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COMMUNICATION AND EARLY GRADE READING IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF CENTRAL DIVISION, KAMPALA, UGANDA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between communication and early grade reading in public primary schools of central division, Kampala, Uganda. Communication is a fundamental goal of early grade reading which enables children develop literacy skills that are essential for effective expression, comprehension, and interaction. To bridge the gaps in literature, a cross-sectional study design with mixed approaches was adopted by the current study. The study population involved 252 teachers in the lower classes, from which a sample of 146 teachers was selected randomly. In addition, 16 key informants were included to provide human judgment on the relationship between the variables. However, purposive sampling was adopted to obtain data from the school heads in the selected government aided primary schools in the study area. The study adopted two main tools of data collection including a self-administered questionnaire and a structured interview guide which were both subjected to quality control tests. From the study findings, it was revealed that both the numerical data and teacher insights showed that communication as a goal supported not only the development of basic reading skills and understanding of written texts but also helped learners become more aware of individual sounds in words. The study concludes that focusing on communication as a core goal is extremely important for improving early grade reading skills. From the study findings, it is recommended that engaging in read-aloud sessions featuring open-ended questions, peer reading, and oral story retelling assists learners in understanding texts and utilizing language for effective communication.

Keywords: Communication, Language, Teaching, Early grade, Reading

Introduction

Communication is a fundamental goal of early grade reading because it enables children to develop literacy skills that are essential for effective expression, comprehension, and interaction. Early reading teaching not only teaches children how to decode text but also nurtures their ability to understand, interpret, and convey meaning in various contexts. Early grade reading supports language acquisition by increasing vocabulary and improving syntax. According to Vygotsky's (1997) sociocultural theory, children's cognitive and linguistic development is enhanced through social interaction and exposure to language in meaningful contexts. Reading provides structured opportunities for children to engage with language, facilitating their ability to communicate effectively. Reading comprehension is essential for effective communication, as it enables children to comprehend spoken and written messages. Pearson (2024) emphasizes that comprehension strategies, such as predicting, questioning, and summarizing, are key to developing reading proficiency and the ability to engage in meaningful discussions. Without comprehension, reading is

a mechanical process rather than a communicative tool. Communicative Language Teaching draws from several theories of language learning, such as Communication Principle Activities involving real communication that promotes learning, and Task Principle which engages in meaningful tasks that facilitate learning. These principles suggest that learners acquire language more effectively when they are actively involved in authentic communicative tasks (Rambe, Zulkarnain & Lubis, 2025).

Communication is the main goal of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), not just a way to learn grammar. Through role-plays, discussions, and problem-solving exercises, CLT schools promote interaction while placing an emphasis on meaning and fluency rather than grammatical accuracy. By encouraging deep cognitive engagement and real-world applicability, CLT-based tasks improved confidence, critical thinking, and recall, according to evidence from Northern Mindanao (Wong & Tian, 2025). In a same vein, Reddit users confirm that communicative fluency frequently surpasses conventional training techniques in terms of preparing pupils for interactions in the real world (Haliwanda, 2021).

Literature Review

Communication goals define broad aims, objectives, and intentions of communication for individuals (Swift & Johnson, 2024) which contains focus on meaning over form. The primary goal is to express and understand ideas, thoughts and concepts. Accuracy in grammar or syntax is secondary to being understood and making oneself understood. Furthermore, it has interaction fluency in which communication is inherently interactive, requiring two or more parties to exchange information, opinions, or ideas. Listening and responding are equally important as speaking. There is also fluency- fluency in communication is valued over grammatical perfection. The ability to keep a conversation flowing and manage misunderstandings is important (Insigne, 2024).

When considering "communication as the goal" in Early Grade Reading (EGR) within primary schools, it means that the primary focus of teaching reading is not just about decoding words on a page, but also about developing the ability to understand and express ideas through language, effectively communicating both verbally and in written form, building upon a strong foundation of spoken for literacy language skills as the basis development (Patrick, 2024). Spoken language is fundamental because children's existing conversational skills and vocabulary are leveraged as the starting point for learning to read, ensuring a smooth transition from spoken language to written text. Likewise, comprehension is key since emphasis is placed on understanding the meaning behind the words read, not just sounding them out, allowing pupils to actively engage with the text and communicate their thoughts (Sadler-Smith & Akstinaite, 2022).

Therefore, active engagement in classroom activities should encourage discussion, retelling stories, asking questions, and sharing opinions, promoting a dynamic communication environment. There should be vocabulary building, thus, deliberately teaching new vocabulary words and their context is crucial for comprehension and effective communication. Storytelling and narrative development involve utilizing stories to develop narrative skills, allowing pupils to understand story structure and express themselves through oral retelling.

EGR practices can support communication as the goal by shared reading -teachers read aloud with pupils, facilitating discussion about the story, characters, and key ideas. Through interactive read-aloud by including questions, predictions, and summarizing to actively engage pupils with the text (Cohen, et al. 2024). By dramatic play acting out stories or scenes from books to enhance understanding and expression. Partner reading where pupils take turns reading aloud and

discussing the text with a partner, promoting collaborative communication. Similarly, by journaling and writing activities, providing chances to write about their thoughts and experiences, developing written communication skills.

The benefits of focusing on communication in EGR include stronger reading comprehension. Thus, pupils who can actively engage with text and understand its meaning are more likely to become proficient readers. There are improved oral language skills by enhanced vocabulary and ability to express ideas clearly through speech. Increased confidence in literacy where pupils feel more comfortable communicating their understanding of text when reading is seen to express themselves (Murphy, et al. 2018).

Additionally, Krashen posited that acquisition is the primary driver of language proficiency, whereas learning serves as a monitor or editor of language use (Tuninetti & Tokowicz, 2018). Classroom Activities in CLT operationalize these theories. CLT incorporates various classroom activities designed to engage learners in authentic communication. These activities require learners to use language to share information, solve problems, or complete specific functions. Such as comparing pictures to identify differences, sequencing events, or following and giving instructions. Social interaction activities involve learners in role-plays, simulations, or debates that mirror real-life social interactions, thereby enhancing their ability to use language appropriately in different contexts (Köpf, et al. 2023).

While CLT has been influential, it has faced critiques over emphasis on Fluency. Some scholars argue that focusing too much on fluency may lead to insufficient attention to grammatical accuracy. The effectiveness of CLT can be influenced by cultural contexts where traditional, teacher-centered methods are dominant. Assessment Challenges, evaluating communicative competence requires more nuanced assessment tools beyond standard tests of grammatical knowledge (Șișianu & Pușcașu, 2024). Despite these challenges, CLT remains a cornerstone in language education, continually adapting to incorporate insights from ongoing research in linguistics and pedagogy.

Communication is not only about understanding but also about expressing thoughts clearly. Reading and writing are interconnected, and early reading experiences contribute to writing proficiency (Wyse, et al. 2025). Pupils who develop strong reading skills are more likely to communicate effectively through written language, an essential aspect of literacy development. Reading raises communication by encouraging discussion, storytelling, and collaborative learning. According to Akakpo & Ezenwa (2025), early literacy experiences, such as shared reading and classroom discussions, play a crucial role in developing pupil's oral language skills, which are foundational for academic success and social interaction. Communication, therefore, is a central goal of early grade reading because it equips learners with the skills needed to comprehend, express, and engage in meaningful interactions. Effective reading instruction should go beyond decoding to include comprehension, discussion, writing, and critical engagement with texts, ensuring that literacy serves as a tool for communication and lifelong learning.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Chomsky's (2012) intrinsic theory of language acquisition, which contends that the ability to learn and utilize languages is a natural function of human brain structure. According to Chomsky, the principles governing language acquisition are intrinsic (inborn) and naturally become stronger as people mature. All languages share formal universals and principles, according to Chomsky's theory of universal grammar, with choices and boundaries for grammatical

and feature variance among languages. This theory correlates with Communicative Language Teaching principles which are critical in early grade reading.

The assumptions of Chomsky's theory can be highlighted. Chomsky argued that all languages encompass similar elements, such as the word classes of nouns, verbs, and adjectives (Baxter, 2023). Noam Chomsky's innate theory of language acquisition, often referred to as the theory of Universal Grammar (UG), posits that humans are born with an inherent capacity for language. This theory suggests that the ability to acquire language is hard-wired into the brain, enabling children to rapidly and efficiently learn complex linguistic systems (Chen, 2025).

Methodology

Research Design

A research design, according to Creswell & Plano Clark (2023), is "the plan, structure, and strategy of investigation used to obtain evidence on a particular research question or problem." It is a methodical plan that outlines the methods and organization of the study to be carried out to answer the research question. This study used a cross-sectional research design in which data is collected from many different individuals at a single point in time (Thomas & Thomas, 2021). In cross-sectional research, you observe the variables without influencing them. It therefore involved collecting data from a population or a representative subset at a single point in time, by identifying the population, determining the target population for the study, selecting a sample, developing data collection methods, collecting and analyzing data. The study collected and analyzed primary and secondary data using both qualitative and quantitative methods because they are complementary. While quantitative approaches were helpful for producing quantitative data, qualitative approaches were used to assist in the generation of non-numerical data. To learn more about respondents' perspectives on early grade reading and communicative language instruction, qualitative data was gathered.

Research Approach

This research study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative approach is a process of collecting and analyzing numerical data which covers patterns and averages, test relationships and generalization using questionnaires. Qualitative approach is an approach that gathers and analyzes no numerical data/descriptive using oral interviews and focus group discussions

Population Size

There are twelve (12) government primary schools in Central Division, Kampala with a head teacher and a director of studies for each. The division also has four (04) education supervisors as well as 252 teachers of P1, P2 and P3, implying that when added to 12 head teachers and 12 directors of studies, the study's target population equated to 280.

Sample Size

Sekaran, and Bougie (2016) define a sample size as the number of observations or individuals included in a study or experiment. It is a fundamental component of research design, as it affects the precision and reliability of the study's findings. Rwegoshora (2006) defined sample size as a part of population which is studied in order to make conclusions about the whole population. The selected sample size is normally obtained from the target population. Using Krejcie and Morgan table, a population of 280 has the sample size of 162.

Table 1: Population, Sample Size, Sampling Techniques and Instruments

Respondent category	Target population	Sample size	Sampling technique	Data collection instrument
Education officials	4	2	Purposive	Interview guide
Head teachers	12	7	Purposive	
Director of studies	12	7	Purposive	
Teachers	252	146	Simple random	
Total	280	162		Questionnaire

Source: DEO Records (2024) for population, Krejcie and Morgan table of sample size for sample determination, and the Researcher (2025) for Sampling Techniques and Instruments.

For the study sample, the following formula was adopted

$$\frac{\text{Population of teachers (P1, P2, P3) in the selected school}}{\text{Total population of P1, P2, P3 teachers in the schools}}$$

* Sample size determined by Krejcie and Morgan Table

Total population of P1, P2, P3 teachers = 252

Therefore, a total of 146 teachers and 16 key informants (head teachers, director of studies, education officials) were selected to participate in the study. This indicates that a sample of 146 teachers was selected from 252 and these were the study's primary respondents. The samples from the other categories were obtained using non-probability techniques and in this case, purposive sampling technique was most appropriate for selecting 2 out of 4 education officials, 7 out of 12 head teachers as well as 7 out of the 12 directors of studies.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used for KCCA education supervisor, and census sampling was used for school administrators whilst Krejcie and Morgan table as cited by Amin (2005) was used for teachers to fill questionnaires and those whose lessons were observed. While using simple random sampling technique, every member of the available population was allocated a number and then those numbers were placed in a container, after, the subjects were requested to pick numbers at random. The subjects corresponding to the numbers picked were included in the sample.

Data Collection Methods

Survey method

The primary data was collected using Questionnaire method. It was used to collect data from teachers. Self-administered questionnaires were adopted because they are cost effective in terms of time and money and also can be relied upon for collecting large amounts of unbiased data. They also enabled the researcher to code the information easily for subsequent analysis thereby reducing the error gap

Interview method

Focus group discussion was used to get data from KCCA officials, and the same method was used on school administrators. This method was used in order to obtain human judgement on the relationship between the variables as provided for by the quantitative analyses.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher used the following data collection instruments:

Questionnaire

This is a document that includes a set of questions that require responses Closed ended questions were used to obtain responses because as they are easier to administer because each item is

followed by alternative answers. The questionnaire were structured under sections where section A had the background information; section B included the independent variable and section C the dependent variable to collect quantitative data. It was adopted to obtain data from the teachers in the selected schools.

Interview guide

This tool was adopted to obtain information from the head teachers so as to gain a human judgment about how the study variables are related.

Data Quality Control

Instruments were pretested before being administered to find out whether they are valid and reliable in the neighbouring division with similar characteristics. A pretest was carried out on four teachers outside the sample in randomly selected schools in Lubaga Division which neighbors Central division with almost similar situations.

Validity

Validity refers to the credibility or believability of the research. The current study used content validity measures of the research instruments. Content validity addresses the match between test questions and the content or subject area they are intended to assess. In the measurement of validity issues such as relevance of the data collection instruments, clarity, simplicity and ambiguity were given utmost consideration. The teachers provided their ratings per question in the questionnaire and the ratings computed as in the following formula to obtain the content validity index.

$$CVI = \left(\frac{n_e - \left(\frac{N}{2}\right)}{\left(\frac{N}{2}\right)} \right)$$

Where n_e is the number of raters who accepted that the tool is essential and N the total number of raters.

Table 2. Results of Validity

Variables	No. of Experts	Validity Index Scores
Communicative language teaching	4	0.75
Early grade reading	4	0.90
Overall CVI		0.825

A CVI of 0.825 (Rodrigues et al., 2017) was deemed relevant for this study

Reliability

Reliability refers to the repeatability of findings. Using statistical procedures on the question specific ratings provided from several teachers purposively selected as in sub section 3.6.1 above, a Cronbach's coefficient of 0.806 (Rodrigues et al., 2017) deemed the questionnaire reliable for the study.

Table 3. Results of Reliability

Variables	No. of Experts	Reliability Scores
Communicative language teaching	4	0.844
Early grade reading	4	0.768
Overall CVI		0.806

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher sensitized and train research assistants that helped her during data gathering process. This was done to enable the process be fast and work within the required time. A questionnaire was administered by the researcher and research assistants to respective respondents because of its convenience for the researcher. In each school the researcher/research assistant

sampled the teachers meant to fill the questionnaire, train them on how to fill it and then give them time. After filling them the researcher/research assistants collected the filled questionnaires.

Other respondents, KCCA Education supervisors were interviewed orally and school administrators were treated to focus group discussions to collect qualitative data. The researcher used an oral interview guide to lead the focus group discussion and her phone to record with permission from the responds.

The researcher observed classroom lessons in the sampled schools on appointment with the selected teachers. Data was collected using a classroom observation kit by sitting behind a lesson. The researcher reviewed lesson plans, schemes of work and assessment records of each teacher whose lesson was observed to pick relevant information. The data was sorted and coded, analyzed, interpreted and presented.

Data Analysis procedure

Simple descriptive analysis (frequency tables, measures of central tendency) was used to analyze it and conclusions were based on the proportions and the size of the statistics. Secondly, data was entered in the SPSS and Pearson's correlation was adopted to assess the relationships between the variables and conclusions were based on comparing the p values with the set significance level (5%). Chi square cross tables (see table 5) were adopted to establish whether there exists significant differences in response by the stated demographic characteristics. Lastly, content analysis was generated from the qualitative data collected by means of a structured interview guide. The following procedure was adopted:

The analysis of qualitative data begun with the preparation of data, involving transcription of interviews, organizing field notes, and reading through the content carefully for good comprehension. The researcher then moved on to coding, marking significant words, phrases, or sentences to indicate their significance. The codes were then grouped into categories and further elaborated into broader themes that connect with the research objectives. The researcher then proceeded to interpret the themes, connecting them to theory and relevant literature so as to determine their meaning within the study context. In promoting rigor, the findings were confirmed through measures such as triangulation, member checking, and peer review. The researcher ultimately reported the findings thematically, using direct quotations from the participants to highlight important points and to show how the themes address the research questions

Ethical Considerations

This research process followed sound ethical principles that include voluntarism by ensuring that respondents are not coerced or manipulated into participating, objectivity to avoid any attempt to bias results, confidentiality by assuring respondents their anonymity and respect of all the respondents involved. Respect covered the opinion of the respondents and whenever they felt uncomfortable to continue the researcher probed appropriately. The questioning style, especially for very personal and sensitive questions, was professionally handled. Informed consent was obtained from respondents prior to gathering data by clearly explaining to them the purpose of the study and assuring them of confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any point. To ensure maximum confidentiality, especially of the teachers during classroom observation, pseudonyms (for identity) was used. Prior to this, the researchers sought the transmittal letter from the School of Postgraduate Studies of Kampala International University. The letter was presented to the relevant authorities asking for permission in order to enable the researcher collect the data from Central Division, Kampala, KCCA headquarters.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Descriptive Analysis of responses on Communication as a goal

The study's component of communicative language teaching was communication as a goal, and the participant responses are presented in the table below.

Table 4. Descriptive Analysis of responses on Communication as a goal

		Response					Mean	SD
		SD	D	NS	A	SA		
1. I focus on meaning over form while teaching language	F	6	16	10	64	39	3.84	1.11
	%	4.4	11.9	7.4	47.4	28.9		
2. I emphasize Interaction fluency when teaching language	F	3	12	8	75	37	3.97	0.95
	%	2.2	8.9	5.9	55.6	27.4		
3. As a language teacher I emphasize fluency while teaching	F	11	27	7	66	24	3.48	1.23
	%	8.1	20.0	5.2	48.9	17.8		
4. My pupils are encouraged to express their ideas in English (or the target language).	F	8	17	6	67	37	3.80	1.15
	%	5.9	12.6	4.4	49.6	27.4		
5. I consider learners' collaboration while teaching language	F	4	18	11	75	27	3.76	1.02
	%	3.0	13.3	8.1	55.6	20.0		
							3.77	1.092

Source: Field Data (2025)

From table 4, the study results indicate that 6 (4.4%) strongly disagreed that they focused on meaning over form while teaching language, 16 (11.9%) disagreed, 10 (7.4%) were not sure, 64 (47.4%) agreed that they focused on meaning over form while teaching language while 39 (28.9%) strongly agreed. The study frequencies and percentages are supported by a mean value of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 1.11 indicating that though dispersed, most of the participants agreed that they focus on meaning over form while teaching language, an implication that meaning is emphasized by the teachers in government aided primary schools while teaching language lessons.

In addition, the study results indicate that 3 (2.2%) strongly disagreed that they emphasize interaction fluency when teaching language, 12 (8.9%) disagreed, 8 (5.9%) were not sure, 75 (55.6%) agreed that they emphasize interaction fluency when teaching language while 37 (27.4%) strongly agreed. The study frequencies and percentages are supported by a mean value of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 0.95 indicating that though dispersed, most of the participants agreed that emphasize interaction fluency when teaching language, an implication that interaction fluency is emphasized by the teachers in government aided primary schools while teaching language lessons.

Third, the study results indicate that 11(8.1%) strongly disagreed that they emphasize Fluency while teaching, 27(20%) disagreed, 7(5.2%) were not sure, 66(48.9%) agreed that they emphasize fluency when teaching language while 24(17.8%) strongly agreed. The study frequencies and percentages are supported by a mean value of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 1.23 indicating that though dispersed, most of the participants agreed that they emphasize fluency when teaching language, an implication that fluency is emphasized by the teachers in government aided primary schools while teaching language lessons.

The study results also indicate that 8 (5.9%) strongly disagreed that their pupils are encouraged to express their ideas in English (or the target language), 17 (12.6%) disagreed, 6 (4.4%) were not sure, 67(49.6%) agreed that their pupils are encouraged to express their ideas in English (or the target language) while 37(27.4%) strongly agreed. The study frequencies and percentages are supported by a mean value of 3.80 and a standard deviation of 1.15 indicating that though dispersed, a majority of

the participants agreed that their pupils are encouraged to express their ideas in English (or the target language), an implication that expression of ideas by pupils is emphasized by the teachers in government aided primary schools while teaching language lessons.

Lastly, the study results indicate that 4(3.0%) strongly disagreed that they consider learners' collaboration while teaching language, 18(13.3%) disagreed, 11(8.1%) were not sure, 75(55.6%) agreed that they consider learners' collaboration while teaching language while 27(20%) strongly agreed. The study frequencies and percentages are supported by a mean value of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 1.02 indicating that though dispersed, a majority of the participants agreed that they consider learners' collaboration while teaching language, an implication that learners' collaboration is emphasized by the teachers in government aided primary schools while teaching language lessons.

With an average response of 3.77 and a standard deviation of 1.092, the study reveals that there were moderate responses regarding the participants views about emphasis of communication as a goal in the selected government aided primary schools in Kampala Central Division. These results are echoed by one of the key informants who noted that:

“...our objective is to assist learners in developing into effective, self-assured communicators... entails setting up classrooms where emphasis is placed on speaking, listening, negotiating meaning, and comprehending many points of view... prioritizing communication over accuracy and fluency over memorization....” Interview with KII2

The excerpt leads to the fact that with communication as a goal, the learners are empowered when they can voice their opinions, pose inquiries, and participate in dialogue in any setting, be it business, school, or daily life. The education administrator's narrative leads to a conclusion that emphasizing communication as a goal improves the effectiveness of CLT programs and ultimately EGR.

Correlation analysis

To establish the relationship between the variables, the study adopts correlation analysis and the results are presented in the tables below.

Table 5. Relationship between Communication as a goal and EGR

		Communication as a goal
Communication as a goal	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	135
Early Grade Reading	Pearson Correlation	.430**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	135
Phonemic Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.257**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	135
Phonics	Pearson Correlation	.391**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	135
Reading Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	.436**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	135

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The statistics ($r = 0.430$; $p < 0.05$) indicate that there exists a moderate and significant relationship between communication as a goal and early grade reading in government aided primary schools in Kampala Central Division. This is also true for the relationship between communication as a goal and phonics ($r = 0.391$; $p < 0.05$) as well as the relationship between communication as a goal and reading comprehension ($r = 0.436$; $p < 0.05$) yet the relationship between communication as a tool and phonemic awareness is only weak ($r = 0.257$; $p < 0.05$). The positive, significant and moderate relationships between communication as a goal and EGR are explained by a statement from the Key informant interviews as in the narrative below;

“... effective reading instruction requires focused attention on decoding, phonics, and print awareness... skills that may not be fully developed through communication-focused approaches alone...” Interview with KII6

These findings suggest that learners become more engaged and improve their comprehension of texts when they are encouraged to use language in meaningful ways to communicate, ask questions, and express ideas. This has a favorable and substantial impact on reading results. However, the impact of communication exercises may be restricted if they are not properly included in an organized reading curriculum.

Therefore, encouraging communication helps EGR, but it is insufficient on its own to produce significant reading increases. The statistics ($r = 0.430$; $p < 0.05$) indicate that there exists a moderate and significant relationship between communication as a goal and early grade reading in government aided primary schools in Kampala Central Division and hence provides an answer to the study's second research question. However, though significant, the relationship between communication as a goal was moderate for phonics ($r = 0.391$; $p < 0.05$) and reading comprehension ($r = 0.436$; $p < 0.05$) yet weak for phonemic awareness ($r = 0.257$; $p < 0.05$). For further inferences, the study rejects the null hypothesis of an insignificant relationship between communication as a goal and EGR in the selected government aided primary schools in Kampala Central Division. Based on the qualitative data, it was revealed that communication as a goal is positively related to EGR in these schools because learners become more engaged and improve their comprehension of texts when they are encouraged to use language in meaningful ways to communicate, ask questions, and express ideas.

Discussion of Findings

The study's findings offer valuable insights into literacy instruction, demonstrating a moderate and statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.430$; $p < 0.05$) between early grade reading (EGR) and communication as a goal in government-aided primary schools in Kampala Central Division. These results provide credence to the idea that encouraging communication in the classroom has a beneficial impact on reading development. This is consistent with the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1997), which highlights the role that linguistic contact plays in cognitive development, including literacy. In addition to developing oral language, students who are encouraged to share their thoughts, pose inquiries, and participate in discussions also improve their vocabulary and comprehension, two essential skills for successful reading.

The results of the present investigation align with those of regional studies as well. For instance, Piper & Zuilkowski (2016) showed in Kenya that reading outcomes, particularly in vocabulary and comprehension, significantly improved in classroom programs that prioritized communicative techniques, in which students actively participated in spoken language exercises. Similarly, current

findings can be interpreted in the context of Vygotsky sociocultural cognitive development theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural context in promoting cognitive development. Vygotsky's theory argues that learning takes place through collaboration and social interaction with more knowledgeable others, such as teachers and peers (Porta et al., 2022).

The current study's moderate association strength, however, indicates that strong early grade reading outcomes require more than just communication. This result somewhat deviates from research conducted in environments with greater resources, like that conducted by Kuche et al (2024) which found a stronger correlation between communication-based instruction and reading proficiency. This could be because of the availability of complementary resources like phonics instruction, extensive libraries, and qualified teachers. On the other hand, it is possible that many government-aided school classrooms in Kampala lack the tools, supplies, or teacher expertise necessary to properly execute integrated reading and communication education. This may help to explain why, despite its significance, the effect is still moderate rather than strong.

Therefore, the statistics ($r = 0.430$; $p < 0.05$) indicate that there exists a moderate and significant relationship between communication as a goal and early grade reading in government aided primary schools in Kampala Central Division and hence provides an answer to the study's second research question. However, though significant, the relationship between communication as a goal was moderate for phonics ($r = 0.391$; $p < 0.05$) and reading comprehension ($r = 0.436$; $p < 0.05$) yet weak for phonemic awareness ($r = 0.257$; $p < 0.05$). For further inferences, the study rejects the null hypothesis of an insignificant relationship between communication as a goal and EGR in the selected government aided primary schools in Kampala Central Division. Based on the qualitative data, it was revealed that communication as a goal is positively related with EGR in these schools because learners become more engaged and improve their comprehension of texts when they are encouraged to use language in meaningful ways to communicate, ask questions, and express ideas.

Conclusion

The study concluded that focusing on communication as a core goal is extremely important for improving early reading skills in government-aided primary schools in the Central Division of KCCA. Teachers who understood Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to enhance communication made sure their learners showed strong abilities in understanding what they read, could recognize and link letter sounds, and were also able to work with and change sounds in simple ways. From the study findings, both the numerical data and teacher insights showed that communication as a goal supported not only the development of basic reading skills and understanding of written texts but also helped learners become more aware of individual sounds in words, although to a lesser extent. Therefore, by emphasizing communication, encouraging learners to share and understand messages, teachers helped build confidence, fluency, and real-world language use.

Recommendation

As a recommendation for improvements, schools can enhance early grade reading by prioritizing communication as a key objective, guaranteeing that reading instruction focuses not only on decoding words but also on comprehending and conveying meaning. This includes incorporating activities that encourage interactive and meaningful language utilization, like storytelling, classroom discussions, drama, role-playing, and Q&A sessions. Teachers foster comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills by motivating students to discuss their readings, express their opinions, and pay attention to others. Engaging in read-aloud sessions featuring open-ended questions, peer reading, and oral story retelling assists learners in understanding texts and utilizing language for effective communication. When communication takes precedence, reading transforms into a means

for real-life interaction, and learners are more inclined to participate actively, enhance fluency, and cultivate confidence in both verbal and written expression.

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