



Original Article

## Teaching of Language and Pre-Primary School Children's Reading Readiness in Vihiga County, Kenya

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### Date Published: ABSTRACT

03 Jun 2022 This article presents findings from a study that was carried out in Hamisi Sub-County in Vihiga County, Kenya. The goal of the study was to look at language

**Keywords:** instruction and pre-primary school children's reading readiness. The study was guided by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The study sample was 72 schools selected from a total of 238 to represent 30% of the school population. The schools were sampled using stratified random sampling to ensure that each division was represented by at least 18 out of the 72 schools sampled. Purposeful sampling was used to identify two language teachers from each pre-primary school for the study. One class was observed during a language session and five children were assessed in reading using the reading readiness assessment checklist in 30% of the sampled schools. On the study questions, head teachers and managers from the sampled schools were interviewed. Questionnaires, an interview schedule, a reading readiness checklist, and an observation schedule were used to collect data. Pilot research was conducted by gathering data from the principals and teachers of seven schools in Vihiga Sub County. Test re-test was used to establish whether the tools were reliable. The Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.9 from Cronbach's convinced the researchers that the instruments were reliable. Data were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The study established that teaching using the first language encourages the acquisition of a second language (85 percent). As a result, first language development must be nourished, nurtured, and improved in order to facilitate English learning, which has a significant impact on reading readiness. The study further established that the learners' social environment, educational environment, and family economic situation all had a significant impact on their language learning and eventual reading readiness (47 percent). The study therefore, concluded that the language environment has the

*Pre-Primary School,  
Reading Readiness,  
Teaching Resources,  
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greatest impact on pre-primary school children's reading readiness. Parents are encouraged to enrol their children in pre-primary schools in order to get the benefits of the first level of education.

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## INTRODUCTION

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

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

readiness for their citizens, they have put in place sufficient mechanisms in the learners' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to monitor their citizens' literacy levels.

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

Enrolment of children by parents in urban pre-primary schools where English is the exclusive language of learning and teaching (LoLT) has increased in South Africa in the last 10 years (Du Plessis & Naudé, 2008). These parents rely on instructors to teach English to their children. The abrupt switch from the student's first language (L1) to English, on at pre-primary schools play a critical influence in their students' acquisition of the English language. Teachers spend the most of their time with the students. The development of children's English as a Language of Learning and Teaching

(ELoLT) is influenced by their experiences under the mentorship of teachers. In instances where the teachers of language are not well grounded in the language, then automatically the child's language acquisition stands to be affected negatively. According to Mathews & Ewen, (2010), South African schools grew more culturally integrated in 1990s, becoming multilingual with English as the primary language (L1). Teachers in pre-primary schools were required to teach in English, despite the fact that some pupils could not understand the language. Pre-primary school teachers in South Africa were expected to be more knowledgeable, have a variety of teaching styles and be conversant with theory, pedagogy, and curricular requirements. The teachers were required to have a multilingual and socio-cultural development background (Viljoen & Molefe, 2008). As a result, these teachers faced a significant problem in multilingual classrooms as they were expected to create a classroom environment that caters for each learner's individual needs. This data suggests that learning a second language in South Africa is difficult.

These challenges are replicated in the East Africa countries. For instance, in Uganda, nationwide examinations of learning report revealed that 46% of class 3 students and 50% of class 6 students do not achieve the required literacy competency (Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, 2012). Further studies in the region by the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality in Africa, revealed that 1% of learners in Malawi and 2% of learners in Zambia achieve the required competences by the end of class 6 (OECD, 2009). This is an indication that literacy levels among young learners in the East Africa countries is still low.

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

According to Uwezo Report (2014), only 14% of grade 3 children in Hamisi Sub-County could read a grade 2 English story, while 21% could read a grade 2 Kiswahili story, compared to 17% in English and 22% in Kiswahili in Emuhaya Sub-County. This was lower than the national average of 32%. This study therefore sought to examine the teaching of language and its impact on the reading readiness of pre-primary school learners in Hamisi Sub County, Vihiga County.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This article is anchored on the Sociocultural Theory by Vygotsky. In this theory, Vygotsky argues that, the way a child interacts with his or her environment and social agents has a big impact on his or her language development (Shabani, 2010). The child's mental growth is proportional to the quality of interaction. When a child is exposed to difficult tasks with the assistance of a more experienced significant other, cognitive development occurs. The more experienced peer or adult takes the lead in managing the difficult work at first, but the child is eventually left to tackle it on his or her own.

The difference between what a child can do with the help of a more experienced colleague or adult and what he or she can do on his or her own is known as the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

This difference, according to Vygotsky, is the child's genuine growth. When a child's contact and socializing with the environment and other people is enhanced, the Zone of Proximal Development grows to its full potential. In this study, Vygotsky's theory is relevant since it focuses on the variables of optimal teaching strategies for growing language reading readiness skills. Teaching methods can be enhanced to fit the needs of second-language learners when establishing reading readiness using this notion. According to Vygotsky's theory, both social and environmental elements influence teaching strategies for building reading readiness.

This theory was relevant in this study for the teachers to determine the learner's zone of proximal development in order to effectively maximize reading readiness in pre-school children. The theory guided teachers in the choice of the teaching strategies, resources and organization of the learning environment which have an impact on how

learners acquire language. After reviewing enough literature on the effectiveness of language teaching, the current study looked into this aspect of the theory by looking at the impact of the school and home environment. These are the sources that feed the child's linguistic skills or serve as a bank for future language use. Traditional teaching approaches are discouraged, but communication proficiency is emphasized. Other cognitive abilities and performance will be merged as language competence improves.

### **Environmental Factors that Influence Reading Readiness**

Reading is an important part of children's development and language learning; this is according to Wambiri and Ndani (2015). Language is the conduit via which a child learns all other subjects and, as a result, it determines whether or not he or she succeeds in school. Children learn to read through their parents and other caregivers at a young age. Parental involvement in a child's literacy development has been shown to have a major impact on the child's reading outcomes in the future. Parental encouragement of children's reading improves their morale, which in turn improves their academic success. In their study, Wambiri and Ndani (2015) compared parental engagement, education level, role, income, and children's literacy development. The finding revealed a favourable association between the variables. The most important predictor of reading success was found to be parental involvement in children's reading. Parental involvement should be emphasized in measures to promote reading readiness. These metrics should clearly describe the role of parents in the linguistic development of their children. Wambiri and Ndani's study did not explore further other key factors most of which may be attributed to successful acquisition of reading readiness skills.

Another study was conducted by Bunyamin (2019) to examine the factors that influence children's reading readiness before formal schooling. The study established that reading begins at the home. The study further established that a lot of factors influence the development of reading skills in young children. Family history, availability of both print and non-print materials, peer influence, and

the learning environment were among the elements shown to have a significant impact on reading.

Apart from the child's inherent characteristics, family support has been discovered to be critical in the development of children's linguistic skills. The importance of a family's economic situation in boosting children's language development has been highlighted in several studies (Hoff, 2003; Noble et al., 2006; Noble et al., 2007; Rowe & Goldin Meadow, 2009). According to the findings of these studies, children from wealthy families develop reading abilities earlier before entering formal schooling than children from low-income families. Other studies have been carried out to determine the impact of family elements such as the literacy environment at home (Deng et al., 2015; Levy et al., 2006; Manolitsis et al., 2011; Shu et al., 2002, Senechal, 2006). The home literacy model explains the function of the home literacy environment in the development of reading skills (Manolitsis et al., 2011; Senechal, 2006). Early literacy abilities are developed by parents reading to their children, while language skills are acquired through exposure to books and other print materials, according to the home literacy model.

The importance of a conducive environment in literacy development cannot be ignored, however, a hostile environment is deterrent to literacy development. It is on this basis that, Dilnot et al. (2017) carried out a study to look into the impact of children's proximity to dangers on reading readiness, behaviour, and attention in children at risk of reading difficulties. The study established that children from families with a history of dyslexia and children with pre-primary school language challenges had higher health and environmental problems than children from households with no history of dyslexia. The study also revealed that the challenges associated with family dyslexia risk were tough to overcome. Early literacy was predicted by the child's health and the home literacy environment, whereas children's concentration and behaviour were determined by the home literacy environment and household characteristics. Once other hazards were adjusted, family dyslexia risk did not predict early literacy, suggesting that it is best understood as indicating nature-nurture correlations.

The findings of a study conducted by Sellas et al., (2018) among Spanish and Peruvian children to examine if there were significant differences in the acquisition of reading readiness skills between the two groups revealed that there were significant differences in the level of language acquisition between the two groups of children. The nation of origin was established to be the most important determinant in a regression study, accounting for a higher percentage of variance than other variables. These findings are consistent with those of other studies involving migratory populations. According to Sellas et al., (2018), early reading disparities can be traced back to cognitive, social, and linguistic variables.

To dig deeper into the gender issue raised by Sellas et al. (2018), Papadimitriou and Filippou (2015) conducted a study on the effects of gender and age on the development of children's reading skills. The study's findings demonstrated that chronological age had a substantial impact on reading task performance; older children did better than younger children in reading tasks such as fluency, comprehension, and overall reading performance. Gender was not however a major factor in reading readiness.

To understand better the issue of pre-primary school reading readiness, Su et al. (2016) conducted a study to establish the impact of pre-primary school early language skills development and beginning family contributions on children's reading skills development at the end of the primary school cycle. Early family contributions and early language skill development in early life were found to account for a considerable percentage of literacy skills in Chinese children. Variations in language development were linked to household economic power and parent-child language coaching. There was also a different pattern of prognosis among varied literacy skills. Furthermore, route analyses revealed that unique language and intellectual skills at pre-primary school arbitrated the relationship between prior household characteristics and literacy skills at the age of eleven.

In a study to determine factors that influence reading readiness of children in a reception class, Duplessis (2016) established that, learner maturation levels, learner motivation to learn,

learner awareness of sounds, learner activity levels, parental support, family economic situation, frequency of reading to learners, and developmental levels of the learner are all elements that influence reading readiness. This means that reading readiness is influenced by more than one environmental factor.

On the other hand, Dawkins (2017) conducted a study to determine the causes of low reading achievement among students. Parental involvement and a positive home environment were identified as important enhancers of reading achievement among students, according to the research. The findings of Dawkins' research led to the creation of a family literacy program. This program provided parents with the knowledge, skills, and approaches they need to help their children acquire reading skills. In addition, the parents were given literacy tools. Parental involvement in their children's reading has a favourable impact on their literacy skills development and generates positive societal change. This study further proves that parental engagement is key in development of early literacy among young children.

Development of early literacy fosters acquisition of language skills necessary for future reading. To understand this, Gumede (2018) set out to establish reading comprehension and elements determining student reading proficiency in order to acquire a better knowledge of the factors impacting reading proficiency. The reading comprehension ability of secondary school pupils in public schools in the study area was found to be lower than that of primary school students in neighbouring nations. The home environment, motivation levels, and family economic status were found to be important determinants influencing reading achievement. In writing activities, students in private schools outperformed their peers in public schools. From Gumede's study, it is a clear indication that the environment in which the learner lives plays a major role in language development.

The family's socio-economic background dictates the success of a child in reading tasks. To explore this further, Akubilo (2015) carried out a study to understand more about the impact of a child's social-economic background in the learning process. In order to prepare a child for reading, he proposed that

the child's socio-economic background be given priority. For a child to be able to read, the home environment must be safe and tranquil. Disruptions in the child's surroundings, such as conflicts, the death of a parent, and maladjustment, obstruct the child's ability to read. Teachers should provide psychosocial support for children who are experiencing disputes or maladjustment in their environment in order to help them read.

To gain more understanding on children's reading abilities, Mwoma (2017) conducted a study which established that all of the students tested were below average readers. Boys outperformed girls in reading for both English and Kiswahili languages. The report revealed the disparities in performance between boys and girls could be attributed to societal influences, such as boys being given more educational preferences than girls. Mwoma's research was conducted in a rural area where the majority of the people are pastoralists. Children in such areas frequently miss school to help herd animals. Children who live a long distance from school are more likely to arrive late every day. These could be factors that contributed to all of the children's poor performance on the reading tests. In another study Mwoma (2019) established that children who attended pre-primary school outperformed their peers in English language tasks. Mwoma's study also revealed that when teachers gave children who did not attend pre-primary school more time, their performance in Kiswahili subtasks improved dramatically. This is enough proof that pre-primary school education establishes a basic foundation for language development in children.

To understand the role of the family in language development, Wambiri and Ndani (2015) carried out a study on the importance of the family environment. Their study emphasized on the need for caregivers to encourage and enhance children's language development and reading readiness. The study also emphasized on the need for relevance of literate-rich home contexts as reading readiness boosters. This, they claimed, was crucial in encouraging children to read. The home environment should therefore be fostered to encourage children's reading readiness.

Mwoma (2017) recognized the importance of both home and school influences in the development of

reading readiness in children in her study. She went on to say that parental support, the availability of enough print and non-print materials, and early schooling are all aspects that contribute to children's reading readiness development at home. Based on how they connect to the child, these elements can either contribute to success or failure in reading readiness. She identified school-based elements such as teacher professional development, teaching approaches, teacher-child contact and the availability of adequate learning resources as contributing to the development of reading readiness in children. To understand more on the role of instructional resources, Ngure, Mwoma and Buna (2019) conducted a study to examine the teachers' use of instructional resources in teaching and learning reading with grade three pupils in Nairobi County. Their study established that, scarcity of instructional resources hindered the acquisition of reading skills among grade three pupils. More studies have been conducted to explore further on factors affecting reading readiness, one such study was conducted by Ngure, Mwoma and Buna (2019) which revealed that majority of the learners studied had very low scores in word recognition and struggled to recognize sounds and letters. Another study conducted by Mitei and Mwoma (2021) revealed that there were insufficient learning teaching and materials which hindered learning among learners in public pre-primary school children in the study area. To gain insight on the contributions of the learners' environment on reading readiness, Serede and Mwoma (2022) established that, the learners' social environment, school environment and family economic status had an impact on children's language learning and eventual reading readiness. More studies on the effect of the environment by Muronga, Ong'ang'a and Mwoma (2020) revealed that the socio-economic status of teenage mothers influenced their involvement in children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Rabok and Mwoma (2020) in their study established an existence of a significant relationship between parent-child interactions and level of writing readiness of pre-school children. It was critical to determine whether environmental influences play a significant effect in children's reading readiness in this study.

This article sought to answer the following question from a study on teaching of language and pre-primary children reading readiness:

- What environmental factors affect reading readiness of pre-primary school children?

## METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a descriptive survey research design. According to Orodho (2017) in descriptive survey, data is collected through the use of interviews and questionnaires. This was used to respond to concerns on the status of the topic under study. This study design was chosen because one is able to collect quantitative data which is later analysed through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. In addition, the study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative research.

This research design was suitable for this study as it allowed the study of issues at hand in detail as well as finding the relationship between them. The design enabled the researcher to gain a deep insight of the influence of the environmental factors on reading readiness of pre-primary school children. This study used qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data was collected through self-administered questionnaires to pre-primary school teachers while qualitative data was obtained through interview schedule and observation guide. This strategy was adopted by the researcher since it captures both qualitative and quantitative data which could otherwise have been lost if only one method was used.

### Site of the Study

The study was conducted in Kenya, one of the East African Countries. Kenya borders Tanzania to the South, Uganda to the West, South Sudan to the North West, Somalia to the North East and Ethiopia to the North. Vihiga County is found to the Western part of Kenya and is home to the Luhya people who majorly practice small scale mixed farming. According to the 2019 Kenya Population Census Report, Hamisi had a population of 159,241 people and occupied an area of 157.2 square kilometres (KNBS, 2019). The sub county consists of 6 educational zones: Tambua, Banja, Jepkoyai, Gisambai, Shamakhokho, and Shaviringa. Vihiga

County was purposefully sampled out of the 47 counties due to the low reading uptake as noted by Uwezo (2014). The researcher chose the sub-county for the study because it had low literacy levels in comparison to other sub-counties, according to the Uwezo 2014 report.

### Research Participants

Participants for the study comprised of pre-primary school children. 34 heads of schools from the selected schools participated in the study to give their perception on teaching of language and its contribution to pre-primary school children's reading readiness. 216 teachers of language from selected pre-primary schools participated in the study to give their perceptions on teaching of language and its contributions on reading readiness.

### Sample Size

30 percent of the school population was sampled for the study (72 schools out of the 238). There were four administrative divisions and six zones in the sub-county. To identify two divisions for the study, the researcher employed stratified sampling of the divisions. The zones were carefully sampled in order to ensure that the four zones chosen fell inside the sampled divisions. The schools were chosen at random, with at least 18 of the 72 schools sampled representing each zone. The reading readiness checklist was used to observe five students at random from each of the 72 schools. One language teacher from the primary section and two teachers from the pre-primary school section of the sampled schools were randomly selected for the study. Thirty-four head teachers and school administrators from the sub county were also polled on their thoughts on the study's topics.

### Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Stratified sampling technique was used to select the divisions and zones that participated in the study. Eighteen schools from each of the four zones sampled were selected for the study randomly. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 216 teachers of language while random sampling was used to select 110 pupils who participated in the study.

## Instrumentation

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

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

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

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

During the school visits, the researcher utilized a reading readiness checklist to assess the readiness of the sampled pupils to read with the help of the pre-primary school teacher. The reading readiness checklist had pre-set observable attributes for each pre-reading skill. The sampled learners were subjected to the pre-set items in the reading readiness checklist and observations made. The learners were then scored according to the number of skills attained from the pre-set checklist.

## Reliability and Validity of the Study

The researcher attempted to determine to what extent the data accurately or meaningfully represented the theoretical framework upon which

the investigation was founded. The content validity of the instrument was attained through consultations on the items in the tool with the supervisor. Each item was scrutinized with regard to relevance of the variable under study and the research objectives. Face validity, in contrast, deals with the reflection of the content being investigated. It refers to the probability that items may be misconstrued and consequently aid in eliminating vagueness thus expanding face validity (Connell J. et.al., 2018). The researcher also sought expert guidance on the questionnaire's validity from the supervisor. The questionnaires were gathered, double-checked, and corrected. After two weeks, the updated surveys were given to the same respondents. The pre-test and post-test results were correlated using Spearman's rho.

Pilot research was conducted using data collected from instructors in schools in the adjacent Vihiga Sub-County. This represented 10% of the sample, or 7 schools. Pilot research on 10% of the sample is recommended by Mugenda & Mugenda (2003). The County Government-ECDE officials from Vihiga Sub-County were chosen for the pilot study's interview. During the trial study, the tool was administered using the test re-test approach. The researcher had to divide the test statements into two halves, odd and even items, to determine the instrument's dependability (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). The split-half technique is a popular name for this method. The approach's key advantage is that it eliminates the possibility of error due to different trial circumstances. The reliability of the instruments was confirmed by Cronbach's Alpha reliability co-efficient of 0.9. The pilot study was useful in ensuring the reliability of the test protocols, data collection tools, sample recruitment tactics and other study logistics. The results of the pilot study allowed the researcher to make any necessary adjustments to the instrument to guarantee that all the study's objectives were met.

## Data Analysis Procedure

The data was analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively by the researcher. Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered, organized, and cleaned. The data was coded and keyed into SPSS version 16.0 computer software data base. The questionnaires were checked for omissions and



digressions in responses given. The questionnaires were then categorized and entered subsequently into the SPSS database. The data collected for all the objectives were then analysed using frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data from the interview schedule was analysed and coded thematically. The results were then presented in tables for easier interpretation. Quantitative data was analysed by SPSS software while qualitative data was analysed by content analysis to identify emerging themes leading to certain conclusions.

### Ethical Considerations

After being granted the research permit and the letter of authority, the researcher informed the respondents about the scope of privacy and confidentiality, the merit of the study and ensured them that the information gathered would not be used for any other purpose other than academic. Since the research could not avoid dealing with children, he sought consent from their parents or guardians to allow the minors to take part in the study by providing the required data. The informants had the right to remain anonymous and turn down the request to give information if they so wished.

### RESULTS

Findings for this study were obtained using observations checklists, interviews, questionnaires

and assessment of learners' reading readiness by use of a reading readiness checklist.

### Environmental Influence in Teaching Language and Reading Readiness.

The study's sought to determine the role of the environment in the teaching of language and reading preparation. The study looked at the school environment, such as the availability of classrooms, teachers, and school peers, as well as the learners' safety, play equipment availability and weather conditions. Social environmental aspects such as the language of the catchment area, play groups, reinforcement of what is learned, modelling and support provided at home and the socioeconomic status of the learners' home environment, such as family diet, ease of fee payment and affordability of school uniform and stationery are all factors to consider. The findings on this goal are presented in *Table 1, 2 & Table 3*.

### School Environment

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

**Table 1: School Environment Influence on Learning.**

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

*Table 1* shows that 4% of respondents felt classroom availability influences reading readiness, whereas 16.5% said teachers had the greatest influence. 27.5% chose peer pressure. The safety of students was cited by 20.5% as a critical factor. Play equipment was emphasized by 29% of respondents, and weather conditions were cited by 2.5%.

From the responses above, it is obvious that having proper play equipment had the greatest impact on reading readiness (29%), followed by peer influence (27.5%). Learning was made easier for the students in a school with suitable play equipment, which resulted in lower absence. Such schools have grounds that were excellent for outdoor play and

learning activities. This means that, in order to improve reading readiness in pre-primary school children, more emphasis should be paid to the provision of suitable play and learning materials as well as the improvement of healthy peer contact.

The findings are consistent with those of Mwoma (2017) who found that both family and school influences play a role in the development of reading readiness in children. Mwoma went on to say that parental support, access to enough print and non-print materials, and early schooling are all aspects that contribute to children's reading readiness development at home. The findings are also consistent with findings from other studies for instance, Ngure, Mwoma and Buna (2019) agrees that, scarcity of instructional resources hinders the acquisition of reading skills. On the other hand Mitei and Mwoma (2021) also agrees that insufficient learning and teaching and materials hinders learning among learners in public pre-primary school. Serede and Mwoma (2022) adds to this and agrees, that learners' social environment, school environment and family economic status has an impact on children's language learning and

eventual reading readiness. Muronga, Ong'ang'a and Mwoma (2020) on the other hand, concurs with this and agrees that the socio-economic status of teenage mothers influences their involvement in children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Rabok and Mwoma (2020) adds to this and points to an existence of a significant relationship between parent-child interactions and level of writing readiness of pre-school children.

**Social Environment**

The study's second goal was to see how the environment in which students interact with one another affects language and reading preparation instruction. The respondents were asked to rate the social elements indicated and their impact on pre-primary school children's reading readiness. Language of the catchment area, play groups, reinforcement of what is learned, modelling, and support supplied at home were highlighted as factors that made up the social environment for pre-primary school children. *Table 2* summarizes their responses.

**Table 2: Effects of Social Environment on Learning**

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

*Table 2* shows that the language of the catchment area has a 30% impact on reading readiness, playgroups have a 25% impact, reinforcement has a 21.5% impact, modelling has a 15% impact, and family assistance has an 8.5% impact. This means that information may be shared quickly in an environment that allows for free interaction among learners and reinforcement of what they have learned. As a result, their vocabulary grows in preparation for reading. The students who mingled freely were daring and rushed down the path of discovery. These findings support the findings of Shabani (2010), who found that children learn better in groups and with the help of teachers and adults when learning new concepts and abilities.

To support these findings, Respondent 12, is quoted as having said:

*“when learners interact during play, both at home and in school, they share and create locally available materials for language development like toys, modelling of letters using clay and drawing and naming of pictures”*

Respondent 29 on the other hand observed that *“exposure to the language of the catchment area facilitates the acquisition of the second language and reading readiness.”* On the other hand, Respondent 44 is quoted saying *“Children are more likely to repeat an act if reinforced through*

*a pat on the back, a clap, a nice word, or a token of appreciation”.*

From the interviews with managers and teachers, the researcher gathered that, children's free contact has an impact on their vocabulary as they prepare to read. The learners' levels of language acquisition are determined by their playgroup/play age mates, which includes the frequency and type of language used in the group. They further observed that, the language of the catchment region has an impact on the learners' language and, as a result, their reading readiness. This is because they speak in the prevailing language of the catchment area during their free time. This is the language that the language teacher constructs. The environment in which the students grow has an impact on their mental and social stability. Respondent 53 is cited as saying in support of the home environment's role:

*“The more disturbed they are in the home/social environment, the more violent/disturbed they are at school. Learners from broken and dysfunctional homes carry low self-esteem, bullying and theft with them wherever they go, hence disturbing the peace of the school”.*

The majority of the teachers interviewed stated that absentee parents did not have time to check on their children's progress, resulting in low performance and delays in reading preparation. They also claimed that due to the instability in their homes, children from single parent and polygamous homes fared poorly on reading tasks. They also noted that

some parents were anti-social/reserved to the point where they could not allow their children to participate in socialization, but the benefits, as indicated above, cannot be overstated. Parents that have recurrent confrontations with the school community, other parents, and teachers make it difficult for language teachers to achieve their objectives. Teachers spend their time settling disputes and nursing grudges rather than teaching. Children look up to their parents as role models. Parents' bad habits, such as drug abuse and self-centeredness, are imitated by their offspring. This obstructs language instruction. Some students come from low-income homes, which makes it difficult for them to socialize with students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. The amount of exposure that learners have to television, libraries, playgrounds, and museums is also determined by their family.

**Family Economic Status**

Family economic position is the third environmental element evaluated in goal three for its impact on reading readiness. The respondents were asked to score the given economic factors and their impact on the reading readiness of pre-primary school pupils from the highest to the lowest. The goal of the study was to see if the learners' family economic condition had an impact on language instruction and subsequent reading readiness. Tuition fees payment, home diet, uniform, stationery, and instructor motivation were among the economic aspects identified. This data is presented in *Table 3*.

**Table 3: Influence of Family Economic Status**

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

According to *Table 3*, fees payment was indicated by 31% of respondents as the main economic factor impacting reading readiness, followed by inadequate food (20%), uniform availability (16.5%), proper stationery availability (17.5%) and teacher motivation (15%).

The data in *Table 3* show that socio-economic circumstances have a significant impact on a learner's reading readiness in pre-primary school. When students are regularly sent home for fees, they get emotionally distressed and their absenteeism causes them to fall behind in class. Lack of cash to

buy/produce enough food at home has an impact on the learners' diet, which has a negative impact on brain development. Children who are malnourished fall behind in school work. Such students become bored and contribute less in class. Due to the parents' low socio-economic situation, the learner does not have a uniform, books, or pencils. There were socio-economic issues that impacted all of the learners observed by the researcher, which accounted for 30% of the studied schools, impacting their performance in class. This has a direct impact on reading readiness. These findings are consistent with the literature reviewed by Akubילו (2015), who suggested that in preparing a child for reading, the child's socio-economic background should be given priority. He went on to say that, in order for a child to learn to read, the home atmosphere must be safe and tranquil. The findings are also consistent with those of Muronga, Ong'ang'a and Mwoma (2020) who agrees that the socio-economic status of teenage mothers influences their involvement in children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. These

are also in tandem with the findings of Rabok and Mwoma (2020) who points to an existence of a significant relationship between parent-child interactions and level of writing readiness of pre-school children. As a result, family and economic position have appositive or negative impact on children's reading readiness

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

Finally, aim three was to determine whether there was a link between reading readiness and language instruction. The researcher looked at how language is taught by comparing first and second languages that learners are exposed to in this area. The respondents were asked to identify the most used language in teaching and its contribution to reading readiness. Luhya was the most widely spoken language in the study region (Tiriki and Maragoli dialects). The study took into account English as a second language. *Table 4* summarizes the findings.

**Table 4: First and Second Language and Reading Readiness**

Factor	Frequency	%
The first language is widely used to accelerate reading readiness.	170	85
The second language is widely used to accelerate reading readiness.	30	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

*Table 4* shows that 85% of respondents widely used the first language to accelerate reading readiness and reading achievement in the second language, whereas only 15% used the second language (English) to accelerate reading readiness. According to the data, there was a link between first and second language use and reading readiness. This means that transitioning from the first to the second language, or from known to unknown, is easier for the teacher and their learners. The study established through observation of classroom instructions that some teachers were not fluent in the second language and hence used the first language as a bridge to help pupils achieve the second language. Teachers in this situation require English language training, support, and practice. They also observed that the first language must be fostered, preserved, and developed in order for English to be learned.

These findings support those of Wanjohi (2014), whose study revealed that teachers lacked proficiency in English, their mother tongue, or

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

Teachers at two schools in town worried about the influence of sheng as the catchment area's language. Many of the teachers believed that learners who were proficient in their first language were able to transfer their skills to English, and that parents or

caregivers in the learner's surroundings should keep the first language alive and well. The study also established that, above all, teaching pre-primary school learners to read properly was a noble undertaking, and that motivation levels needed to be raised upwards; otherwise, sending instructors to lower classes was becoming difficult even for head teachers to handle, as those teachers felt inferior. This is consistent with Mirina (2014)'s analysis of the research, which highlighted major elements influencing children's reading, such as instructional approach, teacher professional qualification, and learner class performance. These findings are also consistent with findings from other studies for instance, Ngure, Mwoma and Buna (2019) agrees that, scarcity of instructional resources hinders the acquisition of reading skills. On the other hand Mitei and Mwoma (2021) also agrees that insufficient learning and teaching and materials hinders learning among learners in public pre-primary school.

The study revealed that there were no textbooks for teaching mother language, leaving the learner's catchment region as the sole source of information. Teachers were pleased to report that learners who had achieved reading readiness were confident, eager to be given the opportunity to read, could perform tasks such as sentence substitution, and could sing and recite poems in the second language.

## DISCUSSIONS

The current study investigated language training and its impacts on pre-primary school children's reading readiness in Vihiga County's Hamisi Sub-County. The study's questions were answered by head teachers, teachers, and students from a sample of pre-primary school centres. A total of 72 schools were chosen for the study. The following is a summary of the study's aims.

The study established that the social environment, the school environment, and the economic status of the learners' homes had a great impact on their learning of language and subsequent reading readiness. The study concluded that environment had a significant influence on the learners' reading readiness.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the objectives of the study, the study concluded that, the environmental factors have the greatest influence on reading readiness.

## Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations:

- The objective of the study sought to establish environmental influence in teaching language and reading readiness. The findings indicated that environmental factors heavily impact on the reading readiness of the learner at pre-primary school. It is therefore recommended that Schools to prioritize environmental factors that promote language acquisition.
- The researcher also sought to establish if there was a relationship between the first language and the teaching of the second language. The findings indicated that, there was a connection between first and second language use in relation to reading readiness. It was easier for the teacher and their learners to move from the first language to the second language, i.e., from known to unknown. It is therefore recommended that the prioritization of teaching of first language be done to promote the acquisition of the second language.

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