

**AN ASSESSMENT OF GRADE 5 LEARNERS' READING FLUENCY IN
ENGLISH AT A SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN SERENJE DISTRICT**

BY

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THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN LITERACY, LANGUAGE
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DECLARATION

I, Kennedy Kasimba, declare that this work is my original work and that it has never been submitted to the University of Zambia or any other university for the award of a Master of Education in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics before. All sources of data and literature on related works previously done by others, used in the production of this dissertation have been dully acknowledged.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation of Kennedy Kasimba is approved as fulfilling part of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Literacy, Language and Applied Linguistics by the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

Studies have been conducted to assess literacy abilities of learners in Zambia. However, these studies have been surveys which have reported data on a large scale. As a point of departure, this study sought to assess the reading fluency of learners of a particular primary school in Serenje District since it was not known how fluent learners of a selected primary school were in reading and what contextual factors contributed to the reading fluency of the learners. The study aimed at assessing grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English. Specifically, the objectives were: first, to assess grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. Second, to establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English. Third, to explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English.

The study employed a concurrent mixed methods design in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches were integrated. In total, the study had 50 Grade 5 pupils (21 females and 29 males), 2 Grade 5 class teachers and 2 senior teachers for upper primary section at a selected school in Serenje District. The selected primary school was randomly sampled from the top five ranked schools in Ibolelo Zone of Serenje district. In this study, the researcher involved Grade 5 class teachers and senior teachers in upper primary in one-to-one interviews using semi-structured interview guides. Grade 5 pupils' reading fluency was assessed using a standardised reading fluency Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) assessment using a cold read or an unpractised passage. The teachers and pupils were purposively sampled.

The main findings of the study with respect to objective number 1, revealed that about 62 percent of grade 5 learners at the selected primary school were reading at frustration level in English. Additionally, the average Words Per Minute (WPM) was at 44, the average Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) was at 38, the average prosody score was 7 out of 16 points, average written comprehension score of 1 out of 5 marks. Regarding objective number 2, the findings of the study noted that respondents explained that learners reading fluency was average to below average and they found prosody and comprehension to be the most problematic areas. With respect to objective number 3, the study highlighted the following factors that positively affected grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English: Practice, materials, differentiation, teacher, oral English, teacher-pupil rapport and methodology factors. Additionally, the study noted the following factors that negatively affected grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English: Time, background, material/resource, environmental, teacher, pupil, transition, parental and policy.

The key conclusions of the study were that the dismal performance of grade 5 learners in reading fluency in English could be explained by an interplay of positive and negative factors. This was compounded by pedagogical-content knowledge deficit among teachers and negative attitude on the part of some teachers, learners and parents.

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should consider explicitly infusing reading fluency content in the Teacher Education curriculum for pre-service teachers as well as introduce a daily 1 hour of reading in English for learners from Grade 1 -7.

Key words: Reading fluency, Words Correct Per Minute, prosody, frustration level.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my darling wife and queen, Prudence and our dear and beloved children - Thembisio, Siphwe, Thabo and Lindwe for enduring months of loneliness and for their incalculable financial, material and moral support, and patience during the time I was pursuing my studies. May you be inspired by dad's achievements. May the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God bless you exceedingly and abundantly.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	ii
Copyright	iii
Approval.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Dedication.....	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Table of contents.....	viii
List of tables.....	xi
List of appendices.....	xii
List of acronyms.....	xiii
Definitions of terms.....	xiv
CHAPTER ONE—INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Overview.....	1
1.2 Background to the study.....	1
1.3 Statement of the problem.....	3
1.4 Purpose of the study.....	4
1.5 Objectives of the study.....	4
1.6 Research questions.....	4
1.7 Significance of the study.....	5
1.8 Delimitation of the study.....	5
1.9 Limitation of the study.....	5
1.10 Structure of the dissertation.....	5
1.11 Summary of chapter one.....	6
CHAPTER TWO— REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	7
2.1 Overview.....	7
2.2 Assessment of Grade 5 learners’ reading fluency in English.....	7
2.3 Teachers’ perspectives on learners reading fluency in English.....	10
2.4 Factors affecting grade 5 learners’ acquisition of reading fluency in English.....	12
2.5 Summary of chapter two.....	15

CHAPTER THREE—THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	16
3.1 Overview.....	16
3.2 Theoretical framework.....	16
3.3 The Automaticity Theory.....	16
3.4 Summary of chapter three.....	18
CHAPTER FOUR—METHODOLOGY.....	19
4.1 Overview.....	19
4.2 Research Paradigm.....	19
4.3 Study Population.....	20
4.4 Sample Size.....	20
4.5 Sampling Technique.....	20
4.6 Instruments for Data Collection.....	20
4.7 Data Collection Procedure.....	21
4.8 Data Analysis.....	22
4.9 Ethical Consideration.....	22
4.10 Summary of chapter four.....	23
CHAPTER FIVE—PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.....	24
5.1 Overview.....	24
5.2 Assessment of Grade 5 learners’ reading fluency in English.....	24
5.3 Teachers’ perspectives on learners reading fluency in English.....	37
5.4 Factors affecting grade 5 learners’ acquisition of reading fluency in English.....	39
5.5 Summary of chapter five.....	49
CHAPTER SIX—DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	50
6.1 Overview.....	50
6.2 Assessment of Grade 5 learners’ reading fluency in English.....	50
6.3 Teachers’ perspectives on learners reading fluency in English.....	54
6.4 Factors affecting grade 5 learners’ acquisition of reading fluency in English.....	56
6.5 Suggestion to improve reading fluency in English.....	63
6.6 Summary of chapter six	64
CHAPTER SEVEN—CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	66
7.1 Overview.....	66

7.2	Conclusion.....	66
7.3	Recommendations.....	68
7.4	Suggestions for future research.....	69
	REFERENCES.....	70
	APPENDICES.....	75

LIST OF TABLES

Table No	Pages
Table 1:	Table showing recommended end of year WCPM targets.....8
Table 2a:	Field data on Grade 5 pupils' performance in word accuracy in English..25
Table 2b:	Grade 5 pupils' word accuracy in English.....27
Table 3a:	Field data on Grade 5 pupil's performance in reading fluency prosody scores in English.....28
Table 3b:	Grade 5 pupil's reading fluency prosody scores in English.....30
Table 4a:	Field data on Grade 5 pupil's performance in reading fluency comprehension scores in English.....31
Table 4b:	Grade 5 pupil's reading fluency comprehension scores in English.....33
Table 5a:	Field data on Grade 5 pupil's performance in fluency reading rate scores in English.....34
Table 5b:	Grade 5 pupil's fluency reading rate scores in English.....36
Table 6a:	Factors that positively affected reading fluency in English40
Table 6b:	Factors that negatively affected reading fluency in English.....42

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: UNZA Ethical Clearance letter.....	75
Appendix B: UNZA introduction letter.....	79
Appendix C: DEBS introduction letter.....	80
Appendix D: Reading fluency passage extract.....	81
Appendix E: Prosody fluency rubric.....	82
Appendix F: Interview guide for grade 5 teachers.....	83
Appendix G: Interview guide for upper primary senior teachers.....	85
Appendix H: Reading rate and accuracy formula administration.....	87
Appendix I: Reading fluency assessment sheet.....	88

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
DEBS	District Education Board Secretary
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills.
ECZ	Examinations Council of Zambia
EGRA	Early Grade reading assessment
MESVTEE	Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
NLF	National Literacy Framework
PEO	Provincial Education Officer
ROC	Read On Course
SITE	Step In To English
TALULAR	Teaching and Learning Using Locally Available Resources
UNZA	University of Zambia
WPM	Words Per Minute
WCPM	Words Correct Per Minute

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Accuracy: Is the ability to correctly decode words.

Automaticity: Is the effortless identification of words.

Catch Up: A literacy programme for teaching learners in grades 3 to 5 in Zambia who have not yet achieved the literacy skills required in their grade, usually done outside the regular class timetable

Comprehension: Is the ability to understand what has been read.

Expression: Is the phrasing, expression, and intonation used when reading.

Familiar Zambian Language: A local language that is commonly used by children in a particular locality. It could be a zone or a community language.

Fluent reading: Fast, smooth, effortless and automatic reading of text with attention focused on the meaning of the text.

Local language: An indigenous language that is widely spoken by members of a particular community or region.

Rate: Is the speed at which words are read.

Struggling reader: Any learner of any age who has not mastered the skills required to fluently read and comprehend text which is written at a level that one could reasonably expect a learner of that age to read.

WPM: Refers to Words Per Minute

WCPM: Refers to Words Correct Per Minute

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter presents the background to the study. The chapter also presents the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions and significance of the study as well as delimitation of the study and operational definitions of terms.

1.2. Background to the study

Reading is a very important skill which is necessary for learning in school. Reading makes way for a better understanding of one's own experiences and it can be an exciting voyage to self-discovery (Panigrahi and Panda, 1996; Eyre, 2005; Mokatsi, 2005). Several studies assessing the literacy levels among Zambian children have shown that reading levels in Zambia were exceptionally low. Without the ability to use reading and writing to engage in a variety of ways of thinking, learners will be incapable of communicating and surviving in this print-based education system and society (Sharma, 1974; Williams, 1998; National Reading Committee, 1997; SACMEQ, 1995, 1998, 2006, 2008, 2010; Serpell and Kanyika, 1999; Nkamba and Kanyika, 1998).

Studies by Kanyika (2003); MOE 2006, 2008; and Sampa, 2005) on the reading levels among Zambian learners have shown that overall, reading achievement levels were still low and the mean performance was below the set standard in Zambian languages and English. For instance, MOE (2006) revealed that by province, the trends indicated a constant performance between 1999 and 2006 in reading in English. The mean performance in English reading at Grade 5 level indicated that reading levels between 1999 and 2006 were relatively the same with 33.2 percent in 1999, 33.4 percent in 2001, 33.9 percent in 2003 and 34.5 percent in 2006 (Zambia National Assessment Survey, 2006; Chibamba, 2012). Later studies by Kanyika et al. (2008) also reported that generally by province, the mean performance at Grade 5 level in reading in English was 35.3 percent. This showed stagnation in pupils' performance when compared to the 2006 survey results which were at 34.50 percent in English. The mean performance is below

the criterion percentage mark of 40.0 percent for minimum level of performance set for the nation in English (MOE, 2008).

The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) has also been concerned about the low literacy levels in Zambia. A study conducted by SACMEQ revealed that 25% of Grade 6 pupils could not read at a minimum level of proficiency and only 3% could read at a specified desirable level (MOE, 1995). To explain and justify these low literacy levels, the same study highlighted a number of reasons, one of which was the use of an unfamiliar language (English) when teaching literacy. This language factor was seen to be the major reason for most Zambian children's backwardness in reading and writing skills (Kelly, 1995; MOE, 1996; Sampa, 2003; Williams, 1995; Kachinga, 2012).

An assessment survey conducted by the Examinations Council of Zambia on behalf of the Ministry of Education revealed that reading performance on the English test was poor. Generally, learners revealed deficiencies in reading and comprehension skills (ECZ, 2006). This meant that despite the language of initial literacy instruction being familiar to the learners the reading performance was still poor. Clearly, despite government and other stakeholders working hard, very little success has been achieved on literacy levels among learners, especially at Basic school level (Matafwali, 2010, Mubanga, 2012; Mwanza, 2012; Kachinga, 2012).

Arising from the concerns raised by different stakeholders as manifested by the different studies cited in the preceding paragraphs, the Ministry of Education in 2013 developed the National Literacy Framework. The purpose of the Zambian National Literacy Framework was to establish a set of guidelines for teaching and learning literacy in all Zambian schools (MOE, 2013). This brought in Primary Literacy Programme (PLP) where regional local languages were to be used as media of instruction in all subjects from Grades 1-4. This was due to discontentment with the Primary Reading Programme (PRP) where Zambian local languages were used as medium of instruction for the first year of primary schooling and English took over from grade two.

The National Literacy Framework (NLF) (2013) notes that instruction in the local language at the foundation stage will support learners as they progress towards English. This means initial literacy at Grades 1 and 2 would be provided in local languages, learners would also be introduced to oral English at Grade 2 and later reading and writing in English at Grades 3 and 4. The National Literacy Framework (NLF) (2013) further outlines that the PLP is anchored on five key competences namely Phonic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension. Phonic Awareness is the ability to hear sounds and manipulate them orally, put sounds together, break words apart into sounds, identify rhyming words, identify likenesses and differences in spoken words. Phonics is the ability to put written letters and their sounds together. Fluency is the ability to read a text with accuracy, speed and expression and understanding. Vocabulary is the ability to understand the meaning of words and use them orally and in writing. Comprehension is the ability to understand the meaning of what is read or heard (The National Reading Panel Report, 2000; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; The National Literacy Framework (NLF), 2013).

The National Literacy Framework (2013) stressed the focus on the four elements: accuracy, rate, prosody, and meaning in explicit fluency instruction for learners to attain high level of fluency (MESVTEE, 2013). The four components of reading fluency are accuracy, rate, expression (prosody) and comprehension

This study focused more on reading fluency in English in Zambia and concentrated on the four components of reading fluency namely accuracy, rate, expression (prosody) and comprehension.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Fluency is a foundational reading skill and an essential component for proficient reading. Lack of reading proficiency prevents one from adequately comprehending the texts. If fluency problems are not addressed in the early elementary grades, it is likely that these problems will continue to hinder learners reading progress in subsequent years (Rasinski, Paige, Rain, Stewart, Julovich, Prenkert, Rupley, & Nichols, 2017). Against this background, studies have been conducted to assess literacy abilities of learners in Zambia. However, these studies have been surveys which have reported data on a large

scale. This means that while national literacy levels are known in Zambia, there was no school based literacy performance data to report how specific schools perform and what contextual factors contribute to the literacy abilities of learners. In other words, there is very limited and scanty school data on reading fluency in English in the Zambian context. Hence, this study sought to assess the reading fluency of learners of a particular primary school in Serenje District since it was not known how fluent learners of a selected primary school were in reading in English and what contextual factors contributed to the reading fluency of the learners. As a question, the research problem was; how fluent were grade 5 learners in reading in English and what factors contributed to the learners reading fluency?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. assess grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.
2. establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.
3. explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

1.6 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research question:

1. What was the grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District?
2. What were the grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District?
3. What were the factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District?

1.7 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of the study may be of help in informing policy makers like Ministry of Education (MOE) through Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) in understanding fully the dynamics of reading fluency in a rural set up. This would enable them make informed and appropriate changes to existing practices where necessary. In addition, the findings may assist practicing teachers with an objective outlook of their learners' fluency levels which may in turn help them to reflect on their classroom practices. The study also hoped to share best practices on reading fluency in English with other stakeholders. Furthermore, the study hoped to highlight the successes and challenges of the Literacy in English implementation in Grades 3 and 4 among stakeholders. Most of all the study hopes to add to the growing body of knowledge and future research on reading fluency.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

The study only confined itself to researching on reading fluency in English for Grade 5s at a selected primary school in Serenje. This meant only Grade 5 teachers and Grade 5 pupils were involved in the study.

1.9 Limitations of the study

This study was conducted at one selected school. Therefore, its findings may not be generalised to other parts of the country.

1.10 Structure of the dissertation

The study is organised into seven chapters. The first chapter explains the background to this study, the statement of the problem, purpose, research objectives and research questions. It further provides the significance of the study, delimitations as well as limitations of the study and definition of terms. The second chapter highlights the relevant literature of the study which includes literature was reviewed from foreign and local studies. The literature supported and bridged the gap of the study. The third chapter discusses the methodology of the study highlighting the research design, study population, study sample, sampling techniques, instruments used for data collection, procedure for data collection and data analysis as well as ethical considerations. The fourth chapter highlights the theoretical framework guiding this study and its implications. The fifth chapter presents findings of the study in both quantitatively and

qualitatively. The sixth chapter discusses the research findings using the research objectives as the themes as well as linking the discussion to previous studies and the theoretical framework. The seventh chapter the final one and it presents conclusions and recommendations of this study. The last section of the seventh chapter provides suggestions for future research. The rest of the pages allude to references and appendices

1.11 Summary of chapter one

In summary, this chapter has among other things established that several studies have been conducted to assess literacy abilities of learners in Zambia. However, these studies have been surveys which have reported data on a large scale. As a point of departure, this study sought to assess the reading fluency of learners of a particular primary school in Serenje District since it was not known how fluent learners of a selected primary school were in reading and what contextual factors contributed to the reading fluency of the learners.

The next chapter discusses the literature review of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Overview

The chapter outlines the literature which informed this study. The literature review was guided by the research objectives of this study. The first objective was to assess grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. Secondly, to establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. Thirdly, to explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. The chapter will end with the theoretical framework of the study.

2.2 Assessment of Grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English

Tysinger, Tysinger, and Diamanduros (2010) in their study noted that Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) have been used to measure reading fluency. Cummings, Park, and Schaper (2013) noted that passage effect or level of text difficulty should be taken into consideration during the assessment of students' reading fluency. Moreover, Wallot, Van Rooij and Hollis (2013) recommend that the genre should be considered during the assessment. The students must have knowledge about the assessed topic (although it is administered as a cold read). The point of departure for this study is that it used the WPCM to assess reading fluency owing to the limited time available to conduct the research.

The WCPM score has 30 years of validation research conducted over three decades, indicating it is a robust indicator of overall reading development throughout the primary grades (Baker et al., 2008; Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, & Update to Compiled ORF Norms 1 Jenkins, 2001; Tindal, 2013; Wayman, Wallace, Wiley, Ticha, & Espin, 2007; Wanzek, Roberts, Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Woodruff, & Murray, 2010). Reading fluency revolves around learners reading aloud from a cold read or an unpracticed text for one minute. During this time the examiner records any errors made such as words read or pronounced incorrectly, omitted, read out of order, or words pronounced for the learner

by the examiner after a 3-second pause. The examiner then proceeds to calculate the total of words read correctly per minute (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2017).

The earlier WCPM norm scores were reflected in percentiles. For instance, the 50% percentile for a Grade 5 in USA indicated 121 WCPM (Fall); 133 WCPM (Winter); and 146 WCPM (Spring) (Hasbrouck and Tindal (2017; 2006). The percentile is a normative score that reflects the student's relative standing compared to his same-grade peers, while words correct per minute is a raw or absolute score without reference to other students. As all students in a grade grow in WCPM, the only way a learner could improve her/his percentile score relative standing in the group is to outpace his peers in WCPM growth (Hasbrouck, 2010). The WCPM should measure a student's growth and progress over time, and use the percentile score to gauge how well she/he is doing compared to same-grade peers where the teacher decides if the child needs to be referred for intervention. (Hasbrouck, 2010; Hasbrouck and Glaser, 2019). As indicated earlier, this study used WCPM too but did not use percentiles as was done in the American study.

Table 1: Table showing recommended end of year WCPM targets

GRADE	WCPM BENCHMARKS
Grade 1	60
Grade 2	100
Grade 3	115
Grade 4	135
Grade 5	150
Grade 6	150

Source: Adapted from Hasbrouck and Tindal (2017)

An individual learner's WCPM score could be compared to the benchmarks outlined in table 1 above. An individual learner can be determined to be either significantly above benchmark, above benchmark, at the expected benchmark, below benchmark, or

significantly below benchmark. Those learners below or significantly below benchmark are at possible risk of reading difficulties. They are good candidates for further diagnostic assessments to help teachers determine their skill strengths or weaknesses, and plan appropriately targeted instruction and intervention (Hasbrouck, 2010). This study also used a WCPM for the Grade 5 learners.

On the African continent, Spaul (2015) did a WCPM study by calibrating comprehension levels and WCPM rates in South Africa. From this, he developed tentative benchmarks and contends that a range of 90-100 WCPM in English was acceptable for Grade 5 English Second Language (ESL) students in South Africa. This study noted that grade 5 learners at the selected school were far below this South African reading fluency in English benchmark. Furthermore, in this large scale study involving 4,667 Grade 5 ESL students and 214 schools, Spaul noted that 41 percent of the sample were non-readers in English scoring less than 40 Words Correct Per Minute and only 6 percent achieved 60% in comprehension scores (Spaul, 2015). This study also assessed learners' comprehension.

According to USAID Education Data (2022), there are major challenges in learning outcomes in Zambia, despite a high primary school completion rate of 86% as highlighted by MOE (2020). For instance, in the year 2011, Grade 6 learners in all nine Zambian provinces scored below the international means for reading and math according to the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality study (SACMEQ III, 2010). The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Baseline study in 2018 showed that only 10.2% of learners assessed in the five provinces (Eastern, Southern, Muchinga, Western and North-Western) read fluently and comprehended grade level text (EGRA Baseline report, 2018). The Monitoring Impact on Learning Outcomes (MILO) study reports that only 1.8% of learners assessed in early primary in 2016 and 2.3% in 2021 attained the minimum proficiency level in reading (UNESCO, 2022). The focus of this study was Grade 5 learners and focus was on reading fluency as well as comprehension.

In 2013, Paige, Spagnoli and Wood assessed 193 Grade 3 5 7 and 9 students attending a Catholic, English medium school in the state of Kerala in southern India. The idea was to ascertain the role reading fluency plays in their reading comprehension. The focus was on students attending the study school who came from different non-English speaking homes where Malayalam was the indigenous language. The results comparing student performance to USA norms found that across all four-grade levels, Words Correct Per minute (WCPM) was around the 70th percentile on USA reading norms as outlined by Hasbrouck & Tindal (2006). The results of assessments of comprehension for the same four grade levels was around the 20th percentile, suggestive of the challenges of understanding a new language. The WCPM findings strongly suggest that English language learners can attain reading fluency with English texts to a high level. At the same time, the comprehension results speak prominently to the difficulties faced by English language learners who have limited exposure to English outside of the school setting (Paige, Spagnoli & Wood, 2013; Aarts & Verhoeven, 2005; Low & Siegel, 2005). This study focused on assessing Grade 5 learners WCPM and comprehension of English Second Language speakers at a selected school in Serenje district in Zambia.

A 2019 study done by the National Early Reading Assessment in the Philippines noted that Grade 3s had an approximate Words Correct Per minute (WCPM) of 60 in both English and Filipino. Additionally, this study noted a substantial increase in students who could not provide any correct responses in comprehension. The English comprehension performance was around 29%. This is a situation where Filipino was the second language while English was the third language. The focus of this study was English language among Grade 5s. English is a second language for most of the learners in the Zambian study at a selected primary school in Serenje district.

2.3 Teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English

Aldhanhani (2019) in his study in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), quantitatively rated the extent to which English teachers agree or disagree with six statements meant to give an insight about the English teachers' perceptions on students' English reading fluency. The statements were outlined as follows; students were not motivated to read aloud;

students did not have a strong foundation of English reading skills such as phonic awareness and sounds. Additionally, parents did not read to their children; students found texts on the textbooks difficult to read; students had anxiety about reading aloud; and students' health (such as articulation, visual and hearing challenges) might affect their oral reading fluency (Aldhanhani, 2019). The point of departure for this study is that issues of teacher perception were qualitatively handled.

From a survey involving 77 teachers in the USA teaching grades 2-5, regarding teacher perceptions of one-minute reading fluency assessments, teachers observed that reading fluency measures provided rate and accuracy figures, are helpful to compare to grade level expectations, allow teachers to see growth or lack of it, and help teachers understand student reading levels. Some indicated that it assisted them to understand errors, strategies while others reported it was not at all helpful. Some teachers indicated they do not use results for any purpose (Deeney & Shim, 2016). This study only engaged 2 grade 5 teachers and 4 senior teachers in upper primary and its interaction with teachers was qualitative.

Related studies have also noted the following perceptions of the use of one-minute reading fluency, these include teaching to the test (Tierney & Thome, 2006), increased pressure and anxiety for teachers and students (Goodman, 2006), and misuse of measures and results (Valencia, Smith, Reece, Li, Wixon, & Newman, 2010). In the same vein, Deeney and Shim (2016) noted that the majority of teachers who do use one-minute reading fluency results, reported grouping students for instruction. Others used results to target instructional practice for those students not meeting benchmark.

Additionally, 44% of teachers provided negative, 38% mixed, and 19% positive opinions about reading fluency. This means reading fluency provided baseline or measure of growth, provided fluency data as well as useful for grouping learners. Teachers also discussed perceived effects of one-minute reading fluency on learners. For example, they asserted that assessments generated anxiety, contradicted what was taught and instead taught learners to value speed (Deeney & Shim, 2016). This study did not inquire about teachers' views about the one-minute reading fluency assessment.

In spite of its significance as a component of skilled reading, fluency was often ignored or neglected. This is because some teachers did not implement the National Reading Panel (NRP) recommended reading fluency practices. Reasons for limited implementation of instructional practices to promote reading fluency were unclear. Possible reasons cited included understanding of the construct of fluency by teachers, including its components and its importance, and their knowledge of effective pedagogy, including research-based methods for assessment and instruction (NRP, 2000; Lane, Hudson, Leite, Kosanovich, Strout, Fenty & Wright, 2009). This study also sought to find out teacher respondent's understanding.

A study of reading courses in teacher education programmes indicated that they seldom included any emphasis on the development of reading fluency (Walsh, Glaser, & Wilcox, 2006). In this regard, teachers who were new were not likely to begin their careers in teaching with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote fluent reading. Until recently, most teacher education programmes have not included a component to address fluency instruction (Osborn, Lehr, & Hebert, 2003). This was because fluency was emphasised neither in programmes intended to prepare teachers to teach reading nor in basic reading programmes and a number of teachers had limited knowledge about fluency (Lane, Hudson, Leite, et al., 2009). In a survey study in Florida interested in the relationship between teachers' knowledge of reading fluency and their students' growth in rate and accuracy, Lane, Hudson, Leite, et al. (2009) demonstrated that teacher knowledge about reading fluency matters. In general, teachers who knew more had students who read quickly and accurately. This study also wanted to find teacher respondents' understanding of fluency and if they had been explicitly taught reading fluency while in college or university.

2.4 Factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English

According to the findings of the study done by Chibamba (2012), in Lusaka district, there were several reasons that led to low reading levels in Chinyanja and English languages among Grade 5 pupils learning under Read On Course (ROC). The key ones included

over enrolment, teacher-pupil ratio, inadequate teaching and learning materials and the library facilities, absenteeism, parents' transfers, teacher and pupil transfers. Furthermore, they also included school location, teachers and pupils' attitudes towards reading Chinyanja, teachers and pupils language background, home environment, language of instruction, lack of external monitoring, lack of the reading culture in most homes, and lack of teacher trainings in ROC (Chibamba, 2012). In Chibamba's study, purposive sampling was employed and the instruments used were observation checklists, interview guide and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Chibamba focused on the Primary Reading Programme (PRP) while this study focused on Grade 5s who had gone through the Primary Literacy Programme (PLP).

In another study done by Kaani et al. (2022), a sample comprising of 108 Grade 5 and 6 children were tested on two reading fluency passages in Nyanja and English writing system in Chipata and Chadiza Districts of the Eastern Province of Zambia. It should be further noted that reasons for dismal standards of literacy attainment in Zambia include; high pupil-teacher ratio (49:1), poor resourced learning environments due to the rapidly declining funding to the sector, HIV/AIDS pandemic preying on teachers, and lack of effective supervision (Kelly & Kanyika, 2000; Sampa, 2005; Mulubale, 2019; 2020). Additionally, Kaani (2018) also noted that teachers are poorly equipped to provide effective literacy instructions due to a pedagogical-content knowledge deficit. This is owing to slight effort made at improving pedagogical skills of teachers to effectively manage literacy programmes (Jere-Folotiya, 2014; Kaani, 2018; Kaani, et al., 2022). The point of departure for this study is that it focused on reading fluency in English for Grade 5 learners at a selected school in Serenje District of Central Province.

Liu, Chen, and Liu (2022) in their study from four provinces of China, namely Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang noted the following factors as playing a key role in Literacy acquisition individual factors, family factors and school factors. Individual and Family having were noted to have the greatest impact on students while school factors took a relatively minor role. The most important influencing factors at individual level were reading metacognition and reading interest. The most important factors at family

level were index of economic, social and cultural status as well as language environment. From the school level, the most important factors were time dedicated to learning and class discipline (Liu et al., 2022). These factors are crucial. The Chinese study is based on secondary school students acquiring literacy while this study focused on upper primary school learners in a selected primary school.

In Australia, a study to investigate factors influencing student achievement in reading at Grade 5 at the student level with respect to reading literacy in South Australian rural schools was done. The data was analysed using Partial Least Square Path (PLSPATH). The major results of the study revealed that students from the urban areas achieve at a higher level in reading than students from rural areas and that female students did better in reading than male students (Rintaningrum, 2009). The study also noted that factors influencing reading achievement and literacy were very complex since there was no single factor affecting student achievement in reading. Some factors were students' background knowledge, motivation, age, gender, home background, home language, and geographical location may affect reading comprehension achievement. These factors influencing literacy achievement were deemed student factors that related to both success and failure in literacy learning (Rintaningrum, 2009). This study explored factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English.

In the same vein, another study comprising 5 classroom teachers working in different classroom levels and occupational experiences from the provinces of Kastamonu and Çankırı in Turkey was done by Kayabasii. Kayabasii (2017) noted five categories of factors contributing to reading difficulties and these were family factors (wrong attitudes in families and financial problems), individual differences (age), education factors (lack of preschool education and not completing homework), emotional factors (attitudes towards reading), and environmental factors (lack of role models, crowded classrooms). Data in the Turkey study was collected using the semi-structured interviews too. This study interviewed 4 teachers at the same school and did not go into details of unpacking each factor.

Piper, Schroeder, and Trudell (2016) studied assessed 2,000 students in Kenya in standard (grade) 3 to determine if children read more fluently in English, Kiswahili or mother tongue. They analysed student-reading outcomes in four languages: English, Kiswahili, Dholuo and Gikuyu and focused on the relationships between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension in these languages. The study used an EGRA tool developed in Kenya. The data showed that in Central Province, overall, children read more fluently in English (40.2 WCPM) than in Kiswahili (26.7 WCPM) and that children read more fluently in English (40.2 WCPM) than in Gikuyu (20.0 WCPM). In Nyanza Province, the results showed that children read more fluently in English (25.6 WCPM) than in Kiswahili (19.0 WCPM) and in English (25.6 WCPM) than in Dholuo (19.6 WCPM) (Piper, Schroeder, & Trudell, 2016). The departure from the Kenya study is that this study was focusing on English for Grade 5 learners at a selected school. The other link to this study is that the WCPM in English was compared to this study's findings.

2.5 Summary of chapter two

The chapter has endeavoured to highlight on literature on the various aspects that form the focus of this study in relation to the objectives of the study. The literature shows that the reading range of learners in USA in grade 5 was between 130-150 while those in South Africa in the same grade was between 90-100 Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM). The Philippines had a WCPM of 60 in English for Grade 3 learners. Some of the learners in Zambia were reading below the Grade 3 learners in Philippines. Some of the key factors affecting reading fluency in English included teacher, pupil, family and school factors.

The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework that informed this study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Overview

The previous chapter reviewed literature that guided the study. This chapter presents the theoretical framework that helped frame the study. The chapter begins with a discussion on theoretical framework. It further highlights on the Automaticity Theory which guided the study and how it relates to the study

3.2 Theoretical Framework

According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993) a theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated concepts that can be used to guide research with the purpose of predicting and explaining the results of the research. In other words, a framework provides the structure within which the relationships between variables of a phenomenon are explained. In the same vein, a theory refers to a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena. This means a theory can be used to successfully make predictions and this predictive power of the theory can help guide researchers to ask appropriate research questions (Kerlinger, 1986), The theory can be used to form decisions and judgements. This study was guided by the Automaticity Theory.

3.3 The Automaticity Theory

This study was informed and guided by the Automaticity Theory by LaBerge and Samuels (1974). The theory was later amplified by Samuels (2007). The Automaticity Theory states that the reading process should be achieved with minimum attention on lower level skills which include letter sound manipulation, decoding as well as word recognition to allow the reader concentrate entirely on text comprehension. If that is not done, deriving meaning from the print will be considerably impeded. The gist of Automaticity Theory is that for comprehension to be maximised, word recognition must be automatised (Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2010; Soleimani, Mohammaddokht, & Fathi, 2022).

Furthermore, the Automaticity Theory also known as the theory of automatic information processing in reading as propounded by LaBerge and Samuels postulates that all readers go through numerous phases of data processing that convert written words into meaning. It further surmises that readers have very limited amount of attention with which to switch processes of decoding and comprehension. If they used too much attention while decoding the words in text, they would have little attention remaining for other tasks, such as understanding what was read. The Automaticity Theory emphasises repeated performance or practices because grasping new words and staying in the learner's mind requires successive exposures. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) recommended repetition to enhance automaticity with the argument that sounding spelling forms generally becomes automatic through repetition of visual as well as articulatory sequences.

The implication of this theory for this study was that the study explored the four components of reading fluency which are accuracy, rate, expression (prosody) and comprehension. Accuracy is closely connected to automaticity. However, for this to happen learners require exposure to targeted support from teachers as well as different fluency strategies. This study appreciates teacher practice are central in disseminating support for reading. Therefore, this study interviewed grade 5 teachers about their practices and perspectives regarding reading fluency and automaticity as well as how the current practices contribute to automatic word identification and fluency.

As acknowledged earlier, gist of Automaticity Theory is that for comprehension to be maximised, word recognition must be automatised. In other words, the Automaticity Theory states that the reading process should be achieved with minimum attention on lower level skills which include letter sound manipulation, decoding as well as word recognition to allow the reader concentrate entirely on text comprehension. If that is not done, deriving meaning from the print will be considerably impeded (Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2010; Soleimani, Mohammaddokht, & Fathi, 2022).

3.4 Summary of chapter three

The chapter discussed the theoretical framework guiding the study. The study used Automaticity Theory by LaBerge and Samuels. The key gist of Automaticity Theory is that for comprehension to be maximised, word recognition must be automatised. This means the reading process should be achieved with minimum attention on lower level skills which include letter sound manipulation. The majority of grade 5 learners in this study fell short of the requirements of the Automaticity Theory. The majority of the learners struggled with rate, accuracy, prosody and most all comprehension. This is because most of the learners operated on the lower level skills manifested in struggling to decode and word for word reading among other things. This consequently affected their prosody and their comprehension too.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Overview

The chapter outlines aspects of methodology and these include, the research design, study population, sample size, sampling techniques, instruments for data collection, data collection procedure, data analysis and ethical considerations.

4.2 Research Paradigm

The study used the concurrent mixed methods design grounded in a Pragmatism paradigm or pragmatist paradigm. This is the research design in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches are integrated. In other words, mixed methods focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a detailed understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano, 2011).

Punch (2009) defines mixed method research as an empirical research that involves the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. He explains the rationale behind mixed method research as using the combination of the strengths of both the qualitative and quantitative method while attempting to avoid their weaknesses. Furthermore, the two approaches are interlinked to deal with specific research questions. Moreover, Punch (2009) argues that mixed methods provide accurate data to complete the picture of the issues under scrutiny. That is why in an attempt to give a relatively full picture of the issues under study, a mixed method was used in this research.

The concurrent mixed methods design used in this study is underpinned by Pragmatism. Pragmatism is the philosophy that permits mixing paradigms, assumptions, approaches and methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014). Similarly, Pragmatism is considered the philosophical partner of the mixed research approach as its underlying assumptions provide the essence for mixing research methods (Maarouf, 2019). In the same vein, agree that pragmatism is an advanced philosophy that provides the epistemology and the logic for combining the quantitative and qualitative approaches and

methods (Johnson et al. as cited by Maarouf (2019). Pragmatism research should be designed and conducted in the best way to answer the research questions regardless of its underlying philosophy (Creswell, 2014; Biddle & Schafft, 2015).

4.3 Study Population

The study population comprised all grade 5 pupils, all grade 5 teachers and all senior teachers at a selected school in Serenje District.

4.4 Sample Size

A representative sample size was selected and used to effectively study the targeted population. The total sample was 54 and it comprised the following participants 50 Grade 5 pupils (21 girls and 29 boys), 2 Grade 5 teachers and 2 senior teachers for upper primary section at a selected school in Serenje District.

4.5 Sampling Techniques

Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used. The selected primary school was randomly sampled from the top five ranked schools in Ibolelo Zone of Serenje district. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select the Grade 5 pupils, Grade 5 teachers and senior teachers at a selected school in Serenje District. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents under study because they were expected to have knowledge on the subject. Grade 5 pupils were involved because they would have completed Grade 3 and 4 Literacy in English instruction under the Primary Literacy Programme (PLP) as guided by the National Literacy Framework of 2013. The rationale of purposive sampling is premised on selecting participants who would provide the richest information for in-depth analysis related to the central issue under study (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

4.6 Instruments for data collection

In this study, the researcher involved Grade 5 class teachers and senior teachers in upper primary in one-to-one interviews using semi-structured interview guides. Grade 5 learners reading fluency was assessed using a standardised reading fluency Words Correct Per Minute (WPCM) assessment. The purpose of one-to-one interviews was to find out what was going on in the minds of the subjects, their attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, motives, plans, past events, knowledge levels and as well as to gather information about the subjects or interviewees. A standardised reading fluency WPCM assessment

was employed on grade 5 learners. An English language passage was extracted from a grade 5 reader under the Zambia Primary Course (ZPC). This was used as a reading text to determine the reading fluency of Grade 5 learners at a selected school in Serenje District.

4.7 Data collection procedure

The researcher began collecting data after receiving ethical clearance and an introductory letter from the University of Zambia (UNZA) School of Education to proceed to conduct research. The introductory letter from UNZA was presented at the local district education office to seek permission to conduct research in the district. Permission was sought from the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) in Serenje District where the research was conducted. The letter from DEBS was presented to the head teacher of a primary school within the district for purposes of conducting a pilot study on grade 5 learners and grade 5 teachers. The pilot study at a school within the district was meant to test the learners' instruments and the efficacy of the structured interview guides in bringing out the intended data. After factoring in lessons learnt from the pilot study, the researcher then proceeded to seek authority from school management to assess grade 5 learners and do one-on-one interviews with grade 5 teachers and senior teachers in upper primary at a selected school in Serenje District. Semi-structured interview guides were used to interview one-to-one each of the following respondents: Grade 5 class teachers and senior teachers in upper primary in order to obtain deep insights on the issue under study. Grade 5 learners were assessed in reading fluency using standardised reading fluency Words Correct Per Minute (WPCM) assessment at a selected school in Serenje District.

The teacher respondents were interviewed one-on-one days after conducting the 1 minute (60 seconds) reading assessment. Teacher respondents were interviewed one-on-one on different days to avoid paralysing school operations. Each teacher respondent was interviewed on a date, day and time that was convenient to her. Before the interview, permission and consent was sought from each teacher respondent to audio record the interview and take down notes to avoid misrepresenting what they were saying. The researcher worked with one grade 5 class teacher in the school hall to ensure learners involved in the study were comfortably seated. During the one-on-one timed reading for

each grade 5 learner, the class teacher was present to make sure nothing unethical was done to the learners during interaction and assessments. The reading assessment for each learner was done in the senior teacher's office to offer privacy and noise free environment to each learner. The researcher sat with each learner during the one-one-one reading. This was done in the presence of the class teacher. Six student teachers at the same school were enlisted and oriented as research assistants on what to do during the interaction and assessment of learners. One research assistant did the time keeping and audio recording of the reading of each learner while the other student teacher research assistants were on standby outside the room and in the classroom to usher learners during the process. Once a learner did the one-minute assessment the research assistants ushered him/her in the classroom to wait for the written assessment based on the same passage they had read on the one-minute timed reading.

The written assessment was conducted on all grade 5 learners in the study at a go in a classroom. In total, 30 minutes was given to all learners to read a 305-worded passage and then proceeded to answer 5 short written comprehension questions in English that ranged from factual to inference. Each learner was given a copy of Zambia Primary Course (ZPC) grade 5 passage which had 5 comprehension questions at the end of the passage. The questions ranged from factual to inference. The comprehension questions had spaces below on which learners could write their short responses. Each comprehension script was marked out of 5 marks. This means each comprehension question was scored out of 1 mark.

4.8 Data analysis

Qualitative data was analysed thematically by categorising the information into significant themes. Data collected through interviews was organised and coded by research questions into themes. The data was interpreted and discussed. Quantitative data on reading fluency accuracy and rate was converted into tables, frequencies and percentages using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

4.9 Ethical considerations

The researcher began collecting data after receiving ethical clearance and an introductory letter from the University of Zambia (UNZA) School of Education to proceed to conduct

research. Permission was sought from the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) in the District where the research was conducted to interact with grade 5 teachers and grade 5 learners. Permission was also sought from the respective school managers involved to interact with grade 5 teachers and grade 5 learners. Consent was also sought from grade 5 teacher participants in advance about the one-on-one interviews whose purpose was to collect information for academic purposes. Participants were assured of confidentiality and were advised they could withdraw any time they felt they needed to. In addition, permission was given by DEBS office and school management to interact with and assess grade 5 learners in reading fluency. Assessment of learners was done in the presence of the grade 5 class teacher. The names of the pupils and teachers involved in the study have not been published in the study report instead pseudonyms have been used.

4.10 Summary of chapter four

The study employed a concurrent mixed methods design in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches were integrated. In total, the study had 54 respondents; 50 Grade 5 pupils (21 females and 29 males), 2 Grade 5 class teachers and 2 senior teachers for upper primary section at a selected school in Serenje District. The selected primary school was randomly sampled from the top five ranked schools in Ibolelo Zone of Serenje district. In this study, the researcher involved Grade 5 class teachers and senior teachers in upper primary in one-to-one interviews using semi-structured interview guides. Grade 5 pupils' reading fluency was assessed using a standardised reading fluency Words Correct Per Minute (WPCM) assessment. The teachers and pupil respondents were purposively sampled. In terms of ethical considerations, informed consent and confidentiality was observed throughout.

The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Overview

This chapter presents research findings both quantitatively and qualitatively. Data has been presented under research objectives. Quantitative data is presented arising from the Words Per Minute (WPM), Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) and prosody standardised assessments as well as written comprehension on grade 5 learners while qualitative data is presented arising from the use of semi-structured interviews one-to-one interviews with class and senior teachers. The findings are therefore, presented in line with the following research objectives.

- i. Assess grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.
- ii. Establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District
- iii. Explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

5.2. Assess grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

The first objective sought to assess Grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. To collect data on objective number one, the Grade 5 pupils were assessed in reading fluency in English using a standardised reading fluency Words Per Minute (WPM), Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) and prosody standardised assessments as well as written comprehension. Since reading fluency has different components, data will be presented under different aspects of reading fluency. The data will concentrate on the four components of reading fluency namely accuracy, rate, prosody (expression) and comprehension. The reading fluency in English data will be presented under sub-heading 5.2.1 to sub-heading 5.2.4. This section will further present the reading fluency data of the four components in tables 2a and 2b to tables 5a and 5b on reading fluency in English.

5.2.1 Findings on reading fluency word accuracy assessment – Quantitative data

The study had a total of 50 grade 5 learners, 29 males and 21 females who were subjected to a timed one-minute reading fluency assessment on a cold read or unpractised passage that had 305 words. The reading accuracy data for each learner was arrived at by subtracting the number of errors from the number of words read per learner divided by the total number of words read, then the answer was multiplied by 100 to get a percentage. The percentage word accuracy of each learner can either fall into independent, instruction or frustration reading level. The word accuracy percentage is obtained by dividing the Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) of each learner into the total words read per minute (WPM or reading rate) multiplied by 100. Learners at independent reading level are those who score between 95-100 % in word accuracy. Learners at instructional reading level are those who score between 90-94 % word accuracy while learners at frustration reading level are those who score between 0-89 % word accuracy.

The data on performance of learners in word accuracy is presented in tables 2a and 2b below. Table 2a shows the raw data of all the 50 learners' performances in accuracy while table 2b shows the categorised and summarised learners' accuracy performance data.

Table 2a: Field data on 50 Grade 5 pupils' performance in word accuracy in English

S/N	LEARNER CODE	GENDER	WORD ACCURACY
1	L17	F	0
2	L27	M	0
3	L41	M	0
4	L43	M	0
5	L48	M	0
6	L47	M	9
7	L24	M	13

8	L9	F	20
9	L10	F	20
10	L33	M	28
11	L12	F	53
12	L44	M	57
13	L16	F	59
14	L23	M	60
15	L20	F	67
16	L3	F	71
17	L4	F	71
18	L32	M	76
19	L15	F	77
20	L18	F	77
21	L46	M	78
22	L34	M	78
23	L50	M	79
24	L35	M	81
25	L28	M	81
26	L42	M	83
27	L45	M	83
28	L13	F	85
29	L30	M	85
30	L29	M	89
31	L2	F	89
32	L14	F	90
33	L8	F	91
34	L31	M	91
35	L11	F	91
36	L37	M	91
37	L38	M	92
38	L1	F	92
39	L22	M	93
40	L39	M	93
41	L21	F	94
42	L49	M	95

43	L7	F	96
44	L19	F	96
45	L6	F	97
46	L25	M	97
47	L5	F	97
48	L36	M	99
49	L26	M	99
50	L40	M	100
AVERAGE			69

As noted in table 2a above, the raw data of all the 50 learners' performances in accuracy is ranked from smallest (0%) to highest (100%). On average, the last row in yellow notes that the 50 learners' average score was 69%. The data in 2a is further categorised and summarised in 2b above.

Table 2b: Grade 5 pupils' word accuracy in English

TEXT LEVEL	WORD ACCURACY (%)	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
INDEPENDENT LEVEL	95-100	9	18	18	18
INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL	90 – 94	10	20	20	38
FRUSTRATION LEVEL	0 – 89	31	62	62	100
TOTAL		50	100		

As shown in table 2b above, 18 percent of the grade 5 learners were at independent reading level (between 95-100 % word accuracy score), 20 percent of the grade 5 learners were at instructional reading level (between 90-94 % word accuracy score)

while 62 percent of the grade 5 learners were at frustration reading level (between 0-89 % word accuracy score).

5.2.2 Findings on reading fluency prosody assessment - Quantitative data

The reading prosody data for each learner was arrived at by rating each learner using a prosody fluency rubric which has four parameters namely; pace, smoothness, phrasing as well as expression and volume. Each of these parameters has up to a maximum of 4 points on the scale. This meant each learner was rated out of 16 points. If a learner scored 10 or more it indicates that the learner was making good progress in fluency. Scores below 10 indicate that the learner needed additional instruction in fluency.

The data on performance of learners in reading prosody is presented in tables 3a and 3b below. Table 3a shows the raw data of all the 50 learners' performance in reading prosody while table 3b shows the categorised and summarised learners' reading prosody performance data.

Table 3a: Field data on 50 Grade 5 pupils' performance in prosody out of 16

S/N	LEARNER CODE	GENDER	PROSODY (OUT OF 16)
1	L3	F	4
2	L4	F	4
3	L9	F	4
4	L10	F	4
5	L12	F	4
6	L16	F	4
7	L17	F	4
8	L20	F	4
9	L23	M	4
10	L24	M	4
11	L27	M	4
12	L33	M	4
13	L41	M	4

14	L43	M	4
15	L44	M	4
16	L45	M	4
17	L47	M	4
18	L48	M	4
19	L15	F	5
20	L28	M	5
21	L34	M	5
22	L35	M	5
23	L42	M	6
24	L32	M	7
25	L46	M	7
26	L8	F	8
27	L13	F	8
28	L18	F	8
29	L22	M	8
30	L29	M	8
31	L30	M	8
32	L37	M	8
33	L2	F	9
34	L11	F	9
35	L14	F	9
36	L31	M	9
37	L38	M	9
38	L50	M	9
39	L6	F	10
40	L7	F	10
41	L25	M	11
42	L39	M	11
43	L1	F	12
44	L5	F	12
45	L19	F	12
46	L21	F	12
47	L36	M	12
48	L49	M	12

49	L26	M	14
50	L40	M	14
AVERAGE			7

As noted in table 3a above, the raw data of all the 50 learners' performance in prosody out of 16 is ranked from lowest (4) to highest (16). On average, the last row in yellow notes that the 50 learners' average score in prosody out of 16 was 7.. The data in 3a is further categorised and summarised in 3b above.

Table 3b: Grade 5 pupil's reading fluency prosody scores in English

PROSODY SCORE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
4	18	36	36	36
5	4	8	8	44
6	1	2	2	46
7	2	4	4	50
8	7	14	14	64
9	6	12	12	76
10	2	4	4	80
11	2	4	4	84
12	6	12	12	96
13	0	0	0	96
14	2	4	4	100
15	0	0	0	100
16	0	0	0	100
TOTAL	50	100		

Table 3a shows that 36 percent of the Grade 5 learners scored 4 points, 8 percent scored 5 points, 2 percent scored 6 points, 4 percent scored 7 points, 14 percent scored 8 points while 12 percent of the learners scored 9 points. Furthermore, 4 percent of the learners scored 10 points, 4 percent scored 11 points, 12 percent scored 12 points, 0 percent scored 13 points and 4 percent of the learners scored 14 points. Additionally, the table

also indicates that 0 percent (none) of the learners scored 15 and 16 points on the prosody scale.

5.2.3 Findings on reading fluency comprehension assessment – Quantitative data

The reading comprehension score data for each learner was arrived at by subjecting each learner to five (5) short answer, written reading comprehension questions in English. The questions ranged from literal to inference. Each learner's answer script was marked out of 5 marks. Each of the five (5) questions given in this task had 1 mark thereby giving a total score of 5 marks. The task used a Zambia Primary Course (ZPC) Grade 5 passage because it was carefully graded by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) to be suitable for Grade 5.

The data on performance of learners in written reading comprehension out of 5 is presented in tables 4a and 4b below. Table 4a shows the field data of all the 50 learners' performance in reading comprehension out of 5 while table 4b shows the categorised and summarised learners' reading comprehension out of 5 performance data.

Table 4a: Field data on 50 Grade 5 pupils' performance in comprehension out of 5

S/N	LEARNER CODE	GENDER	COMPREHENSION (OUT OF 5)
1	L9	F	0
2	L10	F	0
3	L12	F	0
4	L14	F	0
5	L15	F	0
6	L17	F	0
7	L18	F	0
8	L20	F	0
9	L23	M	0
10	L27	M	0

11	L28	M	0
12	L33	M	0
13	L35	M	0
14	L37	M	0
15	L41	M	0
16	L43	M	0
17	L44	M	0
18	L45	M	0
19	L46	M	0
20	L47	M	0
21	L48	M	0
22	L50	M	0
23	L21	F	1
24	L49	M	1
25	L1	F	2
26	L3	F	2
27	L4	F	2
28	L7	F	2
29	L8	F	2
30	L11	F	2
31	L16	F	2
32	L19	F	2
33	L22	M	2
34	L24	M	2
35	L29	M	2
36	L32	M	2
37	L34	M	2
38	L38	M	2
39	L39	M	2
40	L40	M	2
41	L2	F	3
42	L13	F	3
43	L25	M	3
44	L30	M	3
45	L31	M	3

46	L42	M	3
47	L6	F	4
48	L26	M	4
49	L5	F	5
50	L36	M	5
AVERAGE			1

As noted in table 4a above, the field data of all the 50 learners' performance in written comprehension out of 5 marks is ranked from lowest (0) to highest (5). On average, the last row in yellow notes that the 50 learners' average score in written comprehension out of 5 was 1 mark. The data in 5a is further categorised and summarised in 4b below.

Table 4b: Grade 5 pupil's reading fluency comprehension scores in English

COMPREHENSION SCORE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
0	22	44	44	44
1	2	4	4	48
2	16	32	32	80
3	6	12	12	92
4	2	4	4	96
5	2	4	4	100
TOTAL	50	100		

As shown in table 4b above, 44 percent scored 0 marks, 4 percent scored 1 mark, 32 percent scored 2 marks, 12 percent scored 3 marks, 4 percent scored 4 marks while 4 percent of the grade 5 learners in the study scored 5 marks in the reading comprehension assessment.

5.2.4 Findings on reading fluency reading rate assessment – Quantitative data

The reading rate data for each learner was arrived at by counting the total number of words each learner was able to read within a given time of 1 minute or 60 seconds. This is called Words Per Minute (WPM) or rate. Rate does not pay attention to the mistakes or errors made by the learner while reading. The passage used for this task had 305 words.

The data on performance of learners in reading rate (WPM) is presented in tables 5a and 5b below. Table 5a shows the raw data of all the 50 learners' performance in reading rate (WPM) while table 5b shows the categorised and summarised learners' reading rate (WPM) performance data.

Table 5a: Field data on 50 Grade 5 pupils' performance in total Words Per Minute (WPM)

S/N	LEARNER CODE	GENDER	WORDS PER MINUTE
1	L41	M	4
2	L17	F	6
3	L43	M	6
4	L48	M	6
5	L24	M	8
6	L27	M	8
7	L9	F	10
8	L10	F	10
9	L23	M	10
10	L47	M	11
11	L13	F	13
12	L16	F	17
13	L33	M	18

14	L12	F	19
15	L4	F	21
16	L44	M	23
17	L45	M	24
18	L20	F	27
19	L28	M	27
20	L3	F	28
21	L34	M	32
22	L18	F	35
23	L15	F	39
24	L32	M	41
25	L42	M	41
26	L2	F	46
27	L30	M	46
28	L35	M	47
29	L1	F	49
30	L46	M	49
31	L29	M	53
32	L8	F	55
33	L31	M	55
34	L50	M	57
35	L11	F	58
36	L22	M	58
37	L37	M	58
38	L14	F	59
39	L6	F	60
40	L25	M	60
41	L38	M	60

42	L5	F	71
43	L39	M	75
44	L40	M	75
45	L19	F	81
46	L49	M	81
47	L36	M	99
48	L26	M	105
49	L7	F	113
50	L21	F	132
AVERAGE			44

As noted in table 5a above, the raw data of all the 50 learners' performance in total Words Per Minute (WPM) is ranked from lowest (4) to highest (132). On average, the last row in yellow notes that the 50 learners' average score in total Words Per Minute (WPM) was 44. The data in 5a is further categorised and summarised in 5b below.

Table 5b: Grade 5 pupil's fluency reading rate scores in English

READING RATE (WPM)	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
100 - 149	3	6	6	6
50 - 99	17	34	34	40
0 - 49	30	60	60	100
TOTAL	50	100		

Table 5b indicates that 6 percent of the Grade 5 pupils' fluency reading rate (WPM) scores in English were clustered between 100-149, 34 percent of the pupils' reading rate

(WPM) scores in English were clustered between 50 – 99 while 60 percent of the Grade 5 pupils' fluency reading rate scores in English were clustered between 0 - 49.

5.3 Establish grade 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

The second objective sought to establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. This objective was key in the sense that class and senior teachers who are the implementers of the primary school literacy curriculum understand their learners' reading situation and circumstances better. Therefore, taking time to get their views on the subject under study was vital. To collect data on objective number two, one-to-one interviews using a semi-structured interview guide were held with four teachers who included two senior teachers and two grade 5 teachers. This section presents teachers' perspectives on reading levels of learners in English.

5.3.1 Teachers perspectives on reading levels of learners in English

According to the findings of the study, the respondents pegged the reading levels at average and below average. This is because most of them could not read fluently in English. Additionally, the findings noted teachers were still struggling with learners knowing how to read and write in Icibemba.

Below are excerpts of verbatim responses from the teachers interviewed on the reading levels of their learners.

Teacher 1 had this to say:

The reading level is not all that good. I can say average because this is just the second term. They started reading in English in grade 5 which was the first term but at this stage looking at the pace at which they are at least they have improved. But I can say they are at average level. (Teacher 1)

Regarding the reading level of learners in English and why the respondent felt so, teacher 2 had this to say:

I think we are at average in English. It is average because they were just doing Bemba, Bemba and in Grade 3, it is when they step in to English. So as they step in to English they face challenges, difficulties to learn some words in English. (Teacher 2)

In the same vein, teacher 3 had this to say regarding the reading level of learners in English and why the respondent felt so:

The reading levels currently in English are below average, I can't lie in English but with Icibemba it's 80-85%. Because most of them they can't read fluently in English. (Teacher 3)

In the same vein, teacher 4 had this to say:

I would say 40%. 40% due to the way the programme is done here. The concentration is much on teaching learners how to read and write in local language which is Icibemba. So, that's where the concentration is much. So, we are still battling with learners knowing how to read and write in Icibemba. But those who have broken through in English I would say 40% of my learners. (Teacher 4)

Teachers explained some of the characteristics of their learners reading abilities. They explained that learners had poor prosody as well as poor language development which is explained through poor or low comprehension abilities. The following are some of the responses:

Teacher 4 had this to say:

Learners will be reading something that they don't know and understand. At least for some of those from homes where they are able to interact with English. (Teacher 4)

Additionally, teacher 4 had this to say:

The other challenge is mispronouncing of words due to lack of understanding what they are reading. Also learners feeling shy to bring out what they have tried to read due to not understanding.

(Teacher 4)

5.4. Explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

The third objective sought to explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. This objective was also cardinal in the sense that class and senior teachers who are the implementers of the primary school literacy curriculum understand their learners' situation and school circumstances better. To collect data on objective number 3, one-to-one interviews using a semi-structured interview guide were held with the four teacher respondents who included two senior teachers and two grade 5 teachers. This section presents the interview data in tables 6a and 6b as well as sub-headings 5.4.1 and 5.4.3, respectively. Table 6a presents positive factors while table 6b focuses on negative factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English. Additionally, this section will present an emerging theme in part 5.4.5 on teacher respondents' suggestions to improve reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

5.4.1. Factors that positively affected grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English

In the same vein, according to the findings of the study, some factors that positively affected grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English include the following: Practice factor, materials factor, methodology factor, teacher factor, oral English factor, teacher-pupil rapport factor and differentiation factor. This data is summarised in table 6a below.

Table 6a: Factors that positively affected grade 5 reading fluency in English

S/N	Themes
1.	Practice factor
2.	Materials factor
3.	Methodology factor
4.	Teacher factor
5.	Oral English factor
6.	Teacher-pupil rapport factor
7.	Differentiation factor

5.4.2 Findings from interviews with teachers on positive factors

Furthermore, the findings showed that the four teachers interviewed one-to-one understood the positive factors affecting the grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at the selected school. Below are excerpts of some verbatim responses from the teachers on each of the positive factors.

a. Practice factor

Teacher 1 had this to say:

Giving them a lot of activities to do with reading and also making them take part in reading. When giving activities, assigning learners to be doing more of reading. And also encouraging them to make stories, imaginal stories and then they write them, they also give them to others also to read them. (Teacher 1)

b. Materials factor

Similarly, teacher 2 had this to say:

What encourages reading in English, maybe the picture, for example if you get the book, the picture, and the cover of the book. What the learners will see on the cover page will make learners be interested to read what is inside the book or the materials the teacher is using to teach reading, learners will be

able to grasp that concept but if always you just write on the board learners don't concentrate. (Teacher 2)

Additionally, teacher 3 had this to say:

And even the teaching and learning aids they are also helping you stick vowels, words just in class, English words. Learners will be forced to start reading. So teaching aids also help. Even a programme where on a particular day learners can just watch anything or any lesson concerning English or something that can encourage learners to admire something through watching. These private schools, others especially the babies they watch cartoons, their friends are speaking English. (Teacher 3)

Teacher 4 had this to say:

I would say availability of storybooks, teaching and learning aids, aids which have pictures trying to tell a story. (Teacher 4)

c. Methodology factor

When probed further, teacher 4 had this to say:

Maybe I should also mention to say even the method applied also may help learners to know how to read English well. If we were to use the phonics, the methods that we used to use especially when we were using the Break Through To Literacy and Step In To English (SITE) in grade 2, like when we use the phonic methods, the syllabic method to mention but a few. (Teacher 4)

d. Teacher factor

At least, you bring different activities for the learners. Motivation from teachers, the way a teacher will deliver the lesson, will encourage learners to put much effort. (Teacher 2)

e. Oral English factor

Teacher 3 had this to say:

Speaking of English, just the speaking itself. We are just fond of Bemba, Bemba (ZL). So I think even just the speaking itself one if

somebody is encouraged to speak English that person will be also forced to start reading English to know the words. (Teacher 3)

f. Teacher-pupil rapport factor

Teacher 4 had this to say:

And also the relationship between the teacher and the learners. These are some of the factors that encourage reading English in learners. (Teacher 4)

g. Differentiation factor

At least, you bring different activities for the learners. Motivation from teachers, the way a teacher will deliver the lesson, will encourage learners to put much effort. (Teacher 2)

5.4.3. Factors that negatively affect grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English

In the same vein, according to the findings of the study, factors that negatively affected grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English include the following: Time factor, background factor, material/resource factor, environmental factor, teacher factor, pupil factor, transition factor, parental factor and policy factor. This data is summarised in table 6b below.

Table 6b: Factors that negatively affected grade 5 reading fluency in English

S/N	Themes
1.	Time factor
2.	Background factor
3.	Material/resource factors
4.	Environmental factor
5.	Teacher factor
6.	Pupil factor
7.	Transition factor
8.	Parental factor
9.	Policy factor

5.4.4 Findings from interviews with teachers on negative factors

The findings showed that the teachers interviewed understood some of the negative factors affecting the grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected school. The negative factors are highlighted below with accompanying verbatim responses from the teacher respondents.

Below are some verbatim responses from the teacher respondents on the negative factors:

a. Limited Time

Teacher 1 had this to say:

Time specifically for reading, to learn reading we don't have. Mainly, reading is learnt through comprehension and also as they are doing these activities they are reading.(Teacher 1)

b. Learners' Background

I think also the foundation. English, like this time considering our new curriculum, reading in English is done in grade 5. (Teacher 1)

For instance, Mwasankano, Kawama, Chilisha, Chansa to mention but a few and it's like these learners actually most of them were deprived of the opportunity of passing through preschool. So, it is really a challenge. But for a few learners who at least had an opportunity to pass through preschool, they are able to catch up very fast. (Teacher 4).

c. Lack of Material/resource

I think also lack of material, maybe stories, story books. (Teacher 1)

In addition, teacher 4 had this to say on materials:

Lack of books, especially the story books including the pupils' books in school. We have a shortfall of that, so it is usually a challenge, whereby you only depend on decodable stories for stories. But if we had a lot of story books it was going to be helpful even on the part of learners. (Teacher 4)

d. Poor literacy Environmental

Teacher 2 had this to say:

Among our learners, maybe the catchment area, you will find that children from Chilisha far, far places from the town they find it difficult to read English or just speak English. When you just start teaching English uummm it's a challenge for them. so at least those who are maybe coming within the boma we don't find most challenges but children from far places. (Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 continues to highlight some negative factors and she had this to say:

Sometimes even the environment. What I have discovered is that those learners who come from homes where they speak English they don't find difficulties because in my class I have some of the learners, daughters and sons of teachers and lecturers, mostly they are the ones who do better in English. But these others who are just coming from typical villages that's something we can't control. (Teacher 3)

e. Teacher factor

Additionally, teacher 2 continued highlighting some issues negatively affecting learners and had this to say

Even us teachers we can be a problem sometimes causing the learners not to read fluently. We will rely much on those children who are well to do instead of focusing on those children coming from villages. And when we are giving, maybe, the textbooks to the learners to go and read at home, we find that again we give those who know how to read instead of giving those learners who are not able to read. (Teacher 2)

f. Pupil factor

Regarding the catchment area as one of the hindering factors, teacher 4 had this to say:

Maybe because most of the learners that we have especially in our school they come from places where maybe they are not introduced to English. So, sometimes as you teach them it is a bit easier to teach someone who understands what they are even reading but in our case because of our learners coming from places where they rarely speak English, it is a bit difficult. (Teacher 4).

g. Transition from using local language to English

Teacher 3 had this to say:

I think the crossing over from Icibemba (ZL) to English is challenging. I think maybe it would have been better if English would have been started just at preschool bit by bit where they are learning side by side Icibemba (ZL) and English better they just begin from the word go. English should be taught side by side with Icibemba (ZL). In fact, in grade 4 we discourage answering words in Bemba (ZL) or writing spellings in Bemba (ZL) so crossing over at grade 4 level is somehow difficult. (Teacher 3)

h. Parental factor

Teacher 2 had this to say:

When they go home, parents don't know how to speak English or even to write in Bemba. So maybe you teach them at school, they go home there they have no that allowance to speak English with parents at home even their siblings at home because their parents are not learned people. (Teacher 2)

i. Inappropriate language Policy

In the same vein, teacher 4 continued to highlight some issues negatively affecting learners and had this to say:

The introduction of teaching Icibemba (ZL) has hindered because what I have discovered is that the concentration is done much on teaching learners how to read in Icibemba (ZL) or any other

local language. So for the learners no much time is given to introduction of reading in English, so for the learners to break though in English is much of a challenge unless you apply more and more effort. (Teacher 4)

5.4.5. Suggestions to improve reading fluency in English

This section of the chapter presents an emerging theme that arose. According to the findings of the study, the respondents advanced the following suggestions on how to improve reading fluency in English such as beginning to implement reading in English early, improvisation of local materials and introducing reading time daily on the timetable. Additionally, provide adequate storybooks, teachers to be creative and resourceful, teachers to be committed to their responsibilities, more hard work required of teachers in teaching fluency, incorporation of English and Zambian Languages (ZL) when teaching at the lower grades and use of Group work. The respondents further advanced the following suggestions: Build a big library for the school, allow learners to speak English from grade 1 to grade 7, introduce a reading club at school where grade 1 learners could interact with older learners as well as introducing reading competitions. Below are excerpts of verbatim responses from the teachers interviewed regarding suggestions to improve reading fluency in English.

Teacher 1 had this to say:

I think instead of just waiting for them to reach grade 5 and start English with them, if we can start implementing reading at the early stage, maybe even at grade 1. If we can start with them at that level, I think it can help us. (Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 continues and had this to say:

And also if we can come up with strategies, of maybe coming up with materials, the local materials. And also if we can come up with a daily period just to do with reading. And also competition in reading can also help learners in improving their reading. (Teacher 1)

Regarding suggestions to improve reading fluency in English, teacher 2 had this to say:

At least, the government to provide enough story books. Apart from that, also encourage teachers to be creative and resourceful, that will help us. Even just to be committed to our job as teachers because you find that some teachers have just been deployed but they are already tired in the first year of working. Therefore, you find that the old teachers are doing better than the new teachers are. (Teacher 2)

In the same vein, teacher 3 had this to say:

The most important thing that is that they should start at grade 1 learning English. We should also incorporate English. We shouldn't just concentrate on the local language (ZL). Incorporate English, just at grade 1 as they begin. As teachers we also need to work hard teaching them reading fluency. (Teacher 3)

Teacher 4 had this to say:

I would suggest that there should be incorporation of English when teaching at the lower grades and also group work can be used as a mandatory thing. Because I have discovered that most of the learners learn well when they are in groups. (Teacher 4)

Furthermore, teacher 4 had this to say:

I would also suggest that a big library be built for the school so that learners can be having enough time for reading and discovering more where reading is concerned. I would suggest also that a reading club, a club which will just be helping learners to read should also be introduced at school. Reading clubs be introduced where grade 1 learners are able to interact with these older learners, it can be of good help. (Teacher 4)

In addition, teacher 4 had this to say:

We should be having every week reading competitions. Reading competitions to involve lower section (1-4) and upper grades (5-7) readers. You just pick a few then they compete. Then you pick the best readers you put them in one group as well then they start competing just like that. I think that can be of help. (Teacher 4)

Teacher 4 continues and had this to say:

Maybe I should mention this, if learners were to be allowed to speak English from grade 1 to grade 7, it would help a lot because learners will learn fast the things that they are able to understand. Usually, the challenge is that you are helping them to know how to read the things that they do not understand. if they know or they understand what they are reading it becomes easier. (Teacher 4)

In her final suggestion, teacher 4 had this to say:

My suggestion is that if it was going to be mandatory for learners to be passing through preschool before they come to grade 1. And also if it can be allowed for learners from grade 1-4, if we can be code switching when delivering the lessons. We can be incorporating English and the local language it can also be helping to teach reading in English. (Teacher 4)

5.5 Summary of chapter five

This chapter endeavoured to highlight the finding of the study based on the three study objectives. The first objective sought to assess Grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. The findings of the study based on quantitative data gathered through interacting with each grade 5 learner per minute and later through a follow up written comprehension assessment revealed that, about 62 percent of grade 5 learners at the selected primary school were reading at frustration level in English. Additionally, the average Words Per Minute (WPM) was at 44, the average

Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) was at 38, the average prosody score was 7 out of 16 points and the average written comprehension score was 1 out of 5 marks.

Regarding the second objective which sought to establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District, the summary of the findings of the study were as follows. The respondents pegged the learners' reading levels at between average and below average, because most learners could not read fluently in English and some were still struggling to read and write even in Ibibemba.

Regarding objective number 3, the respondents highlighted the following factors that positively affected grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English which include practice factor, materials factor, differentiation factor, teacher factor, oral English factor, teacher-pupil rapport factor and methodology factor. On the other hand, some respondents still felt the following negative factors impacted reading fluency in English: Time factor, background factor, materials/resources factor, environmental factor, teacher factor, pupil factor, transition factor, parental factor and policy factor. Some of the suggestions to improve reading fluency included early implementation of reading in English, incorporating English and Zambian Language (ZL) when teaching at the lower grades as well as building school libraries and introducing reading competitions.

The next chapter presents the discussion of findings of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the findings of this study presented in chapter five by focusing on three major subheadings premised on the research objectives of this study and other related literature. The findings will be discussed with a special reference to the results obtained from grade 5 learners' reading fluency assessment in English as well as class and senior teachers' one-to-one interviews. The following are the sub themes based on the research objectives: Assess grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District, establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District and explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. Thereafter, a summary of the chapter will be given.

6.2. Assess grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

The first objective sought to assess Grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. The findings of the study based on quantitative data gathered through interacting with each grade 5 learner per minute and later through a follow up written reading comprehension assessment on 305-worded passage revealed that, about 62 percent of grade 5 learners at the selected primary school were reading at frustration level in English. Additionally, the average Words Per Minute (WPM) was at 44, the average Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) was at 38, the average prosody score was 7 out of 16 points and the average written comprehension score was 1 out of 5 marks.

The findings in 6.2. above which highlighted the various parameters of reading fluency (rate, accuracy, prosody and comprehension) were consistent with the teacher respondents' perspectives that indicated that the reading levels of their learners were between average and below average. For instance, the average prosody score which stood at 7 out of 16 is deemed low and is consistent with Rasinski's Multidimensional Fluency

Scale used to assess the level of student's prosodic reading. To determine the level of prosodic reading, the students with range scores between 4 and 7 were considered as *low*, while students with range score between 8 and 12 were considered as *moderate* while students with range score between 13 and 16 were considered as *high* (Rahmawati, Rosmalina, & Anggraini, 2020).

From the data in paragraph 1 of this chapter, about 62 percent of grade 5 learners at the selected primary school were reading at frustration level in English. The average word accuracy level was at 69%. This means the word accuracy percentage was between 0-89%. The implication is that if a child's accuracy rate is below 90%, then they are at the frustration reading level. As its name implies, a passage or text this level is too difficult and would most likely frustrate the child and impair comprehension.

This is at variance with earlier studies in the USA where students in the 5th grade were required to read at a rate of 110 words correct per minute (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006) or below with an accuracy rate between 90% and 94% accuracy (Bear et al., 2007). A student in the 6th grade needed to read at a rate of 127 words correct per minute (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006) or below with an accuracy rate between 90% and 94% accuracy (Bear et al., 2007; Kalis, 2012). Later studies by (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2017) have put the average WCPM at 150 for a Grade 5 child as shown in Table 1 under literature review chapter.

Similarly, Piper, Schroeder, & Trudell (2016) citing works from Harris and Sipay as well as Hasbrouck and Tindal contend that researchers in the USA set the benchmark for English oral reading fluency needed for comprehension at 60–90 WCPM in Grade 1, 85–120 WCPM in Grade 2 and 115–140 in Grade 3 WCPM. This revelation has very serious implications for the findings of this study because 60% of the learners were only able to read between 0-49 WCPM. In this regard, it is not surprising to note that the Grade 5 learners in this study did not do well in comprehension too because they fell far short of the minimum required even for a Grade 1 child to comprehend. This view is further amplified by the following quote from the National Reading Panel.

Accuracy in reading supports students in becoming more proficient readers, because if reading is labourious and inefficient, it will be difficult for the child to remember what has been read and relate those ideas to their background knowledge and experiences (NRP, 2000, p11).

Furthermore, it is of concern that about 60% of the grade 5 learners in this study were only able to read between 0-49 Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) or an average of 38 WCPM in English. This is also at variance with the average reading levels of Grade 5 learners in South Africa whose benchmark ranged between 90-100 WCPM in English (Spaull, 2015) and the benchmark range for American Grade 5 learners who stood between 130-150 WCPM in English (Hasbrouck and Tindal, 2006; 2017).

Furthermore, the findings of this study are further at variance with even the Philippines Grade 3 reading benchmark that was around 60 WCPM (National EGRA report, 2019). Compared to some Zambian grade 5 learners at the selected school, the grade 3 learners in Philippines were doing relatively better in English. In another study, Piper, Schroeder, and Trudell (2016) assessed 2,000 students in Kenya in standard (grade) 3 to determine if children read more fluently in English, Kiswahili or mother tongue (Dholuo and Gikuyu) using an EGRA tool developed in Kenya. The data showed that in Central Province, children read more fluently in English (40.2 WCPM) than in Kiswahili (26.7 WCPM) and that children read more fluently in English (40.2 WCPM) than in Gikuyu (20.0 WCPM). In Nyanza Province, the results showed that children read more fluently in English (25.6 WCPM) than in Kiswahili (19.0 WCPM) and in English (25.6 WCPM) than in Dholuo (19.6 WCPM) (Piper, Schroeder, & Trudell, 2016). The findings from Kenya in terms of WCPM in English are almost close to the average WCPM of 38 or range of 0-49 WCPM in this study except this study was focusing on English for Grade 5 learners at a selected school. The other link to this study is that the average WCPM in English in Kenya was almost comparable to the average findings of this study.

The dismal performance by Grade 5 learners in this study is consistent with national mean performance in English reading at Grade 5 between 1999 and 2008 standing at 33.2

percent in 1999, 33.4 percent in 2001, 33.9 percent in 2003 and 34.5 percent in 2006 (Zambia National Assessment Survey, 2006; Chibamba, 2012) and later studies by Kanyika et al. (2008) at 35.3 percent. The mean performance is still below the criterion percentage mark of 40.0 percent for minimum level of performance set for the nation in English (MOE, 2008).

The few grade 5 learners that seemingly did well in prosody score that is between 10 to 16 points and those who scored highly in comprehension as well as in Words Per Minute (WPM) and Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) could be attributed to learners whose parents were very supportive particularly children of teachers and lecturers as indicated by teacher respondents. This would be discussed further under factors in objective 3 of this study.

Furthermore, the dismal performance of learners in the various components of reading fluency in this study were also consistent with the perspectives of respondents who indicated that they had no college or university training in reading fluency except through Continuing Professional Development (CPDs). Additionally, teacher respondents raised concern about some teachers who had a negative attitude towards handling grades 5-7 learners because they did not want to handle English language which required them to exert more effort for their learners to breakthrough in English.

The dismal written comprehension results were also not surprising because respondents indicated that one of the challenges they faced were learners reading without understanding as well as mispronouncing of words. This reading without understanding was also not surprising because the grade 5 learners' performance in prosody left much to be desired. A number of them read without expressivity and some just read word for word or could not even decode any word in English.

This was also consistent with the teacher respondents who lamented about the challenges they had from some of their learners whose parents were not supportive and resided in the marginalised rural and peri-urban areas of the district under study. Some of these

learners did not even have some siblings to assist. In the same vein, teacher respondents lamented about learners in grade 5 who have not had a chance to attend preschool.

6.3. Establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District

Regarding the second objective which sought to establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District, the summary of the findings of the study were as follows. The respondents pegged the learners' reading levels at between average and below average because most learners could not read fluently in English and some were still struggling to read and write even in Icibemba. In this regard teacher respondents explained some of the characteristics of their learners' reading abilities. They explained that learners had poor prosody as well as poor language development which was explained through poor or low comprehension abilities. The following quotation helps to cement what is involved in comprehension.

Comprehension is a complex neurological process that combines vocabulary development and instruction with an overall understanding of what has been read and an intentional internal interaction between the reader and the text. Comprehension strategies and skills must be explicitly taught by teachers (NRP, 2000, p.13).

The concern over poor reading is also noted by Sidekli (2010) who contends that struggling readers generally made mistakes like misreading, skipping syllables and letters as well as adding letters, repeating words and syllabifying to mention but a few. These were also noted by the researcher while collecting field data. In the same vein, Kalis (2012) citing Chard et al and Pikulski et al notes that a reader who was not fluent must alternate between two components of reading namely, word identification or decoding and comprehension in order to derive meaning from the text. If attention was consumed by decoding, it limits the reader's ability to comprehend the text they are reading. Consequently, the ability to decode is essential for high levels of reading achievement. Furthermore, weak readers have fewer skills and they avoid the act of reading as noted by

Stanovich in Yıldız and Akyol (2011). Students with reading difficulties frequently make reading mistakes such as skipping words, adding words, misreading, repeating, inverting and ignoring punctuation (Akyol, 2013). As well as these mistakes, insufficient motivation and the academic failure of students decrease their reading motivation and cause a psychological and sociological regression in students with reading difficulties (Kayabasii, 2017). This observation was noted on some learners in this study who demonstrated timidity and shyness as well as lack of confidence during data collection. This was noted especially on some older learners.

The observations from scholars in the previous paragraph are in tandem and consistent with the Automaticity Theory by Samuels and LaBerge. The Automaticity Theory states that the reading process should be achieved with minimum attention on lower level skills which include letter sound manipulation, decoding as well as word recognition to allow the reader concentrate entirely on text comprehension. If that is not done, deriving meaning from the print will be considerably impeded. The essence of Automaticity Theory is that for comprehension to be maximised, word recognition must be automatised (Samuels & LaBerge, 1974; Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2010; Soleimani, Mohammaddokht, & Fathi, 2022). The implication of these observations for this study are that a number of learners as noted in the low prosody score as well as low WCPM were focusing more on the lower level reading skills which included letter sound manipulation, decoding as well as word recognition at the expense of concentrating entirely on text comprehension. As a result, the comprehension component of this study was notably very low standing at an average of 1 mark out of 5 marks. In view of this and considering the concerns raised by teacher respondents about uncommitted teachers and negative attitude towards teaching learners in grades 5-7, one wonders whether Zambia will ever overcome the issue of learners failing to read at their grade level.

What the researcher noted while in the field was that it was not only struggling learners at the selected school that attended remedial work during Catch Up but all learners in grades 3, 4 and 5. With regard to the grade 5 learners, instead of their teachers focusing on teaching in English their focus was on Catch Up which was underpinned by use of the 7

official Zambian Languages as medium of instruction depending on the region. In the case of the selected school in Serenje, the focus was on Ibibemba. In such a scenario, it was not surprising that grade 5 learners were still not doing well in reading fluency in English at the selected school in Serenje.

6.4. Explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in

English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

The third research objective of this study sought to explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. The teacher respondents who were engaged in one-to-one interviews highlighted the following negative and positive factors that affected grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English. Regarding objective number 3, the respondents highlighted the following factors that positively affected grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English which include: Practice factor, materials factor, differentiation factor, teacher factor, oral English factor, teacher-pupil rapport factor and methodology factor. On the other hand, some respondents still felt the following negative factors impacted reading fluency in English: Time factor, background factor, materials/resources factor, environmental factor, teacher factor, pupil factor, transition factor, parental factor and policy factor. The discussion in this chapter begins with positive factors and then later will delve into negative factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. The respondents highlighted the following factors that positively affected grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English which include: Practice factor, materials factor, differentiation factor, teacher factor, oral English factor, teacher-pupil rapport factor and methodology factor.

From the paragraph above, one of the positive factors that was highlighted by the respondents was practice factor. This related more to pupils being given chance and opportunity to engage in more and more reading practice. As the adage goes *practice make perfect*. According to respondents, one way in which practice factor could encourage reading fluency was through reading circles, reading competitions and reading clubs as well as Catch Up activities and through creation of a school library. To support

and emphasise the issue of more reading practice factor, the following quotation puts it clearly:

The National Reading Panel asserted that fluency is best developed through practice and stressed that this can be accomplished specifically through oral reading practice, such as repeated reading, or guided reading, and through encouraging independent reading as much as possible. (Velchik, 2019).

In the same vein, the materials factor could positively affect reading fluency by providing adequate teaching and learning resources (aids), story books and creation of a well-stocked school library. This meant learners did not just need to wait to read during lessons but could do it in their spare time. A library would even enable them borrow books from there as and when need arose. Teacher respondents further commended books and resources from the Step In To English (SITE) course that were used in the previous Primary Reading Programme (PRP) literacy curriculum. Additionally, respondents indicated that videos and audios modelling speaking and reading in English could be used just as some private schools did. This helped motivate learners towards the language they were striving to attain.

The differentiation factor was meant to address the respective individual reading needs and gaps of respective learners. *This meant differentiated teaching occurs when a teacher planned a lesson that adjusted either the content being discussed, the process used to learn or the outcomes expected from learners to ensure that learners at different starting points can receive the instruction they needed to grow and succeed (Lockhart, 2023).* This approach was used extensively outside the normal classroom context as noted by what teachers did during Catch Up sessions with their different learners. These learners were organised in pace groups after conducting a baseline assessment. The idea was to ensure each learner received the appropriate content regardless of the grade. A struggling reader in grade 5 would be doing work in level 1 which was dealing with sounds. Related to this was the methodology factor. In this study, teacher respondents indicated that phonics was very helpful in encouraging learners to know how to read well in English.

This is crucial because one of the skills learners who are beginning to read in English needed was to be motivated on were skills in grasping word recognition and word attack. Showing speaking and reading modelling videos was also crucial in promoting reading fluency. The Oral English factor was vital too in promoting reading fluency. As one respondent put it: It is this realisation that made some respondents contend that the language of instruction should be in English as early as possible and in the process code switching could be used to mitigate learners who may not understand the language. The oral language factor is in tandem with scholarly work by Babayigit (2015) who contends that;

Oral language was the strongest predictor of reading comprehension levels in L1 and L2. He noted that the weaker English oral language skills explained the lower performance of L2 learners on reading comprehension. He goes on to suggest that his study results underscored the importance of supporting oral language development in minority language learners.

In the same view, O' Hara et al (2020) aver that there is a clear connection between the development of oral language and literacy.

The teacher factor was also crucial in promoting reading fluency. For example, one respondent emphasised the fact that teacher motivation was very critical in reading fluency. The way a teacher taught or delivered a reading lesson would encourage learners to put in more effort. Related to this aspect was the teacher-pupil rapport factor. The nature of the relationship between individual learners and their teacher played a key role in whether learners would be free to make mistakes as they learnt to read without fear of being scolded or being laughed at or shamed by the teacher him/herself. In other words, the quality of teacher-pupil interaction was vital in achieving reading fluency. According to one of the teacher respondents, learners who have a healthy relationship with their teacher would not want to let down their teacher and so they get motivated to excel. In the same vein, Kaani, et al. (2022) highlighted some of the reasons for dismal standards of literacy attainment in Zambia. These included a high pupil-teacher ratio at about 49:1, poor resourced learning environments as well as lack of effective supervision.

On the other hand, some respondents still felt the following negative factors impacted reading fluency in English: Time factor, background factor, materials/resources factor, environmental factor, teacher factor, pupil factor, transition factor, parental factor and policy factor.

Firstly, on time factor, teacher respondents hinted that achieving reading fluency was a challenge owing to limited or no time dedicated to reading on the timetable. For example, one of the teacher respondents indicated that learners were sometimes only exposed to reading in some cases at the time they were attempting a comprehension exercise. This made it very difficult to offer individualised attention to each learner to suit his/her needs. Time factor limited learning time and interaction between the learners and their teachers. To support and emphasise the issue of more reading practice and issue of time factor, the following quotation puts it clearly:

There is a direct proportion between the time allocated by readers for reading and the increase of the amount of reading. In order to increase the reading motivation of students, teachers are required to allocate more time for their students with reading difficulties and increase the duration of reading in general (Yıldız, 2013).

Regarding background factor, the concern was that a number of learners particularly those from marginalised rural homes and surrounding villages who were in grade 5 at the time of the study had not had a chance to attend preschool. In short, the learners had no pre-school foundation that would expose them to skills like print awareness among others. This meant teachers had to find a way of bridging the knowledge gap of missed early childhood education opportunities. This is where the Catch Up initiative came in to address such gaps. The issue of materials/resources factor was manifested in limited story and pupils' books at the disposal of teachers and learners. This compelled teacher to just rely on very short and artificially crafted teacher made decodable stories. Limited materials were compounded by the free education policy pronounced by the Ministry of Education since 2021. This meant the number of learners tended to be more than the

material resources allocated to the class. The environmental factor was notable too because some children at the school in question came from the rural or peri-urban area of the study district that had extremely few or no parents as well as older siblings that could support the school's efforts to impart oral or reading skills in English in such learners. These were learners who were probably coming from places where they had never been introduced to any form of English. Reading and understanding what they read was a challenge let alone speaking or understanding certain commands given in English.

Further, the teacher factor arose in form of some teachers only concentrating on learners from very affluent families. The same teachers would give the few reading materials available to learners who were already doing relatively well in reading. Additionally, some respondents indicated that some teachers were not committed to teaching in English and thereby not pushing enough for learners to breakthrough in English too. This in turn perpetuated what is called the Matthew Effect. The Matthew Effect refers to a pattern in which those who begin with advantage accrue more advantage over time and those who begin with disadvantage become more disadvantaged over time (Dannefer, 1987; O'Rand, 1996). The consequence was an ever-increasing gap between the privileged and underprivileged even in the class set-up. Additionally, teachers were reported to have a negative attitude towards handling learners in grades 5-7 seemingly because of cherishing a relaxed manner of teaching learners who were learning in their local language. This view is in tandem with the findings of Kaani (2018) in his study which also noted that teachers were poorly equipped to provide effective literacy instructions due to a pedagogical-content knowledge deficit. This observation tallies yet again with the respondents' views that all of them did not receive any explicit instructions from their colleges or universities on teaching reading fluency in English.

In the same vein is the pupil factor, this was highlighted by learners either being late for school or completely absent during the time they were expected to report for remedial work during Catch Up lessons or reading circles. This meant that almost each day, teachers would be dealing with different learners from the ones they had the previous day. Additionally, some learners were reported to be timid when asked to read aloud.

This was also experienced by the researcher at the time learners were given chance to do a one-on-one one minute reading to rate their Words Per Minute as well as Words Correct Per Minute.

The transition factor refers to what goes on from the time learners' breakthrough reading in the regional official language of the area where they are to the time they begin to attempt to read in English. The respondents' noted that most teachers were carried away by striving to ensure learners read in their local language. As one teacher rightly put it, *"the concentration is done much on teaching learners how to read in Ibibemba (ZL) or any other local language.* The transition factor is related to the policy factor where the focus was on implementing Zambia's language policy in the education sector. In this vein, the National Literacy Framework (NLF) of 2013 guides as follows:

To support early literacy and later, English literacy instruction, MESVTEE will introduce instruction in a familiar language so as to build learners' arsenal for learning to read in other languages as well as learning content subjects (MESVTEE, 2013, p.5).

One of the teacher respondents indicated that crossing over or transitioning from Ibibemba (ZL) to English was challenging. The assumption by NLF was that learners would just automatically slide into the English mode after breaking through in a familiar language. Unfortunately, this automatic sliding is not happening because there is something which teachers were supposed to do at Grades 2, 3, and 4 which was not happening in the classroom set up in those grades. For example, in some schools, grade 2s had only a single 30-minute period of Oral English per week while in some cases completely no period for Oral English as observed by Masaiti, Mandyata, Zuilkowski, Kasimba, Meki, Chilufya and Katatisha (2022). The last but not the least negative factor noted was parental factor. This had something to do with very unsupportive parents who gave very little or no support to their children or ward regarding reading on its own or task related to reading. This was manifested usually through homework tasks in reading or reading related that were never endorsed by parents or never carried out by the pupil because of the missing parental input at home. These parents also did not even take time

to read with their children or ward. To support and emphasise the issue of parental involvement in their children's reading, the following quotation puts it clearly:

Parents reading interactively to their child, co-reading with their child in which the child may read some words or follow along with a finger to the words and turn pages, or having their child read with or to them has been well-evidenced throughout the literature as a highly effective strategy to improve fluency and overall reading skills for younger children (Wundenber, Wyse, & Chaplain, 2013; Mol & Bus, 2011 as cited by Velchik, 2019, p.18).

The findings of this study are in tandem with Chibamba's (2012) research done on ROC for grades 5 in Lusaka. She noted that factors that seemed to have the greatest impact on the low reading levels among Grade 5 pupils learning under Read On Course (ROC) were family, pupil, teacher and school related. Other factors she cited included lack of ROC materials and classroom libraries, lack of teacher supervision by relevant authorities, teacher and pupil transfers from regions with different language background. Further, teachers and pupils' language background not being in line with language of instruction, new technology, a home environment which did not support continued practice in reading and poor or inadequate training of teachers in literacy teaching. The point of departure with this study finding is that Chibamba's (2012) did not categorise her findings into positive and negative factors. Additionally, this study did not get anything about technology factors in its findings.

In the same vein, the findings of this study are similar to those of Kayabasii (2017) who noted five categories of factors contributing to reading difficulties and these were family factors (wrong attitudes in families, financial problems), individual differences (age), education factors (lack of preschool education and not completing homework), emotional factors (attitudes towards reading), and environmental factors (lack of role models, crowded classrooms). Kayabasii's study group comprised 5 classroom teachers working in different classroom levels and occupational experiences from the provinces of Kastamonu and Çankırı in Turkey. Data was collected using the semi-structured

interviews. The point of departure for this study is that Kayabasii's study even went further to allude to emotional factors which were not highlighted in this study.

6.5. Suggestions to improve reading fluency in English

This section of the chapter discusses an emerging theme that arose. According to the findings of the study, the respondents advanced the following suggestions on how to improve reading fluency in English such as beginning to implement reading in English early, improvisation of local materials and introducing reading time daily on the timetable. Additionally, provide adequate storybooks, teachers to be creative and resourceful, teachers to be committed to their responsibilities, more hard work required of teachers in teaching fluency, incorporation of English and Zambian Languages (ZL) when teaching at the lower grades and use of Group work (see also Nyimbili and Mwanza, 2021; Mashinja and Mwanza, 2021; Mwanza, 2020; Mubita and Mwanza, 2020; Banda and Mwanza, 2020; Mwanza and Bwalya, 2019; Banda and Mwanza, 2020). The respondents further advanced the following suggestions: Build a big library for the school, allow learners to speak English from grade 1 to grade 7, introduce a reading club at school where grade 1 learners could interact with older learners as well as introducing reading competitions.

The suggestions of the respondents are not in tandem with those of Kabayasi who recommended as follows in Turkey:

It is recommended that seminars on reading difficulties could be specifically organised for teachers and parents. Teachers could organise daily reading hours and oral reading not only in the first grade, but also throughout primary school. They could also teach, especially to their students with reading difficulties, self-regulation strategies and give them the motivation to read. In addition, it is recommended that reading specialists be trained and employed for developing the academic skills of students with reading difficulties (Kabayasi, 2017, p.59)

On the Zambian side, the issue of organising parents has been done before under Family Pack while the idea of employing specialists to deal only with struggling learners is a

concept that could be digested further bearing in mind the government is still struggling to employ trained teachers. Suffice it to say, Kabayasi makes very interesting suggestions.

6.6. Summary of chapter six

The chapter discussed the findings in line with the research objectives. The first objective sought to assess Grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. The majority of the grade 5 learners, about 60 percent being only able to read between 0-49 words correct per minute (WCPM) in English is at variance with the average reading levels of Grade 5 learners in South Africa. The South African Grade 5 reading benchmark ranged between 90-100 WCPM in English (Spaull, 2015) and the benchmark range for American Grade 5 learners who stood between 130-150 WCPM in English (Hasbrouck and Tindal, 2017). The findings of this study are further at variance with even the Philippines Grade 3 reading benchmark that was around 60 WCPM (National EGRA report, 2019).

Regarding the second objective which sought to establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District, the summary of the findings of the study were as follows. First, the respondents had basic understanding of reading fluency relating to one or two areas of reading fluency while the comprehension aspect of fluency was neglected. This had implications on how they taught as noted in the teacher respondents' indicating that the performance of their learners was between average and below average. The view of the teachers on performance of their learners is in tandem with the quantitative findings from objective 1.

The third research objective of this study sought to explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. The teacher respondents who were engaged in one-to-one interviews highlighted positive and negative factors that affected grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English which included Time factor and background factor, practice factor, methodology factor and teacher factor. Some of the factors noted in this study are in tandem with the Chinese study done by Liu et al (2022) and the Australian study

(Rintaningrum, 2009) except the Australian study hinges more on the student factors and goes in detail unpacking the same.

The next chapter discusses the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Overview

In this chapter, the researcher presents the summary of the main research findings which answered the research questions and finally recommendations are given. This study sought to assess the reading fluency of grade 5 learners of a particular primary school in Serenje District since it was not known how fluent learners of the selected primary school were in reading and what contextual factors contributed to the reading fluency of the learners. The researcher has also endeavoured to conclude in relation to the research topic with the guidance of the following research questions; What was the grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District? What were the grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District and What were the factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District? The chapter will then present the recommendations and suggestions for further research.

7.2. Conclusion

The study brought out a number of issues concerning the assessment of the reading fluency of grade 5 learners of a selected primary school in Serenje District, contextual factors that contributed to the reading fluency of the learners as well as teacher perspectives on the same in relation to the research objectives. The research was guided by the following objectives: To assess grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District, to establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District as well as explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. The following are the conclusions:

7.2.1. Assess Grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

The first objective sought to assess Grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. The main conclusions of this study were that the grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English levels at the selected primary school in Serenje district were generally below average. This could be attributed to a number of factors outlined in 7.2.3.

7.2.2. Establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

The second objective sought to establish grades 5 teachers' perspectives on learners reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. Regarding objective number 2, the findings of the study noted that respondents had only basic understanding of reading fluency partly because they were not trained to teach reading fluency while doing teacher training. They relied on CPDs and other initiatives like catch-up as well as SITE materials from the previous curriculum to help their learners. Their teaching strategies and materials were biased towards learners learning to read English or striving to breakthrough in English compared to what was expected of learners in their grade level.

7.2.3. Explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District.

The third objective sought to explore factors affecting grade 5 learners' acquisition of reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District. The study concluded that there were positive and negative factors behind the dismal performance of learners are multi-faceted. They needed further understanding and profiling.

It is hoped that the Ministry of Education (MOE) and various stakeholders such as Colleges of Education, Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) as well as the University of Zambia will use the findings of this study as a stepping-stone for other pupil-centred solutions to the literacy dilemma in this country.

7.3 Recommendations

In view of the foregoing findings, the author proposes the following recommendations aimed at addressing and mitigating the identified challenges and weaknesses in the manner reading fluency in English is taught and learnt. In the same vein, the author further recommends measures aimed at taking advantages of the opportunities that remain unexplored:

- 7.3.1 The Ministry of Education, Teacher Education Directorate in association with Curriculum Development Centre should deliberately and explicitly infuse the reading fluency content in the Teacher Education curriculum at University and colleges of education for pre-service teacher trainers.
- 7.3.2 There should be a deliberate daily 1 hour of reading in English for learners from Grade 1 -7. This means certain subjects that are not adding value to learners should be discarded as government reviews the 2013 curriculum.
- 7.3.3 Teachers should seriously devote more time and effort in reading fluency in English. This would give teachers an opportunity to ensure reading fluency is consistently and systematically taught from Grade 1-7.
- 7.3.4 Schools should apply for funds to put up library facilities using the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). This would be a good starting point for inculcating a culture of reading among our young learners.
- 7.3.5 Team teaching and team planning should be encouraged among primary school teachers especially on aspects of reading fluency they are not conversant with. The idea is to enhance exchange of ideas. This would also help teachers to critically evaluate and try out different internationally peer reviewed reading fluency instructional strategies.

It is hoped that the recommendations of the study will be of value to the Ministry of Education and other various stakeholders who may be interested in conducting further research in the area of reading fluency in English. Finally, it is important to note that the teaching and learning of reading fluency in English at the selected primary school in Serenje district still leaves much to be desired unless serious intervention measures are put in place by school management and the district education board office to mitigate the situation.

7.3 Suggestions for future research

Premised on the findings of this study, interested researchers may wish to explore some of the following issues which were beyond the scope of this study:

- 7.3.1 Conduct a detailed analysis of running records and miscues in reading fluency in English to understand the thinking behind learners' performance.
- 7.3.2 Explore pupils' views and perspectives on the acquisition of reading fluency in English.
- 7.3.3 Understand further the multi-faceted interplay of factors affecting the acquisition of reading fluency in English especially for ESL learners.
- 7.3.4 Undertake a study pertaining to Oral English language skills of Grade 5 learners and see how competent they were in spoken English and assess its bearing upon their writing and reading of English.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: UNZA ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

Great East Road Campus | P.O. Box 32379 | Lusaka10101 | Tel: +260-211-290 258/291 777 Fax: (+260)-211-290 258/253 952 | E-mail: director.drgs@unza.zm | Website: www.unza.zm

APPROVAL OF STUDY

IORG No. 0005376

HSSREC IRB No. 00006464

19th July, 2023,

Mr, Kennedy Kasimba,
University of Zambia,
School of Education,
Lusaka.

REF NUMBER: 2023 - JUN- 038

Dear, Mr. Kasimba,

RE: “AN ASSESSMENT OF GRADE 5 LEARNERS’ READING FLUENCY IN ENGLISH AT A SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN SERENJE DISTRICT

Reference is made to your submission of the protocol captioned above. The HSSREC resolved to approve this study and your participation as Principal Investigator for a period of one year.

REVIEW TYPE	ORDINARY REVIEW	APPROVAL NO. HSSREC:-2023-JUN- 038
Approval and Expiry Date	Approval Date: 19 th July, 2023	Expiry Date: 18 th July, 2024
Protocol Version and Date	Version - Nil.	18 th July, 2024

Information Sheet, Consent Forms and Dates	☐ English.	To be provided
Consent form ID and Date	Version - Nil	To be provided
Recruitment Materials	Nil	Nil
Other Study Documents	Questionnaire.	
Number of Participants Approved for Study		

Specific conditions will apply to this approval. As Principal Investigator it is your responsibility to ensure that the contents of this letter are adhered to. If these are not adhered to, the approval may be suspended. Should the study be suspended, study sponsors and other regulatory authorities will be informed.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

- No participant may be involved in any study procedure prior to the study approval or after the expiration date.
- All unanticipated or Serious Adverse Events (SAEs) must be reported to HSSREC within 5 days.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address.
- All protocol deviations must be reported to HSSREC within 5 working days.
- All recruitment materials must be approved by HSSREC prior to being used.
- Principal investigators are responsible for initiating Continuing Review proceedings. HSSREC will only approve a study for a period of 12 months.
- It is the responsibility of the PI to renew his/her ethics approval through a renewal application to HSSREC.
- Where the PI desires to extend the study after expiry of the study period, documents for study extension must be received by HSSREC at least 30 days before the expiry date. This is for the purpose of facilitating the review process. Documents received within 30 days after expiry will be labelled “late submissions” and will incur a penalty fee of

K500.00. No study shall be renewed whose documents are submitted for renewal 30 days after expiry of the certificate.

- Every 6 (six) months a progress report form supplied by The University of Zambia Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee as an IRB must be filled in and submitted to us. There is a penalty of K500.00 for failure to submit the report.
- When closing a project, the PI is responsible for notifying, in writing or using the Research Ethics and Management Online (REMO), both HSSREC and the National Health Research Authority (NHRA) when ethics certification is no longer required for a project.
- In order to close an approved study, a Closing Report must be submitted in writing or through the REMO system. A Closing Report should be filed when data collection has ended and the study team will no longer be using human participants or animals or secondary data or have any direct or indirect contact with the research participants or animals for the study.
- Filing a closing report (rather than just letting your approval lapse) is important as it assists HSSREC in efficiently tracking and reporting on projects. Note that some funding agencies and sponsors require a notice of closure from the IRB which had approved the study and can only be generated after the Closing Report has been filed.
- A reprint of this letter shall be done at a fee.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC by way of an application for an amendment prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address or methodology and methods. Many modifications entail minimal risk adjustments to a protocol and/or consent form and can be made on an Expedited basis (via the IRB Chair). Some examples are: format changes, correcting spelling errors, adding key personnel, minor changes to questionnaires, recruiting and changes, and so forth. Other, more substantive changes, especially those that may alter the risk-benefit ratio, may require Full Board review. In all cases, except where noted above regarding subject safety, any changes to any protocol document or procedure must first be approved by HSSREC before they can be implemented.

Should you have any questions regarding anything indicated in this letter, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at the above indicated address.

On behalf of HSSREC, we would like to wish you all the success as you carry out your study.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. J. I. Ziwa

DR. J. I. Ziwa

**ACTING CHAIRPERSON
THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE - IRB**

CC: Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies
Assistant Director (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies
Assistant Registrar (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies

APPENDIX B: UNZA INTRODUCTION LETTER


THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Telephone: 291381
Telegram: UNZA, LUSAKA
Telex: UNZALU ZA 44370

PO Box 32379
Lusaka, Zambia
Fax: +260-1-292702

=====

Date: 26-07-2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: FIELD WORK FOR MASTERS/ PhD STUDENTS

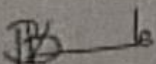
The bearer of this letter Mr/Ms KENNEDY KASIMBA Computer number 2022006752 is a duly registered student at the University of Zambia, School of Education.

He/She is taking a Masters/PhD programme in LITERACY, LANGUAGE & APPLIED LINGUISTICS

The programme has a fieldwork component which he/she has to complete.

We shall greatly appreciate if the necessary assistance is rendered to him/her.

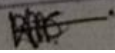
Yours faithfully



Bibian Kalinde (Dr)
ASSISTANT DEAN POSTGRADUATE STUDIES- SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

cc: Dean-Education
Director-DRGS


27 JUL 2023
DISTRICT EDUCATION
STANDARDS OFFICER
P. O. BOX 850100, SERENJE



APPENDIX C: DEBS INTRODUCTION LETTER

*All Correspondence should be addressed to
the District Education Board Secretary
Phone: +260 977 615 221
Email: ha.jacks@yahoo.com*



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

DISTRICT EDUCATION BOARD
P.O BOX 850100
SERENJE

In reply please quote

No.....

27th July, 2023.

TO: All Head teachers
Ibolelo Zone
SERENJE DISTRICT

Dear Sir/ Madam,

**RE: INTRODUCTORY LETTER – MR KENNDY KASIMBA COMPUTER NUMBER
2022006752**

The above subject refers.

Kindly allow the above stated officer who is a Masters Degree student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) to conduct research at your School.

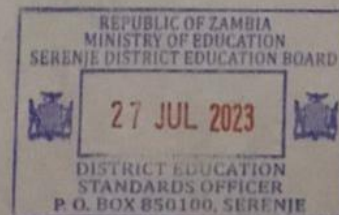
The officer is conducting research on the topic an **Assessment of Grade 5** learners reading fluency in English at a selected school in Serenje District.

Kindly permit him to interact with your teachers and learners as well as access necessary data.

Yours faithfully

Harry Silungwe (Mr.)

 **DISTRICT EDUCATION BOARD SECRETARY
SERENJE DISTRICT**



APPENDIX D: READING FLUENCY PASSAGE EXTRACT

FIRE BECOMES OUR FRIEND

A long time ago, people didn't know how to cook. You need a fire if you want to cook. Today, people can make a fire when they want to cook. We have fires in our houses, and they keep us warm. We use fires for doing lots of things. We can control fire. A big forest fire is still dangerous, because we can't control it. When a house is on fire and we can't control the fire, it is dangerous, too. But, usually, we can control fire. We can usually make a fire when we want to make it. When it is cold, we usually make a fire and it keeps us warm. But it was only by accident that men learned how to control fire.¹²⁶

Long, long ago, men couldn't make fire. They were afraid of fire, when fire came, men usually ran away. They couldn't control it. Long, long ago, men didn't live in villages. They didn't stay in one place for a long time. They travelled from one place to another place looking for food. They used to eat roots and leaves so they looked for a place that had lots of roots and leaves. When there was no more food in that place, they looked for another place to live.²¹⁴

They lived in big river valleys. There was usually water in the valleys, even in the dry season. Wild animals used to drink at the side of the river. When they wanted meat, the men followed the wild animals to the river and killed them. They cut off the wild animals and used them for making clothes. People didn't have any lights, and when it was dark, they lay down and slept. They slept in caves and under trees. Sometimes, the wild animals came and killed them while they were sleeping.³⁰⁵

Adapted from MOE (1971) Zambia Primary Course READER 5

QUESTIONS

1. What are the two uses of fire mentioned in the passage?
2. Why couldn't men make fire long ago?
3. How did men learn to make fire?
4. Why is a big forest fire dangerous?
5. What do you think would have happened if people did not find food as they travelled from one place to another place?

APPENDIX E: PROSODY FLUENCY RUBRIC

STUDENT CODE: _____ **GENDER:** _____ **TOTAL SCORE:** _____

SCORE	1	2	3	4
EXPRESSION & VOLUME	Read words as if simply to get them out. Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language. Tend to read in a quiet voice and flat tone.	Begin to use voice to make text sound like natural language in some areas of the text but not in others. Focus remains largely on pronouncing the words. Still read in a quiet voice and flat tone.	Make text sound like natural language throughout the better part of the passage. Read with intonation. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text.	Read with good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text. Vary expression and volume to match his or her interpretation of the passage.
PHRASING	Read in monotone with little sense of phrase boundaries, frequently read word by word.	Frequently read in two- and three-word phrases, giving the impression of choppy reading, improper stress and intonation fail to mark ends of sentences and clauses.	Read with a mixture of run-ons, mid-sentence pauses for breath and some choppiness, reasonable stress and intonation.	Generally, read with good phrasing, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression.
SMOOTHNESS	Make frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound outs, repetitions and/or multiple attempts.	Experience several „rough spots“ in text where extended pauses or hesitations are more frequent and disruptive.	Occasionally break smooth rhythm because of difficulties with specific words and/or structures	Generally, read smoothly with some breaks, but resolves words and structure difficulties quickly, usually through self-correction.
PACE	Read slowly and laboriously.	Read moderately slow.	Read with an uneven mixture of fast and slow pace.	Consistently read at conversational pace, appropriate rate throughout reading

NOTE: Scores of 10 or more indicates that the student is making good progress in fluency.

Scores below 10 indicate that the student needs additional instruction in fluency.

Source: Adapted from Rasinski (2004) and Low (2014).

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR GRADE 5 TEACHERS

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR GRADE 5 TEACHERS

Research topic: An assessment of Grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District

CONSENT SCRIPT:

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. The information I gather from this interview will be used to learn about the teacher's perception of reading fluency and factors affecting acquisition of reading fluency among Grade 5 learners. You are free to decide whether you will participate, and you may stop at any time. Do you agree to participate while I audio record this interview? Yes/No

Date of interview:

Location (School):

Length of time teaching in primary school:

Male: _____ Female: _____

Highest Professional qualification:

Grades taught:

Interviewer:

Languages spoken proficiently:

Start time: _____ End time: _____

1. What is your understanding of reading fluency?
2. How do you teach reading fluency in English?
3. What are some things that hinder reading fluency in English?
4. What are some things that encourage reading fluency?
5. Have you been taught to teach reading fluency either in college or while at this school?
6. How do you assess reading fluency in English?
7. How do you monitor reading fluency in English among Grade 5 learners?
8. What is the reading level of your Grade 5 learners?
9. What are some of the materials and resources that your school have that promote reading fluency in English?
10. How helpful are the pupils' books that you have in promoting reading fluency in English?
11. What strategies do you use to teach learners reading fluency in English?
12. What challenges have you faced in teaching reading fluency in English?
13. What are your suggestions to make it possible for children to read fluently in English?

14. Do you have any other reflections to share about reading fluency in English in your class?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR UPPER PRIMARY SENIOR TEACHERS

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR UPPER PRIMARY SENIOR TEACHERS

Research topic: An assessment of Grade 5 learners' reading fluency in English at a selected primary school in Serenje District

CONSENT SCRIPT:

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. The information I gather from this interview will be used to learn about the teacher's perception of reading fluency and factors affecting acquisition of reading fluency among Grade 5 learners. You are free to decide whether you will participate, and you may stop at any time. Do you agree to participate while I audio record this interview? Yes/No

Date of interview:

Location (School):

Length of time teaching in primary school:

Length of time as senior teacher:

Male: _____ Female: _____

Highest Professional qualification:

Grades taught:

Interviewer:

Languages spoken proficiently:

Start time:

End time:

1. What is your understanding of reading fluency?
2. How does your school teach reading fluency in English?
3. What are some things that hinder reading fluency in English?
4. What are some things that encourage reading fluency in English?
5. Have you been taught to teach reading fluency either in college or while at this school?
6. How do you assess reading fluency in English at your school?
7. How do you monitor reading fluency in English among Grade 5 learners at your school?
8. What is the reading level of your Grade 5 learners in your school?
9. What are some of the materials and resources that your school have that promote reading fluency in English?
10. How helpful are the pupils' books that you have in promoting reading fluency in English?
11. What strategies do your teachers use to teach learners reading fluency in English?

12. What challenges have your teachers faced in teaching reading fluency in English?
13. What are your suggestions to make it possible for children to read fluently in English in your school?
14. Do you have any other reflections to share about reading fluency in English in your school?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

APPENDIX H: READING RATE AND ACCURACY FORMULA ADMINISTRATION

The following formula will be used to calculate the total number of **Words Correct Per Minute** (WCPM) for each learner under study:

- To calculate **WCPM**, the researcher will **subtract the number of mistakes** made from the **total number of words read** by each learner.
- **WCPM = Total number of words read** by each learner - **the number of mistakes** by each learner
- The WCPM of each learner will recorded on the examiner's copy after each learner has been timed to read for 1 minute
- The examiner will start timing the one-minute time period when the student begins reading
- After one minute, the examiner will say "**stop**" and place a bracket (]) next to the last word read. Then say to the student, "**Thank you for reading.**"
- **NOTE:** Reading accuracy will be calculated by subtracting the number of errors from the number of words read, divide by the number of words read, then multiply by 100.

APPENDIX I: READING FLUENCY ASSESSMENT SHEET

CODE _____ AGE _____ GRADE _____ DATE _____

Explanations:

Researcher will build rapport with each child and help them feel comfortable. Next, say: 'I am going to ask you to read to me. While you read, I will be listening. Do the best you can. When it is time to read, I will show you where to begin reading'. (During this time, the learner's copy should be covered or out of view. Only show the text when it is time for them to begin reading.)

GRADE 5 ENGLISH PASSAGE*

FIRE BECOMES OUR FRIEND

A long time ago, people didn't know how to cook. You need a fire if you want to cook. Today, people can make a fire when they want to cook. We have fires in our houses, and they keep us warm. We use fires for doing lots of things. We can control fire. A big forest fire is still dangerous, because we can't control it. When a house is on fire and we can't control the fire, it is dangerous, too. But, usually, we can control fire. We can usually make a fire when we want to make it. When it is cold, we usually make a fire and it keeps us warm. But it was only by accident that men learned how to control fire.¹²⁶

Long, long ago, men couldn't make fire. They were afraid of fire, when fire came, men usually ran away. They couldn't control it. Long, long ago, men didn't live in villages. They didn't stay in one place for a long time. They travelled from one place to another place looking for food. They used to eat roots and leaves so they looked for a place that had lots of roots and leaves. When there was no more food in that place, they looked for another place to live.²¹⁴

They lived in big river valleys. There was usually water in the valleys, even in the dry season. Wild animals used to drink at the side of the river. When they wanted meat, the men followed the wild animals to the river and killed them. They cut off the wild animals and used them for making clothes. People didn't have any lights, and when it was dark, they lay down and slept. They slept in caves and under trees. Sometimes, the wild animals came and killed them while they were sleeping.³⁰⁵

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SCORE FOR EACH OF THE 5 COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Miscues Analysis	WCPM & Text Level
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mispronunciation: write what learner said 2. Self-correction: SC 3. Insertion: ^ and the word 4. Substitution: Cross out, write the response 5. • ○ Omission: 6. Repetition: R 7. Teacher told word: T 	<p>____WCPM (words read correctly in one minute)</p> <p>____Independent level</p> <p>____Instructional level</p> <p>____Frustration level</p>
Adapted from Transforming Teacher Education (TTE) Module 3, 2023	