

**ASSESSMENT OF READING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN EMUHAYA DISTRICT, KENYA**

**BY**

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**MASENO UNIVERSITY**

**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS**

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## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

The significance of reading skills in the development of English as a second language cannot be underrated. The Kenyan secondary schools curriculum for English requires a student to have developed competence in reading skills by the time they sit for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations at form four. However, some students do not meet the standards which are required by the Kenyan secondary schools English curriculum even though they have done the fourth form final examinations. A good number of studies have been done in the primary schools. This study assessed reading skills development from a psycholinguistic perspective in selected public secondary schools in Emuhaya Sub-County in Western Province. The specific objectives were to: describe fluency, decoding and comprehension strategies used by teachers in developing reading skills of learners ; determine the effectiveness of the strategies used by teachers in the development of learners' reading skills ; assess the effectiveness of fluency, decoding and comprehension strategies used by learners and examine the reading skills preferences the learners make. The study assessed the reading skills within the framework of applied linguistics and used Psycholinguistics theory. The study used a descriptive survey design. Ten secondary schools which formed a third of the total 29 schools in the district were picked based on the noticed performance in English from 2009 and 2010 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations. The performances of the schools were placed in the following strata: very good, good, average, poor, very poor. For the students' and the teachers' population, disproportionate random sampling was used. Five students were picked from each school which amounted to 50 out of a population of 1,017 form four students. One teacher of English language was purposively selected from each of the ten selected secondary schools to represent the 53 teachers in the district. The study was mainly interested in the linguistic behaviors of the students as they engaged in the process of reading skills development. Research instruments were structured questionnaires and observation schedules which were used to get information from the 10 teachers of English language and the 50 form four students. In addition, reading tasks were administered to the 50 students to assess how much of the comprehension skills had been acquired by the form four students. Data was collected and the content was analyzed in reference to the tenets of the psycholinguistic theory. The skills which were used by the teachers and learners were described and their effectiveness discussed. The study found out that intensive teaching of the psycholinguistic skills improved academic performance. In addition, well utilized metacognitive strategies boosted learners' comprehension skills. Therefore, this study recommends that more time should be allocated to intensive and extensive reading in secondary schools to enable students interact effectively with the texts. The study will benefit applied linguists, students, teachers, curriculum developers and other stakeholders.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ELN –English Literary Norms

ERS-Exact Replacement Scoring

KCSE-Kenya Certificate Secondary Education

KIE-Kenya Institute of Education

KNEC-Kenya National Examinations Council

PLSPQ- Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questions

SEMAS-Semantically Acceptable Scoring

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the background to the study, statement of the problem, the research questions, objectives, justification of the study, scope and limitations of the study and the theoretical framework

#### 1.2 Background to the Study

Teaching and learning of languages in schools remain of great interest to most scholars because they cut across the curriculum. English language is the medium of instruction in all learning institutions. Therefore, it is important that learners are conversant with the vocabulary and the linguistic structures. It has been noted that language competence boosts academic performance in all subjects (Patricia, Snow and Amato, 2005). In view of this, the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing language skills require that the student is exposed to all the four languages skills. As the academic demands increase, the learners must keep abreast with the necessary reading skills (Patricia *et al.* 2005). More so, the teacher and the learners need to work in partnership as learning a language is a process which needs a lot of imitation, correction and confidence building which can only succeed if both the teacher and the learner are involved.

Language development rotates around listening, speaking, reading and writing and the close relationships between the skills enhance interaction among speakers of English language (Mckay, 2002). There is need to tap the learner's background knowledge for effective acquisition of the language skills. The interactive nature of the four language skills are best understood if the mode of communication and the direction they take are considered. For example, a skill can either be transmitted orally, or in writing. The receptive or productive forms of communication play vital roles as they determine the types of skills required to master them. This study assesses in particular the development of psycholinguistic skills in selected secondary schools. The relationships between fluency, word decoding and comprehension are also considered in order to get the overall picture.

Reading skills assist readers comprehend the texts. Therefore, the learners' individual differences should be considered to mount a successful reading programme. Research in reading skills has interested scholars from various disciplines which include psychology, linguistics, developmental psychology and education (Treiman, 2001). This interest is a reflection of the importance of reading in the academic world. There are different levels of reading. For instance, one can skim, scan or read critically to achieve a certain goal. The higher level skills like critical reading enable a learner to develop clarity of the ideas under discussion (Pula, Edwards and Dermott, 2002).

According to Kenya's secondary schools curriculum (K.I.E, 2004), the student should be able to read at a reasonable pace with comprehension, read critically and read for pleasure. Apart from these, the student should speak accurately and fluently. The variety of writing skills should also be mastered by the student to reflect good language acquisition. Consequently, the learning process should develop over time where each stage is assessed before a learner moves to a higher level. Reading includes more than picking the main idea in a text (Pula, *et al.* 2002). The close interaction between the reader and the writer should be well captured for reading to be successful. As a result, the reader needs to understand the intensions and the stylistic devices used by the writer in order to grasp the themes under discussion.

The usefulness of the English language and how effectively it is being taught is also a point of focus by scholars (Kioko and Muthwii, 2001). The debate on effectiveness of language teaching and learning has been going on. For example, whenever Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E) examinations are released, the question of falling standards of English language keeps on emerging. For instance, the examining body for the secondary schools, Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) notes that candidates do not read with understanding. For instance, students have notable difficulties when identifying missing words in the Cloze Passage section in English Paper 1 (KNEC Report, 2007). According to the examiners, there is need to intensively teach the four language skills of English as they impact on each other. More so, the Kenyan public is also concerned about the waning standards of reading culture (Olwalo, 2010).

When considering reading as a skill, the development can be assessed in three dimensions: a process, a product, and a practice (Wallace, 2002). Reading skills development is a process as it starts from the lower to the higher level skills. As a product, reading is a manifestation of

the other skills which support it like listening, speaking and writing. Therefore, it is a receptive skill which needs to be practiced in order to perfect the skill. The intertwining roles of the reader, the text and the society in the development of the reading skills cannot be ignored (Lipson and Wixson, 1997). According to Horning (2009), reading is a cognitive process which entails the ability to recognize and label the various parts of language and how they function. For example, a word can be a verb, an adverb or a noun. Therefore, the process has to be developed over time in order for one to develop other critical skills like analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application. A good reader is one who is fluent, motivated, strategic and constructive (Abraham, 2000). However, these reading skills can only be developed if the training begins from the elementary stages. Eventually, good reading skills assist in the reading of unfamiliar words as well as comprehension of texts at different levels.

The interactive role of reading and the other language skills should be focused on in order to understand how they complement each other. The reading process is constructive as one development stage directly influences another (Vaezi, 2006). For example, the mastery of the relevant sub skills influences how well English language is acquired in the schools. The manner in which reading is introduced to learners determines the success or failure in the acquisition of the skills. In a scientific research carried out by Ohio State University (Science Daily, 2010), it was verified that genetics plays a key role in children's initial reading skills. Nevertheless, the environment plays an important role in reading growth over time because the exposure helps in the pace of reading acquisition. Consequently, a learner who is constantly exposed to books will learn much faster than one who is not. In another study done in selected primary schools in Kenya, it was noticed that a number of class six pupils could not read class two books (Orengo, 2010). In the same study, secondary schools teachers who were interviewed expressed concern at the rate of illiteracy among form one students. These sentiments highlight the fact that there are reading skills acquisition and development problems in both primary and secondary schools in Kenya. However, this problem need not be widespread if the curriculum is well implemented. The inability of the learners to advance at the expected pace can be frustrating to both the learners and the teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to come up with effective programmes on how to advance reading strategies among learners if the country hopes to produce effective workforce. In view of this, psycholinguistics theory promotes the interactive approach to reading which create a good base for comprehension to take place. Metacognitive strategies, which boost cognitive theory, are supposed to help a reader fully understand a text. The strategies, if well combined should

liberalize the reader to use his/her mental faculties (Vaezi, 2006). If the reading process is not well implemented, there is bound to be some noted problems in the development of the skills.

More psycholinguistic studies have been done in Kenya on the acquisition of reading skills in the primary schools than on the development of these skills in the context of secondary schools (Gathumbi, 2005). Nevertheless, there is need to find out how these skills can be developed at secondary schools (Kirby, 2007). The current study sets out to try and link the two stages to find out the effectiveness of psycholinguistic skills in developing reading skills in secondary schools.

To try and understand the situation in the Kenyan public secondary schools, the current research was done in Emuhaya Sub-County. The study was necessary because during Western Province Education Day it was noted that schools in the Sub-County did not compete effectively with those from the other Sub-Counties. For instance, the best school from Emuhaya was ranked number 18 out of the possible 19 districts (Ministry of Education Report, 2009). In addition, the same school was the only one which featured as number 1 in English when institutions were ranked at subjects' level. The next school from the Sub-County was number 13 in the performance of English language. Therefore, this was an indicator that there was a problem in Emuhaya Sub-County which needed investigation. A map of Vihiga County which includes Emuhaya Sub-County is attached as Appendix J.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The Kenyan secondary schools curriculum for English requires a student to have developed competence in reading skills by the time they sit for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations at form four. However, there has been an observation that a good proportion of students fail to meet this requirement (KNEC Report, 2007). Teachers of English language in some schools have attributed this to ineffective development of fluency, decoding and comprehension skills among learners. Students have been found to particularly fail in the interpretation of written questions, suggesting they could be handicapped in analyzing written information. This study set out to assess, from a psycholinguistic perspective, how reading skills are developed in a selection of public secondary schools from Emuhaya Sub-County in Kenya.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research was guided by the following questions:

1. What strategies are used by teachers in developing fluency, decoding and comprehension skills of learners in the selected secondary schools?
2. How effective are the strategies used by teachers in developing reading skills of learners in the selected secondary schools?
3. How effective are the fluency, decoding and comprehension strategies used by the learners in the development of reading skills in the selected secondary schools?
4. What reading skills preferences do the learners make in the selected secondary schools?

#### **1.5 Research Objectives**

The study addressed the following objectives:

1. Describe fluency, decoding and comprehension strategies used by teachers in developing reading skills of learners in the selected secondary schools.
2. Determine the effectiveness of the strategies used by teachers in the development of learners' reading skills in the selected secondary schools.
3. Assess the effectiveness of fluency, decoding and comprehension strategies used by learners in the development of reading skills in the selected secondary schools.
4. Examine the reading skills preferences the learners make in the selected secondary schools

#### **1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study limited itself to the broad area of psycholinguistics theory that views reading as a psychological process at the same time as a language activity (Wallace, 2002). The focus was on psycholinguistic skills which included word recognition ability, reading fluency and comprehension skills. Apart from these, metacognitive strategies were also studied as they reinforce the psycholinguistic skills. Moreover, the concern was on how these skills were developed in selected public secondary schools to assess level of competence among the selected form four students. The intensive reading lessons were assessed to find out whether the Kenya English reading curriculum was being followed in the selected secondary schools or not. In addition, the study concentrated on ten selected secondary schools in Emuhaya

District in Western Province where the experiences of the selected teachers and learners were examined within the confines of Applied Linguistics.

### **1.7 Justification of the Study**

The motivation behind this study was that development of reading skills has remained challenging. The study was justified by the following main reasons:

First, the study was based on reading skills which has been a source of problems to a number of secondary school students (KNEC Report, 2007). The study identified psycholinguistic challenges faced by students when developing the reading skills. The findings could assist students who would like to overcome the noted challenges. Teachers could also benefit as they would know areas which students find challenging. This would enable teachers assist the students as they would identify linguistic features which are problematic and organize remedial programmes.

Secondly, the researcher had interacted with secondary school teachers in Emuhaya district and noted that teachers were complaining that students had difficulties in interpreting texts. Difficulties noted when students were reading affected their performance in both internal and external examinations. The study focused on psycholinguistic strategies used to teach the reading skills and how they could be improved. The findings could assist teachers to come up with strategies which would meet the needs of their students.

Thirdly, the study investigated the challenges which were faced by both teachers and students when teaching and learning reading skills. Respectively, the researcher hopes that the findings will interest curriculum reviewers who would like to change the situation.

Fourthly, the findings draw attention to the ongoing debate on the declining standards of English language and low reading culture among secondary students and the public in general (Orengo, 2010). The finding will benefit students, teachers, curriculum developers and the other stakeholders.

## **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

Psycholinguistic theory, which has a wide base, is used to guide this study. This theory approaches reading from a mentalist position and combines cognitive psychology with the science of linguistics. The psycholinguistic theory explores what is involved when one engages in the reading process (Haulman and Adams, 1983). The main interest when reading is analyzed using this theory is on how people get information and use it (Atherton, 2009). Some of the key scholars in the study of ‘psycholinguistics of reading’ are Carton, (1976), Goodman, (1965), Kolars, (1968) and Smith, (1971).

One of the first scholars to define the term ‘Metacognitive’ is Flavell (1979) who stated that the distinction between metacognitive and cognitive knowledge depends on how the acquired information is used. The metacognitive strategies assist the reader gauge whether the cognitive goals have been met or not. Therefore, the study was guided by the following tenets from the psycholinguistic theory:

### **1.8.1 Reading and Writing as interactive**

The relationship between the reader and the writer occurs due to the interaction which is achieved. The effectiveness of this interaction is assisted by the context of the reading and the writing (Lipson and Wixson, 1997). According to Rosenblatt (1988) there are certain factors which might affect how well this transaction succeeds. The emotional and the physical state of the reader during the linguistic event determine the quality of the process. For example, the reader’s fatigue or state of emotion can interfere with the concentration span. The reader must therefore focus on the purpose of the reading in order to benefit from the engagement (Rosenblatt, 1988). In the same way, writing depends on personal, social, individual and environmental factors which must be considered when reading as this will highlight the intentions of the writer (Rosenblatt, 1988).

Moreover, learners have individual differences which determine how fast the reading skills are acquired. The levels of cognitive information processing help determine how well the reading skills are mastered. In addition, there is need to control the reading and merge the various skills to come up with a base for new ideas to thrive (Abraham, 2000). There is an interrelationship between reading and writing as the skills complement each other. For example, fluency depends on how well the reader can balance between word decoding and comprehension. If a reader has limited oral based lexicon, it can affect how well they decode

words (Abraham, 2000). Consequently, the intensity of listening skill mastery assists the learner gain reading proficiency. This tenet is used to identify and assess the reading preferences of the learners based on the administered tasks. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the learning strategies is also focused on to highlight the interactive role of reading and writing skills.

### **1.8.2 Reading as Hypothesis based**

According to Goodman (1967), reading is a psycholinguistic process where the reader is the key player who determines how well the ideas are understood. The process assists the reader understand the text because it is mainly cognitive and the reader makes a critical evaluation of the text (Widdowson, 1984). Therefore, the reader needs to reflect on what is being read and monitor the degree of comprehension by using effective metacognitive strategies. In order to effectively carry out the process, the reader needs to make use of metacognitive strategies which encourage a reader to control the reading by thinking about it. If the psycholinguistic skills and the metacognition strategies are well combined, the reader develops independence and fluency because word attack skills, the syntax of sentences and the semantic constraints help link up knowledge of word meanings and the collocations (Goodman, 1967). Eventually, the reader learns to erase misconceptions in the course of the reading as the linguistic variations lead to proper identification of the necessary metacognitive strategies which can assist in comprehension. This tenet is used to examine the effectiveness of the psycholinguistic and metacognitive strategies which are necessary to teach and learn the reading skills.

### **1.8.3 Reading as Strategic**

The reading process is strategic because the reader uses specific reading skills to achieve the central aim of comprehension. For instance, the comprehension skills enable a reader predict the next word, phrase or sentences quickly (Wallace, 2002). If the interaction level between the reader and the writer is low, the text cannot be well understood because the necessary cognitive skills will be lacking. Furthermore, reading is an intricate process which must be taught (Lyon, 2000). Fluency can enable a reader detect the larger segments which are composed of phrases, clauses and sentences. The role of the teacher is vital if the reading skills are to be understood because pieces of writing need different approaches (Abraham, 2000). Therefore, the teacher should vary the strategies employed during the reading process. This tenet is used to identify and discuss the teaching strategies used by teachers in the

selected secondary schools. Apart from that, the effectiveness of the strategies which are used by the teachers is discussed.

#### **1.8.4 Reading as Enjoyable**

Reading is important as it assists the reader learn about others, their history, culture and content subjects like Science and Mathematics (Lyon, 1997). Reading for pleasure is an activity which should be done at free will in order to get satisfaction out of it (Nell, 1988). Furthermore, recreational reading can also be developed in a person. For instance, a teacher can assist a learner enjoy independent reading after initiating a love for reading. The interest in books can be done by availing interesting reading materials to the learner. Through this approach, the reader's imagination is triggered to hanker for more books and reading becomes a hobby (Nell, 1988). According to Hobson (2004), reading is a creative process which improves the imagination to culminate into an active process in contrast to a passive one. If done appropriately, the learner can achieve academic success because there will be connectivity between the reader and the text (Pullman, 2004). In summary, concentrating on the cognitive aspects without including reading for pleasure makes the reading programme incomplete (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). This tenet is used to assess the students learning strategies and their effectiveness. In addition, it is used to identify learners' reading preferences.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses literature related to reading skills development in selected public secondary schools. The strategies used when teaching reading are reviewed. Furthermore, the secondary schools reading curriculum is reviewed in relation to learners reading preferences as it has an impact on how well the skills are mastered. Over the years, three approaches to teaching and learning reading have evolved which display the cognitive processes which are necessary for skilled readers though each approach has advantages and disadvantages.

#### 2.2 Reading fluency, Word decoding and Comprehension skills

Fluency, word decoding and comprehension skills are the key reading skills which need to be well learnt to promote efficiency in academic performance as discussed below.

##### 2.2.1 Reading fluency

Fluency in reading is achieved when a student can recognize more words on sight and manage to store them in memory. The first psychologists to effectively focus on what it means to acquire fluency were La Berge and Samuels (1974). In their study, the scholars show that acquisition of sub-skills assist in complicated comprehension.

If a reader is fluent, the vocabulary increases because the person can read a wide range of books competently and learn the use of words (Smith, 1977). The skill is necessary for a secondary school student which makes it relevant to the current study. Fluency includes gaining speed through rapid reading skills like skimming and scanning.

The importance of an effective reading programme which is properly monitored is highlighted by Pinnel, *et al.* (1995). Among the recommended reading strategies is a situation when a teacher can read to students using appropriate prosody. However, the teacher should be a good model for the reading strategy to be effective.

Lipson and Wixson (1997) agree with Smith (1978) that learners who are given the opportunity to use phonic skills when reading instead of explanations from the teachers

advance faster than vice versa. To these authors, skilled readers do not read loudly but sound the words mentally as this improves fluency.

Accurate word decoding distinguishes a good reader from a poor one as effective phrasing and expressions assist the reader project the correct emotions which emphasize meaning of words (Rasinski, 2003). Rasinski concurs with Pinnel *et al* (1995) who stressed the significance of an effective reading programme. These programmes should be familiar to the teacher so as to monitor the fluency levels of students in a class. Among the things which they recommend for good assessment modes are regular and time effective strategies. Rubrics have been used to assess reading fluency and the overall reading performance. When rubrics are used, a student reads and a score is used to indicate the student’s reading ability based on a four point rubric. It is time effective as it can be done in 60 seconds or less. The following rubric is used for the purposes of the current study. Since the study was done among senior students, the Table below was used in conjunction with an extract from one of the course books which suited their level of difficulty.

**TABLE 1: Reading fluency scale**

Level	Student’s reading ability
1	Reads word-by-word-occasional two-or-three-word phrases occur though infrequent/or they do not present meaningful syntax.
2	Reads two-word phrase groups with some three – and four – word groupings some groupings may be awkward and student’s reading ability unrelated to the large context of the sentence or passage. A smaller portion of the test is read with expressive interpretation. Reads a significant section of the text excessively slowly or fast
3	Reads in three – and four – word phrase groups. Some smaller groupings may be present. Majority of the phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax. Little or no expressive interpretation is present. Generally, reads at an appropriate rate.
4	Reads in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions and deviations may be present but do not detract overall structure of the story. Preservation of author’s syntax is consistent. Some or most of the story is read with expressive interpretation. Reads at an appropriate rate.

**Adopted from Pinnel, G.S, Pikulski, J.J, Wixson, K. K Campbell J. R, Gough, P.B (1995) Listening to children Read Aloud; Oral Fluency.**

Assessment programs can assist learners know how to handle struggling readers. For example, poor decoders need extra work on word study and phonics' instruction while those who are not fluent need more work on reading with expression and meaning (Rasinski, 2003). In addition, the teachers should use passages which consider the readability level of the students. According to Rasinski (2003), the lexical and syntactic difficulty level can be used to assess whether or not the students can read a passage. Therefore, fluency is an outcome of a development process which is influenced by a reader's knowledge.

### **2.2.2 Word decoding skills**

If word attack skills are merged effectively, reading proficiency can improve. A reader can use the skills after fluency has been developed (Lipson and Wixson, 1997). Furthermore, fluency is boosted by knowledge of word attack skills; hence, the link between word decoding and fluency. The current study assesses how word recognition skills are taught in the selected secondary schools to find out whether or not there is a link with the other sub-skills which answers objectives one and three of the study on the effectiveness of the chosen teaching and learning strategies.

So as to clarify further the roles of word recognition in promoting reading efficiency, Ediger (2000) supports Lipson and Wixson (1997) that word decoding skill is not an end in itself but contributes towards comprehension since meanings of words are necessary in a successful reading programme. The scholar lists behaviour of students who engage in poor word recognition and suggests the remedies. For instance, students who have difficulties in word recognition, read in a halting manner, incorrectly identify words, fail to read in thought units, mispronounce closely spelled words, fail to use phonics when necessary, re-read content, do not attempt to identify words which are difficult to read, read words without understanding the meaning and insert or omit words in sentences.

Word recognition is necessary because the focus is on the linguistic forms of words (Treiman, 2001). For example, the phonological form is part of the recognition process. Treiman concurs with Ediger (2000) that meanings of words are important for reading programmes to succeed. According to Treiman (2001), although the phonological form might fail to be detected clearly in silent reading, the administered tasks to the students can assist to verify whether a learner has mastered word recognition or not. Also, category names can be used where a list is given and the students are supposed to identify the group a word belongs to. Students who have not developed word decoding skills can end up classifying similar

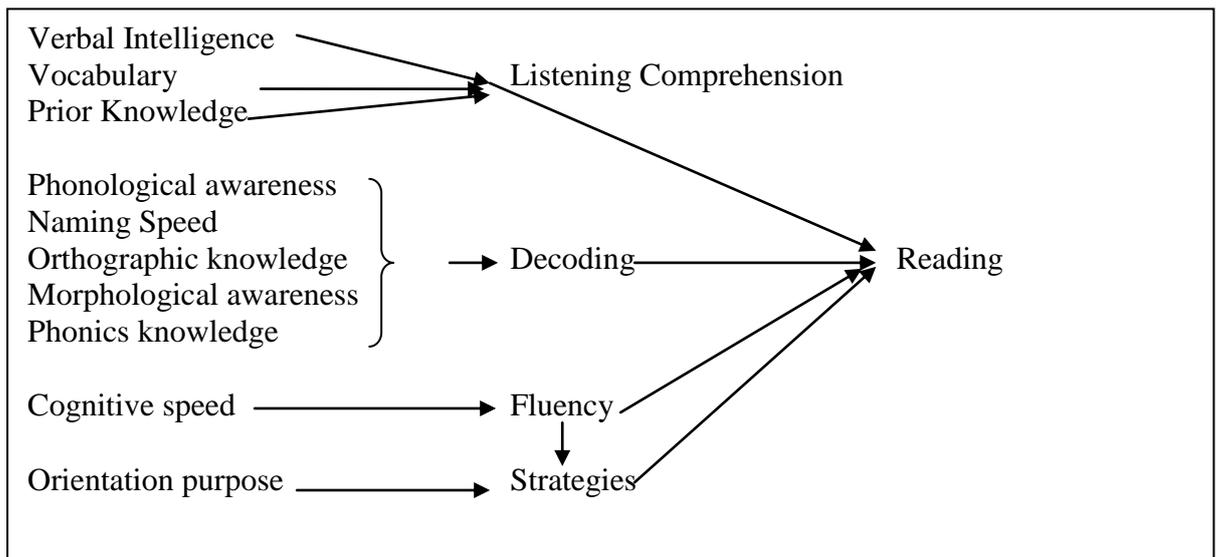
sounding words under a wrong category when that is not the case. For example, homophones like **deer** and **dear**, **pair** and **pear**, **mayor** and **mare** have different meanings but similar sounds. The current study uses a cloze test passage from Appendix D to find out whether or not the students have learnt how to identify and fill in blank spaces using specific words. Besides, the passage is used to test mastery of synonyms.

### **2.2.3 Comprehension skills**

From a cross – cultural study among Indians and Americans, Steffensen (1981) concluded that the background of a reader assists in understanding a text. More so, good comprehension skills are acquired over time. For instance, Americans did better in American cultural content while Indians were comfortable with the Indian cultural content. Therefore, some linguistic problems can be attributed to background knowledge. Steffensen (1981) agrees with La Berge and Samwels (1974) that development of sub-skills is necessary in getting the advanced level skills which eventually leads to effective comprehension.

Nunan (1985) proves that the background knowledge of a reader is important which concurs with Steffensen (1981) La Berge and Samuels who underscore the significance of prior knowledge in language development. Moreover, Nunan stresses that the length of exposure to a language is contributory to fluency. Hence, there is a link between fluency and comprehension. Nevertheless, it is ironic that English language has been given eight lessons in a week in Kenyan secondary schools curriculum yet there are continuous complaints that students have problems when interpreting examination questions (Kembo – Sure, 1998).

Dean (2002) agrees with this concern that students lack the expected competence. He concludes that reading is not taught in most secondary schools in England which means that enough attention should be given to the skill. Only 51% of secondary school students who took a test in America were among those who were ready for college level reading demands (ACT, Inc., 2006). The above figure supports the need for more research in the secondary schools to find out how teachers of English can effectively implement reading curriculum because comprehension is a complex process which includes all the linguistic components. This interconnection can be summarized in the figure below.



**FIGURE 1: Summary of the linguistic components in a reading process**

**Adopted from Kirby (2007). Reading Comprehension: Its nature and development. At <http://www.literacyencyclopedia.ca/>. Retrieved on 2012, March.26**

Although these linguistic features are important in developing comprehension skills, the learners should be motivated to read as the prevailing environment play an equally important role (Kirby, 2007). Kirby supports Rasinski (2003) that the teacher should consider the difficulty level of the reading material to get suitable content for each child. In the long run, the comprehension skills should be developed where fluency, phonics and vocabulary given enough focus in the classrooms (Kirby, 2007).

In a study among primary school pupils by ‘Uwezo’, it was discovered that children have not mastered the literacy skills. The organization in conjunction with Ministry of Education of Kenya released a report at Kenya Institute of Education (Orengo, 2012) which blamed lack of professionalism in the education sector for the poor mastery of literacy skills. In addition, the policy makers were pointed out as being too slow to implement changes in the curriculum to keep pace with the changing times.

The implication behind these sentiments is that the curriculum in Kenya needs to be re-organized to be more learners centered. The waning standards in English language performance were noticed among secondary school students as highlighted by the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC, 2007). Much of the psycholinguistic studies in Kenya have covered primary schools as they are seen as important basis for developing reading skills. Nevertheless, secondary schools should also be focused on to trace the effects of primary schools curriculum on an advancing reader. The current study uses this knowledge

gap to bridge the gap between primary and secondary schools and join those who have done their studies in this area.

#### **2.2.4 Metacognitive strategies**

Teachers can enhance metacognitive strategies awareness among students by enlightening them on how they can develop cognitive and motivational thinking in order to be independent readers (Paris and Winograd, 1990). In addition, extensive research on metacognition and reading for comprehension has underscored the fact that students' awareness of what reading comprehension involves can improve if they are exposed to systematic and direct instruction. Baker and Cerro (2000) support Paris and Winograd (1990) that the importance of the metacognitive strategies have been recognized because students who are high achievers in reading, writing, mathematics and science display higher levels of metacognitive knowledge which help them to regulate themselves and be more confident. However, one noted limitation is that there are few instruments which can be used to check students' awareness and reading strategies as they read for academic improvement (Pressley, 2000, Alexander and Jetton, 2002).

Mokhtari and Reichard (2001) agree with Pressley, Alexander and Jetton that the instruments in use are good for testing metacognitive awareness and reading strategies for elementary classes but not for upper primary and high school students. The current research uses a rubric where the metacognitive strategies are listed in Appendix C of the observation schedule. The rubric is used to find out whether or not secondary school students have acquired the specific metacognitive skills.

A previous study on how to improve literacy level among primary school pupils used defined standards based on setting English Literacy Norms (ELN) which considers the score or quotient on a test above a group. Furthermore, a concept is not introduced before a pupil is ready (Gathumbi, 2005). The findings reveal that there is need for more learner centered activities which include a variety of reading materials. More so, the study assessed the curriculum, syllabus, textbooks and other educational materials to find out the main cause of illiteracy in English. From one teachers, who were interviewed, expressed displeasure at the literacy level of students who joined secondary schools. There is need to assess how the base, which is set in primary schools, can be used to advance reading skills in secondary schools. Although the current study is similar to Gathumbi (2005) the focus is on secondary and not primary schools.

According to a study (Siauliu University, 2006), metacognitive strategies help develop reading comprehension skills. The experiment design was used in the study which went on for five months between January and May. The study used pre-test and post-test approaches where a group was taught how to use metacognitive skills while another group was not taught. The findings revealed that metacognitive strategies need to be developed to cater for individual needs. It was realized that good readers have their own strategies which have been developed overtime and the teacher cannot produce more positive results. The study revealed that the impact on testing on the metacognitive strategies is still debatable because students are taught to use strategies to read not to sit exams. Although the current study considers metacognitive strategies, the descriptive design is used where lessons are observed to determine the presence or absence of the identified skills.

Teachers are supposed to be facilitators in enhancing reading culture among students (Commeyras and Inyega, 2007) as concluded in a study on teaching reading in Kenyan primary schools. The above finding concurs with Gathumbi (2005). Also, the study reveals that the attitude towards reading should change for students to see it as a vital skill which goes beyond passing examinations and securing employment.

To sum up, the education system in Kenya should be reviewed to encourage reading among students. Glogowski (2008) supports Commeyras and Inyega that there is too much focus on examinations. The scholar recommends more independence where teachers can motivate students to read. The current study uses this knowledge gap to identify the types of activities which can be given to secondary school students to enhance independence as they learn the reading skills. The role of extensive reading is examined while considering students reading preferences.

### **2.3 Teaching strategies used to develop reading skills.**

The ‘bottom-up’ approach to teaching reading forms a base for most reading schemes because it promotes the ability to decode and sound letters. Through this approach, reading becomes a phonic process. However, scholars like Kolers and Katzmann (1966) express dissatisfaction with ‘bottom-up’ approach on the grounds that the approach does not cater for irregularly spelt words. In addition to this, the two scholars argue that the 26 letters which represent 40 sounds in English make spelling – to – sound correspondences unpredictable. Another point of concern by Kolers and Katzmann (1966) is that a reader can easily forget

beginning of words and sentences since the decoding process is slow. Retention of words is also interfered with because it is not easy to predict the next words or letters. Therefore, the 'bottom-up' approach to reading requires that the words must be understood first. The current study assesses whether or not the secondary school students are exposed to development of the lower level reading skills to intensify their competence in reading.

The study on error analysis (Goodman and Burke, 1972) agrees with criticisms leveled against the 'bottom-up' approach by Kolers and Katzmann (1966) and agrees that it does not pay enough attention to semantics of words. As a follow-up to this idea, Goodman and Burke (1972) stresses the importance of meaning if one has to be competent in the development of reading skills. On its own, 'bottom-up' approach encourages passive reading though it assists in the acquisition of the linguistic features which are necessary for comprehension to take place (Goodman and Burke, 1972).

In view of the above sentiments, Eskey (1973) discussed this approach as limiting readers' abilities to make predictions and process information. Moreover, the other reading sub-skills like fluency and comprehension are not given enough attention yet the development of one sub-skill affects the other. The current study intends to assess how fluency, word decoding and comprehension complement one another in a secondary school situation. All the three sub-skills are necessary for learners at that level as they enable them to keep abreast with the growing academic demands.

To advance the argument against over reliance on 'bottom-up' approach to reading, Stanovich (1980) argues that the approach does not pay enough attention to beginners. More so, 'bottom-up' teaching strategy does not consider the effect of sentence content as well as how prior knowledge contributes to word recognition and comprehension.

In total, the critics of 'bottom-up' approach to reading concur that the connectivity between the reader and the text is not fully achieved when this strategy is used. Furthermore, lack of harmony between the reader and the text interferes with the development of reading proficiency. The implication is that the individual differences are not well catered for as it is assumed that the readers advance at the same pace. The current study traces the significance of individual differences by discussing how the learners' reading skills preferences can determine how well a student acquires the skills. If the learner preferences are considered, the teachers can know how to help the slow readers

Due to the criticisms raised against the 'bottom-up' approach to reading, the teaching of the skills shifted to 'top-down' or the psycholinguistic approach. Unlike the phonics method, the 'top-down' model majors on what the readers contribute during the reading process (Goodman, 1967, Smith, 1971). Proponents of 'top-down' approach to reading identify it as a good approach which assists learners to identify the integration of the reading and writing skills. The reader needs to compare and contrast what is in the text with what exists in the real world. This suggests that reading becomes an active process which is relevant to the reader's immediate environment.

Though proponents of 'top-down' approach to reading defend it, Stanovich (1980) points out that the readers do not have enough knowledge to make predictions. Furthermore, a skilled reader needs more time to make predictions than to recognize the words. Therefore, the model is time consuming and the individuality of the reader is ignored. The individual differences of the learners are not properly considered by the reading programmes which ignore beginners and fluent readers. As an alternative to the 'top-down' approach to reading, Stanovich (1980) suggests the interactive compensatory model which calls for implementation of both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' approaches to reading.

Burns and Roe (1980) agree with Stanovich (1980) that reading is a complex process which involves all the senses, perception which needs to be cultivated in an orderly manner. The authors suggest that there are important factors which teachers of English require to bear in mind for them to come up with a successful reading programme. The scholars highlight the importance of varying the teaching methods to cater for individual differences. Also, the roles of word attack skills in enhancing independence are mentioned because students end up enjoying what they read as they are motivated when they succeed in deciphering the challenging words. The current study assesses how students can be assisted to use word attack skills as they advance in academic performance.

The interactive compensatory model is further supported by Read (1986) who accepts that if well implemented, a learner can benefit from 'bottom-up' as well as 'top-down' models. For instance, the scholar says that concentration on isolated words improves spelling compared to whole language teaching. The current study analyses the importance of multiple methods to develop the reading skills.

Blachman (1987) support Read (1986) that concentration on isolated words is necessary if a learner wants to improve on the spelling. Again Blachman (1987) stress that phonemic awareness enhances the relationship between reading and speech .The scholar further points out that a teacher can hinder effective phonics instruction if they do not put enough emphasis on the linguistic components of English language. The current study assesses the importance of the students being exposed to effective learning of the psycholinguistic skills through properly monitored reading programmes.

As much as Eskey (1988) like Stanovich (1980) has some negative comments on ‘top-down’ model, agrees that the focus is on high level reading skills rather than the low level ones. According to the scholar, a fluent reader can benefit from ‘top-down’ model more than one who is still developing the skills. The current study considers the two approaches to teaching reading. Stanovich (1980) advocates the interactive strategy which combines the two approaches. Though secondary school students need more high level reading skills to suit the academic demands, the low level skills are also important to achieve fluency and automatic recognition of words. Hence, the lower level skills should also be given time in a secondary reading programme.

The need to combine ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ reading models is supported by Carrel (1988). In his view, readers who are weak in one area can use another strategy to decipher the information. Language listening and writing contribute to the development of reading readiness. Therefore, other language skills must also be developed along the way as this builds the interaction approach to reading. For example, the role of the context in a passage is best understood when the two teaching approaches are used.

In support of Stanovich (1980) and Eskey (1988), Adam (1990) concur that reading programmes which include both phonics and whole language approaches better prepare the readers to develop their reading skills. For example, some learners have difficulties in following the phonics instruction because they lack phonemic awareness which is essential in developing the reading skills.

The interactive roles of reading and writing are stressed because the meaning and the purpose of reading becomes clear (Treiman, 2001). In addition, the individual differences are catered for if the two reading models are used concurrently. Hence, Treiman (2001) agrees with Adam (1990) that phonemic awareness needs to be cultivated for one to develop good

reading skills. Similarly, phonics instruction is beneficial in developing good spelling as research has proved that not all good readers are good spellers.

In conclusion, summary skills go hand in hand with comprehension as they boost academic excellence because a student needs to know how to consolidate the information from different sources. Since a secondary school student needs comprehension skills to succeed, the current study assesses whether the students are exposed to a variety of language skills which can help them excel in their academic work. The section of literature review that is based on teaching strategies is used to identify and describe fluency, decoding and comprehension skills used by teachers in developing reading skills of learners in the selected public secondary schools in order to find out how effectively they have been implemented by the teachers of English.

#### **2.4 Learning strategies used to develop reading skills**

The four language skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing are interrelated. So the learners need to be exposed to all of them in order to express themselves in various ways (Crow and Murray, 1969). Therefore, students' attitudes and level of perception can determine the success or failure of a reading programme. For instance, students get motivated to learn if the teachers use motivating learning styles.

In addition, Lomax (1983) points out that there is cause and effect relationship in phonological awareness, word recognition, reading speed and comprehension. Moreover, all these linguistic skills improve reading development and have a noticeable impact. For example, phonological awareness improves reading speed as a reader needs to get the sound patterns to gain automaticity. Lomax's study (1983) was done among beginners and high school readers where used structural equation modeling procedures was used but the current study uses descriptive survey method. While Lomax's study involves 101 disabled children, the current study concentrates on form four secondary school students who are assumed to be good readers. Lomax verified that the reading skills are acquired in a systematic manner and the underlying factors in the process of reading determine how well a learner masters the skills. Phonological awareness is important because the skill provides a base for reading. Apart from phonological awareness, Lomax's study (1983) discusses comprehension, fluency, word recognition and phonology which make it similar to the current study.

Studies which have been on learning strategies reveal that students who are aware of what good readers require become better than those who are ignorant about them (Paris and Jacobs, 1984). Furthermore, reading awareness and monitoring of comprehension are significant skills which recognize the roles of metacognitive strategies in a reading process. The current study explores the importance of metacognitive strategies when reading texts especially for a secondary school student.

To further verify the ideas highlighted by Lomax (1983) Gough and Tunner (1986) used a strategy referred to as ‘simple view of reading’, which is a product of decoding and listening comprehension. In their approach, the scholars monitor learners’ performance by using standardized measures of listening comprehension, word reading and reading comprehension. The findings reveal that reading comprehension is not acquired at the same pace as the other skills hence the importance of considering the development hierarchy of skills which moves from the lowest to the highest. The current study adopts this idea and gives tasks to test fluency, word decoding and comprehension using a common passage which are marked and graded to assess students’ level of competence in carrying out the reading tasks. Nevertheless, the current study differs from Gough and Tunner (1986) because intensive reading lessons are observed to find out whether or not the psycholinguistic skills are effectively taught and learnt.

Reid’s (1987) study on students’ preferred method of learning identified six categories of learning styles for teaching English as a foreign language under visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, group and individual. The Table below summarizes the learning styles and the features.

**TABLE 2: Students preferred learning styles.**

<b>Learning style</b>	<b>Preference</b>	<b>Examples of activities</b>
Visual	Seeing words in Writing	Read handout, watch videos, make notes
Auditory	Listening to somebody	Oral explanation, discussions, debate
Kinesthetic	Carrying out activities	Drama, role play, moving around
Tactile	Hands on activities	Taking notes handling materials
Group	Work with others	Group interactions
Individual	Work alone	Independent study

The study concludes that teachers should encourage learners to be part of the lesson planning activities because their involvement enables a more effective learning process. In the same way, other learning environments outside the classroom need to be enhanced and varied to boost the classroom learning. The current study uses Reid's (1987) six learning styles to assess the learners' preferences. In addition, the learning styles assist in the current study because the role of extensive reading is considered in the overall secondary schools reading programme. The four levels of context assist learners use the linguistic components related to morphology, phonology, semantics, pragmatics and syntax (Pinker, 1995). According to Pinker (1995), the readers who are aware of what is expected of them, can improve their reading abilities.

Miller and Leacock (2001) who classify context into local and topical emphasize their significance in the reading process. Dash (2004) concurs that context plays a crucial role in disambiguation of meaning and comprehension of the actual meaning of words.

To complete Miller and Leacock's list of contextual levels, Dash (2005) adds sentential and global contexts. The three scholars agree that contextual levels need to be explained to the learners to enable them unravel unfamiliar or forgotten words. For instance, use of contextual clues improve the learners' reading speed and enhance independence. While the local context deals with the syntax, the topical context highlights the meanings of sentences. On the other hand, the sentential context shows the syntactic relation with the other words in the sentence. Lastly, the global context analyses a word in reference to the pragmatic use which covers the idea of speech acts where the implied meaning of a word is borne in mind as it is linked to the literal meaning. Through the observed lessons and the administered tasks, the current study assesses how effectively the psycholinguistic skills are taught and learnt.

From the above discussion on contextual clues, it is noticeable that the clues at all levels enable a student gain competence in the analysis of the different texts which is a necessary skill for a high school student. The current study considers how these skills can be developed in learners as part of discussion of objective three which assesses learning strategies and how effective they are in developing reading skills.

## **2.5 Students' reading skills preferences.**

Teaching and learning of the specific language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing falls under specialized information which help in the spread of language through education programmes (Whiteley,1971). However, the aspects which compare and contrast them are highlighted during the teaching and learning interaction as they have to be stressed for the programmes to succeed. For instance, the psycholinguistic skills have to be emphasized for reading development to be successful.

The Mackay report (1984) was more elaborative in secondary schools language policies in Kenya than previous commissions as it linked that level of education to university learning. The significance of Mackay Report is that the roles of English and Kiswahili language took a frontline in secondary schools as mother tongue has no place in the secondary school curriculum (Mbaabu, 1996). Although language teaching objectives remain the same regardless of the level of education, the stress shifts to reflect the changing needs of a growing learner. Moreover, the specific language skill under discussion is considered for emphasis. For example, primary school pupils cannot be handled in the same way as the secondary school students. The current study is interested in assessing how secondary students can be assisted to be better readers bearing in mind the age bracket and learning preferences as discussed in objective four which considers the students preferred learning styles.

Language planning emerges as an important component of the education sector as this is one avenue of language spread (Schiffman, 2002). Hence, language policies influence teaching and learning of various languages in a country because the education system has to be geared to meet the needs of the learners. Ingram (2007) supports Schiffman (2002) that the main objective of language teaching education is to acquire and enhance communication competence. The performance of the student reflects the competence in the language which can be gauged by reflecting on the four language skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Most global studies have been on comprehension of a text because it is the end product of all the reading activities (Kirby, 2007). Nevertheless, the sub-skills which promote effective comprehension should be given equal attention as they determine how well a student develops reading proficiency. In Kenya's English curriculum, there is an expected development process on how the reading concepts are introduced and taught to the advancing

learners. The current study is interested in finding out how these sub-skills influence the overall comprehension. The key psycholinguistic skills which are assessed in objective one and three are fluency, word recognition and comprehension as the objectives touch on teaching and learning strategies. As an answer to research question two of the current study, the effectiveness of the teaching strategies are also discussed based on the secondary schools reading curriculum to assess how well it is being implemented. Therefore, this makes the literature review on reading curriculum important in discussing the mentioned psycholinguistic skills.

### **2.5.1 Reading for pleasure**

Poor readers, if not assisted, can fall into a predictable trend where they do not improve (Juel, 1988). Krashen (1993) reiterates that reading for pleasure assists learners get all the necessary skills like vocabulary acquisition, good writing styles, effective comprehension and complex grammatical constructions. Furthermore, in a study ‘Hooked on Books’ with juvenile delinquents between 12 – 17 years, it was concluded that those who read two to three books a week for two years improved their linguistic abilities in contrast to the non-readers. Also, the attitudes of the readers changed as they developed interest in the skill. He elaborated the importance of wide reading by discussing how libraries can be stocked from the school budget, donations and the nearest public library. The public libraries can assist learners be more exposed to varieties of reading sources like the internet, audio and video tapes, magazines and newspapers (Krashen, 1994).

In support of Krashen’s findings, Cho and Krashen (1994) state that learners who are allowed to make personal reading choices assist the teachers know how to motivate and support them as the reading materials can create the connectivity between the reader and the writer.

Few studies have been done on reading for pleasure as well as its components like motivation and the incentives (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). However, previous studies on reading for pleasure have used co-relational method and focused more on children but not on adult literacy. The current study differs in that it considers students’ reading preferences in selected secondary schools and how students can be motivated to read to gain independence. Learners can be reluctant to read due to boredom and low self-esteem and inability to cope with the other students (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Therefore, factors which hinder students from reading extensively ought to be addressed in order to motivate the learners because reading has an impact on the education and the social life of an individual. If the students are exposed

to more independent reading, they would be more proficient. The current study considers students' preferences in objective four to find out what their learning styles are and how they can be incorporated in the reading lessons to promote extensive reading.

A positive response to E-Learning in Kenya has been noticed in one rural primary school that has introduced e-readers (Miruka, 2012). As a result, the pupils are motivated to read more books as they can access a total of 3, 150 titles. Similarly, reading fluency among the pupils has increased. In addition, the teachers are motivated since reference materials are easily available. The current study discusses different ways that psycholinguistic skills can be developed among secondary schools students to boost academic performance. There is need to carry out more research on how secondary schools in Kenya can be assisted to equip libraries which can enhance reading culture among students and the nearby communities.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides information on research design, population, study area, data collection and data analysis. These areas are necessary to provide a general base for any research regardless of whether it is qualitative or quantitative. The research design assists in proper assessment of a study and verifies how empirical a study is.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The descriptive research design was used to study reading skills as a phenomenon and representatives were drawn from a selected group to explain and analyze the relationship noticed after studying the emerging issues (Paton, 2002). A selected number of Emuhaya Sub-County secondary schools were used to study the trends of reading skills development. This study was done among form four students through analytic induction which involves using a few schools to reach a general conclusion on a noted phenomenon (Silverman, 2005). Descriptive survey was chosen for the study as it assisted in verifying a detailed description of linguistic features which influenced development of reading skills in selected secondary schools in Emuhaya Sub-County (Mason, 2002).

#### **3.3 Study Area**

The study was done in Emuhaya Sub-county. Emuhaya Sub-county is among the nineteen Sub-Counties of Western Province. According to Kenya's new constitution (2010), Emuhaya Sub-County is in Vihiga County. The County borders Butere District to the North, Vihiga District to the East, Kisumu West District to the South and Siaya District to the West. The Sub-County covers a total area of 173.2km<sup>2</sup>. The altitude ranges between 1350mm and 1500mm above sea level. The Sub-County is composed of two divisions: Luanda and Emuhaya. The 29 secondary schools in the district are placed in four educational zones: Emuhaya East, Emuhaya North, Luanda South and Luanda West. Every zone has an average of seven secondary schools. The study was done in Emuhaya Sub-County as it was noted that the performance of the students in the secondary schools was not good in comparison to the other Sub-Counties (Ministry of Education Report, 2009).

### 3.4 Study Population

The study focused on the form four students in Emuhaya Sub-County as they represented the highest level of reading skills development in secondary schools as stipulated in the curriculum (K.I.E syllabus, 2004). Teachers of English language in the Sub-County formed part of the study population as they implement the curriculum. According to the Emuhaya Teacher's Service Commission Unit Records (2011), the teachers of English were 53 while the total numbers of the form four students in the Sub-County were 2,196. However, the teachers were not evenly distributed in the schools as most of the schools relied on teachers employed locally by the Board of Management and form four leavers.

### 3.5 Study Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study used purposive sampling which allows a researcher to use their discretion to choose people or samples which best meet the objectives under study (Silverman, 2005). The purpose of the sample was to isolate a manageable proportion of the population for closer examination. Ten<sup>1</sup> out of 29 schools were therefore selected on the basis of their performance in English in KCSE Examination. In that regard, the schools were categorized into *Very good, Good, Average, Poor and Very Poor* on the basis of their performance in English in the KCSE examination between 2009 and 2010. Two teachers of English were then drawn from each of these 5 categories to yield a total of 10<sup>2</sup> overall. It is these ten that gave their opinions on the teaching of the key psycholinguistic skills in the 10 selected secondary schools in Emuhaya. Five pupils, representative of the grades *very good, good, average, poor* and *very poor*, were interviewed from each of the 10 selected schools bringing the total number of interviewed pupils to 50<sup>3</sup>. Small sample sizes are justifiable when the respondents give large enough qualitative data (Isaac and Michael, 1995). The assumption underlying the criteria for selecting pupils was that those likely to do well in English would also be in possession of good reading skills.

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<sup>1</sup>This is roughly 34% of the population. Scholars like Silverman (2005) have felt such a proportion could lead to generalizable findings.

<sup>2</sup>There were 53 teachers of English in Emuhaya Sub County at the time of the study. Ten of these therefore comprise 18%.

<sup>3</sup> Even though there are 2,196 pupils in Emuhaya Sub-County according to Emuhaya Teachers Service Commission Unit Record (2011), Alreck and Settle (1995) argue that a sample size does not necessarily depend on the population size because a small sample can still determine the characteristics under study.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

The study used primary source to get data on reading skills development. The data was from ten sampled secondary schools in Emuhaya District. During the data collection, in-depth interviews based on structured questionnaires and observation schedules were used. Intensive reading lessons were assessed to find out whether or not the connectivity between the psycholinguistic sub-skills were considered to link fluency, word recognition and comprehension. Moreover, students were given tasks to carry out to assess their reading abilities. Triangulation method was used as it helps in overcoming weaknesses which might be observed from using one method (Denzin, 1989).

#### **3.6.1. Pilot study**

Pilot study was done in two schools which were not part of the sampled schools to test tools of data collection. The teachers and students questionnaires were tested to find out how the targeted group would respond to the questions. The questionnaires were responded to by five students and three teachers. Through this approach, the grading criteria for the questionnaires were adjusted to allow some questions to cover the reading skills properly. Moreover, an observation schedule was created to supplement the questionnaires. Finally, the pilot study assisted to categorize the schools according to their performance between 2009 and 2010.

#### **3.6.2. Interview Schedule**

Two in-depth interview schedules based on structured questionnaires were used to carry out a study of the sampled population of form four students and teachers of English in selected secondary schools. Interviews are important in descriptive research as they help obtain accurate information from the respondents (Trochim, 2006). The differences in the opinions of the interviewees emerge to reflect the real picture as concerns a particular phenomenon (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). In addition, interviews are more natural ways of interacting with people and can effectively be used with a smaller group like the secondary school teachers of English language and the fifty form four students in Emuhaya district. The main target was to assess how reading skills were developed in the schools.

##### **3.6.2.1 Teachers' interview Schedule**

The interview schedule based on a structured questionnaire was used. The teachers gave their opinions towards reading skills development in the selected schools. The schedule adopted

rubrics format which could be easily scored as this was one way of tackling time constraint. Apart from this, the researcher easily outlined the questions to the interviewees and clarified where necessary. The teachers ended up speaking openly as they were assured of confidentiality. The questions covered all the areas of English language teaching. The classroom teaching, departmental organization and co-curricular activities were discussed as they contributed to the success of the reading programs. Metacognitive awareness questions were part of the interview schedule and this gave an overview on the teaching of comprehension skills in the selected secondary schools. The respondents' background information were captured during the interview to find out whether or not the teaching of reading skills improved as the teachers became more experienced. Through this approach, the teachers had an opportunity to discuss the challenges they faced as they taught reading skills. The interview schedule used structured questions which highlighted both the professional and personal opinions of the teachers on syllabus coverage and curriculum development (Silverman, 1993). In the course of the discussion, the reasons which motivated the teachers to prefer certain ways of teaching reading skills to others were noted. A total of ten teachers were interviewed where one was picked from each of the ten selected schools.

### **3.6.2.2 Students' Interview Schedule**

The fifty sampled students were interviewed using a structured questionnaire to get their opinions on the learning of reading skills in the selected secondary schools in Emuhaya district. In the pilot study, the questions were readjusted just like the teachers' interview schedule. The questions were geared towards getting an overall view about reading as a skill. The main idea was to verify whether or not what the teachers said corroborated with the students' answers. The respondents' details were written and five students were interviewed from each of the ten selected schools. Data on language learning styles and students preferences were collected using a modified version of Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questions (PLSPQ, 1987). Six questions were asked to help find out which of the six learning styles the learners liked. From the answers, the students' preferences were detected and how far the teachers considered them. The questions were included in the appended students' interview schedule. In addition, self-report questions adopted from (Peacock, 2001) were included in the students' interview to get further insight into their reading preferences.

### **3.6.2.3 Observation Schedule**

As a data collection technique, observation enables a researcher find out the specific behaviors. Reading takes place in the classrooms and how the skills are taught and learnt are best observed in such a set up (Ritchie and Lewis, 2009). Observation technique was used to find out whether the psycholinguistic and metacognitive reading skills were acquired or not by the students. A Table with the various reading skills was used to tick either the presence or absence of the skills among students. Also, a fluency reading scale was used to rank the level of the students (Pinnel *et al*, 1995). The information gathered verified whether the interviews method was reliable or not. Observation schedule assisted the researcher understand the linguistic behavior of the students and teachers in the classroom (Silverman, 2005). The data enabled the researcher identify the challenges faced by both the teachers and students when developing the reading skills. Each of the ten secondary schools was visited at least two times.

The first visit was used for introduction and the second was for the interview sessions and lesson observation. The observed lessons concentrated on intensive reading where teachers were assessed teaching the psycholinguistic skills. Through the passages the connection between the sub-skills were observed. However, there were times a school was visited three times to finish off an interview session as some of the teachers were very busy and had no free sessions. In the course of lesson observation, the researcher assessed availability of the educational documents like the syllabus, schemes of work, lesson plans and whether the exercise books were marked or not. This approach was necessary to assess how much these documents influenced the teaching of English in the secondary schools. Moreover, the English language teaching objectives were assessed to find out whether or not they were being achieved in the classrooms. This was an approach which was adopted when a similar study was done in some of the primary schools in Kenya (Gathumbi, 2005).

### **3.6.3 Administered Reading Tasks**

Reading tasks which tested development of the psycholinguistic and the metacognitive skills were prepared and administered to the selected fifty students. A cloze test passage, which was easy to create and administer was used to test reading proficiency. Cloze tests are effective in measuring reading comprehension and use of language skills in a meaningful context (Litz

and Smith, 2006). Semantically Acceptable Scoring (SEMAS) accepts synonyms and demonstrates the students understanding of the text without changing the meaning of the text. On the other hand, cloze test passages can be scored using Exact Replacement Scoring (ERS) which accepts only one answer. SEMAS was chosen by the researcher as it diagnoses in a better way the strengths and weaknesses of the students in acquiring vocabularies over time (Oller, 1972) which was what the researcher set out to assess. Moreover, the focus was on how the reading skills had been acquired over the years by the form four students. In addition, a comprehension reading passage was also administered after gauging the level of difficulty. The two tasks were timed and done under supervision. The reading passage was done for 45 minutes while the cloze test passage was allocated 15 minutes. Part of the comprehension passage was used to test how fluent the fifty students were. A rubric (Pinnel *et al*, 1995) was used to get the students' reading levels. The students' exercise books were observed to find out if they had mastered the reading skills. For example, the responses to the comprehension questions displayed their abilities to use the psycholinguistic and metacognitive skills (Lipson and Wixson, 1997).

#### **3.6.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is necessary to assist get answers to questions (Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, 2008). During the presentation and analysis, the researcher used tables to reflect the responses to the key reading skills: fluency, word decoding and comprehension. The responses were coded, tabulated and tallied to get frequencies which were converted into percentages to form a base for qualitative analysis. According to Trochim (2006), qualitative data can be coded quantitatively to assist gain deeper insight into the issues revealed by the collected data. Observation comments and interview responses were slotted into the selected research objectives. Content was analysed and explained using the tenets of the psycholinguistic theory. Specific psycholinguistic tenets were used to assess particular objectives. The hypothesis considered was whether or not there existed a relationship between reading proficiency and effective mastery of the psycholinguistic skills and the metacognitive strategies.

#### **3.6.5 Ethical Considerations**

Since the data aimed at rating performance in reading skills, there were certain issues regarding not infringing on the rights of the students or teachers when administering the tools

which were considered. A letter of introduction was given by Maseno University School of Graduate Studies to get permission to conduct the study in Emuhaya Sub-County schools. While in the schools, the students and teachers' consent was sought for them to be part of the study. The sampled population was assured of confidentiality and lack of any form of victimization as they responded to the questions on the research tools.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on data presentation, analysis and discussion of how reading skills are taught and learnt in selected public secondary schools in Emuhaya Sub-County in Vihiga County. The main aim of the study was to assess from a psycholinguistic perspective, how reading fluency, word decoding and comprehension skills are taught and learnt in the selected secondary schools. Therefore, the study was guided by the following four objectives: describe fluency, decoding and comprehension strategies used by teachers in developing reading skills in learners; determine the effectiveness of the strategies used by teachers in the development of learners' reading skills ; assess the effectiveness of fluency, decoding and comprehension strategies used by learners in the development of reading skills. In addition, the study was to examine the reading skills preferences the learners make. The objectives formed a base for discussing the findings.

#### 4.2 Reading fluency, word decoding and comprehension skills

##### 4.2.1 Responses of teachers on reading fluency

Fluency involves how well a learner can recognize words on sight store them in memory and read to convey correct emotions in order to get meaning of words (Pinnel *et al.* 1995). The researcher set out to identify whether accuracy, automaticity and prosody were taught in the selected schools because these are the factors which determine how fluent a reader is (Rasinski, 2003). Through the responses from the ten teachers of English and the observed lessons, conclusions were reached on whether the teachers implemented what they said or not. The following is a presentation and discussion of the responses from the teachers' interviews and findings from the observed lessons.

A structured questionnaire was used to interview the ten teachers of English. The interview method was appropriate because the researcher used it to get further clarifications from the teachers which helped to get the prevailing situation from the teachers as well as the challenges they faced as they taught reading skills (Trochim, 2006). Apart from this, the teachers had an opportunity to come up with suggestions on what else was needed in the

secondary schools (Silverman, 1993). The psycholinguistic tenet which encourages the readers to interact with the texts and explore fully reading and writing skills to determine how they boost each other was considered in the analysis. Similarly, the fact that reading is a strategic skill was investigated as expressed by the psycholinguistic theory which stresses on variability of the teaching strategies (Abraham, 2000). The teachers' interview schedule sought the opinions of the teachers about their students. The study concentrated on form four students because it was based on the assumption that students at this level would be competent readers.

The study sought to find out how well the students had achieved reading fluency as expected by the curriculum. One of the teachers indicated that the students were 'very good'. Six teachers rated their students as 'average' and three teachers said their students were 'poor'. According to the teachers, the students' reading entrance behaviour at form 1 was better, but they deteriorated as they moved to form four. When asked to rate their students reading abilities at form four, a teacher said that 10% of the candidates were 'very good', three teachers said 30% were 'good' and six teachers said that 60% were 'average'. So as to determine the reason behind this decline in reading abilities as the students progressed in secondary schools, the researcher probed the teachers for further clarifications. The teachers felt that this trend could be attributed to lack of balance between extensive reading and classroom tasks. There was more stress on syllabus coverage as the students drew close to Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) final examination. This suggestion concurs with Glogowski (2008) that there is too much focus on examinations. According to the psycholinguistic theory, effective reading is cultivated over the years through close interaction with the available texts. However, the strategic nature of reading can only be achieved if the relationships between the skills are properly understood by the learners.

To find out how the actual lessons were conducted, a question was used to assess to what extent the teachers explained to students how to increase their reading fluency. This question was necessary as it helped the researcher to find out whether students were exposed to methods of increasing their reading fluency or not. While four teachers said they 'hardly' explained to students how to increase reading fluency, six teachers said they did to a 'great extent'. However, a further probe revealed that even the six teachers did not teach how automaticity, prosody and accuracy could be achieved. The teachers said that they only mentioned in passing to the students that they should learn how to be fluent which ended up

not being a practical way of teaching reading fluency. From this answer, the researcher deduced that fluency was not given the attention it deserved.

A question was asked to find out whether or not the teachers found it easy or difficult to teach reading fluency. Through this question the teachers' competence in teaching reading fluency skills in the classrooms was assessed. Four teachers accepted that they found it difficult while six teachers found it easy. In addition, the discussion highlighted the teachers' sentiments that they needed refresher courses on how to come up with specific programmes which could promote reading fluency among the students. The teacher who had rated the students as 'very good' stated that there was no specific mode of teaching strategy used but mainly cautioned students to guard against poor reading habits like movement of lips or vocalization, using fingers to point at the words and moving the head instead of the eyes from left to right.

The frequency of using the evaluation strategies to teach language skills was identified. After identifying the strategies from a provided list, the teachers pointed out five strategies which assisted them to teach fluency. Table 3 below is a summary of the teachers' responses to this question. The question was necessary to find out whether or not the teachers used other modes of teaching reading fluency.

**TABLE 3: Summary of supplementary skills used to teach reading fluency**

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Always</b>		<b>Sometimes</b>		<b>Never</b>
Speech drills	9	90%	1	10%	0
Reciting poems	8	80%	2	20%	0
Debates	6	60%	4	40%	0
Dictations	7	70%	3	30%	0
Telling stories	2	20%	8	80%	0

Nine teachers 'always' used speech drills during grammar lessons, eight teachers allowed their students to recite poems, six teachers used debates, seven teachers included dictations in writing and speech work lessons and two teachers let their students narrate stories. From these figures, it was concluded that the teachers taught fluency indirectly and they only guessed the specific levels of students' reading abilities which should not be the case if the psycholinguistic skills are to be properly acquired. Pinnel *et al.* (1995) discusses the importance of a reading programme which can enable teachers to monitor learners' progress in reading fluency. According to Pinnel *et al.* (1995) reading programmes enable teachers to

monitor learners' progress in reading fluency. From the data, teachers in the selected secondary schools accepted that they needed a way to keep pace with the students reading fluency.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that there was need for more research and development of reading programmes for secondary students as there is a noticeable problem when the students are exposed to college academic work (International Reading Association, 2008). The data from the teachers' interview concurs with Dean's (2002) case study of England that reading is not taught in most secondary schools as the strategic nature of reading has remained elusive to most high school students.

#### **4.2.2 Responses of teachers on word recognition abilities.**

The fluency level of the students can affect how well they decode words and get meaning. If the emotions are not well brought out, the original meaning can be distorted. Questions were asked to draw out responses on strategies used to teach word decoding in secondary schools. Word decoding skills include reading aloud, correcting mistakes and giving work on word attack skills (Smith and Bernard, 1976). The teachers were asked whether or not the students could respond correctly to tasks based on word decoding. The answers were graded according to level of performance: 'very good', 'good', 'average', 'poor' and 'very poor'. Two teachers said their students were 'good' six teachers said the students were 'average' and two teachers rated their students as 'poor'. However, the teachers answers were not objective because the figures from the research findings showed that more students were 'average' and none fell under 'very good' which was an indication that the teachers needed to help students improve on recognition of words.

The teachers were interrogated to find out to what extent they explained word recognition strategies to the students. The teachers responded as summarized in Table 4 below

**TABLE 4: Summary of whether or not word recognition skills are explained to students**

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Great extent</b>	<b>Moderately</b>	<b>Hardly</b>
Recognize and read words	8 80%	2 20%	
Answer questions using specific strategies	9 90%		1 10%
Use a range of vocabularies and sentence structures well	10 100%		

Out of the ten teachers, nine responded that they explained to a ‘great extent’ the word decoding strategies to the students. However, a teacher confessed that he found it difficult to teach word recognition skills. Therefore, he ‘hardly’ explained the word recognition skills to students. Two teachers ‘moderately’ explained the skills to the students. In addition, the teachers said that they used other language strategies to teach word recognition skills. For example, seven teachers used dictation during oral drills and all of them used gap-filling and completion of sentences during writing lessons.

To assess word recognition skills which were easy or difficult to teach, teachers were asked to identify the skills accordingly. The question assisted to find out how competent the teachers were in teaching word recognition skills. The teachers responded as summarized in Table 5 below.

**TABLE 5: Summary of word recognition skills which were easy or difficult to teach**

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Difficult</b>		<b>Undecided</b>		<b>Easy</b>	
Word decoding	1	10%	0		9	90%
Identification and blending words	1	10%	0		9	90%
Phonological awareness	1	10%	0		9	90%
Phonics knowledge					10	100%

The ten teachers stated that it was easy to teach skills based on phonics knowledge. A teacher said it was difficult to teach phonological awareness which involved combining sounds and linking them to the correct symbols. In order to elaborate this challenge, the teacher mentioned that the ethnic backgrounds of the learners enhanced this challenge where some English sounds were not available in some local languages which contributed to mispronunciation of English words.

In response to how the teachers rated the students’ abilities to monitor comprehension of new words in a passage, the answers varied as per the given choices: good, average and poor. The question was asked to find out whether or not the students could recognize words in context and get the correct meanings. The question was also used to find out whether or not the students could use word attack skills. In order to assess the students’ abilities in carrying out specific word recognition activities, a list was provided of word decoding skills which could assist in comprehension skills. The teachers were supposed to identify whether or not their students could do the tasks competently. The responses were summarized in Table 6 below.

**TABLE 6: Summary on students' abilities to monitor comprehension of new words**

Skills	Good	Moderately	Poor
Predict next word, phrase or sentence	2 20%	1 10%	7 70%
Re-write information in own words	6 60%	1 10%	3 30%
Infer meanings from text	6 60%	2 20%	2 20%
Understand meanings of words, phrases and sentences	3 30%	5 50%	3 30%
Read unfamiliar word using word attack skills	3 30 %	2 20%	5 50%

When asked whether or not the students could predict next word, phrase or sentence when reading for comprehension, a teacher stated that they could 'moderately' predict the next word or words, two teachers said the students' levels were 'good' and seven said the students were 'poor' at carrying out the task. The negative responses given by the seven teachers assisted the researcher to conclude that the students had not mastered contextual clues to enable them get meanings of words by looking at the surrounding words. To get further clarifications, the teachers were asked whether or not the students could read unfamiliar words using word attack skills. The responses were as noted in Table 4 above. From the Table, five of the interviewed teachers stated that the students could not carry out this task. In addition, two teachers responded that the students were 'moderate' as they read unfamiliar words using word attack skills. As a follow-up to the question on comprehension monitoring, the researcher decided to find out whether the teachers could readily outline the word attack skills. The teachers did not give the answers.

Therefore, a conclusion was reached that the teachers were not familiar with the word attack skills yet the skills should form a base for word recognition activities (Smith and Bernard, 1976). Furthermore, the teachers could not produce a definite programme which they used to assess the level of development of word decoding skills as suggested by Slavin *et al.* (2008). The programme should also be extensive to match the current changing needs of the students.

#### **4.2.3 Responses of teachers on comprehension skills**

Psycholinguistic and metacognitive skills were assessed to find out whether the teachers included the skills in the lessons or not. The researcher felt it was necessary to assess the sub-skills of comprehension which were fluency and word decoding. Apart from that, answers were sought to find out how fluency and word decoding complemented each other. Secondary schools' reading lessons include all the three so as to comprehend the given texts.

Passages from the course books and from other sources are the main references for intensive reading in secondary schools. Through the appended passages from the course books, the teachers exposed the students to the psycholinguistic skills in the observed lessons. Therefore, the current study would have been incomplete if the reading skills were not assessed concurrently as secondary students need a variety of learning strategies to match the growing academic demands (Pressley, 1999).

The teachers were asked if the students had achieved the overall comprehension objective of reading creatively and critically. The responses were graded according to level of performance. A teacher stated that the students were ‘very good’ two said the students were ‘good’, four said the students were ‘average’ and three rated their students as ‘poor’. The majority of the students fell under ‘average’ which meant that the desired level of reading performance as expected by the reading curriculum (K.I.E, 2004) had not been achieved by the students. Moreover, the answers reflected that the teachers needed to intensify the teaching of the psycholinguistic skills.

To get more details about mode of teaching comprehension skills, the teachers were asked how often they used loud, silent or both strategies during intensive reading lessons. The teachers’ responses on this item were as summarized in Table 7 below.

**TABLE 7: Summary of strategies used in teaching comprehension skills**

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Always</b>		<b>Sometimes</b>		<b>Never</b>	
Teacher reads then gives tasks	3	30%	2	20%	5	50%
Students read loudly then carry out tasks	9	90%	1	10%		
Students read silently then carry out tasks	4	40%	2	20%	4	40%

Loud reading was ‘always’ used by nine teachers while a teacher used the strategy ‘sometimes’ which was interpreted to mean ‘once in a while’. The reasons for the choices were based on three things. Three teachers stated that loud reading was easy to use while three teachers indicated that students enjoyed the lessons. Three teachers used loud reading for variation and one mentioned that loud reading strategy was easy to plan. The ones who preferred loud reading considered it the best strategy to identify learners reading problems. Although loud reading was used as a strategy to teach fluency, some schools did not have enough textbooks. Therefore, not all the students were well exposed to the reading materials and could not practice reading fluency. In addition, the teachers did not give all the students

time to read. ACT, Inc., (2006) states that though guided reading is effective, slow readers can end up being embarrassed if exposed to a common textbook.

On silent reading, four teachers chose ‘never’, four ‘always’ and two ‘sometimes’ Four teachers who chose silent reading said they did so due to availability of course books and all the learners could read comfortably. The teachers further clarified that silent reading develops fast reading skills and achieves better comprehension due to undivided concentration. The least popular strategy was where a teacher read for the students before giving tasks. When asked how many of them read for their students, five teachers chose ‘never’, three ‘always’ and two ‘sometimes’. The responses revealed that the teachers were yet to fully use this strategy to teach reading in the classrooms.

Asked which comprehension skills they found difficult or easy to teach, the teachers responded as summarized on Table 8 below. The teachers identified the psycholinguistic skills from a given list. The question was important because it helped the researcher to find out the competence of the teachers when handling the skills in the classrooms.

**TABLE 8: Summary of comprehension skills which were difficult or easy to teach**

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Easy</b>
Summary writing	1 10%	0	9 90%
Note making		0	10 100%
Synthesis of ideas in a text	3 30%	0	7 70%
Recall of information	1 10%	0	9 90%
Application of information	1 10%	0	9 90%
Analysis of information	2 20%	0	8 80%
Make predictions about a text			10 100%

The teachers’ responses as summarized in Table 8 above reveal that the teachers stated that knowledge from students’ experiences and making predictions about texts before the actual reading were skills which were easy to teach. All the ten teachers who were interviewed stated that they could carry out the two tasks. Three teachers found teaching synthesis of ideas in a text difficult. Two teachers found teaching of analysis of information in a text difficult. The data revealed that there was need for avenues where teachers could get refresher courses to help the teachers be confident when teaching all the psycholinguistic skills.

Teachers were asked to what extent the students could monitor their comprehension. The question was necessary to find out the level of reading independence among the students. There are some skills which fall under both metacognitive strategies and psycholinguistic skills. For instance, reading for inferred meaning can be a psycholinguistic skill at the same time a metacognitive strategy which can be used by a reader to monitor comprehension. Word attack skills can also be used by a student to effectively monitor reading competence. The responses of the ten teachers towards this question were summarized in Table 9 below:

**TABLE 9: Summary of students’ abilities to monitor their reading**

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Good</b>		<b>Average</b>		<b>Poor</b>	
Re-write information in own words	6	60%	1	10%	3	30%
Use prior knowledge from own experience	9	90%	1	10%		
Interpret text by identifying issues	7	70%	2	20%	1	10%
Infer meanings from the text	6	60%	2	20%	2	20%
Identify important text details	<b>7</b>	<b>70%</b>			3	30%
Recognize link between sentences	5	50%	2	20%	3	30%

According to the teachers, the skill which the students were more comfortable with was how to relate prior knowledge to understand new information. Nine teachers said their students could use prior knowledge to read unfamiliar information as they tapped on their experiences. However, one teacher stated that the students could not use prior knowledge to read unfamiliar texts. The figures as summarized in the above table indicated that while the students achieved the lower level skills like recall of information, there was need to intensify teaching of higher level skills like synthesis of information, and analysis of information. Nevertheless, the students could only succeed when the teachers were well equipped with the skills.

#### **4.2.4 Observed Lessons**

Teachers’ interviews were followed up with lessons’ observation to try and find out what was happening in the selected secondary schools. Observation of intensive reading lessons was done in ten schools to establish the behaviour of the students as they responded during the lessons. The schools were sampled while considering the performance of the students in English in the previous KCSE examinations in the years 2009 and 2010. Hence, the schools were placed in three categories: best, average and poorly performing. The teaching strategies were assessed to determine whether or not the teachers used the recommended metacognitive strategies and the psycholinguistic skills. Apart from that, observation of lessons was used to counter check whether the teachers carried out what they said during the interviews. The

main concern was to find out whether the skills were discussed in the observed lessons. Through inclusion of a skill in the lesson, the researcher found out how well the students responded to the questions posed by the teacher.

#### 4.2.4.1 Fluency

A fluency reading scale from Appendix I was appropriately used to rank the students reading abilities (Pinnel *et al.* 1995). The researcher observed whether or not the students displayed presence or absence of accuracy, automaticity and prosody when reading the chosen texts. During the lessons, the researcher assessed how the teachers responded to students’ answers. Apart from that, the researcher found out whether or not the teachers corrected noted mistakes. The answers from the students enabled the researcher to rate the students’ reading fluency. The reading scale was from level 1 – 4 (Pinnel *et al.* 1995). The Table below which has already been introduced as Table 1 on page 11 summarizes the four levels of reading abilities.

**TABLE 1: Reading fluency scale**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Student’s reading abilities</b>
1	Reads word-by-word-occasional two-or-three-word phrases occur through infrequent/or they do not present meaningful syntax.
2	Reads two-word phrase groups with some three – and four – word groupings some groupings may be awkward and student’s reading ability unrelated to the large context of the sentence or passage. A smaller portion of the text is read with expressive interpretation. Reads a significant section of the text excessively slowly or fast
3	Reads in three – and four – word phrase groups. Some smaller groupings may be present. Majority of the phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax. Little or no expressive interpretation is present. Generally, reads at an appropriate rate.
4	Reads in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions and deviations may be present but do not detract overall structure of the story. Preservation of author’s syntax is consistent. Some or most of the story is read with expressive interpretation. Reads at an appropriate rate.

**Adopted from Pinnel, G.S, Pikulski, J.J, Wixson, K. K Campbell J. R, Gough, P.B (1995) Listening to children Read Aloud; Oral Fluency.**

The Table above was used to identify the levels of the students who were chosen to read aloud during the lesson. A total of fifty students were sampled and the levels calculated while considering automaticity, prosody and accuracy in order to get the fluency level of the students. The fluency levels were necessary for this study as they assisted the researcher to quantify the reading abilities of the students. At the same time, this was a good way to identify where majority of the students fell. Through this approach, an attempt to describe the

situation in the selected secondary schools was done. Nine teachers used loud reading to teach comprehension lessons. Eventually, the levels of fluency among the students were identified and described as the students were given opportunities to read in class.

Although the passages varied from school to school, selected paragraphs have been used as examples of the classroom observation situations. To discuss the emerging issues on fluency, sentences were isolated. The paragraphs where the words, phrases and sentences appeared were identified before a discussion of the emerging linguistic issues. Hence, the researcher attempted to show what the data revealed about reading competence of the students from the ten selected schools. The isolated sentences were numbered 'S' for easy identification. The sentences assisted the researcher find out the fact that the average readers stuttered, repeated certain words or skipped some of them and this interfered with the expected level of fluency. For example, the following italicized words were isolated during a lesson.

He approached the blind beggar nearest to him who was sitting cross-legged and snoring loudly. He stood for a moment before him, gazing intently as though to probe his sleep and determine whether it was genuine or feigned. Then he kicked the *disheveled* head and the man stirred, but not in a startled manner. He raised his head slowly and despite his blindness, he recognized Zaita at once. He thrust his hand *into* his pocket and pulled out a small coin, which *he* placed in Zaita's palm.

Zaita *now* turned to the next beggar, then to the next until he had collected money from all beggars.

## **Stuttering**

### **S1**

*Then he kicked the dish-eveled head...*

A student read the word *disheveled* as she hesitated during a loud reading lesson. She paused and read the word as *dish- eveled*.

The hesitation was interpreted as either lack of word attack skills to read the unfamiliar word or uncertainty of the correct pronunciation of the word. The finding agrees with Ediger (2000) that hesitation is one of the signs of lack of confidence in word recognition.

## **Skipping**

### **S2**

He thrust his hand *into* his pocket and pulled out a small coin, in which *he*----- placed in Zaita's palm.

The italicized words were omitted by a student. This altered the meaning of the sentence as well as the syntax or the word order. Without the pronoun *he* the reader does not understand who was being referred to. Omission of the preposition changes meaning of the sentence for lack of clarity on where the hand was directed.

## **Repetition**

### **S3**

Zaita *now now* turned to the next beggar.

When a student repeated the word *now*, the reading fluency was interrupted. The repetition was interpreted by the researcher as lack of automaticity which is necessary to promote fluent readers.

Level 4 readers were the best while level 1 were the poorest. The students who were rated as level 3 read in three – and-four words phrase groups. Level 3 readers were better than level 2 as they read in three and four words phrase groups. Another noted thing among level 3 readers is that their phrasing was within the expected level as the syntax was well brought out because the students considered correct word order to come up with grammatical sentences. For instance, in one school, the teacher did not highlight a noted mistake in accuracy of decoding words which directly influences level of fluency.

When he was introduced to us at assembly, there was a murmur from the students. It was a murmur of bemusement, a quiet appreciation of the presence of a an who was different from what we were used to seeing. This particular teacher was not dressed casually like the others, and he did not look like he even knew how to handle a cane. Those days, every teacher appeared to know how to handle the cane and apply it most *prodigiously* on our bottoms. But this particular one held a different promise.

The italicized word *prodigiously* was pronounced wrongly but the teacher did not correct it accordingly. The irregular sound letter relationships which covered phonic knowledge and phonological awareness was needed to come up with the correct pronunciation.

If the students were exposed to enough extensive reading, they would be more comfortable when reading unfamiliar texts. The students with the above reading problems displayed lack of confidence which decreased automaticity as they decoded the words while they strained. From the observed lessons, six teachers attempted to develop automaticity while four did not stress on it as a skill. Prosody as a skill was the least referred to by the teachers. Seven teachers ignored this skill while two teachers mentioned the importance of prosody in passing. The teacher from the best performing school pointed out the importance of prosody as a skill but did not teach it directly.

#### 4.2.4.2 Word decoding

The word recognition abilities of students differed from school to school which depended on the chosen reading passage from the course books. Therefore, the students' word recognition abilities were assessed depending on what was being read. Just like fluency, the researcher identified lessons where students were involved in word recognition tasks to tick 'present' while where these activities were not done 'absent' was ticked. Table 10 below summarizes the word decoding skills as observed in the ten lessons.

**TABLE 10: Summary of the word decoding skills present in the observed lessons**

<b>Psychological Skills</b>	<b>Observed</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Identify word correctly	6 60%	4 40%
Read in thought units	6 60%	4 40%
Pronounce closely spelt words correctly	6 60%	4 40%
Can use phonics to recognize unknown words	8 80%	2 20%
Can identify unknown words	5 50%	5 50%
Insert words when reading	6 60%	4 40%
Omit selected words while reading content	7 70%	3 30%
Read words aloud but do not understand meaning	9 90%	1 10%
Can read words and phrases already identified without repeating	3 9%	7 70%

In the ten visited schools, six teachers included correct identification of words while four did not include word identification activities. The teachers who encouraged reading in thought units were six while four teachers did not stress on it. These skills were mainly handled under explanation of meanings of words. The words were from the selected passages. Use of phonics to recognize unknown words were well brought out by eight teachers while two teachers did not include the skill in the lessons.

Words which are closely spelt were well explained to students by six teachers while four did not explain the words. For example, in one school a student read 'bought' as 'brought' and the teacher intervened to correct.

After collecting his dues, he *bought* himself a loaf of bread, some sweets and tobacco, and returned to Midaq Alley where he lived. He carefully pushed open his wooden door and closed it quietly behind him. Inside, sat Dr. Booshy and two other men. Zaita was neither surprised nor troubled by their presence.

The error was interpreted as based on word decoding where the student failed to focus on the reading material.

In five schools, the students were exposed to identifying unknown words while in the remaining five the students were not engaged in the activity. When two students came across an unknown word, they opted for a familiar one.

The village was a marvel of small, heaped houses raised jauntily on groundsels of limestone, and arranged in rows on either side of the multiplying *marl* roads. Sometimes the roads disintegrated, the limestone slid back and the houses advanced across their boundaries to meet those on the opposite side in an embrace of board and shingle and cactus fence. The white *marl* roads made four at each crossing except where the road narrowed to a lane or alley that led into a tenant's backyard. There were shops at each crossing: one, two, sometimes three, and so positioned that the respective owners could note each other's customers.

The word *marl* was unfamiliar and a student pronounced it as *mall* which was familiar as in *shopping malls*. This was interpreted as an indication that the word attack skills were not included in the lessons to assist them read unfamiliar words on their own. Furthermore, the teacher read the word for the student who could not read the unfamiliar word. In contrast, the teacher from the best performing school used a different approach. Initially, during the interview, the teacher had stated that time was allocated to explain to students how to recognize words. In the observed lesson, the teacher discussed the new words as students gave answers without referring to the dictionaries. The researcher noticed that the teacher only intervened at the end of the discussion. This strategy was a good one as the students learnt how to be independent. To add to this, the necessary word attack skills like context clues, comparison with known words, root word, syllabification and use of phonics could be mastered.

In his findings, Dash (2004) revealed that students need to be exposed to use of contextual clues to be independent and fluent readers. This supports the psycholinguistic tenet which highlights that reading is hypothesis based as students need to confirm or reject what they have read depending on the contextual clues. Apart from that, the teachers need to stress the importance of maintaining the original meanings of all the words. For instance, omission or insertion of content words changes the semantics of the sentence. Although the structural words might not create much difference, the students should be taught the importance of keen reading to get the full impacts of words.

Situations where students inserted and omitted words in sentences were noticed in observed lessons. For instance, six lessons had incidences where two students' inserted words while in seven lessons four students omitted selected words. For example, the following error was noted.

The village was *a* marvel of small, heaped houses raised jauntily on groundsels of limestone, and arranged in rows on either side of the multiplying marl roads.

The italicized article '*a*' was omitted which interfered with the student's use of syntax and semantics in sentences. The commonly left out words were articles and pronouns.

In nine schools, five students read out words without getting the meanings. The researcher reached this conclusion when six students failed to explain the meanings of words as used in the selected passages. Furthermore, the students while explaining the words changed the original tenses which were indications that the six students had not mastered word decoding skills. In three schools, six students could read words and phrases without repeating the words. Conclusively, the students could easily recognize the words which contributed to improved comprehension.

#### 4.2.4.3 Comprehension Skills

Psycholinguistic and metacognitive skills were observed to find out whether or not the teachers included the skills in the lessons. Comprehension is the end goal of all reading programmes. Therefore, reading comprehension should be properly cultivated in the students (ACT, Inc., 2006). This supports Harvey and Goudvis (2007) who state that comprehension should encourage students to think as they engage in reading activity, develop awareness of what they are thinking about and effectively make use of the acquired knowledge. A table was used to tick the presence or absence of the psycholinguistic and metacognitive skills which were observed during the lessons. Metacognitive strategies are necessary for a fluent reader because they assist a student develop higher thinking skills. In the observed lessons, some skills were included in the lessons and students responded to the questions well. For example, all the teachers asked factual questions which were well answered. Table 11 summarizes the comprehension skills in the observed lessons. Through the questions which were asked by the teachers during the lessons, conclusions were reached on whether or not the skills were present or absent in the observed lessons.

**Table 11: Summary of observed comprehension skills**

<b>A</b>	<b>Psycholinguistic skills</b>	<b>Observed</b>	<b>Absent</b>
	Answer factual questions	10 100%	
	Answer inferential questions	10 100%	
	Retell in own words	5 50%	5 50%
	Predict next word, phrase and sentence	2 20%	8 80%
	Use prior knowledge	9 90%	1 10%
	Interpret text by identifying issues	9 90%	1 10%
	Identify important text details	8 80%	2 20%
	Recognize link between sentences	4 40%	6 60%
<b>B</b>	<b>Metacognitive strategies</b>		

Classify purpose of reading	6	60%	4	40%
Compare and contrast issues in the text	3	30%	7	70%
Determine cause and effect of issues	7	70%	3	30%
Summarize events in the text	8	80%	2	20%
Sequence of events recognized from text	8	80%	2	20%
Hypothesize and predict authors purpose	3	30%	7	70%
Infer from the text	10	100%		
Establish whole part	3	30%	7	70%
Conclusions based on previous information	8	80%	2	20%

Although inferred questions were asked in all the classes, not all the students readily gave correct answers which were an indication that they needed to be assisted to learn how to respond to implicit questions. Inferred meaning reading falls under both psycholinguistic skills and metacognitive strategies. A passage was used as an example to trace how the students responded. An example of the inferred question below was extracted from the course book.

#### S 4

What does the expression ‘his occasional aloofness and his cosines with young pupils’ mean? The students were supposed to get the answer from the paragraph below:

Mr. Wagatai looked like a story with a tragic ending. It appeared as if past tales of *bounty* and *tragedy* were imprisoned in his peculiar frame. These tales yearned to come out, yet they could not because he would never let them. Instead, his charming nature, *his occasional aloofness and his cosiness with young pupils* made it pointless for one to want to probe into his personal life.

#### S 5

**Answer:** The expression means that sometimes Mr. Wagatai was not friendly to the young pupils and at other times he was warm towards them.

In an attempt to provide the correct meaning to the expression in italics, a student said that the teacher made friends with the pupils. The researcher realized that, though the student got part of the answer, the second part which was required to show contrast was not included.

Five teachers exposed the students to retelling parts of the passage using their own words. However, this skill was missing in five lessons. From this information, the researcher realized that comprehension is tied to word recognition skills because a student needs enough vocabulary to avoid repeating the authors' words. Below is an example to show the importance of word recognition abilities in paraphrasing information from a text.

#### **S 6**

**Paraphrase the following sentence,** "It appeared as if past tales of *bounty* and *tragedy* were imprisoned in his peculiar frame."

Two students responded to the question but they did not get the correct words to paraphrase the italicized words.

#### **Students' attempts:**

##### **S 7**

Wagatai was a *prisoner*.

##### **S8**

Wagatai was a *tragedy*.

The second student due to lack of an appropriate synonym used the same word from the question *tragedy*.

#### **Correct response**

##### **S 9**

Mr. Wagatai had experienced both *good* and *bad* times.

The stress of the question was on how to use synonyms without changing the meaning of the sentence. Nevertheless, the teacher did not show students how to get synonyms without referring to the dictionary. The researcher expected the teacher to include uses of word attack skills in the lesson to assist students use the contextual clues. The responses to the question proved that limited lexicon can affect the quality of comprehension. For example, the words *bounty* and *tragedy* as used in the sentence above were not clear to the students as they required knowledge of vocabularies. The teacher gave the remaining questions as an assignment which was interpreted to mean that the students had enough confidence to successfully do the tasks well.

The students were well exposed to use of prior knowledge from their own experiences in nine lessons which assisted the learners to prepare for the actual reading. The example below was asked in a lesson in preparation to reading the passage.

### S 10

**Teacher:** How many of you enjoy celebrating your birthdays? Why?

When given the opportunity to respond to the above question, the students successfully drew from their own experiences and gave good answers. The answers helped to reach the conclusion that the skill was well mastered in nine schools.

In nine lessons, the students did reading tasks which required them to interpret texts by identifying issues discussed in the passage. Nevertheless, the students did not carry out the given tasks properly and this was noted in nine out of ten schools. The researcher interpreted this as a pointer that there was need for more explanations from the teachers to help learners gain more confidence.

Questions which recognized link between sentences were discussed by four teachers while six teachers did not include them in the lessons. Below is an example of an extract which was used to show how three students responded to a question based on linking information from two paragraphs.

And wherever there were shops there was a street lamp ringed to a post, and Always much activity, and often the *stench of raw living* .The lamps were fuelled with gas and lit at six every evening. When the lights went on, little boys like a bevy of flies assembled around the lamp-post.

There was a public bath for men and women, which had a *perpetual stench of disinfectant pervading the air*, and everywhere limestone constructions like roofless ovens for the disposal of garbage.

### S 11

What were the two sources of stench in the village?

The three students could identify the italicized answer in the second paragraph. However, the italicized answer in the first paragraph was not identified because the answer was implicit.

From the responses, the researcher concluded that the responses could be used to show that the students needed more assistance in answering inferred meaning questions. This meant that the students could read but failed to come up with the total relationship of sentences to get the overall meaning of paragraphs and passages and this could be an explanation why the students failed to interpret examination questions well (KNEC Report, 2007).

Under the metacognitive skills, six teachers classified purpose of the reading before the actual reading while four teachers omitted this skill yet the skill is necessary to successfully prepare the students to use prior knowledge from the students' experience. The sentence below was used by a teacher to help students learn how to monitor their comprehension of the passage.

## S 12

**Teacher:** The author wrote this passage to share with the readers how the narrator did not enjoy his ninth birthday as brought out in paragraph 1.

Rain, rain...my mother put her head through the window to let the neighbor know that I was nine, and flattered me with the *consolation* that my birthday had brought showers of blessing.

The teacher also used the italicized word from the extract above to explain that the narrator felt sad because it was raining on his birthday.

If well linked up, the above question is an example of the connection between psycholinguistic and metacognitive skills. Comparison and contrast of issues were noticed in three lessons while seven lessons did not include this skill. How to determine cause and effects of issues were noted in seven lessons while three lessons did not have this skill. The skill is necessary when tracing the relationship of ideas in a text to achieve overall comprehension. Below is an example of a question which dealt with the skill. The question helped students learn how to discuss causes and effects of actions.

## S 13

Explain what makes Zaita happy when he is walking in the street at night?

Eight lessons had the comprehension skill which required students to summarize sequence of events from a text. If well brought out, the skill can assist the teachers to correctly conclude

the lessons based on previous information. The question below serves as an example to the above skill.

**S 14**

According to the passage, Zaita's joy was that of a powerful lord mixed with the delight of a merchant.

In not more than **50 words**, summarize what makes Zaita a lord and merchant.

However, only in only three lessons were hypothesis and prediction of the author's purpose for writing included. In addition, the students were expected to outline the order of events. This skill assists learners to be creative and imagine if events happened differently from what is included in the text. Questions which were based on how to establish whole part relationships were included in three lessons while seven lessons did not have these types of questions yet this skill help students learn how to connect the ideas from different paragraphs to reach a conclusion based on previous information.

A prediction question was discussed in only one lesson. The example below was used to demonstrate the expectations of such a question. Below is the last part of the story.

The following Monday, Mr Wagatai did not turn up for assembly. We all waited, glancing occasionally at the gate and wondering when that stylish frame would emerge. But Mr. Wagatai never came back. Where he went, nobody knows. There was no mourning for him because nobody knew whether the man was dead or alive. The process of mourning never quite begins until one is certified dead. And so, the village waits for Mr.Wagatai to return, or to hear news that he is dead so that the mourning can begin.

**S 15**

What do you think happened to Mr. Wagatai?

**S 16**

**First student:** He went back home

**S 17**

**Second student:** He died.

**S 18**

**Teacher:** How do you know?

The student could not support his answer yet he should have concluded using metacognitive strategy which allows use of previous information. The answer to the above question required more than one skill and was determined by how well the students could make conclusions using what had been read.

From the last part of this passage, the reader is left in suspense and needs to imagine what happened.

### **4.3 Teaching strategies used to develop reading skills**

The word ‘effectiveness’ as used in the study was interpreted to mean ‘how successful’ the strategies used by the teachers were. Although the teachers used similar strategies, the difference lay in how intensively they used each of them. Below is the presentation and discussion of the findings of the study on this objective. The data was from the teachers’ interviews and the observed lessons.

#### **4.3.1 Fluency**

The students reading background was an advantage as those who were good readers had developed the skills over the years and the teachers did not add much. This finding concurred with Siauli University (2006) study on metacognitive strategies. The study proved that the good readers did not need much help from the teachers as they developed their own strategies over the years. From the observed lessons, 40% of the students had not developed automatic decoding of words and 70% of the students could not read with appropriate use of phrasing and expression to convey meaning. When the teachers were asked how fluently their students could read, six teachers said their students were ‘average’ readers. A teacher rated the students as ‘very good’. Three teachers placed their students under ‘poor’. From these interviews responses, the conclusion was that fluency is not effectively taught to enable more students to move to ‘good’ and ‘very good’. The researcher sought to find out how competent the teachers were in handling reading fluency and four teachers confessed that they found it difficult to teach the skill in class. However, the remaining six teachers who said they found it easy to teach reading fluency did not teach the skill directly as observed from the lessons.

### 4.3.2 Word decoding

To find out how effectively the word decoding skills were taught in the selected secondary schools, intensive reading lessons were observed. The main idea was to find out how the teachers assisted the learners to acquire word recognition skills. The teachers' interviews also assisted the researcher find out how effectively word decoding skills were taught. Word decoding was taught by all the teachers through discussion of specific words from the selected passages. Below is an example of a typical word recognition question.

Zaita sat *engrossed* in the wanderings of his imagination, waiting for the time for work. At about midnight he got up, blew out the lamp and a deep darkness took over. He then felt his way to the door, opened it quietly, and made his way through the bakery into the alley. The cripple maker crossed over to the Hussain Mosque, walking with short deliberate steps.

#### S 15

Explain the meanings of the following words or expressions as used in the passage:

- engrossed
- deliberate
- absolute sovereignty

The above question required the students to use word attack skills to identify how the word was used in the context. At the same time, the student needed a good knowledge of synonyms. For instance, the students were supposed to use the word *absorbed* to replace the word *engrossed* in the passage. Although this section was part of the observed lesson, the teacher did not teach the words directly but they were given as students' assignment. Therefore, the teacher could not verify whether or not the students used word attack skills or checked the correct answer from a dictionary which interfered with the students' abilities to use metacognitive skills effectively. In addition, this could be used as a pointer to lack of effective monitoring of the administered tasks.

### 4.3.3 Comprehension

To find out how comprehension skills were effectively taught, intensive reading lessons were observed. The teachers' interviews were also important as they assisted to reach conclusions

on the students reading competence. The classroom environment was necessary to find out how the teachers interacted with the students in order to assist them learn the psycholinguistic and metacognitive skills. Through this approach, the researcher found out whether or not the skills were effectively taught and learnt.

The teachers were asked if they taught all the language skills. This question was necessary to find out the time given to intensive reading in contrast to the other language skills. The teachers' responses were as summarized in Table 12 below.

**TABLE 12: Summary on frequency of teaching language skills**

Skills	Daily	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	After 2 weeks
Listening		10 100%		
Speaking		10 100%		
Reading	1 10%	5 50%	3 10%	1 10%
Writing	1 10%	8 80%	1 10%	
Grammar	2 20%	8 80%		

Five teachers mentioned that they taught reading once or twice a week. Three teachers taught intensive reading three times a week. A teacher taught reading everyday and a teacher taught reading after every two weeks. The researcher realized that the teacher who said 'daily' had misinterpreted the question to include analysis of literature set books which was not the intended meaning. From the above responses, the researcher noticed that half of the teachers taught intensive reading skills once or twice a week. The three teachers who taught reading three or four times a week included literature lessons. Although language can be taught during literature lessons, there is need to allocate specific time to the psycholinguistic skills through intensive lessons.

Interactions with the teachers revealed that on the average, two lessons were allocated to intensive reading every week. However, two teachers out of ten taught the skills after two weeks which was a long duration and the difficulties the students experienced could not be properly looked into. Literature set books were given more time yet the students needed specific skills to understand the books properly. The teachers of English pointed out that choice of the strategy depended on time constraint and the need to cover all the four languages skills equally. Another challenge the teachers faced is that the special methods are handled at the universities without integrating literature and language yet the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) integrates the two. This has been identified as one reason why

students do not perform well in English (Muindi, 2012) because there is a gap between curriculum implementation and evaluation.

In response to which strategy was frequently used in the classes, the researcher found out that loud reading was ‘always’ used by nine teachers while one used it ‘sometimes’ which was interpreted as ‘occasionally’. Four teachers ‘never’ used silent reading while four teachers ‘always’ used silent reading. Two teachers ‘sometime’ used silent reading skills. The less popular strategy by teachers who taught form four students was a situation where teachers read for the students then gave tasks. However, this strategy can only be effective if the teachers demonstrate good reading skills. Five teachers ‘never’ used the strategy; two teachers ‘sometimes’ used the strategy while three teachers used it ‘always’. Although all the teachers were aware of the advantages of silent and loud reading, they chose the strategies as guided by the number of textbooks in the classes not the individual needs of the students.

Apart from individual reading activities, the study sought to find out how often group work activities were done in the selected schools. The question was necessary to find out whether or not teachers varied their teaching strategies by including learner centered activities. In addition, the responses which covered all the language skills assisted to find out whether or not the teachers gave enough time to the reading skills in contrast to the other language skills. To get the teachers responses, Table 13 below summaries them

**TABLE 13: Summary of frequency of group activities**

Skills	Daily	1 or 2times	3 or 4 times	Never
Listening		6 60%		4 40%
Speaking		7 70%		3 30%
Reading		4 40%	1 10%	5 50%
Writing	1 10%	3 30%	2 20%	4 40%
Grammar		4 40%	1 10%	5 50%

The above Table shows that five teachers ‘never’ used group work to teach reading skills. When probed further, the four teachers who said that they used group work once or twice a week to teach intensive reading agreed that more work was done in the analysis of literature set books than on intensive reading. Though language can be taught through literature set books, there is need to give specific psycholinguistic skills more attention through intensive reading lessons. The four teachers accepted there was need for the Ministry of Education to organize specific seminars based on how to teach intensive reading lessons.

As a follow-up to the question on group work activities, it was important to find out how frequently students did assignments on the specific language skills. Apart from that, the item sought to find out whether or not the assignments were handed in for marking. This question was necessary to find out how closely the teachers monitored the students' progress in carrying out reading tasks. The teachers' responses to the question were summarized in Table 14 below

**TABLE 14: Summary of frequency of assignments**

Skills	Daily	1	2	3	4	5 or more	After 2 weeks
Listening	1 10%	3 30%	6 60%				
Speaking	2 20%	5 50%	2 20%	1 10%			
Reading		5 50%	3 30%	2 20%			
Writing		6 60%	1 10%	1 10%		1 10%	1 10%
Grammar		2 20%	5 50%	3 30%			

From the above table, five teachers administered reading assignments once a week. Three teachers provided assignments twice a week while two teachers gave students assignments three times in a week. On the average, the students had their work marked once a week. The time allocation was not enough to effectively cover all the psycholinguistic skills considering the metacognitive strategies also required attention.

#### 4.4 Learning strategies used to develop reading skills

To find out how effective the learning strategies were, the researcher observed ten lessons and marked administered tasks. Students' reading fluency and comprehension skills were tested. A cloze test passage assisted to find out the level of word recognition. This was necessary as the results were used to verify what the teachers had said.

##### 4.4.1 Fluency

A total of fifty students were given a paragraph from one of the passages to read and a rubric was used to tick the level of fluency which considered four scales (Pinnel et al, 1995). The students' levels of fluency were as summarized below in Table 15.

**TABLE 15: Summary of students' level of fluency**

Levels	No. of students
1	0 0%
2	25 50%
3	20 40%
4	5 10%

From the data, twenty students which translated to 40% were placed under scale 3 where they read in three and four word phrase groups. Although the students preserved the syntax, expressive interpretation was not present. The reading fluency was good. Five students formed 10% of the total number were in level 4 which is the highest and the best. These students could read in larger and meaningful phrase groups and they were consistent in reading the syntax. Two of the students were from the best performing category, two from average performing schools and one from the poorly performing category which proved that fluency was not confined to the best performing schools. Twenty-five students were at level 2 which formed 50%. This group of students read in two – word phrase groups with three – and four – word groupings. Though the students at this level read some sections of the text expressively, they were not consistent to get the overall picture of the story. Nevertheless, no student was at level 1 where one read excessively slowly or fast and read word by word. Level 1 readers are commonly found in primary schools where the pupils are still acquiring the basic psycholinguistic skills. From the overall percentage of students, 10% of the students read using appropriate use of phrasing and expression to convey meaning while 40% of the students could decode the words but hesitated as they read the words. The above behavior was interpreted to mean lack of enough confidence to read without strain which require enough practice through loud reading.

#### **4.4.2 Word decoding**

A cloze test passage was administered to find out how well students had developed word recognition skills. This mode of assessment was chosen by the researcher as it can prove whether students understand meanings of words. At the same time, one can end up predicting the next words (Wallace 2002). The researcher used Semantically Acceptable Scoring (SEMAS) which accepted synonyms without changing the meaning of the sentence (Litz and Smith, 2006). Semantically Acceptable Scoring is better than Exact Replacement Scoring (ERS) as it reflects whether or not a student has mastered synonyms over the years.

The cloze test passage was done by a total of fifty students from the ten selected schools. More so, the researcher supervised the sessions as this ensured that the students used word attack skills to respond to the blank spaces. The students' scripts were marked out of ten to match the provided blanks. The scores were then translated to percentages as summarized on Table 16 below.

**Table 16: Summary of students scores in the cloze test passage.**

No. of students	Scores	
1	4	40%
1	3	30%
20	2	20%
18	1	10%
10	0	0%

The overall performance was poor .Only one student out of fifty students scored 40%. A student scored 30%, twenty students scored 20%, eighteen scored 10% and ten students scored 0%. The answers were poorly written and the students failed to consider the trend of thoughts in the sentences to come up with the correct words. To discuss the linguistic shortcomings in the students’ answers, sections of the answers were availed to point out the noted mistakes. Specific sentences were isolated to serve as examples that teachers needed to assist students master word recognition skills.

**Cloze passage (10 Marks)**

**Fill each blank space in the following passage with the most appropriate.**

The cornerstone of Plato’s thought was his theory ----- (1) forms or ideas. It disturbed Plato that he could not gain satisfactory intellectual control over the world. The quality of virtue, for example, meant different things in different situations as ----- (2) honesty, courage, truth and beauty. Generally speaking, for example, virtue ----- (3) individuals to honour and obey their parents ----- (4). If a parent engaged in illegal behavior, virtue required offspring to --- ----- (5) the offence and----- (6).

How was it possible then to understand virtue as an abstract quality? In seeking an answer to this question, Plato developed his belief that the world, in which we live, was not the genuine world. Indeed, was not the world of genuine reality but only a pale and imperfect reflection of the world of forms or ideas? Display of virtue or all other \_\_\_\_\_(7) in the world imperfectly reflected the ideal qualities. Only by entering the world of forms or ideas ----- (8) it possible to understand the true nature of virtue and other qualities. The secrets of this world were available ----- (9) to philosophers-those who applied their rational facilities to the----- (10) of wisdom.

### **Examples of responses from the students' scripts**

The following sentences were identified to discuss level of word recognition skills among the sampled fifty students. Apart from that, the sentences were used to point out the prevailing mistakes.

#### **S 17**

If a parent engaged in illegal behavior, virtue required offspring to *do* (5) the offence and *take* punishment.

#### **S 18**

The cornerstone of Plato's thought was his theory *investigated* (1) forms or ideas.

#### **S 19**

The cornerstone of Plato's thought was his theory *OF* (1) from or ideas.

The sentences above indicate that the students failed to link the sentences to identify the next word or phrase as noticed in sentence 18. Furthermore, capital letters were misused as in sentence 19. Some students inserted two words in a blank space as in sentence 20 below:

#### **S 20**

The quality of virtue, for example, meant different things in different situations *such as* (2) honesty, courage, truth and beauty.

The error in sentence 20 reflected that this student had limited lexicon which could not enable him to identify an appropriate word for the provided blank space.

### **4.4.3. Comprehension skills**

A passage was read and questions responded to by fifty sampled students under supervision for 45 minutes. The reading task was supposed to register how well the students had acquired the psycholinguistic and metacognitive skills. The students' scores were out of twenty which were converted to percentages then summarized in Table 16 below.

**TABLE 17: Summary of the students' scores in the administered comprehension passage.**

NUMBER	OUT OF 20	%
1	17	85
2	16	80
2	15	75
2	14	70
5	13	65
2	12	60
2	11	55
2	10	50
4	9	45
6	8	40
4	7	35
4	6	30
8	5	25
5	3	15
1	2	10

The scores indicated that few students were comfortable with the learnt skills. Out of the fifty students, only seven students scored above 70%. Four students scored 45 % and a student had 10%.Thirty-two students ranged between 45% and 15% which was not an encouraging trend considering that comprehension passages carry more marks in the English Examinations at K.C.S.E level. The students' use of incomplete sentences were commonly noted in all the scripts which proved that the students did not know there is a difference between spoken and written forms of communication. The student who had the best mark at 85% was from an average performing school which was a pointer that a student can do well in any environment as long as the motivation to read is there. The students' scripts had a number of noticeable errors which touched on syntax, semantics, phonological awareness and lack of proper link between sentences. Spelling mistakes were quite dominant which proved that the students had poor word recognition skills.

From the read passage, for instance, the words 'grimaces' and 'deliberately' were wrongly spelt as 'grimances' 'liberately'. The students who made the mistakes failed to concentrate in order to achieve the required interaction between reading and writing yet this is one of the tenets of the psycholinguistic theory. Some of the definitions attached to the given words were very far from the expected. For example, answers like 'the trap' or 'mental illness' were used to define the word 'assylum'. Ninety per cent of the students failed to get synonyms to avoid repetition of the provided words. Seventy percent of the students left blank spaces to most of the questions which was interpreted as 'lack of information' to answer the questions.

In reference to Table 4, on page the students' scores indicated that while some of them show that they are on the upward trend as concerns mastery of the psycholinguistic skills, majority still need to be assisted to acquire them successfully. All the students from the best performing school were all above average with the lowest scoring 55% and the highest with 80%. This can be attributed to background knowledge as the findings support Ohio State University (Science Daily, 2010) study which stated that environment plays an important role in language learning. Gathumbi (2005) stresses the importance of background knowledge and learner centered activities to motivate the learners.

#### **4.5 Students' reading skills preferences**

To examine students reading preferences, an interview was done using a structured questionnaire. Through this approach, students' opinions towards the learning styles and the available conditions in the school were identified. Information on students' preferences was sought based on the most preferred skill.

Sixteen students chose reading, eighteen students chose listening, six students chose speaking, four students chose writing and four students chose grammar. Out of the fifty students, seven students chose reading as the least preferred skill. This question was necessary as it would portray the students' interest in developing the reading skills.

This question was followed by the one on how the students rated their reading behavior. One student rated himself as 'very good', thirteen students rated themselves as 'good'. Thirty-six students, who were the majority, rated themselves as 'average'. From this response, a conclusion was reached that the students did not regard themselves highly and their confidence needed to be boosted through use of effective exposure to metacognitive strategies.

In order to find out how well the students were exposed to extensive reading, the students were asked how often they borrowed books from the library. These questions were necessary as they assisted to find out whether or not the students were exposed to supplementary reading materials. Forty-one students said that they borrowed books more than once a week. Six students stated that they borrowed books once a week and three students borrowed books once a month. However, the students when probed further said that they mainly borrowed textbooks which were used as course books. This meant that story books, which they needed to improve reading skills, were hardly borrowed as they were either missing or not interesting

enough. From the same interviews, it was established that the students lacked enough interesting story books which could motivate them to read further as the libraries in the selected secondary schools needed proper stocking.

Students' level of preference for the supplementary resources was assessed. A list was provided from which the students were expected to choose based on their interests. Through this item, the researcher sought to find out whether or not the selected schools had other avenues which promoted independent learning. The responses to the question were summarized in Table 18 below.

**TABLE 18: Summary of supplementary materials as per students' level of preferences**

	<b>Most preferred</b>		<b>Moderately Preferred</b>		<b>Least Preferred</b>	
Storybooks	39	78%	11	22%	10	20%
Newspapers	48	96%	2	4%		
Magazines	15	30%	35	70%		
Audio tapes	30	60%	20	40%		
Audio/visual tapes	40	80%	5	10%	5	10%
Radio	26	52%	9	18%	5	10%
TV	34	68%	16	32%		
Internet			10	100%		

From the discussions with the students, the data revealed that 78% of the students 'mostly preferred' story books though they stated that the ones available in the schools were not interesting. In addition, the students said that the story books were archaic. The responses further revealed that 20% of the students were not sure whether or not they had story books in the schools which could be translated to mean lack of interest. Forty-eight students 'mostly preferred' newspapers. However, the students said that the newspapers were mainly in the staffrooms and they hardly reached the students as some schools did not have libraries to keep the newspapers. The same trend was established when the researcher sought to find out whether or not students were exposed to televisions. The answers revealed 68% of the students 'mostly preferred' televisions. Ten students did not know the difference between magazines and newspapers but after they were defined it was established that only 30% 'mostly preferred' magazines. Through this item, it was concluded that 80% of the students 'mostly preferred' audio/visual tapes to learn reading. From the above figures, the researcher realized that the students were not widely exposed to different avenues for learning to create independence in reading and further research yet they desired to have them in the learning

sessions. Students were cautious when asked about their learning preferences towards the use of the internet. None of them selected the learning mode as the ‘most preferred’. The fifty students chose ‘moderately preferred’ which was interpreted to mean ‘uncertainty’ as most of the students lacked computer literacy.

Students were asked whether or not they enjoyed silent reading, loud reading or both silent and loud reading. The students’ responses were summarized in Table 19 below. This question was asked to establish students’ preferred reading style. Moreover, the question assisted to find out whether or not the teachers’ choices suited the students.

**TABLE 19: Summary of the students preferred reading style**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Always</b>		<b>Sometimes</b>		<b>Never</b>	
Loud reading	16	32%	18	36%	16	32%
Silent reading	18	36%	6	12%	26	52%
Both loud and Silent reading	15	30%	17	34%	18	36%

The figures above show that though nine teachers used loud reading skills to teach intensive reading, the skill was not the most preferred. Instead, the students’ responses 36% of them revealed that they ‘always’ liked silent reading. On the other hand, 36% of the students ‘always’ liked loud reading. Furthermore, 30% of the students preferred both loud and silent reading. The responses revealed that the students needed a variety of learning strategies where the teachers considered their learning preferences. Nevertheless, 90% of the teachers preferred loud reading as established from the summarized data.

To assist the students learn well, a question was asked to find out which skills they would have preferred explained to them. The answers reflected that 34% of the students wanted to know how to increase their reading fluency. However, 20% of the students were undecided on the areas they would like assistance on. When probed further, 28% of the students wanted help with how to recognize and read words.

In a discussion with the students, 14% of the learners needed to know how to answer questions using specific words while 16% of the students desired to know how to pronounce words. The current study found out that 18% of the students had difficulties in decoding words; especially those with irregular letter sound relationships. The responses helped to

reach conclusions on this item that students needed guidance in carrying out the key psycholinguistic skills: fluency, word decoding and comprehension.

To find out the skills which the students found easy or difficult to learn, it was noted that the students experienced more difficulties with higher level skills than lower level ones. For example 36% found problems with reading to get synthesis of ideas in a text and make predictions about a text while 86% found recall of information easy as it fell under one of the basic comprehension skills a learner needs to know. Use of prior knowledge was difficult to 10% and this was interpreted to mean that students were comfortable with questions which were linked to their experiences and familiar backgrounds. This finding support Gathumbi (2005) that background knowledge plays important roles in learners' lives. Note making skills were easy for 88% of the students which required that they write answers using incomplete answers as in spoken speech. The response on note making skills was identified as an explanation why forty-five students wrote incomplete answers when responding to questions from the administered reading passage. Although 70% of the students found summaries writing easy, 12% of the students were undecided. The researcher interpreted this indecision as either lack of knowledge of what was required or need for more help in the area.

After discussing the classroom strategies, it was important to find out the learning styles the students preferred. The students' preferences were explained under the six learning styles: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, individual, tactile and group (Reid, 1987). In conclusion, comprehension skills were assessed to find out the ones which the students were comfortable with while using a self-report assessment based on the six learning styles. A certain pattern was noted when assessing students from best, average and poorly performing schools. The students from best performing school were comfortable with auditory learning at 100%. The least preferred style in the best performing school was individual learning at 6%. None of the students preferred teacher dominated classes. The average performing students enjoyed group activities at 88.5% and individual learning style was the least preferred at 31.4%. The poorly performing schools enjoyed tactile at 100% as well as group at 100%. The least preferred was individual style at 10%. The responses revealed that students enjoyed learner centered activities like group work and use of interesting learning aids.

As an answer to the statement '*we would like the teacher of English to do the following to improve our language skills*', the likert scale was used to grade the responses as summarized below on Table 20.

**Table 20: Self-report assessment based on the six learning styles**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Students want teachers to provide plenty of in-class student discussions	36 72%	6 12%	8 16%
Students want teachers to correct their errors	44 88%	6 12%	
Students want teachers to provide a role model for them	38 76%	7 14%	5 10%
Students want teachers to encourage them to be independent learners	22 44%	16 32%	12 24%
Students want teachers to provide a variety of interesting reading materials in the library	44 88%	4 8%	2 4%
Students want teachers to talk throughout the lesson as they listen	2 4%	8 16%	40 80%

As can be seen from Table 20, 72% of the students wanted teachers to provide plenty of in-class student discussions, 12% of the students were undecided and 16% students disagreed. As concerns the students being corrected by the teacher, 88% of the students wanted teachers to correct them, while 12% of the students were undecided. The students stated that 44% of them wanted the teachers to encourage them to be independent .However, 32% of the students were undecided on whether or not they wanted to be independent while 24% of the students disagreed. This question was interpreted in different ways by the students even after clarification. This is why when asked whether they wanted a variety of interesting reading materials in the library, 88% of the students agreed, 8% of the students were undecided and 4% of the students disagreed.

When probed further, the students who disagreed felt that the teachers would not commit themselves to the lessons but would simply send them to the libraries to read on their own. The undecided students were not sure whether or not this would work as some schools could hardly afford the books. More so, the schools which tried to stock the libraries did not have a variety of reading materials. As concerns getting role models from the teachers, 76% of the students agreed that this was necessary, 14% of the students were undecided and 10% of the students disagreed. When asked whether they wanted teachers to teach them throughout the lesson, 80% of the students disagreed, 16% of the students were undecided and 4% of the students agreed. From the self report, the students wanted the teachers to guide them as role models at the same time encourage independence through providing a variety of interesting reading materials in the libraries.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study aimed to carry out a psycholinguistic assessment of reading skills acquisition in Emuhaya district. The analysis in chapter four focused on four main objectives: describe fluency, decoding and comprehension strategies used by teachers in developing reading skills of learners in selected secondary schools; determine the effectiveness of the strategies used by teachers in developing reading skills of learners; assess the effectiveness of fluency, decoding and comprehension strategies used by learners and examine the reading skills preferences the learners make. The current chapter dwells on summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

#### 5.2 Reading fluency, word decoding and comprehension skills

Three categories of schools were studied; best, average and poor performing. The analysis of the results revealed that good reading was spread out in the three categories of schools and was not a preserve of the best performing school. More so the leading student in comprehension was from an average performing school. The scores from the data were interpreted as emerging from the students' own initiative. In addition, secondary school teachers depended on other means of developing fluency which were poetry recitation, debates, narrating stories in oral literature lessons and speech drills in grammar lessons. This was proved by the fact that the ten interviewed teachers could not categorically rate the reading fluency level of their students.

In the classrooms, though loud reading was used as a strategy to teach fluency, some schools did not have enough textbooks. For instance, in one of the schools, six students shared a book. Therefore, all the students were not well exposed to the reading materials and could not practice reading fluency. In addition, the teachers did not give all the students time to read, hence; need for a variety of reading strategies which is supported by ACT, Inc., (2006) which states that though guided reading is effective, slow readers can end up being embarrassed if exposed to a common textbook.

According to the psycholinguistic theory, the interaction between reading and writing skills should be well brought out in order to comprehend a text. For example, the five students who could comprehend the texts knew how to link up the sentences well. They could also interpret the sentences and use correct prosody which the researcher detected from the tonal variations as the students read statements and questions. The mastery of prosody enabled them to highlight mood and attitudes of the writers.

If word decoding is not properly attained, the level of fluency cannot be good because automatic recognition of sounds, letters and words would not take place. More so, punctuation marks assist in fluency as the meaning is properly registered through expressive reading of words.

In all the visited schools, none of the teachers was familiar with the word attack skills which include; syllabification, context clues, root words and comparison with known words. All the teachers complained that students depended on the dictionary and teachers' assistance to read forgotten or unfamiliar words. The teachers did not take time to discuss words which were not commonly used by the students to help them learn how to be independent. The students lacked self confidence, hence; they stuttered, skipped, inserted or omitted words.

Another finding from the study is that the teachers gave word recognition activities as assignments without concentrating on teaching the skills. The teachers assumed that the lower level skills; where word decoding falls, had been mastered in primary schools. However, the teachers who gave assignments based on the decoding skills could not guarantee that the students did not copy the meaning from the dictionary.

All the observed lessons used passages from the approved course books. The different strategies used by the teachers assisted the researcher to find out how well the psycholinguistic and metacognitive skills were traced in the observed lessons. Among all the lessons, the teacher from the best performing school took time to explain to the students how to approach a passage while outlining the important reading skills to bear in mind. After that, the teacher went through the questions to help students focus on them as they read the passage. Besides, the students read the passage loudly at whole class and individual level. At whole class level, the teacher corrected pronunciations of words as the students read. The relationships between the paragraphs were discussed. A wide range of questions were discussed which included factual, inference, summary, relationships between the ideas and definitions of meanings of words. The teacher highlighted grammar aspects and discussed

indirect, direct speech and question tags. When the teacher discussed the meaning of words, she stressed that the students should only use one answer and not two as one can negate the other which was good advice. As a conclusion, students were asked to pose questions but they did not respond. The researcher concluded that the lesson was well conducted and the students understood the concepts.

Among the average performing schools, a variety of strategies were noted. For example, a teacher explained the procedures of reading a comprehension passage but the actual reading was not done. Besides, the teacher gave all the ten questions as an assignment. Although the questions covered the necessary comprehension skills, the students were not exposed to the practical steps of gaining these skills. Therefore, it was more of a theoretical lesson than a practical one.

### **5.3 Teaching strategies used to develop reading skills**

Reading should be a receptive as well as an active process (Lipson and Wixson, 1997). Therefore, the learners should be well equipped with the specific skills at the same time enjoy themselves when reading a text. Loud reading was significantly used in all the visited schools except four teachers who allocated few minutes to silent reading. However, both strategies have advantages and disadvantages when it comes to reading abilities. Availability of reading materials also determines the success or failure of the lessons. Loud reading belongs to the oral English programme and is quite effective in teaching the lower level skills of reading like eye movements, word recognition and identification skills. Nevertheless loud reading limits the reading speed yet a secondary school student needs to develop speed for better comprehension and cover enough academic work. In addition, loud reading assists in development of correct pronunciation of words, enunciation which focus on sounds of the letters, intonation and its effect on interpretive reading. Eventually, the mistakes can be corrected on the spot and save time for the remedial work and this can assist the secondary students who have difficulties in developing fluency and word decoding problems. Apart from this, listening skill is enhanced to boost reading and writing as recommended by the psycholinguistic theory.

On the contrary, silent reading develops fast reading skills and achieves better comprehension due to undivided concentration. In addition, group teaching can be done where the backward readers are attended to. The spellings of words improve as the readers can focus on them and

note the correct order of letters. Since the students are in control of their reading, they can build vocabulary as they encounter unfamiliar words and try to understand them from their context. Nevertheless, one disadvantage is that the teacher cannot detect whether there is meaningful reading taking place. The current study found out that more teachers leaned towards loud reading which failed to consider individual differences of the students.

When students are picked to read sections of a passage, both slow and fast readers can follow it. One disadvantage is that only a student develops the necessary reading skills at a go as the rest are passive. Furthermore, the teacher can end up picking the best reader and forget the rest of the class. Through preference for loud reading over silent reading, the teachers failed to consider the slow learners.

The main word attack skills which fit secondary school students like context clues, comparison with known words, root words, syllabification and phonics can be integrated in the lessons to create independence among the learners. The word recognition skills, which enhance monitoring of comprehension, were not properly taught in the observed lessons. For example, the teachers could have assisted students identify author's intentions and link them up to the student's background knowledge and this would have helped them identify with the main issues discussed in the text. If the teachers used a variety of strategies, individual preferences could be considered and merged in the lessons. This would draw out the expected cognitive skills which are phonics, phonological awareness, reading fluency and morphological awareness. The teachers would strategically develop the comprehension skills over the years to capture the intricate nature of reading. Over dependence on the questions from the course books emerged from the observed lessons. One noted disadvantage is that the psycholinguistic and metacognitive skills which were not incorporated in the chosen passages were not taught to the learners. This can be supported by the fact that 100% of all the observed lessons had factual and inferred questions but 80% did not have questions which assisted learners predict next word, phrase or sentence while using word attack skills. There was imbalance in the choices of questions since all the teachers concentrated on the set questions. Eventually, the students had difficulties in developing the reading skills which were not given enough attention by the selected course books.

For example, six of the observed lessons did not include questions which could assist students to link up sentences in the passages. Although all the teachers had schemes of work and the syllabus, none of them planned for the lessons which gave the teachers room to

concentrate on one aspect of comprehension and forgot the other skills. For instance, nine teachers used prior knowledge from students' experiences which ended up taking more minutes in the lesson. In the process, the teachers forgot to move on to other comprehension skills. The researcher reached a conclusion that lack of a balanced discussion of the skills could explain why fewer questions were given attention in the classrooms.

#### **5.4 Learning strategies used to develop reading skills**

From the data analysis in chapter four, the psycholinguistic learning strategies were highlighted and then discussed to find out how they were successfully learnt. The tasks were administered by both the researcher and the teachers. On reading fluency, the analysis of the data as per Table 15 on page 58 revealed that 50% of the sampled students were average readers. In addition, since fluency as a skill was taught through other skills like dictation, poetry recitation, and speech drills, the teachers lacked a specific programme which could clearly show how students were taught this skill.

When the students were interviewed, they stated that among the skills which they would like the teachers to explain to them was how to increase their reading fluency. The researcher interpreted this to mean that the students were asking for specific strategies on fluent reading. Therefore, this request was used to conclude that the psycholinguistic learning strategies were not effectively taught.

To gauge word decoding competence of the students, the researcher administered a cloze test to fifty sampled students. The students' scores were low as already discussed. A student scored 40% and ten students got 0%. From these scores, the students needed specific skills on how to tackle unfamiliar or forgotten words. Not only would the word attack skills be necessary knowledge but they would also be avenues for independent reading. The cloze test passage was further indication that the students required more vocabularies and knowledge of synonyms to effectively identify substitute words when necessary.

As concerns the psycholinguistics skills and metacognitive strategies, there was need to expose students to more self monitoring skills. These skills would enhance comprehension because the students would learn how to sieve the given information in order to answer specific questions. The students mentioned that among the skills which they would like the teachers to explain to them was how to answer specific questions. Apart from that, the

students were not competent in answering high level skills questions like synthesis of information from a text and analysis of information.

### **5.5 Students' reading skills preferences**

From the analyzed data, the students preferred learning styles which were learner centered. For instance, the students wanted group activities yet they were hardly used. Furthermore, the students needed the teachers to include learning aids to help them remember the concepts. Nevertheless, the researcher did not witness use of learning aids in all the observed lessons. Only two students wanted individual learning. The request was interpreted as a sign of lack of confidence. Instead, the students wanted the teachers and their peers to work closely with them when carrying out the reading tasks.

The students who preferred silent reading can be interpreted that they felt embarrassed when reading loudly. To add on to that, silent reading could be preferred by those students who would like to be corrected discreetly. Though loud reading was the most preferred by the teachers, the students' favourite reading style was silent reading. Though loud reading was the teachers' best strategy, the students pointed out in a self-report assessment that the teachers' corrections were limited yet they would like to be guided.

From the students' self- report what they wanted their teachers to do for them was summarized. The analysis showed that 88% of the students required well stocked libraries with varieties of interesting reading materials. To follow- up this suggestion, the students mentioned that they would like both print and electronic media when exposed to reading skills. Through this approach, the students suggested that they would be more exposed to the changing times which support Ohio State University (Science Daily, 2010). Electronic reading creates enthusiastic readers as the strategy deviates from the normal classroom set up.

The students' learning preferences, if well considered, could assist teachers come up with effective programmes which cater for the learners' when exposed to psycholinguistic skills and metacognitive strategies which are necessary in a successful reading programme. The needs of the individual students would be taken care of.

## **5.6 Conclusions**

The following are the summarised findings for each study objective:

The first objective of this study was to describe fluency, decoding and comprehension strategies used by teachers in developing reading skills of learners in the selected secondary schools. The study found that reading fluency and word recognition skills were not taught directly in the selected secondary schools to help boost effective comprehension of the texts. The higher level skills were concentrated on more than the lower level skills yet the two categories are necessary to develop competence in reading.

The second objective of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the strategies used by teachers in the development of learners' reading skills in the selected secondary schools. The study found that the lessons lacked variety of approaches to motivate learners. Apart from that, the level of intensity of teaching the psycholinguistic and metacognitive strategies was not balanced in all the selected secondary schools which interfered with the development of the reading skills. The teachers tackled more questions on factual and inference than the other skills when they taught reading comprehension. Loud reading was preferred to silent reading though the teachers cited the importance of balancing the two strategies. When teaching comprehension, the teachers mainly relied on the course books to teach the psycholinguistic skills. The teachers were not familiar with the word attack skills which are necessary to develop independent readers.

The third objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of fluency, decoding and comprehension strategies used by learners in the development of reading skills in the selected secondary schools. The study found that the administered tasks proved that students' mastery of the psycholinguistic skills needed concentrated attention as they displayed quite a range of linguistic mistakes. The scores indicated that the foundation a learner had could assist to determine how well one read and performed the given tasks. In addition, the intensity of exposure to the psycholinguistic skills created a difference in reading development.

The fourth objective of this study was to examine the reading skills preferences the learners make in the selected secondary schools. The study found that students played minimal roles in choosing the learning strategies as the teachers made the decisions on the type of reading activities they were involved in. Therefore, the learning strategies did not directly address

individual differences to help learners pursue their reading preferences and be independent. For example, those students with fluency, word recognition and comprehension challenges were not given specific tasks to catch up with the others.

## **5.7 Recommendations**

Psycholinguistic research on reading has continued to draw interest and the researcher acknowledges the work which has been done before. Moreover, the current study is just an additional one at the secondary level and recommends the following

1. Reading fluency and word recognition skills should be taught directly using a properly outlined reading programme. In addition, refresher courses should be organized for secondary school teachers of English on how to teach the key psycholinguistic skills.
2. All the psycholinguistic skills should be given enough attention to avoid imbalance in mastery of the skills by the students. Reading extracts can be retrieved from other sources apart from the course books to avoid monotony.
3. The teachers of English should use a variety of metacognitive strategies to assist students develop them and learn how to monitor comprehension of texts. More so, challenges faced by the students while developing the reading skills should be identified and tackled by being given specific reading tasks as this would help them gain the confidence to answer questions effectively as required by the examinations.
4. Students reading preferences should be considered to create a variety of reading strategies which can motivate the learners to develop the necessary reading culture.

## **5. Suggestion for further research**

1. How secondary schools can be assisted to stock libraries with a variety of supplementary resources which can promote further reading.

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## APPENDIX A

### TEACHERS OF ENGLISH QUESTIONNAIRE

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- Do not write your name.
- Every information will be treated with confidentiality.
- Put a tick in the spaces provided.

1. At what level have the following language skills been attained by the students in your school?

	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very Poor</b>
a)	Listen carefully and respond to information					
b)	Speak accurately and efficiently					
c)	Use variety of sentence structures and vocabulary correctly					
d)	Use correct grammatical and idiomatic forms of English					
e)	Use a range of sources of information like libraries, dictionaries and encyclopedia correctly					
f)	Write neatly, legibly and effectively					
g)	Think creatively and critically					

2. Among the following skills, rank the most preferred to the least preferred by the students (Where most preferred is number 1).

<b>Skills</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Listening					
Speaking					
Reading					
Writing					
Grammar					

3. How often do you teach each of the following language skills?

Skills	Never	1	2	3	4	Everyday
Listening						
Speaking						
Reading						
Writing						
Grammar						

4. How would you rate the reading behavior of students in your school?

Grade	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Form 1					
Form 2					
Form 3					
Form 4					

5. How often does the Ministry of Education organize seminars for teachers of English in the following language skills?

Skills	Never	Once a month	Once a term	Hardly ever
Listening				
Speaking				
Reading				
Writing				
Grammar				

6. How adequate are the following supplementary resources?

Resources	Adequate	Fairly adequate	Inadequate
Story books			
Newspapers			
Magazines			
Audio Tapes			
Audio / Visual tapes			
Radio			
Television			
Internet			

7. How often do you use the following strategies to teach comprehension skills?

Strategy	Always	Sometimes	Never
Teacher reads then gives tasks			
Students read loudly then carry out tasks			
Students read silently then carry out tasks			

8. What makes you choose one strategy over another when teaching reading skills?

9. To what extent do you assist your students in the development of the following language skills?

	Skills	Great extent	Moderately	Hardly
a)	Listen carefully to spoken information			
b)	Recognize and read words			
c)	Increase reading speed			
d)	Answer questions using specific strategies			
e)	Use a range of vocabularies and sentences structures appropriately			

10. How often are group activities done per week in your class when teaching the following language skills?

Skills	Never	1	2	3	4	Every day
Listening						
Speaking						
Reading						
Writing						
Grammar						

11. Which of the following language skills do you find difficult or easy to teach?

Skills	Difficult	Undecided	Easy
Reading fluency			
Word decoding			
Blending words			
Phonological awareness			
Phonic knowledge			
Morphological awareness			
Summary writing			
Note making			

Synthesis of ideas in a text			
Recall of information			
Application of information			
Analysis of information			
Predicting about a text			
Use of prior knowledge			

12. How would you rate the support given by the following departments in the teaching of English language skills?

<b>Department</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very Poor</b>
Science					
Humanities					
Applied Science					
Language					
Administration					
Mathematical					
Co-curriculum					

13. How often do you give assignments per week in the following languages skills and receive them for marking?

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5 days +</b>
<b>Listening</b>					
<b>Reading</b>					
<b>Writing</b>					
<b>Grammar</b>					

14. How often do you use the following strategies?

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>
Speech drills			
Reciting poems			
Dramatization			
Role play			
Debate			
Dictation			
Making speeches			
Listening comprehension			
Interpretive reading of extracts			
Telling stories			

Note-making			
Drawing discussion ideas			
Study skills reading			
Critical reading			
Re-writing exercise			
Objective questions			
Group discussions			
Use pictures to encourage writing			
Composition writing			
Completion exercise			

Drama			
Kiswahili			
English			
Debate			
Journalism			
Reading club			

15. How often do students borrow books from the library?

Never	
Once a month	
Once a Week	
More than once a week	

16. How do you rate the ability to monitor comprehension in the following ways by your students?

	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>
a)	Predict next word, phrase or sentence			
b)	Re-write information in own words			
c)	Use prior knowledge from experience to understand new information			
d)	Interpret text by identifying issues			
e)	Infer meaning from text			
F)	Identify important text details			
g)	Recognize link between sentences			
h)	Understand meaning of words, phrases and sentences.			

## APPENDIX B

### STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- Do not write your name.
- Every information will be treated with confidentiality.
- Put a tick in the spaces provided.

1. Rank the following skills according to the most preferred to the least preferred. (Where least preferred is number 1).

Skill	1	2	3	4	5
Listening					
Speaking					
Reading					
Writing					
Grammar					

2. What is the level of your preference for the following resources?

Resources	Most preferred	Moderately preferred	Least preferred
Story Books			
Newspapers			
Magazines			
Audio tapes			
Audio /Visual tapes			
Radio			
Television			
Internet			

3. How often are you allowed to borrow books from the school library?

Once a month	
Once a week	
More than once a week	

4. How often in a week would you like to be taught the following skills?

Skills	Daily	1	2	3	4	Never
Listening						
Speaking						
Reading						
Writing						
Grammar						

5. What is the level of your preference for the following comprehension skills?

	Comprehension skill	Most preferred	Moderately preferred	Least preferred
a	Teacher read then gives tasks			
b	Students read loudly then carry out tasks			
c	Students read silently then carry out tasks			

6. Would you prefer the teacher to explain how to carry out the following language skills?

	Language skill	Yes	Undecided	No
a	Pronounce words correctly			
b	Listen carefully to spoken information			
c	Recognize and read words			
d	Increase reading fluency			
e	Answer questions using specific words			
f	Use a range of vocabularies and sentence structures appropriately			
g	Write neatly legibly and effectively			

7. How often per week would you prefer group activities to be done when learning the language skills below?

Language skill	Daily	1	2	3	4	Never
Listening						
Speaking						
Reading						
Writing						
Grammar						

8. How would you rate the following language skills in terms of their level of difficulty?

<b>Language skill</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Easy</b>
Reading fluency			
Word decoding			
Blending words			
Summary writing			
Note making			
Combining sounds to make words			
Correlating letters and sounds			
Synthesis of ideas in a text			
Recall of information			
Application of information			
Analysis of information			
Making predictions about a text			
Using prior knowledge to understand a text			

9. How often in a week do you do assignments in the following languages skills?

<b>Skill</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5 or more</b>	<b>Never</b>
Listening						
Speaking						
Reading						
Writing						
Grammar						

10. Do you enjoy learning the following skills?

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>No</b>
Speech drills			
Reciting poems			
Dramatization			
Role play			
Debate			
Dictation			
Making Speeches			
Listening comprehension			
Interpretive reading of extracts			
Telling stories			
Note-making			
Drawing discussed ideas			

Study skills reading			
Critical reading			
Re-writing exercises			
Objective questions			
Use pictures to encourage writing			
Gap-filling exercises			
Composition writing			
Completion exercise			

11. How actively do you participate in the following clubs?

<b>Club</b>	<b>Actively</b>	<b>Moderately</b>	<b>Hardly</b>
Drama			
Kiswahili			
English			
Debate			
Journalism			
Reading club			

11. What is your preference of learning style?

<b>Learning style</b>	<b>Most preferred</b>	<b>Moderately preferred</b>	<b>Least preferred</b>
Ask question based on the text			
Summarize issues discussed in the text			
Clarify issues raised in the text			

### **C. Students' preferred learning styles**

1. Rate your learning style preference in terms of Agree, Disagree, and Undecided.

<b>Learning styles</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
I prefer to work with others in groups			
I prefer to work or read alone			
I prefer to take notes and use learning aids			
I prefer to listen to the teacher or someone explain points			
I prefer to read notes either on the blackboard or in my book, watch videos and take notes			
I prefer to participate actively in class through drama, role play or move around			

2. We would like the teacher of English to do the following to improve our language skills.

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Students want teachers to provide plenty of in-class student discussions			
Students want teachers to correct their errors			
Students want teachers to provide a role model for them			
Students want teachers to encourage them to be independent learners			
Students want teachers to provide a variety of interesting reading materials in the library			
Students want teachers to talk throughout the lesson as they listen			

3. How often do you prefer the following reading strategies?

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>
Loud reading			
Silent reading			
Both silent and loud reading			

**APPENDIX C  
OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

**Reading Performance**

		Observed	Absent
A	Psycholinguistic skills		
1.	Word recognition ability Identify words correctly Reading in thought units Pronounce closely spelt words correctly Can use phonics to recognize unknown words. Can identify unknown words. Insert words when reading. Omits selected words while reading content. Read words aloud but do not understand meaning Can read words and phrases already identified without repeating		
2	Oral reading fluency Accurate decoding of words in text Automaticity / decoding words with minimal strain. Prosody / appropriate use of phrasing and expression to convey meaning		
3.	Comprehension Skills Answer factual questions. Answer inferential questions Retell story in own words Predict next word, phrase and sentence Use prior knowledge Interpret text by identifying issues Identify important text details Recognize link between sentences Understand meaning of words, phrases and sentences. Read unfamiliar words using word attack skills.		
B.	Metacognitive strategies Classify purpose of the reading before reading Compare and contrast issues in the text Determine cause and effect of issues Summarize events in the text. Sequence of events recognized from text Hypothesize and predict author's purpose for writing and order of events. Infer from the text Establish whole part relationship Conclusions based on previous information		
C	Reading Curriculum		
	The syllabus		
	Student's Exercise books		
	Lesson plans		
	Scheme of work		
	Text book for teachers and students		

## APPENDIX D

### CLOZE PASSAGE (10 MKS)

**Fill each blank space in the following passage with the most appropriate.**

The cornerstone of Plato's thought was his theory ----- (1) forms or ideas.

It disturbed Plato that he could not gain satisfactory intellectual control over the world. The quality of virtue, for example, meant different things in different situations as -----

(2) honesty, courage, truth and beauty. Generally speaking, for example, virtue -----

----- (3) individuals to honor and obey their parents

----- (4). If a parent engaged in illegal behavior, virtue required offspring to ---

----- (5) the offence and----- (6).

How was it possible then to understand virtue as an abstract quality? In seeking an answer to this question, Plato developed his belief that the world, in which we live, was not the genuine world. Indeed, was not the world of genuine reality but only a pale and imperfect reflection of the world of forms or ideas? Display of virtue or all other \_\_\_\_\_(7) in the world

imperfectly reflected the ideal qualities. Only by entering the world of forms or ideas -----

----- (8) it possible to understand the true nature of virtue and other qualities. The

secrets of this world were available ----- (9) to philosophers-those who

applied their rational facilities to the----- (10) of wisdom.

## APPENDIX E

### Activity 3: Reading Comprehension

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow:

#### *The Cripple Maker*

Zaita sat engrossed in the wanderings of his imagination, waiting for the time for work. At about midnight he got up, blew out the lamp and a deep darkness took over. He then felt his way to the door, opened it quietly, and made his way through the bakery into the alley. The cripple maker crossed over to the Hussain Mosque, walking with short deliberate steps.

As he walked, Zaita kept close to the walls of the houses. In spite of the blackness of the shadows, some lights still gleamed; thus, if you approached from the opposite direction, you would almost collide with him before you saw his flashing eyes glinting in the dark like the metal clasp of a policeman's belt. Walking in the street made him feel revived, lively and happy. He only walked about when there was no one but the beggars, who acknowledged his absolute sovereignty. As he swept his eyes over the heaps of the boggars on both sides of the streets, he was filled with delight. His joy was that of a powerful lord mixed with the delight of a merchant who sees profitable merchandise.

He approached the blind beggar nearest to him who was sitting cross-legged and snoring loudly. He stood for a moment before him, gazing intently as though to probe his sleep and determine whether it was genuine or feigned. Then he kicked the dishevelled head and the man stirred, but not in a startled manner. He raised his head slowly and despite his blindness, he recognised Zaita at once. He thrust his hand into his pocket and pulled out a small coin, which he placed in Zaita's palm.

Zaita now turned to the next beggar, then to the next until he had collected money from all beggars. Not a single one escaped him. His enthusiasm at receiving his dues did not make him forget his duty to care for the cripples he had created and frequently asked this or that beggar, "How is your blindness?" The beggars would respond, "Praise be to God... Praise be to God."

After collecting his dues, he bought himself a loaf of bread, some sweets and tobacco, and returned to Midaq Alley where he lived. He carefully pushed open his wooden door and closed it quietly behind him. Inside, sat Dr. Booshy and two other men. Zaita was neither surprised nor troubled by their presence.

"These two poor men seek your help," Dr. Booshy said without wasting time.

"At a time like this?" Zaita replied. Dr. Booshy placed his hand on Zaita's shoulder and said, "The night is a veil."

"But I am tired," Zaita responded.

The two men begged and pleaded to be helped until Zaita yielded. Zaita fixed his eyes on the taller of the two. He was a giant of a man.

"Why do you want to become a beggar?" he asked.

"I am never successful at a job. I have tried all kinds of work, but my luck is bad and my mind is worse. I can never remember anything."

"Then you should have been born rich," Zaita said spitefully.

The man wept and begged. He said, "I have failed in everything. I even had no luck as a beggar. Everyone said I was strong and I should work".

Zaita examined him thoughtfully and feeling his arms and limbs, then said decisively: "You are really strong. I can't manage to twist or break your arms or legs. However, I will teach you the art of imbecility". The huge man's face beamed with delight and thanked Zaita profusely.

Zaita now turned to the other man and muttered after examining him, "Good material. You were created to be a blind squatting beggar." The man was pleased. He said, "Praise be to God." Zaita then went on to tell the man that the operation he was going to perform was difficult and dangerous, and that he could easily lose his sight in case of an accident. The man hesitated then replied, "It would be a blessing

from God! Have I ever gained anything by my sight that I should be sorry to lose it?" he asked, "please do what you have to do, and I promise I will eternally be grateful to you. I will give you half of what the good people give me."

[Adapted from: *Midaq Alley* by Naquil Matifouz]



### **Answer these questions.**

1. According to the passage, Zaita sat "engrossed in the wanderings of his imagination".  
What do you think these "wanderings" of his imagination were?
2. Explain any two metaphors used in the passage.
3. Explain what makes Zaita happy when he is walking in the street at night?

4. It is ironical when the man in the passage says that it would be a blessing from God if he lost his sight. This is an example of irony. Give and explain two other examples of irony in the passage.
5. What does the author imply when he says, "despite his (the beggar's) blindness, he recognised Zaita at once?"
6. Why do you think Zaita is neither surprised nor troubled to find visitors sitting in his house when he comes back?
7. Explain the meanings of the following words or expressions as used in the passage:
  - engrossed
  - deliberate
  - absolute sovereignty
  - probe
  - dishevelled
  - the night is a veil
8. According to the passage, Zaita's joy was that of a powerful lord mixed with the delight of a merchant. In not more than 50 words, summarise what makes Zaita a lord and a merchant.



### Word study

Match the words in column A with their meanings in column B.

Column A	Column B
1. gleamed	(a) brought something back to life
2. revived	(b) not genuine
3. profitable	(c) extremely big
merchandise	(d) surprised
4. feigned	(e) pushed suddenly and strongly
5. startled	(f) produced a small light
6. thrust	(g) goods that bring in a lot of money
7. a giant of a man	

### Activity 4: Language Practice

#### Interrogative Pronouns: Who, Whom, Whose.

Study the following questions:

1. Who was the cripple maker?
2. Whom did the beggars praise?
3. Whose biro is this?

## Checkpoint

**A Listening and speaking**

Listen attentively as your teacher narrates a story to you and then answer the following questions.

1. What did Hare ridicule Tortoise about?
2. Why did Tortoise decide to take up Hare's challenge to compete in a race?
3. What type of an oral narrative is the story you have just listened to?
4. Give a saying that can be used to summarize the teaching in the story.

**B Reading**

Read the following passage and then answer the questions that follow.

**Waiting for the village teacher to return**

I still remember the visage of a tall hat-wearing man with a rare sartorial elegance who walked with a spring in his step. He always carried a walking stick, not to aid him in walking, but rather as a statement of fashion; declaration of his own superiority. This man was a teacher in the school I attended. His name was Mr Wagatai.

There was something painfully different in Mr Wagatai. At a time when teachers rarely wore suits and ties, Mr Wagatai always wore one. He preferred the white cream or beige type. His hat was always black. For this, I admired him.

Yet, there was something vaguely unsettling about him. He looked far too distant. He chose his company well and he spoke to few people. On some mornings, his eyes looked like small black hearths left by a fire that had not been properly put out. But when he started talking, they lit up like fireflies. Sometimes I had the feeling that Mr Wagatai was surrounded by some darkness we could not decipher and which he was always struggling to rise from.

Mr Wagatai looked like a story with a tragic ending. It appeared as if past tales of bounty and tragedy were imprisoned in his peculiar frame. These tales yearned to come out, yet they could not because he would never let them. Instead, his charming nature, his occasional aloofness and his cosiness with young pupils made it pointless for one to want to probe into his personal life. He never talked about himself or about his family. Still, on meeting him, he left an impression that engendered both an exciting sensation and a morose taste. There was something treacherous about him. Yet, because he allowed us only a small chink through which to peer into his personality, nobody could definitively say what was treacherous about this teacher.

When he was first introduced to us at assembly, there was a murmur from the students. It was a murmur of bemusement, a quiet appreciation of the presence of a man who was different from what we were used to seeing.

This particular teacher was not dressed casually like the others, and he did not look like he even knew how to handle a cane. Those days, every teacher appeared to know how to handle the cane and apply it most prodigiously on our bottoms. But this particular one held a different promise.

With this appreciation and a welcome whose basis could not be properly defined, Mr Wagatai settled into our school. He taught mathematics and mathematics teachers were known to wield the cane with abandon. But Mr Wagatai rarely did. He spoke softly, taught well, and those he taught loved him.

In the evening, he would walk in quick long strides, waving his cane with some theatrical flourish and seeming to imbibe some indeterminate grace in every step that he took. Sometimes, he would raise some dust in his wake and everyone would know that Mr Wagatai was on his way home. He was never happier than when he was going home.

When one is young, there are many things that one sees and which disturb one only momentarily, then one forgets them. Such things come up later to make one wonder about a life gone by and a cast of characters one really never learnt to fully appreciate. Still, when I looked at Mr Wagatai, I wondered why he was so kind. He would always buy me sweets and a *mutura*. Those days we used to call sweets *madifani* because, as I learnt later, they were manufactured by the Madhvani Company. I also wondered why he never used to cane pupils in his class and why he never fraternized much with the other teachers. But he used to come alive when talking to the denizens of the shopping centre.

One Saturday evening, I met Mr Wagatai at the shopping centre. I used to look out for him because I wanted the *madifani* and the *mutura*. On this particular day, Mr Wagatai seemed more eloquent than other days. Instead of buying me a *mutura* worth five cents as was the norm, he bought me a piece worth ten cents and a bigger packet of sweets. He seemed to be a fountain of stories on that day, yet there still was nothing out of the ordinary in the manner he went about things on that day.

The following Monday, Mr Wagatai did not turn up for assembly. We all waited, glancing occasionally at the gate and wondering when that stylish frame would emerge. But Mr Wagatai never came back. Where he went, nobody knows. There was no mourning for him because nobody knew whether the man was dead or alive. The process of mourning never quite begins until one is certified dead. And so, the village waits for Mr Wagatai to return, or to hear news that he is dead so that the mourning can begin.

## Questions

1. Which of the following statements is true about Mr Wagatai?
  - A. He always carried a walking stick because he walked with a spring in his step.
  - B. He wore a hat because it was fashionable.
  - C. He had an inferiority complex.
  - D. He wore well designed and attractive clothes.

2. How had the narrator met Mr Wagatai?
3. What distinguished Mr Wagatai from his colleagues?
4. Paraphrase the following sentence, 'It appeared as if past tales of bounty and tragedy were imprisoned in his peculiar frame.'
5. What does the expression 'his occasional aloofness and his cosiness with young pupils' mean?
6. Why was it difficult to understand Mr Wagatai's personality?
7. Why did students murmur when Mr Wagatai was introduced to them as an assembly?
  - A. The students were afraid of Mr Wagatai.
  - B. The students thought Mr Wagatai was different from the other teachers.
  - C. The students thought Mr Wagatai would dress differently from the other teachers.
  - D. The students thought that the other teachers appreciated the presence of Mr Wagatai.
8. Give two character traits of Mr Wagatai.
9. What do you think happened to Mr Wagatai after he left the village?
10. Explain the meaning of the following words as used in the passage.
 

(i) visage    (ii) decipher    (iii) moronic    (iv) imbibe    (v) fraternized

Here

## C Grammar

### Exercise 1

Combine the following pairs of sentences by making one of them a participle phrase. The first one is done for you.

1. He was occupied with important matters. He had no time to see us.  
Answer: *Being occupied with important matters, he had no time to see us.*
2. Ambani was dissatisfied with his position. He resigned.
3. We were standing at the gate. We saw the visitors approaching.
4. They had started early. They arrived before noon.
5. Godana listened attentively. He answered all the questions.
6. I did not know the way. I asked a police officer.
7. Ole T'endai turned twenty. He went into partnership with his brother.
8. Awino met her brother in the street. She asked him where he was going.
9. The hunter took his bow and arrows. He went out to kill the snake.
10. She had lost her passport. She applied for a new one.

### Exercise 2

Rewrite the following sentences following the instructions given after each.

1. The president of Japan came to Kenya last year. (*Rewrite using **Japanese** in place of **Japan**.*)

## APPENDIX G

### Read the following passage and then answer the questions:

I think that we're mentally ill; those of us outside the *asylums* only hide it a little better and maybe not all that much better, after all we've all known people who talk to themselves, people who have some hysterical fear of snakes, the dark, the tight place, the long drop and of course those *final worms and grubs* that are waiting so patiently underground. When we pay our four or five bucks and seat ourselves at tenth-row center in a theater showing a horror movie; we are daring the nightmare.

Why? Some of the reasons are simple and obvious. To show that we can, that we are, not afraid, that we can ride this roller coaster. Which is not to say that a really good horror movie may surprise a scream out of us at some point, the way we may scream when the roller coaster twists through a complete 360 or plows through a lake at the bottom of the drop, and horror movies, like roller coasters have always been the special province of the young; by the time one turns 40 or 50, one's appetite for double twists or 260 degree loops may be considerably *depleted*.

We also go to re-establish our feeling of essential normality; the horror movie is innately conservative, even reactionary. Freda Jackson as the melting woman in *Die, Monster, Die!* Confirms for us that no matter how far we may be removed from the beauty of a Robert Redford or a Diana Ross, we are still light years from true ugliness.

And we go to have fun.

Ah, but this is where the ground starts to slope away, isn't it? Because this is a very peculiar sort of fun indeed. The fun comes from seeing others menaced-sometimes killed. One critic has suggested that if pro football has become the voyeur' version of the public lynching.

It is true that the mythic, "fairy-tale" horror film intends to take away the shades of gray. It urges to put away our more civilized and adult penchant for analysis and to become children again, seeing things in pure black and white. It may be that horror movies provide psychic relief on this level because this invitation to lapse into simplicity, irrationality and even outright madness is extended so rarely. We are told we may allow our emotions a free rein ---- or no rein at all.

If we are all insane, then sanity becomes a matter of degree. If your insanity leads you to carve up women like Jack the Ripper or the Cleveland Torso Murderer, we clap you away in the funny farm (but neither of those two amateur-night surgeons was caught, heh-heh-heh); if, on the on the other hand, your insanity leads you only to talk to yourself when under stress or to pick your nose on your morning bus, then you are left alone to go about your business--- -though it is doubtful that you will ever be invited to the best parties.

The *potential lyncher* is in almost all of us (excluding saints, past and present; but then, most saints have been crazy in their own ways), and every now and then, he has to let loose to scream and roll around in the grass. Our emotions and our fears form their own body, and we recognize that it demands its own exercise to maintain proper muscle tone. Certain of these emotional muscles are accepted --even exalted-- in civilized society, they are, of course, the emotions that tend to maintain the status quo of civilization itself, love, friendship, loyalty, kindness--these are all the emotions that we applaud, emotions that have been immortalized in the couplets of hallmark card and in the verses (I don't dare call it poetry) of Leonard Nimoy...

When we exhibit these emotions, society showers with positive reinforcement; we learn this even before we get out of diapers. When, as children, we hug our rotten little puke

of a sister and give her a kiss, all the aunts and uncles smile and twit and cry, “Isn’t he the sweetest little thing?” Such coveted treats as chocolate-covered graham crackers often follow. But if we deliberately slam the rotten little puke of a sister’s fingers in the door, sanctions follow- angry remonstrance from parents, aunts and uncles; instead of a chocolate- covered graham cracker, a spanking.

The mythic horror movie, like the sick joke, has a dirty job to do. It deliberately appeals to all that is worst in us. It is morbidity unchained, our most base instincts let free, our nastiest fantasies realized---and it all happens ,fittingly enough ; in the dark. For those reasons, good liberals shy away from horror films. For myself, I like to see the most aggressive of them-Dawn of the Dead, for instance- as lifting a trap door in the civilized forebrain and throwing a basket of raw meat to the ‘hungry alligators’ swimming around in that subterranean river beneath.

**Source: Why we crave horror movies by Stephen King**

**QUESTIONS**

1. a) What three forms of human behavior does the author use to justify that we are all mentally ill? (3mks)
- b) What one statement does the author use to sum up the reasons why we pay to watch horror movies? (1mk)
- (c) “And we go to have fun”. Why is this fun viewed as peculiar according to the passage?(2mks)
- (d) What kind of person does the author say may have problems when it comes to invitation to parties? (2 mks)
- (e) List the emotions that are said to uphold and perpetuate the civilization’s status quo. (2mks)
- (f) How does the society encourage the display of accepted emotional tendencies? (1mk)
- (g) State the reasons that prevent the good liberals from identifying and feeling comfortable with the horror movies. (3mks)
- (h) What one word can best describe us when we delight in the suffering of others featured in these horror movies? (1mk)
- (i) Rewrite the following sentences in the singular.  
“We’ve all known people who talk to themselves, people who sometimes squinch their faces in horrible grimaces when they believe no one is watching...” (1mk)
- (j) In not e form, give reasons why we pay to watch horror movies. (2mks)
- (k) Explain briefly the meanings of the following words and phrases as used in the passage.(4 mks)
  - i) Asylums

- ii) Final worms and grubs
- iii) Depleted
- iv) Potential lyncher

## APPENDIX H

### Practice exercise

Read the first paragraph of the reading passage in this unit and answer the following questions. Note that the answers to these questions are not directly given in the paragraph. You will need to read critically.

1. Does the narrator come from a rich family?
2. Do you think the narrator's mother is right about the significance of the rain?

### (ii) Reading comprehension

#### Pre-reading

How do you usually celebrate your birthday?

*(This passage is taken from the novel In the Castle of My Skin by George Lamming. It is the story of a boy growing up in a poor village on the island of Barbados in the Caribbean, also called the West Indies. This is an area with a lot of problems, mainly resulting from a history of slavery when European settlers took African people to work on their plantations. Even after the end of slavery, the black people remained very poor and backward. They were also despised by racist Europeans simply because they were black, and they ended up despising themselves, too, as the leading character in the novel, who is also the narrator, tells us about himself and his companions. The narrator, like many other young people in the Caribbean, loves his home island, but he is deeply dissatisfied with the deprived and poor condition of life around him and he ends up going away from the island. The passage below is the beginning of the novel.)*

#### A miserable birthday

Rain, rain, rain... my mother put her head through the window to let the neighbour know that I was nine, and they flattered me with the consolation that my birthday had brought showers of blessing. The morning laden with cloud soon passed into noon, and the noon neutral and silent into sodden grimness of an evening waded through water. That evening I kept an eye on the crevices of our wasted roof where the colour of the shingles had turned to mourning black, and waited for the weather to rehearse my wishes. But the evening settled on the slush of the roads that dissolved in parts into pools of clay, and I wept for the watery waste of my ninth important day. Yet I was wrong, my mother protested: it was irreverent to disapprove the will of the Lord or reject consolation that my birthday had brought showers of blessing.

It was my ninth celebration of the gift of life, my ninth celebration of the consistent lack of an occasion for celebration. From a window where the spray had given the sill a little wet life I watched the water ride through the lanes and alleys that multiplied behind the barracks that neighboured our house. The white stalks of the lily that lay flat under the hammering rain, then coaxed their roots from the earth and drifted across the upturned clay, into the canals and on to the deep black river where by agreement the floods converged. The water rose higher

and higher until the fern and flowers on our verandah were flooded. It came through the creases of the door, and expanded across the uncarpeted borders of the floor. My mother brought sacks that absorbed it quickly, but overhead the crevices of the roof were weeping rain, and surfacing the carpet and the epergne of flowers and fern were liquid, glittering curves which the mourning black of the shingles had bequeathed. No one seemed to notice how the noon had passed to evening, the evening to night; nor to worry that the weather had played me false. Nothing mattered but the showers of blessing and the eternal will of the water's source. And I might have accepted the consolation if it weren't that the floods had chosen to follow me in the celebration of all my years, evoking the image of those legendary waters which had once arisen to set a curse on the course of man.

As if in serious imitation of the waters that raced outside, our lives — meaning our fears and their corresponding ideals — seemed to escape down an imaginary drain that was our future. Our capacity for feeling had grown as large as the flood, but the prayers of a simple village seemed as precariously adequate as the houses hoisted on water. Of course, it was difficult to see what was happening outside, but there were paddling splashes of boys' feet and the choke of an engine stuck in mud.

The village was a marvel of small, heaped houses raised jauntily on groundsels of limestone, and arranged in rows on either side of the multiplying marl roads. Sometimes the roads disintegrated, the limestone slid back and the houses advanced across their boundaries to meet those on the opposite side in an embrace of board and shingle and cactus fence. The white marl roads made four at each crossing except where the road narrowed to a lane or alley that led into a tenant's backyard. There were shops at each crossing: one, two, sometimes three, and so positioned that the respective owners could note each other's



customers. And wherever there were shops there was a street lamp ringed to a post, and always much activity, and often the stench of raw living. The lamps were fuelled with gas and lit at six every evening. When the lights went on, little boys like a bevy of flies assembled around the lamp-post for gossip and stories. Elsewhere in a similar manner men gathered to throw dice or cut cards or simply to talk. The spectacle repeated itself at each crossing where there was a street lamp ringed to a post. The roads bore names — Murrell, Alkins, Hunt — and a curious one-way affection grew between the villager and the road he lived in; just as a mutual antipathy

sometimes passed from dwellers in one road to those in another. Now and again those who lived at Alkins would contrive a secret conspiracy against those at Murrell, and the verdict was always the same. The people in Hunt's road, those in Alkins, would declare, were a lot of so-and-so's.

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There was a public bath for men and women, which had a perpetual stench of disinfectant pervading the air, and everywhere limestone constructions like roofless ovens for the disposal of garbage. But most notable was the wood of mahogany trees through which the trains passed from the city on their excursions to the country. There were days when the village was quiet: the shoemaker plied lazily at his trade and the washerwomen bent over the tubs droned away their complacency. At other times there were scenes of terror, and once there was a scene of murder.

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From *In the Castle of My Skin* by George Lamming, Longman.

### Wordpower

The words in the box below are taken from the passage you have just read. Find the sentences where they are used and study the way each is used.

sodden	crevices	irreverent	coaxed	precariously
jauntily	bevy	antipathy	plied	droned

The following sentences will help you understand better the meanings of the words.

1. It was raining heavily last night so we arrived home completely *sodden*.
2. Nyamango's keys *disappeared* in the *crevices* on the rock.
3. Fatuma told Owiti that it was *irreverent* to question God's will.
4. Mbori *coaxed* his mother to let him go to the dance.
5. The acrobat balanced *precariously* on the rope.
6. Kwaku marched *jauntily* to the podium to receive the award.
7. A *bevy* of beauties jammed the village square during the Miss Kijiji beauty contest.
8. There is growing *antipathy* in the school towards students who abuse drugs.
9. The company has withdrawn the bus that *plied* between Embu and Moyale.
10. The generator *droned* on the whole day, disrupting learning in the school.

### Practice exercise

Use each of the words in the box above to write a sentence of your own.

### Comprehension questions

1. What does the author feel about the rainfall on his birthday?  
A. He sees it as showers of blessing.      B. He is excited.  
C. He sees it as a waste of his birthday.      D. He is indifferent.

2. Which of the following statements is **true**?
  - A. The author's mother was unhappy about the rain.
  - B. It had rained on all the author's birthdays.
  - C. The author's neighbours joined in celebrating his birthday.
  - D. The author helped his mother to dry the floor.
3. How does the author see the floods as symbolic of their lives?
4. Paraphrase the sentence: 'Sometimes the roads disintegrated, the limestone slid back and the houses advanced across the boundaries to meet those on the opposite side in an embrace of board and shingle and cactus fence.'
5. Identify and explain the use of personification in the sentence given in 4 above.
6. Why do you think the shop owners positioned themselves so that they could note each other's customers?
7. What was common between *the boys and the men in the author's village*?
8. What were the two sources of stench in the village?
9. Point out from the last paragraph what is paradoxical about life in the village.
10. Do you think the author enjoyed his birthday? Explain your answer.

### Let's talk

Discuss ways in which you can celebrate your birthday without spending money.

## Grammar and usage: Relative pronouns

### Language in context

The following sentences are taken from the passage you read in this unit. Study the way the italicized words are used.

1. It was difficult to see *what* was happening outside.
2. Those *who* lived at Alkins would contrive a secret conspiracy against those at Murrell.
3. There was a public bath for men and women, *which* had a perpetual stench of disinfectant.
4. Most notable was the wood of mahogany trees through *which* the trains passed.

The italicized words are **relative pronouns**.

### Grammar point 1: Uses of relative pronouns

Relative pronouns have the same form with the interrogative pronouns discussed in Unit 3 in this book, but they have different uses as discussed below.

#### A: Relative pronouns as subjects and objects

Although all the relative pronouns come at the beginning of the relative clause, they are used as subjects or objects in their clauses. Study the examples below.

1. I saw the man *who* came yesterday.
2. I saw the man *whom* you met at the river.

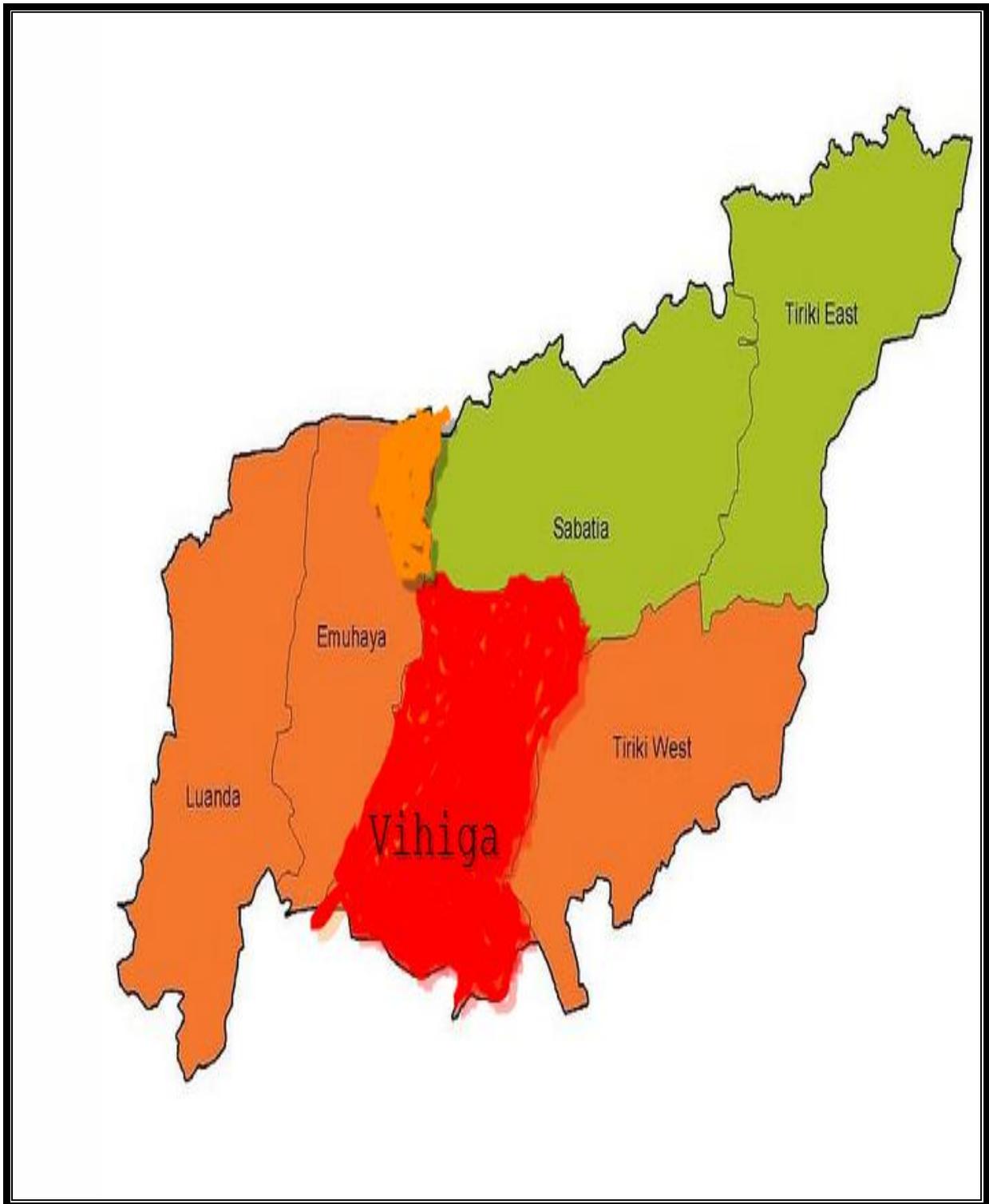
## APPENDIX I

### READING FLUENCY SCALE

Level	Student's reading abilities
1	Reads word-by-word-occasional two-or-three-word phrases occur through infrequent/or they do not presence meaningful syntax.
2	Reads two-word phrase groups with some three – and four – word groupings some groupings may be awkward and student's reading ability unrelated to the large context of the sentence or passage. A smaller portion of the test is read with expressive interpretation. Reads a significant section of the text excessively slowly or fast
3	Reads in three – and four – word phrase groups. Some smaller groupings may be present. Majority of the phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax. Little or no expressive interpretation is present. Generally, reads at an appropriate rate.
4	Reads in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions and deviations may be present but do not detract overall structure of the story. Preservation of author's syntax is consistent. Some or most of the story is read with expressive interpretation. Reads at an appropriate rate.

**Adopted from Pinnel, G.S, Pikulski, J.J, Wixson, K. K Campbell J. R, Gough, P.B (1995) Listening to children Read Aloud; Oral Fluency.**

**APPENDIX J**



**Vihiga County Map**