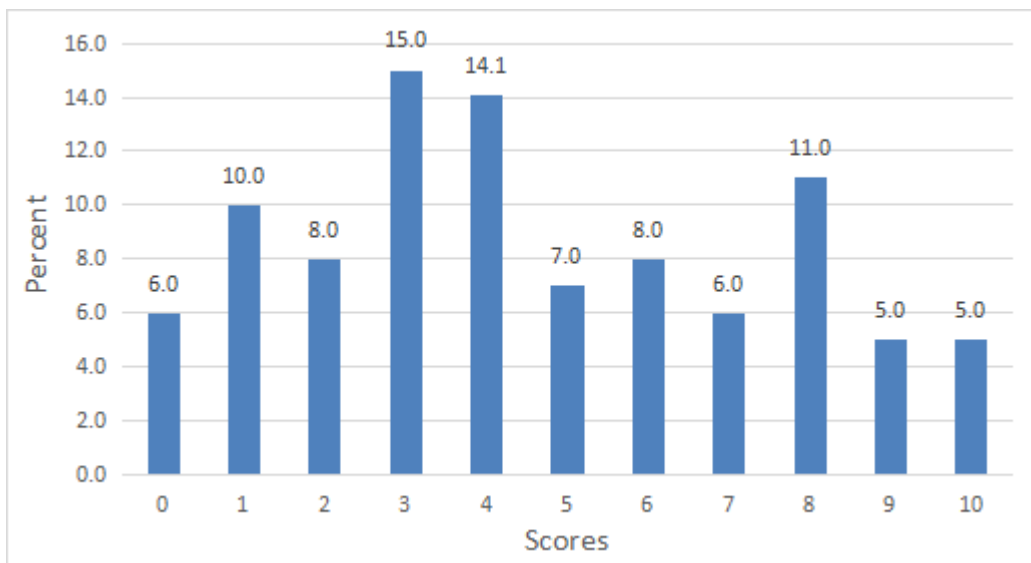
Table 3: Statistical distribution of mean, median and mode

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistics	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
words per minute	213	0	55	25	25	16.158	.042	.000
Valid N (listwise)	213							

Source: Primary data, 2023

Mean and median in table 3 are equal but the mode is multiple because there is a high variability in data for reading score. This is because there are students who cannot read any word and score 0 out of 55 while there are others who scored 55/55. The figure shows that scores are not normally distributed because of that high variability in the reading ability of learners.

Figure 4: Distribution of learners’ comprehension performance scores



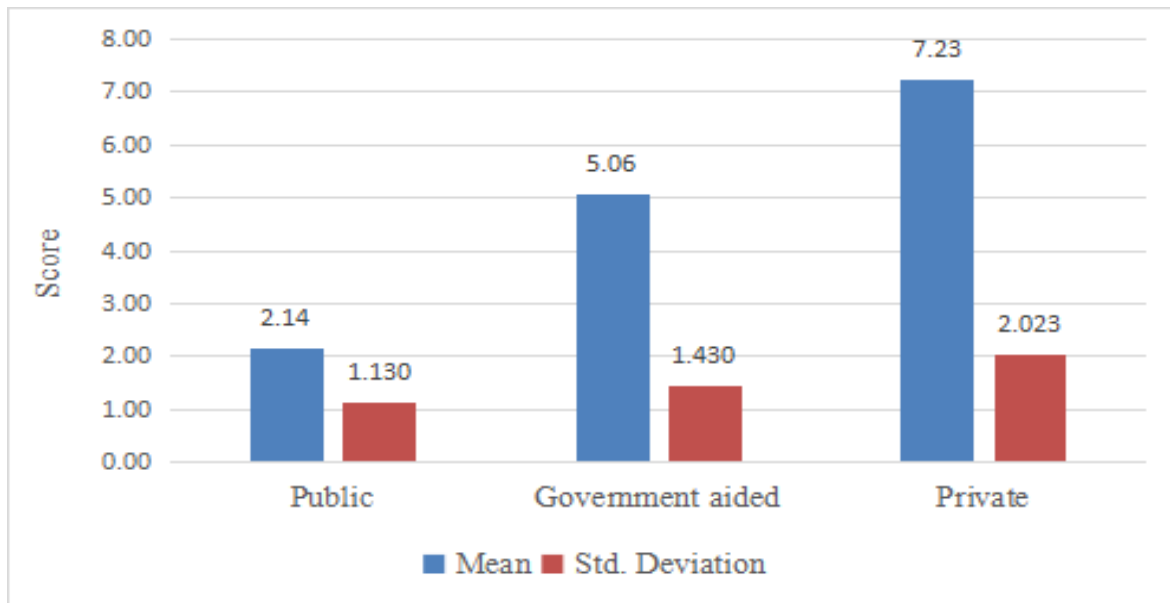
Source: Primary data, 2023

The figure 4 shows that 15% of the 213 students to whom the tests were given scored three out of ten on total comprehension scores. A high number of them as illustrated in the figure scored below five. Six per cent (6%) of the students scored zero out ten while only 5% scored ten out ten. This shows that a significant portion of learners attending TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools were not able to answer the reading comprehension questions.

4.2.2 Reading Comprehension scores by school type

The comparison was conducted among students from private, public, and government aided schools. Then by comparing means and standard deviations, the following chart displayed the result.

Figure 5: Mean comparison for comprehension scores by school type



Source: Primary data, 2023

According to the chart in this figure 5, the results from comprehension questions indicate that in public school the mean score out of 10 was 2.14 while the variability to the mean was 1.130. The same figure shows that at private school level the mean score was 7.23 while the standard deviation was 2.023. The comprehension test performance difference between public and private school learners was significant as the average shows above. And this confirms the variability in test scoring for reading comprehension asked for the year three learners in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools. On the other hand, the analysis of variance for the mean score and sex of children, the study result found no difference among the learners from different schools.

4.3 Teachers' responses on practicing foundational reading skills

The study requested the teachers to provide their answers about how often core reading skills are given time in their classes. Details on the responses given by the teachers attending this study were summarised in the table below for more details. Teachers gave their responses for items set on questionnaire by using 5 Likert scales namely Very often, Often, Neutral, Rarely and Never. The following table (3) shows their responses.

Table 4: Scores about teachers’ reaction on the teaching of foundational reading skills

Statements	Very often	Often	Neutral	Rarely	Never	Mean
Give learners opportunity to practise phonological awareness	0%	10%	0%	10%	80%	1.4
Give opportunity for learners to practise phonics	10%	20%	10%	10%	50%	2.1
Give opportunities for learners to practise fluency such reading aloud several times	20%	10%	0%	30	40%	2.4
Pre-teach vocabulary that will appear in the text	10%	30%	0%	20%0	40%	2.5
Give opportunity for learners to practise reading comprehension	10%	10%	10%	20%	50%	2.0
Overall mean = 2.08						

Source: Primary data, 2023

According to the findings of the study illustrated in table 4, perception of primary three English teachers from TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools, the results show a great number of respondents who never give the opportunity to practise phonology awareness, phonics and word recognition and reading comprehension with the respective mean scores of 1.4, 2.1 and 2.0 far behind the overall average score of 2.08. Reading fluency and Pre-teaching of vocabulary appeared the best practice used by many teachers in the study area with respective mean scores of 2.4 and 2.50 greater than the overall average mean score.

4.4 Teachers’ responses concerning the availability of reading materials

English teachers in grade three were questioned about the existence of materials and tools that facilitates their students to improve their reading proficiency in English in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools. Their agreement on each statement is also measured on the 3 Likert scales levels of agreement, namely, existing, not sure and not existing.

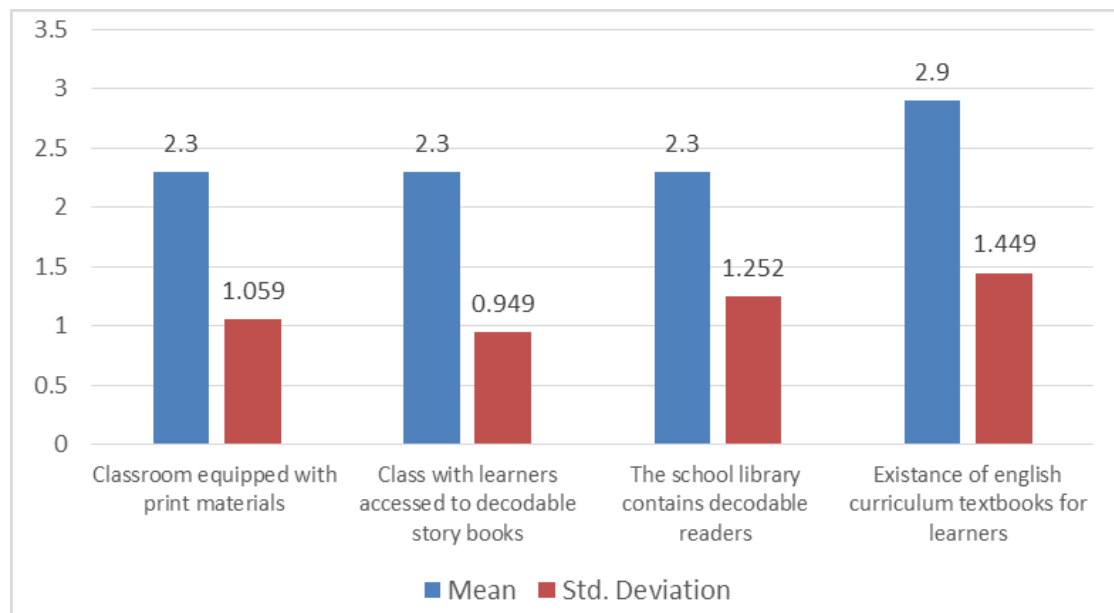
Table 5: Responses about availability of reading materials

Statements	Existing	Not sure	Not Existing	Total
Classroom equipped with print materials	20%	10%	70%	100%
Class with learners accessed to decodable story books	20%	0%	80%	100%
The school library contains decodable readers	30%	0%	70%	100%
Existence of English curriculum textbooks for learners	30%	0%	70%	100%
Overall mean= 2.40				

Source: Primary data, 2023

According to the study results in table 5, it has been found that in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools there is lack of the materials to make primary three learners improve their good performance in English learning. The results show that percentages between 70 and 80% of respondent did not have the reading materials for their learners to read.

Figure 6: Mean comparisons for English reading materials existence



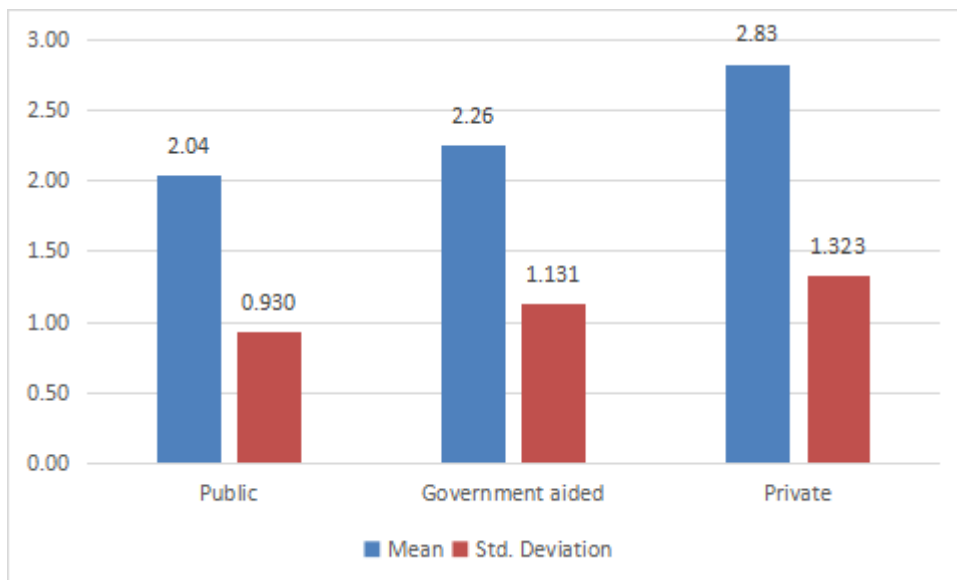
Source: Primary data, 2023

The figure 6 here about mean comparison reveals the results in graphic representation for the mean and standard deviation comparison known as the variability analysis. It shows that most materials and tools that were under investigation were below the overall average, and its variance to the mean is high which shows that their availability is low or non-existent in most of the schools visited. It shows that a significant portion of teachers among TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools did not even use one of the available materials and tools for helping the primary three learners improve their level of English reading performance. Only the existence of English curriculum textbooks for learners were highly available on the average of 2.9 out of five schools visited which is slightly above the overall average.

4.5 The availability of reading materials by type of schools

Availability and use of English reading materials was a subject of research during this study. The results from this variable were analysed by considering the types of schools where data were collected. This study tries to make the mean comparison and standard deviation to assess their level of variability between different groups and levels as revealed in figure below.

Figure 7: Comparison of availability of materials by school type



Source: Primary data, 2023

The results from comprehension questions indicate that in public school the mean score out of 5 was 2.04 while the variability to the mean was 0.930. The same figure shows that at private school level the mean score was 2.83 while the standard deviation was 1.323. The availability of English teaching materials for improving the reading performance were

significantly different between public and private school learners as the average shows above. This confirms the variability in relation to the test scoring reading materials availability among the grade three learners in TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools.

4.6 Teachers' responses about learners' reading motivation

In this part teachers were requested to share their opinions about the motivation of their learners regarding reading activities. The degree of agreement with the statements was also evaluated using a Likert scale from disagree to agree. The Table 5 shows students' agreements for their motivation about the way to improve their performance in English learning.

Table 6: Teachers' agreements for motivation about English learning

Statements	Agreed	Not decided	Disagreed	Mean	Std. Deviation
Most learners show enjoyment in reading on their own	20%	5%	75%	2.5	1.08
Learners in all my current classes finish every reading assignment given to them	15%	10%	75%	2.4	0.843
My learners are not discouraged after correction on reading activities	60%	10%	30%	3.5	1.18
Overall mean= 1.03					

Source: Primary data, 2023

The table is made of three statements namely about learners' enjoyment when reading on their own, finishing reading assignments and attitude when their reading mistakes are corrected. According to the results, most of teachers (75%) disagreed that learners enjoy reading on their own, explaining and finishing the reading tasks assigned to them. However, another important portion of them 60% indicated that their learners are not discouraged when their mistakes are corrected.

4.7 Quantitative analysis of classroom observation

As stated in the research methodology, classroom observation was conducted to triangulate data. Ten reading lessons delivered by primary three teachers from TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools were observed by the researcher. The checklist served as a guide for the classroom observation as it evaluated the reading instruction techniques used to teach the fundamental reading skills, namely; phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension and the scoring mode was yes =1 and no = 0. Observation also revealed the availability of reading materials and the print rich classroom. The following table (6) presents data from the classroom observations:

Table 7: Quantitative analysis of classroom observation data

Statements about classroom observation checklist	N	Yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Opportunity for the learners to practice phonological awareness such as segmenting, blending and identifying phonemes	10	2	20.0	8	80.0
Opportunities for learners to practice phonics such as identifying written syllables, words and sentences	10	3	30.0	7	70.0
Opportunity for learners to read aloud (pair, echo and choral reading)	10	5	50.0	5	50.0
Opportunity for the learners to answer comprehension questions.	10	5	50.0	5	50.0
I pre-teach vocabulary that will appear in the text.	10	3	30.0	7	70.0
Learners to use a variety of books and other reading materials to practise reading	10	2	20.0	8	80.0
Ensuring print rich classroom (a classroom where there are letters, words and texts hang on the wall)	10	1	10.0	9	90.0
Valid N (listwise)	10				

Source: Primary data, 2023

The table is made of seven checklist statements. The frequency of students' chance to practise phonological awareness skills including segmenting, blending, and identifying phonemes in reading lessons was 20%. Opportunities for learners to practise phonics such as identifying written syllables, words and sentences is of the percentage of 30%. Opportunity for learners to read aloud (pair, echo, and choral reading) is at the percentage of 50%. Time for learners to answer comprehension questions is 50%. The pre-teaching of vocabulary that will appear in the text is of the percentage of 30%. The use of books and other reading materials to practice reading is of the percentage 20% and the ensuring of print rich classroom is of the percentage of 10%.

4.8 The association between the causes and effects of the reading skills

The statistics test was conducted to evaluate the relationship between causes and effects of the reading skills of primary three English learners of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools. The model below illustrates.

Table 8: Test analysis for the most causes and effects of reading

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.000 ^a	.056	.021	0.000

Primary data, 2023

The table 8 shows R (.000) as a strong and positive relationship between causes of low reading skills and the effects of low comprehension scores while the R² is .056, showing that only 5.6% of variance is predicted by the causes.

Table 9: Test analysis coefficients for supply chain performance and inventory control systems.

Model		Coefficients			T	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Independent variables on causes	(Constant)	4.000	0.000		7.000	.002
	Poor teaching strategies (lack of opportunities for learners to practice phonological, phonics, fluency vocabulary and comprehension)	0.000	1.004	.094	0.000	0.000
	Lack of reading materials for learners to practice reading	.024	0.000	.015	.027	0.000
	Lack of reading motivation	3.000	2.000	1.000	1.000	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Effect on reading scores						

Source: Primary data, 2023

The Beta values for each of the independent variables are poor teaching strategies .094; lack of reading materials was .015 and lack of motivation 1.000 respectively. This indicates that there is *a positive relationship between causes and effects* of English reading on learners in all the three attributes with being highly significant as $p \leq 0.05$ which shows the positive significance in relationship between variables.

4.9 Analysis of primary three English teachers' semi-structured interview

The interview was composed of four main questions from which the researcher drew the themes, namely; the teachers' attitudes to the teaching of English in primary three, causes of poor English reading skills of primary three learners from TTC Nyamata Demonstration

Schools, effects of poor reading skills and recommended strategies about how English reading skills can be improved.

4.9.1 Teachers' views about teaching reading in English

The interviewer started by asking primary three English teachers about how they describe teaching of English reading. The question aimed to elicit opinions from teachers regarding how simple or difficult it is based on their experiences. Eight out of ten teachers who responded said that teaching English in primary three is challenging because they sometimes have to use both Kinyarwanda and English. This is because, as they stated, learners lack the vocabulary necessary to comprehend what is spoken in English alone. One respondent for example said: " *You can't manage to teach learners by using English only. It requires every time to say in Kinyarwanda. That is why when you tell them to do something in English only, they ask you to say it in Kinyarwanda so that they can understand.*" Teachers also answered that since learners have a low background in English, it is challenging to straightforwardly teach the content of primary three. Moreover, teachers said it is difficult to teach the curriculum of primary three in English only because of the learners' limited English proficiency. Some respondents (2 teachers out of 10) claimed that because their own English is subpar, it takes them long to learn the lessons they teach.

However, one teacher from the private school said: *My English reading classes are very interesting for both my learners' side and mine because the learners easily read the passages and comprehend what they read. I appreciate the questions they raise when reading and how they offer to read.* The classroom observation conducted by the researcher affirmed that students at private schools had better facilities and a stronger foundation in English literacy than learners in public schools, which is the underlying cause of their positive attitudes toward reading tasks.

4.9.2 Teachers' perspectives about causes of poor English reading

When learners took a reading test, it revealed that their English reading abilities were lacking. This raised the question of what English teachers believe to be the primary causes of this. Eight teachers out of ten stated that primary three English learners' low reading ability in English is associated with little time they spend reading. They replied that reading tasks their learners carry out are limited to the classroom time. That is because, as they replied, when they get home no one is ready to help them read or encourage them to read. One teacher said: *The majority of the learners I teach have parents or guardians who do not know how to read*

and write. That results in the learners missing someone to assist in their lessons. Reading for learners, therefore, is limited to the classroom instructions.

According to some teachers, a student's ability to read is influenced by their prior English-language exposure. This had occurred, according to the teachers, due to the language policy whereby all subjects were taught in Kinyarwanda in early grades. When one teaches them how to read, they face so many vocabulary gaps in reading that they do not understand words meaning. That also blocks their reading comprehension skills. One teacher said: *When I teach reading, I spend much time explaining in Kinyarwanda words that learners do not understand. With my experience, the texts found in primary three textbooks are difficult for my learners to decode. It requires me to bring the easier passages from books of primary one or two. Little by little, I start teaching them to read primary three texts. This results in lagging behind in the curriculum contents.*

Majority of public school teachers also are challenged to teach reading because of lack of reading materials for students' low English reading skills. All respondents cited the dearth of reading materials at their schools including storybooks and read-aloud. Some even claimed that there were none. Besides, the curriculum textbooks are not enough. One teacher said: *At our school, there are no other books that my learners can read independently. It is as if the only passages they read are the ones I write on the chalkboard. The number of curriculum textbooks is very small. In my class one book is shared by three desks. How can twelve learners share only one book?*

Teachers claim that lack of training to enhance their English teaching abilities is another factor contributing to primary three learners' weak reading abilities. The majority of them claimed that they do not have effective pedagogical skills to teach English. This is because some of them (five teachers), as they stated, do not have teaching certification. They claim for training in how to teach English as a second language.

Additional factors cited by teachers include some students who have social issues that impair both their reading and other academic achievement. They stated that some learners come from underprivileged homes where finding food is difficult. As a result, they arrive at school in the afternoon hungry and do not listen to instructions. Some of the learners come from homes with disharmonies where their parents show little regard for their children's education. Their failure to master English literacy is another outcome of this.

Class size was also mentioned to contribute a lot to the poor English literacy in the schools under investigation. Eight teachers (80% of the total respondents) explained that their classes are so big that they hardly find time to attend learners individually. One teacher said: *At school, every class is attended by over 50 learners. How can teachers find time for every learner who struggles to read? It results in failing to know where learners struggle in literacy.*

Additionally, teachers reported that some learners with poor performance fear reading in English. Some teachers who have repeating learners in grade three have demonstrated this. They claim that they are reluctant to read aloud in public.

4.9.3 Teachers views about the effects of poor English reading skills

English teachers in grade three were questioned about how their students' low reading proficiency affects their performance in English literacy. All the respondents argue that, when learners have low reading skills, they fail to understand instructions. That results in their failing questions in assessments. One teacher said for example: *The exams we give to our learners are written. So, some of them fail to answer them because they do not decode instructions. One day I asked them to mention three parts of their bodies. A majority of them failed to answer this question until I explained that verbally. So, when learners do not read well, they cannot understand instructions.*

The respondents also claimed that, the way they assess in examinations, requires much reading skills. They say that every learner, in examinations, is given their own questions paper that they answer by reading on their own. It becomes a barrier to many of the learners when they do not decode passages and neither do they answer the comprehension questions. Some other teachers said that if learners do not read proficiently, they get bored of learning English. Some of the learners also tend to drop out of school because of that situation.

According to the above discussed findings from the interview with teachers, it can be confirmed that poor reading skills among primary three learners of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools was caused by the limited time on tasks, unavailability of reading materials, learners' lack of prior language skills that should be acquired in earlier grades, lack of professional development of teachers such as trainings, and sociological issues such as family problems. The findings also confirm the results from a questionnaire presented in the previous analysis where reading materials, teaching strategies and motivation fall short and

impact the reading skills of the learners under study. It is also confirmed that poor reading skills negatively impact English performance since the assessments conducted by teachers depend much on reading.

4.9.4 Teachers suggestions about how English reading skills can be improved

After all, the interviewees were asked a question about how English reading skills of primary three learners can be improved. The majority of them (seven teachers out of ten) recommended that English teachers should acquire training about how best to teach English reading especially in early grade. One teacher said: *as I did not study Education at high school, there is a challenge that regards how I can help learners who struggle to read in my class. Therefore, I need training about how best I can teach reading in my class.*

Teachers who have been working for a long time (more than 15 years) said they learned French. In order to be able to serve as role models for teaching English reading and other skills generally, they recommend enough English courses to improve their English competence. One teacher said: *My English proficiency is not good enough to be able to help my learners. This is because the little English I use is the one I learnt on my own. This is because I studied in French. I can, therefore, recommend trainings for both effective teaching and improving my proficiency.*

All the respondents (ten teachers) recommended that their classes should be provided with reading materials that support the curriculum implementation. Respondents assert that learners cannot improve reading skills when they only read passages that teachers write on chalkboard. The government should equip schools with enough reading materials such as levelled stories, magazines, novellas etc. The ratio of textbooks by a learner is low according to their responses.

Teachers also suggest that there should be enough time allocated to reading tasks on the daily timetable. One respondent said: *My timetable is so overloaded that finding time for helping my learners in reading is very hard. There should be, therefore, enough time in a week for reading in English.* Respondents (three out of ten) also call for parental support in literacy. Parents should help and encourage their children to read when they are at home because that is where they spend much time. One teacher said: *So many parents have a mind-set that the learning of their children is in the hands of the teacher only. That is false! They should know*

that studying (reading in particular) should also happen at home. They should change their mindsets.

Apart from the training, teachers suggested that they should be coached about how best to implement the training they get in teaching reading. They said that training is important, but some teachers tend to leave behind what they acquire in training. Therefore, they should be coached and monitored about the way they implement them. The teachers also should be skilled about how to manage diversities and the large number of learners in their classroom. This is because they said that class size also affects the way learners' reading needs can be reached out by the teacher.

Reading skills should also be catered for from early years of schooling. This has been suggested by respondents as many of them criticised the learners' reading proficiency comparing to the grade they are in. The majority of teachers (especially those from public schools) said that instead of teaching primary three curriculum contents right away after the learners get in primary three, it requires to first teach them the contents of previous years. This takes much of their time.

4.10 Discussion of findings

The research purpose was to assess the root causes and effects of poor English reading skills of primary three learners. It was conducted in five Demonstration Schools of TTC Nyamata. The study triangulated data by employing English reading test for grade three learners, questionnaires to English teachers, reading classes observations, semi-structured interviews. This part discusses findings by focusing on the research questions and comparing findings with reviewed literature and theory guiding the study.

At the foremost, the demographic background of English teachers showed that the majority of them (60%) teach in the public schools while 40% of them being equally classified as both government aided and private schools. A half of respondents age beyond forty-one while 30% and 20% range between 26 and 30 respectively. Regarding their teaching experience, the study finds that 80% of the teachers are classified over fifteen years of experience and five teachers are the only ones with English teaching qualification. As reviewed in the literature, the absence of precise pedagogical content knowledge of differentiated instruction has a negative impact on the learning of foundational skills including reading. The majority of the available research provides compelling evidence for the association between teachers' qualification and the effective delivery of various instructions (Moosa & Shareefa, 2019).

The findings for the research question about assessing the learners' English reading level revealed a significant portion from 213 learners who failed to read correctly a half of the total words comprising the story with mean 25.21 and standard deviation of 16.158. Scores also indicate a big number of learners who failed to answer comprehension questions more significantly in the public schools with a minimum standard deviation of 1.130 and mean of 2.14 which is far below the standard deviation of 2.023 and mean of 7.23 of the learners from private schools.

The results from reading subtasks (fluency and comprehension) support the theory guiding this study. The theory postulates a strong dependence between *word recognition* or *fluency and comprehension*. Word recognition and reading comprehension are interdependent for a reader to succeed in reading (Hoover & Gough, 1990). When teaching a second language, a teacher uses the Simple View of Reading theory more precisely to identify the potential challenges that ESL students may have when learning to read (Mutema, 2022). Insufficient phonics instruction was found to be one of the causes of low reading. This study demonstrated a gap in decoding fifty-five words that composed the story. As a result, they failed to answer the comprehension questions. Therefore, there is a strong positive relation between word recognition and reading comprehension.

This research parallels these findings from classroom observation where most learners fail to recognise print texts or answer comprehension questions and in most cases it required the teachers to translate in Kinyarwanda the questions for learners to understand the question well.

Concerning the research questions about the root causes of poor English reading skills, the research found very limited opportunities (overall mean of 2.08 from the English teachers' answers) of learners practising foundational reading skills, namely; *phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension*. The teachers' responses support the findings of the researchers' classroom observations, which showed that, there were few opportunities for students to practise those fundamental reading skills. The above responses signal a disadvantage for young learners of English since teaching phonological awareness to second-language learners, as reviewed in the literature, facilitates their transition from their mother tongue to their second language, which in this case is English (Bacang, 2019). According to research (Blachman, 2000; National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; Snow et al.,

1998), phonological awareness not only correlates with early reading achievement but also plays a causal role in learning to read (Leung, 2021).

It is well known that without understanding letter-sound correspondences, students lack a vital tool for recognizing and generating familiar words to figure out new ones while reading and writing (Fletcher, 2009). The findings also contradict the study's guiding theory of simple view of reading, according to which successful reading in ESL should start with word recognition and precedes comprehension because the two go hand in hand.

Vocabulary is very crucial in teaching reading. For independent or unassisted comprehension, studies have shown that students need to be familiar with 95–98% of the terms in a text (Sue & Fiona, 2019). However, English teachers can help students by focusing instruction on the highest frequency of words, which are words that are used most frequently in all written text in English. This is especially helpful for young EFL learners when using authentic texts in the classroom which can have a wide range of vocabulary meant for native speaker children (Sue & Fiona, 2019).

Reading skills was found from both teachers' views and classroom observation to be disadvantaged by the unavailability of reading materials since English teachers under this study (mostly those from public schools with **mean of 1. 131**) replied the absence of the reading materials (with the **overall mean =2.40**) namely print materials in the classroom, decodable stories, readers in the library so as the curriculum textbooks. This is a very big challenge as Owusu-Achew (2024) asserts that if learners are not given a chance to interact with books in their early years, it makes it difficult for them to develop strong reading habits later in life, and their reading performance is poorer than that of those who used libraries. Low motivation is also a cause of poor reading since only 20% of the teacher respondents answered that, learners show enjoyment in reading on their own. The low percentage of English teachers (15%) answered that learners finish every reading assignment. The findings show a disadvantage to reading skills of primary three as scholars explored in the literature review like Dara (2019) and Fitria (2019) show the correlation between reading interest and reading comprehension.

In the semi-structured interview, results mostly overlap with the above discussion such as teachers' open responses about causes of poor English reading skills. Eight teachers from both public and government-aided schools (representing 80% of the respondents) cited a shortage of reading materials as the cause of learners' poor reading. However, teacher

respondents add low prior English literacy skills, the limited time on reading tasks both at school and home, social economic challenges like hunger, lack of both qualifications from in-service training about English literacy pedagogy, and the class size where reaching every learner's need is almost impossible.

Additionally, the study attempted to look into how poorly developed reading abilities affected English performance. Ten teachers agree that low reading proficiency among learners has a significant impact on how well they understand written instructions. One of them gave an example of when learners failed to mention three body parts because they could not decode information written. Each and every respondent affirmed that all examinations are written tests. Reading clearly has a significant impact on academic success. English teachers suggested some of the strategies for enhancing English literacy among primary three learners. Reading materials such as daily readers, curriculum textbooks and other print materials should be provided with learners. In addition to that, enough reading time for learners should be allocated on the timetable, class size should be decreased, and English literacy training should be given to teachers. It was also recommended that English literacy skills should be given priority in early years of schooling starting from nursery schools.

Summary

This chapter has presented and discussed results from data collected on the research problem. It outlined the demographic information of teachers under the study, quantitative analysis of English reading test scores. The chapter offers scores by school type for readers to understand the extent to which some schools' reading achievement is low in comparison to others based on their types. It also presents the statistical results of root causes of poor English reading, namely; the teaching of foundational reading skills such as phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension; availability of reading materials and learners' reading motivation. The chapter triangulates results mentioned with others from classroom observation and semi-structured interviews conducted.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

In this last chapter, we utilize the knowledge and understanding gained during the dissertation to develop thorough conclusions and provide useful suggestions for furthering the subject of English reading literacy. The study found that results tally with the objectives that were established at the outset, namely; to assess the English reading comprehension level of primary three learners at TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools, the root causes of poor reading skills among them, the effects of poor reading skills to the English performance and the suggestions about how English reading skills can be improved among primary three learners at TTC Nyamata Demonstrations schools.

Poor reading skills of learners under this study is caused by lack of teaching of foundational reading skills like *phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension; lack of reading materials*, for grade level readers, *story books, and curriculum textbooks and low reading motivation*. English reading has been negatively impacted English teachers who lack the required educational background to teach English in primary grades, especially primary three. The change from Kinyarwanda to English as the major medium of instruction played a role in this matter. Sociological and psychological problems such as poor families and discordant households, inadequate early preparation of learners regarding English literacy, and the limited time for reading assignments in and outside of the classroom have also hindered primary three learners' reading abilities. Reading motivation has also been observed to be the shortcomings of the development of reading skills.

The study established measurable effects by properly evaluating the reading comprehension level of grade three learners and comparing scores by school type. English comprehension levels of primary three learners in public and government-aided schools were lower than those in private schools, and the association between the causes stated and reading performance was examined using regression analysis in chapter four. Teachers raised a concern that reading counts a lot on poor performance in English because it is heavily weighted in English school examinations. Therefore, primary three learners' English reading abilities can be improved by giving them access to enough reading material because when

they have reading material, they will be more willing to read. The need for primary three English teachers at TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools to receive sufficient training and rigorous courses on how to effectively teach reading and English competence in general is paramount. Teachers have to motivate, through an informed reading methodology, their primary three learners to devote enough time to reading by scheduling reading time and involving parents in their children's reading. Additionally, in the initial years of schooling, literacy skills should take the lead in teaching.

5.2 Recommendations

The recommendations are for community of TTC Nyamata and its demonstration schools namely English Teaching Methods and Practices tutors at Nyamata TTC, parents, the Ministry of Education, and other partners in education.

English teachers at demonstration schools are advised to properly teach English reading by carefully imparting the fundamentals of reading namely phonological awareness, phonics or word recognition, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Additionally, teachers need to allot enough of time each day for students to read independently both within and outside of the classroom. Additionally, teachers should urge learners in primary three to read the few books available in their classrooms.

The TTC Nyamata tutors should train future educators who can close the English literacy gap in primary three. They should train them in pedagogical skills so that they can improve the reading comprehension of pupils in primary three. That means the English language Teaching Methodology and Practice should consider much of the instructions about reading skills in early grade.

According to the study, parents are not actively involved in their children's education, particularly when it comes to assisting them with reading homework at home. The report advises parents to not delegate all of their responsibilities to their children's teachers. Given the amount of time they spend with them at home, they should encourage their kids to read. Schools and parents should work together to encourage reading at home.

The findings led to the conclusion that the reading proficiency of primary three English learners at TTC Nyamata Demonstration schools is significantly hindered by a lack of teacher

preparation and materials, including textbooks and other supplemental readers, about English literacy. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

The ministry of education through its affiliated organ, REB, should provide enough literacy materials such as English curriculum textbooks and supplementary readers to the schools for learners to read them either in classroom or outside when they are at home.

The ministry of education should also make early grade literacy a priority by training teachers about the effective teaching of reading. They should also allocate much time for reading in schools.

The ministry of education should also deploy English teachers in lower primary (including primary three) who have qualified to teach English in that section and who have a proficiency in English.

5.3 Limitation and further research

According to the study, parents are not actively involved in their children's education, particularly when it comes to assisting them with reading homework at home. The report advises parents to not delegate all of their responsibilities to their children's teachers. Given the amount of time they spend with them at home, they should encourage their children to read. Schools and parents should work together to encourage reading at home. Parents could also remove negative filters such as hunger, family strife, and any other psychological barrier that may be impeding their children's reading development.

The findings led to the conclusion that, the reading proficiency of primary three English learners at TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools is significantly hindered by lack of teacher preparation and materials, including textbooks and other supplemental readers, about English literacy. Thus, the following recommendations are made:

The Ministry of Education through its affiliated organ, REB, should provide enough literacy materials such as English curriculum textbooks, and supplementary readers to the schools for learners to read them either in classroom or outside when they are at home.

The Ministry of Education should also make early grade literacy a priority by training teachers about the effective teaching of reading. They should also allocate much time for reading in schools.

The ministry of education should also deploy English teachers in lower primary (including primary three) who have qualified to teach English in that section and who have a proficiency in English.

As stated in the opening chapter, the survey was confined to TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools and did not include all of the schools in eastern Province, which was placed bottom in terms of English literacy achievement. The researcher did not have means to involve all the primary three learners in the schools selected. Furthermore, primary three learners are not old enough to be interviewed and asked to create narratives about their reading issues and experiences. The viewpoints of parents or guardians were not heard, limiting the study from incorporating all stakeholders concerned with children's reading development. This might have impacted a thorough collection of data concerning views about causes and effects of poor English reading skills. Therefore, further research that covers a bigger scope (like districts) and involving all stakeholders mentioned should be carried out. Since primary three reading comprehension scores show a big variability by school type (public and private schools), there is a need for a comparative study about reading skills in public and private schools in a bigger scope.

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APPENDICES

Appendix one: Questionnaire for teachers' responses on causes of poor English reading skills

Aim of investigation

The study's general objective is to assess the causes and effects of poor reading skills among primary three learners of TTC NYAMATA Demonstration Schools. The study would enable teachers from Demonstration Schools and countrywide to promote English reading skills.

Instructions

You have been chosen to participate in this study and we know you value its purpose. you are therefore, respectfully requested to answer all sections of this questionnaire truthfully., participate in this interview. We would like to let you know that this questionnaire/interview is totally confidential. It is beneficial to us if you complete it independently, freely, and honestly. Close-ended questions require you to respond by ticking the proper space. We also request you to provide other information in the space provided for open-ended questions.

I would also like to assure you that your answers will be handled with confidentiality and at will never be passed to a third party. Rather, it will only be used for this research. Please sign the following consent form if you will participate.

Please contact us if you have any questions about this study via the following address:

Mr. KARAMAGE Rodrigue (+250789190903), Email: [rkaramage@yahoo.com/
karamagerodrigue@gmail.com](mailto:rkaramage@yahoo.com/karamagerodrigue@gmail.com)

We appreciate your collaboration.

CONSENT FORM

I, (write only your name initials), agree to participate in the study titled **“ASSESSING CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF POOR ENGLISH READING SKILLS OF PRIMARY THREE LEARNERS. CASE OF TTC NYAMATA Demonstration Schools”**

I understand the goal of this study and I am completely aware that participation is voluntary and confidential.

Respondent’s signature: Date:

INVESTIGATOR’S STATEMENT

I, Mr. Rodrigue Karamage, hereby declare that I have described the goal and nature of this research to my study participants in a language that they understand. For this reason, they were given time for clarification, and she/he committed to freely engage and not miss any questions.

Investigator’s signature :

Investigator’s phone contact :

Part I: Demographics information

I.1 Gender:

Male	Female

I.2 Age:

Below 20	20-25	26-30	30-35	40-45	41 and above

I.3 Type of school:

Public	Government Aided	Private

I.4 Qualification

A2 Normale primaire	TTC ECLPE/ECE	TTC LE/TML	OTHER S

1.5 Teaching experience

Below 5 years	Between 5 and 15	Over 15 years

I.6 Trainings about teaching English reading

Please mention any training about teaching English reading that you attended.

1
2
3
4
NONE	

Part II: Opinions around strategies for promoting reading skills

II. 1. EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF READING SKILLS

Please rate your level of agreement with the statements around the effective teaching of reading skills.

When you tick: 1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Neutral, 4= Often, 5 = Very often. Tick (V) in the right box. (*Hitamo umwe mu imibare ikurikira ujyanye n'ikigero wemeranywaho cyangwa utemeranywaho n'ibikubiye mu nteruro zatanzwe zijyanye n'uburyo bw'imyigishirize yo gusoma.*

1: nta na rimwe, 2: Gake, 3: Rimwe na rimwe, 4: Kenshi, 5. Kenshi cyane. Urahitamo igisubizo ukoresheje akamenyetso ka V)

STATEMENTS ABOUT TEACHING OF FOUNDATIONAL READING SKILLS (IBITEKEREZO BIJYANYE N'IMYIGISHIRIZE YO GUSOMA)	Never (<i>Nta na rimwe</i>)	Rarely (<i>Gake</i>)	Neutral (<i>Rimwe na rimwe</i>)	often (<i>Kenshi</i>)	Very Often (<i>Kenshi cyane</i>)
In my class, I give learners opportunity for learners to practice phonological awareness tasks such as segmenting, blending and identifying phonemes. (<i>Mu ishuri ryange mpa abanyeshuri umwanya wo gukora imyitozo y'Itahuramajwi nko kugemura, guhuza imigemo, gutahura imigemo ivuzwe</i>).					
In my class, I give opportunity for learners to practice phonics and word recognition tasks such as identifying written syllables, words, sentences and decodable texts. (<i>Mu ishuri ryange mpa abanyeshuri umwanya wo gukora imyitozo y'Ihuzamajwi nko gutahura imigemo, amagambo n'interuro byanditse</i>).					

<p>In my class, I give opportunities for learners to practice fluency such as reading aloud several times. <i>(Mu ishuri ryange mpa abanyeshuri umwanya wo gusoma badategwa nko gusoma mu ijwi riranguruye inshuro nyinshi).</i></p>					
<p>In my class, I pre-teach vocabulary that will appear in the text. <i>(Mu ishuri ryange nigisha inyunguramagambo zikubiye mu mwandiko kandi zatuma batawusobanukirwa mbere yo gusoma inkuru ziri ku kigero cy'abanyeshuri).</i></p>					
<p>In my class, I give opportunity for learners to practice reading comprehension such as predicting what the story is about, checking their predictions and answering comprehension questions. <i>(Mu ishuri ryange mpa abanyeshuri umwanya wo gukora imyitozo yo kumva umwandiko nko gutahura uko inkuru iri bugende, kugereranya ibyavuzwe mu nkuru n'uko batekerezaga iri bugende no gusubiza ibibazo byo kumva umwandiko).</i></p>					
<p>Are there any other strategies you use to teach English reading in your class which are not in this list? If yes, please specify. <i>(Ese haba hari ubundi buryo bwo kwigisha gusoma butavuzwe? Nimba buhari ni ubuhe?)</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>					

II.2. READING MATERIALS

Please rate your level of agreement with the statements around reading materials.

You would say: 1=existing, 2: not sure, 3: Not existing. Tick (V) in the right box. *(Hitamo umwe mu mibare ikurikira ujyanye n'ikigero wemeranywaho cyangwa utemeranywaho n'ibikubiye mu nteruro zatanzwe zijyanye n'imfashanyigisho zo gusoma. 1= Birahari, 2= Simbizi, 3= Ntabihari)*

STATEMENTS ABOUT THE USE OF READING MATERIALS	Existing (<i>Birahari</i>)	Not sure (<i>Simbizi</i>)	Not Existing (<i>Ntabihari</i>)
<p>My classroom is equipped with print materials (such as texts hang on walls, letter cards. <i>(Ishuri ryange rikungahaye ku nyandiko abanyeshuri basoma nk'inyandiko zimanitse ku nkuta, udukarita twanditseho inyuguti n'amagambo).</i></p>			
<p>In my class, learners have an access to decodable story books. <i>(Abanyeshuri bahabwa udukuru two gusoma turi ku kigero cyabo cyo gusoma).</i></p>			
<p>The school library contains decodable readers that learners read independently. <i>(Isomero ryo mu kigo ririmo udutabo abanyeshuri basoma ku giti cyabo).</i></p>			
<p>There are enough English curriculum textbooks for learners. <i>(Mu ishuri ryange hari ibitabo by'abanyeshuri bihagije bijyanye n'integanyanyigisho).</i></p>			
<p>Are there any other reading materials that your learners read which are not mentioned above? If yes, specify. <i>(Haba hari izindi mfashanyigisho abanyeshuri bakoresha bitoza gusoma zitavuzwe?) Nimba zihari zivuge.</i></p>			

.....

.....

II. 3 READING AND MOTIVATION

Please make sure you quantify your Likert's question statements.

Please rate your level of agreement with the statements around reading attitude and motivation

You would say: 1=Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree. Tick (V) in the right box. *(Hitamo umwe mu mibare ikurikira ujyanye n'ikigero wemeranywaho cyangwa utemeranywaho n'ibikubiye mu nteruro zatanzwe zijyanye n'uburyo abanyeshuri bashishikazwa no gusoma . 1= Simbyemera na gato 2= Simbyemera 3= Nta makuru mbifiteho 4= Ndabyemera 5= Ndabyemera cyane)*

STATEMENTS ABOUT LEARNERS' READING MOTIVATION	Strongly disagree (<i>Simbyemera na gato</i>)	Disagree (<i>Simbyemera</i>)	Neutral (<i>Nta makuru</i>)	Agree (<i>Ndabyemera</i>)	Strongly agree (<i>Ndabyemera cyane</i>)
Most learners show enjoyment in reading on their own. (<i>Abanyeshuri bagaragaza ko bishimira gusoma ku giti cyabo</i>).					
Learners in all my current classes finish every reading assignment given to them. (<i>Abanyeshuri barangiza imyitozo yose bahabwa yo gusoma</i>).					
My learners are not discouraged after correction on reading activities. (<i>Abanyeshuri ntabwo bacika intege nyuma yo gukosora amakosa bakora basoma</i>).					

Appendix two: Teaching reading strategies observation checklist

Do you observe teachers using these strategies to teach reading in English? Say: 1= Yes, 0= No	Yes	No
Enough time given to basic reading skills	1	0
Opportunity for the learners to practice phonological awareness such as segmenting, blending and identifying phonemes.		
Opportunities for learners to practice phonics such as identifying written syllables, words and sentences.		
Opportunity for learners to read aloud (pair, echo and choral reading).		
Opportunity to the learners to answer to comprehension questions.		
Pre-teaching vocabulary that will appear in the text.		
Opportunity for learners to use a variety of books and other reading materials to practice reading.		
Ensuring print rich classroom (a classroom where there are letters, words and texts hang on the wall).		

Appendix three: Interview guide for causes and effects of poor English reading skills of Primary three learners of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools.

The study's introduction and purpose

My name is Rodrigue KARAMAGE, a Master student in MED English Language Education conducting a study on causes and effects of poor English reading skills among primary three learners. This structured interview aims at examining teachers' experiences about causes and effects of poor reading and their recommendation about promoting English reading skills. This study has potential to inform policy and practice for reading skills among early grade learners.

Instructions:

This interview will last no more than forty (20) minutes. You will be recorded in order to capture and properly handle the information given in this interview. However, the information that you provide will be confidential and will never be shared to third party. Rather, it will only be utilised for the purposes of this research. Do you have any questions about this research? Can we now start the interview?

Main probing interview questions

1. How long have you been teaching English in Primary three?
2. How do you describe your teaching of English? Is it easy for you? Why?
3. What do you think are causes of poor reading skills among primary three learners?
4. How do you think those causes contribute to the poor English reading skills in your class?
5. What do you advise that facilitates teaching reading in Primary Three (P3)?
6. Is there anything about this topic that we have not talked about here? If so, what?
Describe

Thank you very much!

Appendix four: Reading test

The story: The Mango

Kalisa was walking home. It was a hot day and Kalisa was angry. He was feeling tired and hungry. He sat down under a big mango tree. It was nice and cool, so he fell asleep. Suddenly, a big mango fell on him and woke him up. Kalisa ate the mango. Then he was happy.

Comprehension questions

1. Who is told in the story?
2. What was his problem?
3. Why did he sleep?
4. Where did he sleep?
5. Why was he happy after?

Appendix five: A snapshot of Primary three English literacy achievements from LARS

3.1.2.6 Comparison of Performance of P3 students per province

P3 candidates who took part of the survey were from the City of Kigali and the four other Provinces of Rwanda. Hence, it is essential to have a look into the discrepancy of P3 students' performance by subject and geographical location as given out in Table 3.21.

Table 3.21: Comparison of Performance of P3 students per province

Subjects	Does not meet Benchmark	Meet Benchmark	Total
P3	64.54%	35.46%	100.00%
ENGLISH	89.92%	10.08%	100.00%
City of Kigali	67.74%	32.26%	100.00%
Eastern Province	95.81%	4.19%	100.00%
Northern Province	93.46%	6.54%	100.00%
Southern Province	86.63%	13.37%	100.00%
Western Province	92.38%	7.62%	100.00%
NUMERACY	39.06%	60.94%	100.00%
City of Kigali	19.35%	80.65%	100.00%
Eastern Province	52.10%	47.90%	100.00%
Northern Province	38.82%	61.18%	100.00%
Southern Province	29.85%	70.15%	100.00%
Western Province	43.54%	56.46%	100.00%

The analysis of the data portrayed in Table 3.21 informs that although P3 candidates did not do well in English in across all provinces. Candidates from the City of Kigali outperformed those from the rest of the country in the subject as 32.26% met the benchmark compared to other low percentages from other provinces. In numeracy, P3 candidates from the City of Kigali performed well at 80.65%, followed by southern provinces by 70.15%. The last province in numeracy is the Eastern Province with 47.90% of P3 candidates who meet benchmarks in numeracy.

Appendix six: Research Ethical Clearance



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION OFFICE

Rukara, 15th May, 2023

Ref: 03/DRI-CE/075(a)/ EN/gi/2023

Mr Rodrigue KARAMAGE

Master Student

Master of Education in English Education

School of Education

UR-CE

Dear Mr Karamage,

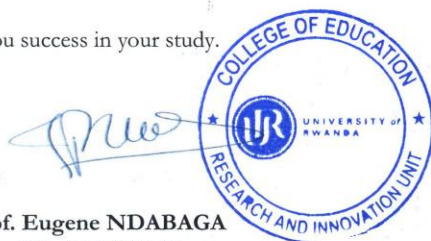
RE: RESEARCH ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR YOUR STUDY

Following your application for research clearance for your study entitled: **“Assessing causes and effects of poor English reading skills of primary three learners. Case of TTC Nyamata Demonstration Schools;”**

Having reviewed your application and being satisfied with your protocol (research topic, interview schedule, questionnaire and informed consent): this study is ethically acceptable. This ethical clearance shall last for 18 months and is renewable upon your request and presentation of the progress report to the UR-CE Research Screening and Ethics Clearance Committee (RSEC-C) through the Research and Innovation Unit. Please note that you will have to apply for ethical clearance before making changes in the protocol during the implementation phase. The Research and Innovation Unit shall receive a final copy of your study report at the end of your study.

We wish you success in your study.

For Director,



Assoc. Prof. Eugene NDABAGA

Chairperson, UR-CE RSEC-C

Director of Research and Innovation Unit

Tel.: 250788308862

Email: ndabagav@yahoo.ie

UR-College of Education

Cc:

- The Principal, CE
- Dean, School of Education
- Dr Anthony Kamanzi (Supervisor)
- Dr Patrick Anguru Ujwiga (Supervisor)