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**HOME TO SCHOOL COMMUNICATION AS A PREDICTOR OF ACQUISITION  
OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCIES AMONG  
PRIMARY LEARNERS IN KITGUM  
DISTRICT UGANDA**

**BY**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Okello Proscovia Daphine, declare that this report is my original work and has not been presented to any University for any academic award.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPROVAL**

I confirm that this Report was carried out by the candidate under my supervision.

\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Simon Peter Ongodia

Supervisor

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

I thank the Almighty God for the knowledge, wisdom, strength and understanding during the whole period of my study of Master program at Kampala International University.

I dedicate this work to my family who have supported me during my entire study and to those who seek knowledge, embrace the pursuit of truth, and tirelessly strive to make our world a better place through the power of research and understanding.

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored the influence of home to school communication as a predictor of acquisition of English Language Competencies among Primary learners in Kitgum district Uganda emphasizing literacy activities and the development of English as a second language among ethnic Ugandan children in Kitgum and focused specifically on English vocabulary, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and word reading skills. The study was guided by the following objectives namely; To investigate the effect of home to school reading culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary schools Kitgum district. To find out the influence of home to school speaking culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary schools Kitgum district. And To assess the impact of home to school writing culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary Kitgum district. The study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey design. The researcher used simple random sampling technique to select 48 head teachers, 96 teachers of English language, and 177 pupils, heads of schools and 53 parents in primary schools in Kitgum District. The researcher recommends Kitgum district should provide professional development opportunities to teachers, provide parents with materials and resources that can help them support their child's English language development such as reading materials, online learning platforms and language learning apps, Organize events that showcase pupils' English language achievements and should implement regular assessments to track pupils' progress and share the results with parents as this can help identify areas that need attention.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives, research questions, hypothesis, scope of the study, and significance of the study.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

A child's home to school English language communication skills dictate performance in other subjects and also a proper language command in other areas. Primary school children's ability to communicate between home and school has great advantage on the child. One of the advantages is that this ability will determine the child's performance in other academic and educational areas. There is no doubt that a good home to school language will automatically become good language use and practice in all aspects.

There is no magic and nothing mysterious about this. Basic literacy skills include the skills of, social, language (Moon, 2016). Language skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing with the ability of a child to understand and use fundamental skills like speaking and even communicate in English apart from mother tongue (Adlof & Hogan, 2018). On the other hand, social skills are used by individuals to communicate and interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally, through gestures, body language and our personal appearance (Dowd & Tierney, 2017). Social skills are essential in building both personal and interpersonal relationships (Mikami, 2010). The primary children's developments of English language skills are essential in the communications and strengthening of language and ability to communicate (Niklas et al., 2015). This study comes to investigate Home to school communication as a predictor of acquisition of English language competencies among primary learners in kitgum district Uganda

#### **1.1.1 Historical Perspective**

It has been well documented that differences in language and literacy skills emerge early in life (Fernald et al., 2013). Extant research has explored individual and environmental factors that underlie variability in language growth and development (Tabors, 2001). Mounting evidence suggests that the home literacy environment (HLE) is one of the most significant

predictors of early language and literacy development; As gaps in language, literacy and achievement persist over time and can have long-lasting impact on children, it is critical to understand the characteristics and role of the home to school communication starting from the early years in order to disentangle the factors and processes associated with language and literacy outcomes and to identify the kinds of support needed for children and families.

With the rise of English as a global language (Crystal, 2012), a growing number of studies has investigated the association between the home, school and children's development of English as a second language. However, to date, most studies that examined the influence of the children's home to schools language proficiency in English as a second language have primarily been conducted in predominantly English-speaking contexts for example; Farver et al., 2013). Far less research has focused on home to school communication and second language learners of English in multilingual contexts against this background, the present study examined whether and how home to school communication is associated with the development of English language in primary schools of Kitgum district.

Much of the early research on the School to home communication primarily focused on differences in family socio-economic background for example income and parental education or on a single literacy activity, most notably parent-child reading as a defining feature of the home school communication on English language competences (Payne et al., 1994).

Later work conceptualized the home to school language as a multidimensional construct that encompassed a variety of literacy-related interactions, resources and attitudes, consisting of parent-child joint activities, such as shared reading, parental teaching of print-related skills, singing songs and rhymes, storytelling and watching educational television programs (Wood, 2002); availability of learning materials, such as the number of books at home and parental beliefs and attitudes toward literacy (Weigel et al., 2016).

Based on the Home Literacy Model (Sénéchal, 2016), argue that home literacy experiences can be categorized into formal and informal interactions Babies are also able to make and hold eye contact, and follow the gaze of an adult. This was the beginning of adults sharing language with babies. If any sound was made to a baby, the baby was able to respond with some kind of sound. This proto – communication was the first step children learned to communicate with other people. Ministry of Education (2001) confirms that language to young child is a way of expressing needs – means of communication.

### **1.1.2 Theoretical Perspective**

This study was guided by Halliday's (1993) language based theory of learning. The theory postulates that human learning is essentially semiotic (that is, involves use of signs and symbols) in nature despite the fact that educational knowledge was massively dependent on verbal learning; many theories of learning have not been specifically derived from observation of children language development.

The theory attempted to explain how children engage in "learning language" and it tried to highlight the distinctive characteristics of human learning which states that language is the process of making meaning from what children are learning. Children only learned if they understood the language they are using or learning.

When children learn first language or the mother tongue, they make effort to speak and reason in that language. Children acquire first language very gradually and usually on their own, and use this first language to express their feelings or thoughts.

The theory makes assumptions that language development is continuous process that starts at birth, through infancy and childhood and through adolescence into adult life, for example, a child was able to come to grips with grammatical metaphors only until when he or she was approaching the age of puberty.

**At ages 3-5**, babies are reaching out and grasping; trying to get hold of objects (they can see the object). Such an effort provoked the use of the sign which was then interpreted by the adult and a form of conversation between the adult and child takes place.

At ages 6-10 years, regular symbols are created by the child in an interactive context. When children construe their signs into sign system protolanguage is formed; the proto language which MOE (2017) calls proto communication the children are using at this stage is the imitation of adult words. Children use this language to take roles during conversations with other people.

The theory also attempts to outline features of language development and states that a human infant engages in symbolic acts, which the author also refers to as acts of 'meaning.' or the foundation of learning language. Signs involved mediating or enacting – interacting with

others and construing experiences into meaning. Parents and peers played critical role in modelling child's first language.

This theory highlights other forms of communication like reading and writing which children use to express their feelings or thoughts in the languages they speak. Children learned language not only at home and neighbourhoods but also in school. It is in schools that children learn English as second language. Schools provide environments whereby learners are able to learn from their peers, homes and model their teachers' English command and development.

The researcher is supporting the view that English language development in children, like for other languages progressive and entirely depends on their mental age, homes and social development. Teachers of English language needed to understand the level of development in their children this assisted them plan for their educational needs.

This theory guided this study because it can be applied in the educational context. Teaching/learning activities can be designed and implemented to take principles of learning into account. It was interesting to think about individual differences among learners and teachers should work towards including activities that have variety and interest for all learners in educational programs and also their homes.

### **1.1.3 Conceptual Perspectives**

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, International Student Edition (2010) defines communications as the activity or process of expressing ideas and feelings or of giving people information. Without the use of language, it would be very difficult to communicate and children to acquire formal education.

Language acquisition is a process of how people learn language and use it when its necessary while competencies is knowledge and skills of teaching English language skills by the teacher.

Children are born with the ability to acquire language and are able to use these innate abilities to learn all languages. Ministry of Education and sports (2017) agrees that children are born with the ability to acquire any language they hear when they are very young. Children acquire first language gradually and largely on their own.

Burgess et al., 2012 argue that, first language babies acquire is also known as mother tongue or native language; babies acquired this language to make them fit into the environment they

are living in. It is said that babies are able to follow rules of a language they are learning to speak, but this ability decreases as they grew older, the child's readiness to acquire and use language is also influenced by training, experience and home enforcement

Formal literacy interactions refer to activities in which the focus is on the features of print like adults directly teaching children print-related skills, such as letter names and sounds; adults pointing to letters in the text, whereas informal literacy interactions refer to opportunities that are centred on the meaning attached to print for instance often manifested by shared reading; adults focusing on meaning carried by the text during shared reading (Weigel et al., 2016).

The school to home communication can be further differentiated into active components, which emphasize parent-child engagement in literacy activities and passive components, which refer to children's observations of parents modelling literacy behaviours (e.g., parents' engagement in reading) (Burgess et al., 2012).

An extensive evidence has shown concurrent and longitudinal links between the school home communication and children's early language and literacy development (Tamis-Lemonda et al., 2019). Shared reading –the most studied aspect of the home and school communication has been found to contribute significantly to the development of receptive and expressive vocabulary in primary schools, letter name and letter sound knowledge and as well as listening comprehension.

(Sénéchal, 2002) argue that in several meta-analytic reviews that, the frequency of exposure to parent-child reading accounted for unique variance in children's language and literacy skills, and later reading achievement. Other indices of shared reading, such as the number of books in the home, visits to the library, children's requests to be read to and the age at which children were first read to by their parents contributed substantial variance to language growth.

The quality of book reading, including the reading behaviours of parents and interactions during shared reading was also found to be significant correlates of children's language and literacy outcomes correlation revealed that reading behaviours, such as asking questions, labelling and describing objects, and providing feedback and focusing on print yielded significant positive effects on vocabulary and print knowledge (Ezell, 2010).

For instance, Van Steensel (2006) found that children who participated in a variety of joint literacy activities, such as shared reading, library visits and singing nursery songs, as well as observed parents and/or siblings engaging in literacy activities themselves exhibited gains in vocabulary and general reading comprehension. Wood (2022)'s study demonstrated that children who were exposed to four types of parent-child literacy activities (i.e., storybook reading, letter-based activities, singing, and playing language games) had significantly higher vocabulary and reading ability scores as compared to their counterparts who were engaged in singing only or to those that did not participate in almost any of the literacy activities.

Weigel et al. (2016)'s findings revealed that children's engagement in a variety of parent-child joint activities, such as shared reading, storytelling, singing rhymes, drawing pictures, playing games and television viewing was associated with enhanced print knowledge. Indeed, several large-scale longitudinal studies have adopted a multidimensional approach in examining the home to school communication as it increases pupils' competencies that captures variations in the type of literacy activities that children are exposed to at home. For instance, the Index of Early Home Literacy.

According to Genesis Framework, World Press (2014) teacher competence refers to the right way of conveying units of knowledge application and skills to the students. The right way here includes knowledge of the content, process, methods and means of conveying content. A teacher was an important person when it comes to the development of the learners language. A teacher was facilitator and a role model to his learners.

#### **1.1.4 Contextual Perspectives**

Activities of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Mullis et al., 2017) examines early literacy experiences through six activities, namely reading books, telling stories, singing songs, playing with alphabet toys, playing word games and reading aloud signs and labels.

Cumulative research has demonstrated the associations between aspects of the home to school communication and children's early language and literacy skills in their native language (Hindman and Morrison, 2012). Studies with children from different ethnic backgrounds and/or contexts who are learning English as a second or foreign language have

found similar results. Study with Latino immigrant, for example children in the United States found that parents' engagement in activities was positively associated with children's oral language skills in both English and Spanish.

Further, home literacy resources in English and parents' literacy behaviour's in Spanish were associated with children's print knowledge in both English and Spanish. In another study with Indian children learning English, it was found that book reading practices and parental teaching predicted children's print skills in English and that book reading practices moderated the relationship between the degree of English spoken at home and children's English receptive vocabulary skills (Kalia and Reese, 2019).

Indeed, as there is greater complexity in the school to home communication of children and families that navigate multiple languages in their homes and community contexts, it is worthwhile to identify specific pathways through which the home to school communication may impact children's language and literacy development. Oral language and early literacy skills are interrelated components that provide a crucial basis for children's academic success and subsequent educational attainment in school.

In a similar way, when a pupil grows to the age of going to primary school, parents expected the child to be good at reading simple sentences using English language. What this means is that if a child begins primary one at the age of six years, by the time the reaches primary six, he or she is already eleven years. There is no excuse for a child at this age not to be able to read simple sentences in English language and even communicate well with home people and naming home to school objectives in English language.

Kaye (2018), while lamenting the generally poor state of provision of library facilities and language laboratory resources in most primary schools in Uganda stressed that inadequate provision of libraries in schools is a general disease that is plaguing good English language communications in some district of Uganda like Kitgum.

Ingham (2018) notes that while noise making in the classrooms and checking of homework are within the teacher's control. Ingham concludes that this is where parents enable the child's reading condition when they are in full support of those factors that are outside the teacher's control.

In the development of English, vocabulary, phonological awareness, and letter knowledge have been found to predict word reading abilities among first and second language learners as they acquire competences in that language being learnt. This study therefore, explored the influence of home to school communication as a Predictor of Acquisition of English Language Competences among Primary learners in Kitgum district Uganda, emphasizing literacy activities and the development of English as a second language among ethnic Ugandan children in Kitgum.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Effective communication between homes and schools is widely recognized as a crucial factor in a child's educational development. In the context of Kitgum District primary schools, where English language acquisition is of paramount importance, understanding the role of home-to-school communication in predicting the acquisition of English language competences becomes imperative. However, despite its acknowledged significance, there exists a dearth of comprehensive research examining the specific impact of home-to-school communication practices on English language competences among primary school learners in this region. This is because English is a medium of instruction in upper primary schools in Uganda, Barasa (2015) confirms that inability to communicate effectively will disadvantage their learning as well as their social life.

This research aimed to address this gap by investigating the nature, frequency, and effectiveness of home-to-school communication and its direct correlation with the acquisition of English language competences, thus shedding light on potential areas for improvement in bridging the communication gap between homes and schools for the betterment of English language education in Kitgum District primary schools.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

This study explored the influence of home to school communication as a predictor of acquisition of English Language Competencies among Primary learners in Kitgum district Uganda emphasizing literacy activities and the development of English as a second language among ethnic Ugandan children in Kitgum and focused specifically on English vocabulary, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and word reading skills.

#### **1.4 Study Objectives**

1. To investigate the effect of home to school reading culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary schools Kitgum district.
2. To find out the influence of home to school speaking culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary schools Kitgum district.
3. To assess the impact of home to school writing culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary Kitgum district.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What is the effect of home to school reading culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary schools in Kitgum district?
2. What is the influence home to school speaking culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary schools in Kitgum district?
3. What is the impact home to school writing culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary schools in Kitgum district?

#### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study were expected to be of help to primary school teachers in their decision to adopt a particular teaching method aimed at making pupils learn how to read in English language.

Also, it was believed that the findings of this study will guide parents in their collaborative effort to teach their children the reading culture. More so, this study will provide current empirical data as regards the English language command of upper primary pupils in English language.

Finally, this study would be of immense benefits to resource persons in their course of training and retraining primary school teachers. Again, this study will equally benefit would-be researchers by serving as a reference material for those who might want to conduct research on similar related subject matter.

## **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study included geographical scope, content, theoretical scope, time scope.

### **1.7.1 Geographical Scope**

The study was conducted in Kitgum district located in northern Uganda between Longitude 320E and 340E and Latitude 020N and 040N. It is bordered by the Republic of Southern Sudan to the North, Karenga district to the East, Kotido district to the South East, Agago district to the South, Pader district to the Southwest and Lamwo District to the Northwest.

### **1.7.2 Content Scope**

The study assessed the pronunciation of English language skills through home to school reading in primary schools, also to examine the contrastive phonological relationship of reading and English speech sounds and identified ways of overcoming the influence of language reading on the pronunciation of English language skills between home to school activities.

### **1.7.3 Time Scope**

This study was carried out for four months, from May 2023 to September 2023. The procedure entailed data collection, analysis, and compilation.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The theoretical review and conceptual framework were covered in this chapter. It examined other related literature under the sub-topics chosen from the study's objectives, as well as a summary of the identified gap.

#### **2.1 Theoretical framework**

This study was guided by Halliday's (1993) language based theory of learning. The theory postulates that human learning is essentially semiotic (that is, involves use of signs and symbols) in nature despite the fact educational knowledge was massively dependent on verbal learning; many theories of learning have not been specifically derived from observation of children language development.

The theory attempted to explain how children engage in learning language and it tries to highlight the distinctive characteristics of human learning which states that language is the process of making meaning from what children are learning. Children only learned if they understood the language they are using or learning.

When children learn first language or the mother tongue they make effort to speak and reason in that language. Children acquire first language very gradually and usually on their own, and use this first language to express their feelings or thoughts.

The theory makes assumptions that language development is a continuous process that starts at birth, through infancy and childhood and through adolescence into adult life, for example, a child was able to come to grips with grammatical metaphors only until when he or she was approaching the age of puberty. At ages 3-5, babies are reaching out and grasping; trying to get hold of objects (they can see the object). Such an effort provoked the use of the sign which was then interpreted by the adult and a form of conversation between the adult and child takes place.

At ages 6-10 years, regular symbols are created by the child in an interactive context. When children construe their signs into sign system protolanguage is formed; the proto language

which MOE (2017) calls proto communication. Children use this language to take roles during conversations with other people.

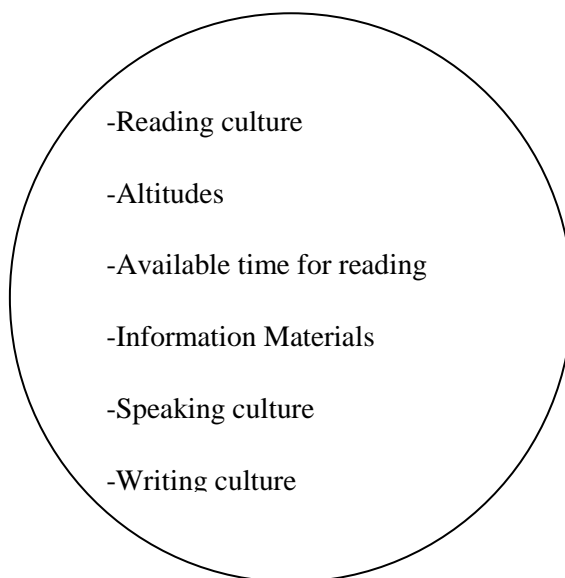
This theory guided this study because it can be applied in the educational context. Teaching/learning activities can be designed and implemented to take principles of learning into account.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework

The researcher used the conceptual framework to link the variables that served as a yardstick for evaluating the relationship between the independent and dependable variables.

CC. Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

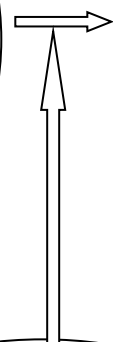
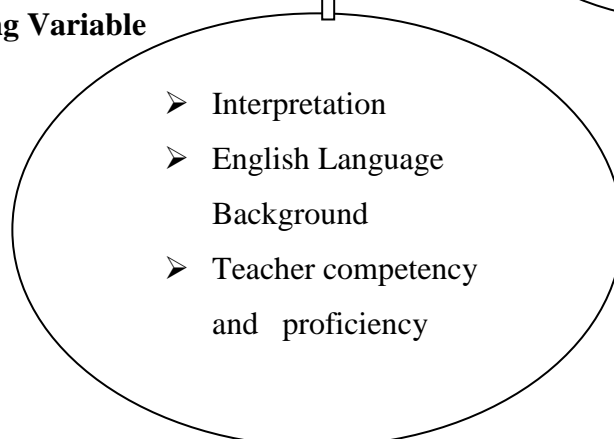
### Independent Variable



### Dependable Variable



### Intervening Variable



## 2.3 Empirical literature

Young children are natural language acquirers. They are self-motivated to pick up language without conscious learning unlike adults or adolescents do. This is because children are born with innate language abilities which they use later to pick up later.

Different theories had been advanced on how children learn. The behaviourists believe the child's mind is blank and society is responsible for 'writing' on it. While the cognitivists stressed the fact that a child was born with the ability to think which enabled them to perceive and analyze language they heard.

Therefore, it is of the view that a child had the ability to think and it was that ability to think that enabled them to pick up language. The Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in children enabled them to learn any language. This meant that a human brain is programmed to enable individuals to learn and use language, this gives homes more work to choose the type of language children must speak at home and schools to enable teachers guide them accordingly.

Babies started communicating from very early times, for example, babies are able to make eye contacts and follow the gaze of light. MOE (2017) says this is the beginning of sharing language. Children are born with the ability to imitate, pronounce and work without the rules of language for themselves.

The child's readiness to use language was also influenced by training and experience. Children acquire first language basically for survival, since they needed it to interact with the environment. There are no rules that children follow when learning first language. Ideally, all children develop first language in similar way.

According to Kimathi (2017) all children develop language through the following stages;

- i) Pre - linguistic vocalization 0-3 months
- ii) Babbling 3-6 months
- iii) One word (holophrastic) 12- 18 months
- iv) Two word (telegraphic) 18-24 months
- v) Acquisition of grammar 2 – 6 years.

Haynes (2015) agrees that children go through various stages in the process of learning language. He says during pre-production or silent period children have up to 500 words in receptive vocabulary and are not yet producing language but parrot.

At this stage a child is able to respond to pictures and other visuals. Dunn (2021) adds during the 'silent period' children look, listen and communicate through facial expressions or gestures before they begin to speak memorized speech, although not always used correctly.

But according to Haynes (2015) when a child acquires vocabulary of 6000 active words, the child is able to use more complex sentences when communicating.

Babies go through these stages of language development very gradually. A child's effort to learn and communicate in the new language was usually met with a lot of appreciation by the mother and other people because the child was making effort to communicate through the home activities.

### **2.3.1 Reading Culture in Primary Schools**

English is the main language that is used for communication in schools. Language proficiency was key in promoting learners understanding, interpretation and analysis of content, especially when it came to reading, and answering questions. During these stages of language development parents need to provide their children with correct feedback to imitate.

Parents can respond to the child's cry, cooing, and vocalization, this feedback gave the child feeling it is on the right direction.

From then on children learned a lot from the environment through interaction, they used these experiences to pick the second language when they are still young. This study supported the view that the language input the child got from the parents and experiences they got in the environment made them learn language much faster.

Children came across regular use of English for the first time at school. English was learned in school as a second language, since it is an important subject in our school curriculum and as such children needed to be fluent in oral and written English. Goodson and Peters (2020) adds that since English is a medium of instruction in an educational system in many countries, English teaches the literacy on which the practice of other subjects is based. It was also a key subject because it was spoken all over the world, English is a *lingua Franca*. According to Manning (2017), English is the indispensable means of communication for an estimated seven million people throughout the world.

Haynes (2015) further says that it takes 4-10 years to achieve cognitive academic language proficiency in primary schools and also in homes where there is little English use and also in examinations and this correlates with other subjects as well except the mother tongue. English is a medium of instruction in upper primary classes in all schools in Uganda

and beyond and is taught as a subject both in lower and upper primary classes in Kitgum district and also spoken in some homes and markets.

Because of its importance in school curriculum, MOE (2017) suggests that the learning of English is concerned with development of the four English skills. It further says English is learned systematically and is surrounded by rules for grammar and generally demands for correctness. It was structured; this made it different from mother tongue which children acquire naturally without formal rules.

Kimathi, (2017) suggests that children acquire English as second language;

- (i) Through interaction with speakers
- (ii) By listening to and speaking the language
- (iii) Through formal instruction
- (iv) Through private or individual study.

Children must master rules of grammar if they were to learn English. This is a hard task for children who are already influenced by their mother tongue if not supported by the parents at their homes. Dunn (2005) noted that picking up third, fourth, or even more languages were easier than picking up second language. When children learn first language, they gradually go through stages of first language development with a lot of ease.

But in second language development child cannot go through the crying, cooing and babbling stages, but instead are faced with challenges of rules of grammar and influence of the first language.

MOE (2017) confirms that children were faced with problems of mother tongue as they learnt second language. The child's mother tongue influenced the spoken language, spelling and sentence structures. These problems remain manifested in some children over the years and were the main cause of poor grammar in sentence construction, writing and spoken English. The influence of mother tongue in children continues to affect quality of composition and sentence writing at school and at the National examination.

Since teaching/learning of English is basically concerned with teaching of four language skills. Children can improve English competences if they listened, spoke, wrote and read English. Teachers should first develop listening skill in learners before moving to the next skill area. Listening is a prerequisite skill to speaking.

According to MOE (2017), the foundation for all literacy is in listening and talking. Teachers needed to develop teaching/learning activities to enhance listening skills in children. Teachers can ask children to tell stories as the rest of the class listened, read stories to the class, give verbal instruction, and use pictures to stimulate talk and storytelling to children.

### **2.3.2 Speaking English Culture in Primary Schools**

Children need to be encouraged to listen to other speakers before they are engaged in any meaningful conversation. Teachers need to encourage children to talk about events, objects or things that interest them; this improved their oral fluency.

Haynes (2015) agrees that children go through various stages in the process of learning language. He says during pre-production or silent period children have up to 500 words in receptive vocabulary and are not yet producing language but parrot. At this stage a child was able to respond to pictures and other visuals.

Dunn (2005) adds that during the 'silent period' children look, listen and communicate through facial expressions or gestures before they begin to speak memorized speech, although not always used correctly. But according to Haynes (2005) when child acquires vocabulary of 6000 active words, the child is able to use more complex sentences when communicating.

Speech becomes the fastest and most commonly used method of communication between people. Alongside speaking, children are taught how to listen. Children do not always listen attentively in class; some children easily got distracted by external stimuli and fail to learn. No meaningful communication took place without use of listening and speaking skills because the two skills complemented one another.

Popp (2011) confirms that speaking and listening are foundations for learning a language, he argues that teachers who regard listening and speaking as tools for learning integrate the learning and practice of these skills to the rest of the curriculum because they believe that the ability to speak and listen effectively assist all learning.

Learners who do not speak fluently and accurately might become poor speakers and in effect fail to communicate and interact with other people. It was important to note, other language

skills like reading and writing can only develop in a child till when the child had learned to listen. It should be noted that modern education was hinged on the ability to read and write.

According to the MOE (2001) the foundation for all literacy is in listening and talking. The role of a parent in the child's language development cannot be overlooked; parents provided a lot of input and model child's first language. Parents and teachers of English need to provide learners with the best role model of English language. But both must polish their language first because making mistakes can make the learners repeat the same.

American Speech Language Association (2014) confirms that it is important for parents/care givers to provide strong language model; it further says if you cannot use language well, you should not be teaching it. Reinforcing a child's language was important in enhancing learning of language in the child. A mother, who praises, prompts and responds to what the child says, makes the child learn faster.

Quist (2000) argues that genuine praises and encouragement are the methods that can be used to encourage a feeling of confidence and achievement and also to improve attitudes and change the child's behaviour. The teacher needs to appreciate each learner by smiling and speaking to them in a friendly way. This was one way the teacher made his pupils know that he/she really valued their participation and contribution. When teaching language items, a teacher can present subject matter in a stimulating and interesting manner to the learners to enhance learning. Children who are stimulated in learning process are energized to move forward in the activities the children are learning.

Ngaroga (2017) argues that stimulus variations are those teacher actions that are sometimes planned and sometimes spontaneous that develops and maintains a high level of attention on the part of the pupils during the course of the lesson. The aim was to have the pupils' attention focused on the lesson. It was the role of the teacher to create good classroom atmosphere for all learners to participate in the teaching/learning process.

Reinforcement always is a motivational strategy that teachers use to strengthen habits or behaviour in the learner. Use of body language, for example, nodding, smiling, clapping; giving a child pat on the back are some of the reinforcement schedules teachers used in class to give learners assurance he/she were on the right track. They also help develop confidence and positive self-image in children. The school environment was important for developing the child's English language skills.

The environment provided role models and stimulated learner's language development. This study assumes that the learners' language competencies, that is, ability to listen, speak, read and write English impacted on performance of the pupil at school and home communication.

### **2.3.3 Writing Cultures in Primary Schools**

Holt, Rinehart and Winston (2001) suggest that before leading children to reading they should be made to figure out that letters stood for sounds and that clumps of letters made words. The teacher can organize reading activities to enhance reading skills in their learners. Teacher gives learners short written words in cards provide reading material, story books and command card games to read.

This method of 'look and say' assists the learners build sight vocabulary and learners are taught to associate sounds (phonemes) with the letter symbols in order to read the word. The teacher can also use whole sentence method to build sentences from words written on cards. The teacher can encourage the children first to recognize the word by its overall appearance rather than by individual letters of what the word was made up of. Finally, children learned that words formed sentences that communicated a message.

But Holt, Rinehart and Winston (2001) further argue that before you make child to read go through pre-reading activities, tell children to write simple stories about events. Reading, like writing was a process that was made up of many steps and it takes effort to attain it. Once children are able to read they can then be encouraged to write freely and creatively. This study wishes to highlight that the learners' ability to write and read is however, not adequate to see them through education but had to be taught a language that was then used as the medium of instruction in the school system. The teacher in this respect must be a writing model by writing pieces and giving them to read.

When teaching listening, speaking, writing and reading skills, MOE (2017) cautions that teaching of the 4 language skills should not be taught in isolation from the other language skills. There should be integration of language skills when teaching any one of the four skills. Teachers are advised to be creative to enhance learning in their children. In similar study,

Similarly, Odima (2015) carried out a study on teaching of language items in District. Its findings gave insight into some of the challenges teachers of English met during the teaching of English language. The study gap in this research was to investigate the effects of teaching on acquisition of English language skills on KCPE performs in Teso North Sub County,

Busia County, Kenya he recommends that most children who fail in speaking of any language the challenge come from home so the emphasis here should be put on home to school communications, which is the aim of this study.

Brindley (2007) confirms that a good teacher of English language has to know how children speak, their pronunciations and language command. The teacher must know the subject considerably beyond the content they are expected to teach. He/she should have a strong background in the subjects related to their specialty. Teachers who do not have the skills or competencies in English are not to teach it.

The American Speech Hearing Association (2014) cautions that if you cannot use language well, you should not teach it. The teaching/learning of English can have repercussions on the teaching, achievements and the standard of all the other subjects if it was not taught by a competent teacher. Teachers' skills are enhanced by quality academic grades and professional training of the teachers. Kembo - Sure (1992) looked at the standards of the teacher as one of the reasons for the poor English teaching and performance in languages in Ugandan schools.

Barasa (2015) cited a study in which it was reported that the teaching and learning of the English language in Kenya has been suffering due to lack of role models for the language learner. Poor performance in English in schools and at national examinations level had been blamed on the teacher. Although many people are getting into the teaching profession, majority of the teachers rarely do it with any seriousness. People go to teaching profession as last resort, simply because there are no other opportunities Teacher proficiency helped enhance effective assessment of pupils. Teachers usually put in place variety of methods to assess what the pupils had learned.

Kiato (1997) argues that evaluation can be used to assign grades, check learning, give feedback to pupils, and improve instruction by giving feedback to the teachers. Besides assessing their learners, these teachers can also self-evaluate their work. An effective teacher was a reflective teacher. A reflective teacher is a teacher who self- evaluates his teaching skills, resources, and practices in classroom delivery. These teachers are reflective about learners' practices; think systematically about what happens on individual in the classroom and school. They go further to find out why events happen, and what can be done to improve pupil speaking achievement in class and outside the class.

Davidson (2013) argues that reflective teachers profess disposition; they believe that all children can learn. Being reflective assists teachers to identify shortcomings in planning and assist in coming up with interventional strategies.

#### **2.4 English Language Competences in Primary Schools**

It is due to the importance of the medium of instruction that the teaching of English, the medium of instruction in Ugandan schools is allocated more time on the timetable than other subjects. It is also in this respect that all subjects in the school rely on.

Since teachers play a central role in the teaching/learning of English. It is necessary for them to have the necessary competencies (knowledge, skills) in teaching of English language in class. To achieve effective classroom teaching/learning required teachers who are highly qualified or have competencies in teaching of English language. Teacher competencies are important because they assisted in enhancing acquisition of English language to the learners through selection and organization of teaching/learning activities, preparation, and use of teaching/learning activities among other factors that support acquisition of language to children in school.

Teachers needed to know the subject content appropriately and be able to apply this content to the learner. It was the teacher who determined the mode of presentation of the content, the extent of the learner's participation, choice of learning activities and the learning materials. Genesis Framework, World Press (2014) further argues that teacher competency has various dimensions such as content, knowledge, student motivation, presentation, and connection skills. The Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation University of Toronto (2014) outlines some of the competencies a teacher should possess, they include:-

- (i) Success in stimulating and challenging students and promoting their intellectual and scholarly development.
- (ii) Strong communication skills.
- (iii) Success in developing student's mastery of a subject and latest development in the field.
- (iv) Promoting academic integrity.
- (v) Superlative teaching skills.

Besides, mother tongue and other languages like Arabic and Kiswahili are taught or learned in English. Goodson and Peters (1990) suggests that English teaches the literacy on which the practice of other subjects is based.

Republic of Kenya (2002) says the objective of teaching English language in primary schools in Kenya is to enable the pupils acquire sufficient command of language skills that will make them communicate fluently.

Murray (2006) observes that language is a crucial tool for determining how children learn and think because advanced models of thought are transmitted through words. Children who are proficient in English learned easily. English is Uganda's national and official language; it is used as a tool for promoting national unity.

Adagi (2001) confirms that language acts as a tool for enhancing national unity. English language is a lingua franca and is widely used in the commonwealth countries. For the learner to be able to follow instruction in the school, the knowledge of the medium of instruction must be good or, at least, sufficient to allow us understand the information from teachers and from books. It was therefore important for children to learn English so that they do not only use it for passing examinations but also preparing individuals to be part of the international community.

Children who do not come from English speaking families learn English in schools as a second language as was a case with many Kitgum district children.

American Speech Language Hearing Association (2014) agrees that when children who speak a language other than English go to school for the first time, these children had an easier time learning a second language, but anyone can do it at any age. It takes a lot for teachers play a key role in assisting learners to acquire and use language skills. It is the teacher who introduces English language to the child in class.

Choudhury (2014) agrees it is the responsibility of all teachers of English to assist all students in the development of their ability to speak and write better language. A teacher, therefore, was a key person in assisting and developing children's proficiency in language.

Sereti (1993) contends that the task of melding students so that they express themselves effectively both orally and in written work lies on the shoulders of the teacher the language

teachers are able to provide learners with experiences that stimulated the acquisition and use of English language skills.

Teachers with competencies (knowledge and skills), good academic and professional qualifications in the English language made children acquire language. He pointed out that teachers must have the experience and training that enables them to understand and respect diversity of dialects.

Teachers can improve children's language by encouraging learners to talk about events or objects that interest them. Teachers can achieve this by allowing children discuss their experiences through dramatization, narratives, storytelling and debating. This was called teaching through exposure; teaching through exposure enables learner use English language skills.

Choudhury (2014) agrees that pupils learn a language faster when they are exposed to all four skills. It further says, when teaching English language skills, a teacher should not teach the four language skills in isolation. Exposing child to all language skills increases the child's receptive language skills.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology that was used to carry out the study. Herein, the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instrument, validity and reliability of the instrument, data collection procedure, data processing and analysis and ethical consideration are discussed.

#### **3.1 Research design**

The study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey design. This type of design requires collection of data at a given point in time across a whole population to get the sample elements for the study (Onen & Oso, 2008). In this regard, no follow-ups were made on the respondents. A qualitative approach was adopted for the study, thereby allowing the description and narration of the events.

#### **3.2 Target Population**

Mwituria (2012) says a population is a collection of items of interest in research. A population represents the group that the member wishes to generalize his/her research to. The study targeted 95 public primary schools, 48 head teachers, 121 teachers, 70 parents, and 231 pupils in primary schools in Kitgum district.

#### **3.3 Sampling and Sample Size**

Mwituria (2012) says a sample is a smaller group obtained from the accessible population. He says each member or case in the sample is referred to as a subject, respondent or interviewee. He further says sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that individuals selected represent the larger group from which they were selected. This study sample was drawn from primary schools and teachers teaching English language in Kitgum. The researcher used simple random sampling technique to select 48 head teachers, 96 teachers of English language, and 177 pupils, heads of schools and 53 parents in primary schools in Kitgum District.

The table below shows the sample and Simple size

**Table 3.1: Table Showing the Target Population and Sample Size**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Target population</b>	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Sampling Procedure</b>
Head teachers	48	48	Purposive sampling
Parents	70	53	Random Sampling
Teachers of English	121	96	Simple random Sampling
Pupils	231	177	Stratified sampling
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>374</b>	

**Researcher, 2023**

### **3.4 Research Instruments**

The researcher hopes to use questionnaires to collect data. These questionnaires were administered to teachers teaching English language in primary schools in Kitgum district. Wadsworth (1997) defines questionnaires as asset of questions written down and generally answered in writing in the same sheet of paper.

According to Muitarua (2012) questionnaires consist of asset of questions presented to a respondent for answers. He says there are three basic type of questions closed ended, open ended, and combination of both.

The researcher gave the respondents the questionnaires to fill out themselves. The researcher used self-administered questionnaires as they are economical in terms of time and efforts.

The researcher used questionnaires because according to Kothari (2003) questionnaires are not too expensive to prepare, they are also free from bias of the researcher, and the respondents have time to give well thought out answers, the researcher was able to reach the respondents who were inapproachable and the fact that questionnaires can make use of large samples thereby making the results dependable. Self-administered questionnaires are also economical in terms of time and effort.

### **3.5 Validity**

Mwaituria (2012) further says validity asks whether the research measured what it intended to. Content validation (also called face validity) checks how well the content of the research are related to the variables to be studied. It asks; are the research questions representative of the variables being measured? Validity implies reliability: a valid measure

must be reliable. The instruments were amended according to the supervisors' comments and recommendations before they could be administered. For validation of the instrument, the researcher consulted supervisors in the college of education who gave guidance that helped in improving the tools.

### **3.5.1 Reliability**

While Mwituria (2012) adds that reliability is the extent to which a measure will produce consistent results. Test re-tests reliability were checked on how similar the results were if the research was repeated under similar circumstances. Suitability over repeated measures were assessed with the Pearson coefficient. The correlation coefficient of the questionnaires was determined by using test re-test method.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher requested for an introduction letter from higher degrees and then sought permission from the relevant authorities to make sure that data was collected as it planned to carry out the study. The researcher also planned to move from school to school collecting data using questionnaires. These instruments were randomly administered to the respondents by the researcher during and out of class time.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The researcher first ensured that all questionnaires and interview schedules were duly completed by the respondents. Data was organized for the purposes of analysis. Data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative paradigm.

Chakraborty (2012) says quantitative research is an inquiry into an identified problem, based on testing a theory, measured with numbers, and analyzed using statistical techniques with a goal of determining whether the predictive generalization of a theory holds true. He adds that quantitative approach is the systematic scientific investigation of quantitative properties and phenomena and their relationship. The objective of quantitative research was to develop and employ mathematical models, theories, and/ or hypotheses pertaining to the natural phenomena. It provided the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expressions of quantitative relationship (ibid). Quantitative data was presented in percentages, means and frequency tables.

According to Chakraborty (2012) qualitative research aims to acquire an in-depth understanding of human behaviour. It relies on reason behind various aspects of

behaviour. It investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where, and when, (ibid). Qualitative data was organized into themes as they emerge from content analysis.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher introduced herself to the respondents and explained why the study was to be carried out, and also explain to the respondents why they should be involved in the study.

Respected and protected the confidentiality of data obtained from the respondents were assured. Chakraborty (2012) says respondents were informed that the demographic information was held in strictest confidence and reported only as aggregated characteristic, not as individual data and that information will be for no other purpose.

The respondents were encouraged to respond to all items in the questionnaire. The researcher guarded against misrepresentation, biased writing, plagiarism and be sensitive to the respondents' views.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter essentially caters for the presentation of data generated, its interpretation, analysis and discussion thereof. The data was collected from Kitgum district among pupils, teachers and head teachers. Data was presented in a cross sectional survey form using texts, tables and the charts, and the analysis was handled thematically in relation to the objectives of the research.

Cross sectional survey was used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon that were being studied. The SSPs was used for frequencies, averages and other statistical calculations.

#### 4.1. Response Rate

The researcher distributed the data collection items to 374 respondents to provide data on the issues at hand. The research achieved a response rate of 75%. In other words, out of the 100 items distributed, 75 were returned. Therefore, with this response rate, there is high confidence that the responses received on the study are reliable. Mugenda (1999) as well as Saunders (2007) suggest that a response rate of 50% is adequate when quantitative data is manually collected. Table 4.1 below presents a breakdown of the response rate of the respondents by their categorization.

**Table 4.1: Response Rate**

Respondents Category	Sample Size	Actual returned	Percentage
Teachers	374	296	75

**Source:** Primary Data, 2023

Table 4.1 above presents the response rate of the responses to which the research instruments were administered. The findings presented show that out of 374 respondents targeted and given instruments 296 filled and returned them. The remaining 78 respondents did not return them.

## 4.2. Respondents

### 4.2.1 Demographic traits of Teachers as respondents

This was based on the gender of respondents, age, education and marital status. This was intended to attain a detailed understanding of the respondent's key characteristics. The general information has an implication on the study variables. The different demographic characteristics are analyzed and presented in table 4.2.1.

**Table 4.2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (n=296)**

Categories	Response	Frequency	Percentages
<b>Gender</b>	Male	176	56
	Female	120	44
	<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>	6- 15	86	37.3
	16 - 25	94	41.33
	26 - 35	43	13.33
	35 Years above	11	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Marital status</b>		
	Married	147	57.33
	Divorced	4	2.7
	Widow	3	1.9
	Single	122	36
	<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education</b>	Certificate	96	49
	Diploma	79	34.3
	Degree	43	18
	Masters	5	2.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Working experience</b>	1-2 years	24	6.6
	3-5 years	164	37.3
	6-10 years	128	37.3
	Above 10 years	32	9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 4.2 presents the findings on the demographic characteristics of teacher respondents. The demographics are presented in the forms of gender, age, academic qualifications and time of working/stay of respondents.

The presentations were based on the gender of respondents; majority of the respondents were male who constituted 56% of the total respondents while the female were 44%. The findings imply that the respondents were both male and female, the schools are dominated by male teachers.

The Table further presents the results of findings by the age of the respondents, the majority of respondents were aged between 16 - 25 years, while 37.3% of respondents were between 26-35 years, 13.33% were between 36 years, while only 8.0% were 36 years and above. This implies that most primary schools in Kitgum district are mainly full of teachers having 24-35 years.

The study findings also present information regarding the education of the respondents. Out of the respondents, the majority were Bachelor's degree holders (84%), followed by diploma holders (13.3%). Only 2.7% of respondents were Master degree holders. The study findings therefore on average reveal that the data was collected from respondents with good education background, it is pivotal to argue that data was collected from understanding people/ respondents of the study.

The findings also reveal that majority of the respondents had worked for a period of ten years and above (42.7%). Followed by those who have worked for 6-10years (37.3%). Those of 3-5 years were only 13.33% of the respondents. The study findings imply that majority of the respondents had been of teaching in primary schools for quite long, and thus have enough experience.

### **4.3 . Results as per the Research Objectives**

#### **4.3.1 What is the effect of home to school reading culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary schools in Kitgum district?**

The study found out that reading as culture is not well practiced in Kitgum district and this has negatively impacted on the pupils' acquisition of English language competence in primary schools since they cannot proficiently read on their own, as shown in table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: showing reading culture on English language competence**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Pupils able to communicate in English always	2.78	1.594	Large extent
Teacher is key person in teaching English language skills	2.79	1.546	Large extent
English language is read at school only	2.27	1.340	Small extent
The language policy in the school is to communicate in English language only	2.35	1.385	Small extent
Children get English messages from home always	2.45	1.525	Small extent
Social places have helped children to communicate English	2.98	1.210	Large extent
Pupils are able to read keenly when teaching in class	2.47	1.424	Small extent
Can pupils in your school read English well	2.32	1.432	Small extent
Pupils are able to access English reading materials at school	2.20	1.542	Very Small extent
We have a reading space at home	2.24	2.104	Small extent
School environment influences reading of English language	2.44	1.643	Small extent
<b>Average mean</b>	<b>2.42</b>	<b>.73440</b>	<b>Small extent</b>

**Source: Primary data, 2023.**

Data from table 4.4 shows that reading culture is available in primary schools of Kitgum to a small extent (mean 2.42). This means that reading skills are limited. As the table shows, reading culture in primary schools are available to a small extent. In visiting various schools, the researcher however found out that there were pupils able to communicate in English always, however reading materials and space for reading were limited in primary schools of Kitgum. Several head teachers however pointed out that most of the reading materials were due for replacement.

Another observation made by head teachers was that the school reading materials in school library for the schools that were delivered were based on a thin-client technology while the Uganda National Examinations Board requires “fat client” computers for Computer Studies and ICT Subsidiary reading and communications.

Another issue pointed out was the sustainability of the current reading materials. Most primary schools in Kitgum district lacked funds to continue paying for connectivity after RCDF support ended. Stakeholders feel that the lack of an ICT in Education policy may be hindering communication culture in the reading ways since many schools depend on Books, circulars sent to the parents and Bank slips, the digital reading that can improve on home to school communication through reading were minimal in the schools visited.

On the other hand, head teachers during oral interviews maintained that since a competency-based curriculum involves a fundamental shift from passive to active learning, the infrastructure needed for this model was very different. In order to implement a competency-based curriculum, educational institutions required everything from modern classrooms, creative centers, smart boards, laboratories, and the latest technologies at all levels, as it can help learners to actively participate in the reading process, even such materials were necessary to have them at pupils’ homes to promote Home to school learning communication culture. This essentially means that the administrators need to be fully convinced about the advantages that their institutions accrue from implementing the new ways of communication that should improve on reading culture in Primary schools.

In many primary schools visited however, reading culture and skills development is hampered by lack of adequate equipment, software and connectivity at all levels of the education system. The general feedback is that primary schools in Kitgum lack adequate equipment such as computers, software, content and connectivity to adequately develop the modern reading culture to learners. Head teachers of Primary schools of Kitgum district indicated that there was a need to improve the ICT infrastructure and increase and reading skills of learners in the modern ways.

Teachers said that many primary schools find challenges in ICT connectivity, their pupils’ are not having social media profiles on various platforms to help them read and the schools were giving them little time for reading during school hours. So, teachers found it difficult to get a

way to utilize this trend and turn it into a powerful tool for enhancing the reading process. They reported that some teachers or schools had started using social media as a communication tool that could encourage reading culture, where pupils can interact with their parents and school members usually, and pupils share reading with their friends. But with social features embedded in their eBooks, they can share reading materials, opinions, and school information with their parents and guardians They can comment on someone else’s post or share links to other websites, all the while building peer networks and enhancing the online learning and reading experience. Teachers in some primary schools visited claimed that reading materials in the library like novels and newspapers are not available so they allow the use of social media as part of the learning mode and communication to the parents since majority of the prefer reading school circulars on their cell phones.

#### **4.3.2 What is the influence home to school speaking culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary schools in Kitgum district?**

The study found out that speaking culture on English language competences was, to a small extent as shown in table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: showing the speaking culture on English language competence**

Item	Mean	Std.	Interpretation
Teachers use English language in class only	1.91	1.201	Small extent
Parents speak English with teachers when visit school	1.83	1.039	Small extent
I am able to use Computer aided instruction & computer mediated conferencing, video/audio conferencing	1.82	1.080	Small extent
We have news on assembly weekly	1.77	1.032	Small extent
We have academic debate competitions in our school	1.61	.892	Small extent
We are able to use the lessons to improve on listening skills	1.60	1.165	Small extent
All learners participate in debate at school	1.58	.931	Small extent
Some exercises are given in oral form	1.52	.986	Small extent
<b>Average mean</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>.51556</b>	<b>Small extent</b>

**Source: Primary data, 2023.**

Table 4.5 shows that speaking culture in primary schools is at a small extent. This means that the majority of Kitgum district primary schools are poor in speaking skills integration in teaching. With SD .51556

It was revealed by respondents that the new curriculum is designed to reduce teachers' lecture delivery and help learners to participate actively therefore speaking as a skill or culture at schools become small. Teachers have now noticed a reduction in their exertion levels during teaching since they act as a facilitator for learning. This help reduce teacher learner communication during class hence English speaking culture is disturbed since teachers only used to speak with very few breaks in between and not much active speaking and interactions of learners. They stressed that the new curriculum emphasized group work, group presentations, peer-to-peer learning and learner-centred teaching to develop the confidence, oratory and presentation skills exhibited by the learners are missing.

Another head teacher for example gave his experience of how the new curriculum was promoting teamwork and critical thinking because of the peer learning strategy, where learners pair up to share their understanding of a particular concept and hence learn from each other this is not mostly done in English since interactions maybe in any other way of communication not necessarily speaking. The teacher then intervenes to check for understanding and clarify any concepts or doubts that the learners may have.

Teachers who were contacted in the field especially in government primary schools lamented that with big numbers of pupils in one class, the only way speaking skills could be improved especially on English language competences was to introduce classroom technology since that could then assist and guide pupils with their homework in class. They can have discussions and activities in classrooms, creating an interactive speaking environment where learners are completely involved in the learning process. Creating interaction and engagement had become a priority for many schools in Kitgum district. This style of learning had seen a growth in recent years for its ability to keep pupils speaking discussing and engaged in the classrooms.

It was however reported by teachers especially those who teach in primary schools with ICT that integrating ICT in the competency is important as it enabled facilitating increased interaction with pupils; providing for differentiation of learners according to their strengths

and weaknesses so that they were targeted better; Supporting pupils to create and innovate so that they were engaged in managing their own learning goals and activities;

Teachers reported that speaking was one of the key generic skills in the competency that can be promoted by ICT, therefore, the use of internet through Smart phones is necessary. Through use of ICT, learners and teachers do access information related to what is taught.

#### **4.3.3 What is the impact of writing culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary Kitgum district?**

To answer the above question all the data was presented as shown in the table below:

**Table 4.5: Shows the impact of writing culture on acquisition of English competences in primary schools**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Easy writing is necessary while teaching	2.13	1.235	Poor
Dictation in the learning process is good	2.04	.825	Poor
Teacher emphasize notes check at school	1.91	1.088	Poor
Parents always check on pupils' books and send feedback	1.89	.998	Poor
Everybody must write in the class	1.88	1.213	Poor
No oral class is allowed	1.68	.974	Very poor
<b>Average mean</b>	<b>1.65</b>	<b>.39344</b>	<b>Very poor</b>

**Source: Primary data, 2023.**

Respondents in table 4.5 argued that writing culture in primary schools was very poor with Sd,39344 which impacted negatively on pupils' acquisition of English language competences in primary schools in Kitgum. Writing culture was poor for instance most of pupils observed were struggling to copy what the teachers put on the black board and some did not have exercise books to use.

Teachers during oral interviews in the district said that pupils' keeping of notes given was the most challenge they faced. They argued that even the home work given sometimes majority of the pupils did not do it, they went on complaining that writing English language was very challenging because children basically learn and practice writing while school. Home provided very little support to children in terms of writing. A higher number of pupils in a classroom tends to affect learner-instructor interactions and can also prevent monitoring of pupils' writing skill during the teaching –learning process. They said that since every pupil learnt differently, the teacher's pace in a high-density class may work for some pupils but not for all. This greatly hindered implementation of English language competency and restricts educators from applying learner-centric interactive teaching methods to improve on writing culture in primary schools of Kitgum district.

Some respondents said that one of the major challenges facing writing process in primary schools was standardizing the mechanisms in which English competencies or skills are assessed. This was because, being a personalized learning approach, teachers focused largely on subject mastery, irrespective of the place, time, and pathway to good writing skills and writing cultures in primary schools. In this way, teachers found some concerns in terms of assessment implementation as per the new curriculum, for example, how to measure each pupil for every performance outcome; how to identify opportunities for learners to demonstrate individualized subject mastery without adhering to standardized performance outcomes; who determines the pupils' learning outcomes, and how can parents and guardians support children in developing their writing skill while at home in order to acquire the competences needed in English language.

During interactions with teachers and head teachers, it was revealed that teachers in many primary schools were ill-equipped to implement writing competency unless they were a product of it themselves. This is the reason why building their capacity is one of the essential prerequisites before implementing writing competency learning. Further, there were challenges related to the teacher's knowledge of competency-based pedagogy.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a thorough discussion of the findings of the study, the conclusions from the findings, as well as the recommendations.

#### 5.1 Discussion

5.1. 1 What is the effect of home to school reading culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary schools kitgum district?

The study found out that home to school reading culture affected the acquisition of English language competence in primary schools in Kitgum District. The extent to which it is practiced is still wanting and it has been rated on small extent, this an unfortunate scenario limits teachers' and pupils' ability to research and hence effectively handle the reading competency.

Although Technology was vital, for instance, in many government aided primary schools in Kitgum where the study was carried out, it was reported by head teachers that eduTrac is a mobile phone-based data collection system piloted by UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports to monitor education service delivery but it does not facilitate reading culture in primary schools to pupils. Districts identify bottlenecks at school level, track accountability for resolution of issues arising from eduTrac reports and improve planning for education.

Literacy Teachers, teachers of English language needed to be helped on English competency to learners. The questions asked are unique to each group. Regular reports are expected from the head teacher, School Management Committee (SMC) members, parents, thereby creating partnerships among all education stakeholders. District officials were then expected to follow up on these reports and priorities visits while at a higher level, these reports feed into the planning of the education ministry and also pupil's home to improve on reading competence and communication form home to school. This was in agreement with Syomwene, A. (2007) who said that due to reading dependence on an open source framework and possible use of feature friendly reading materials, learners are able to have access to different reading resources.

Pupils nowadays can use the hands-on, to know and see whatever they are studying, hence improving their reading skills.

As earlier researchers indicated, ICT is important in schools to promote learners' generic skills. Jobs today require flexibility, initiative and the ability to undertake many different tasks. They are not as narrowly prescribed and defined as in the past and generally they are more service oriented, making information and social skills increasingly important. Employers now focus on adaptation, cost reduction, increased productivity, and new markets, products and services. Employees need to demonstrate teamwork, problem-solving, and the capacity to deal with non-routine processes. They should also be able to make decisions, take responsibility and communicate effectively. Proficiency in the broad range of generic skills has become the main requirement for the modern worker (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry & Business Council of Australia 2002).

Employers seek to recruit and retain employees with these skills; thus, education programs that emphasize such skills offer learners a comparative advantage in the labour market. Education providers are also interested in generic skills because they encourage learners to be more reflective and self-directed (Hager, Holland & Beckett 2002). Internationally, there is increasing emphasis being placed on active citizenship and community capacity as reflected in the extensive work on learning communities. Reading skills feature prominently in this body of literature as fundamental to developing successful, progressive communities.

### **5.1.2 What is the influence of home to school speaking culture on acquisition of English language competences in primary schools Kitgum district?**

The study found out that the speaking competency in Kitgum primary schools was to a small extent. Very little was transferred from home to school. This relates to Lochner, Conrad, and Graham (2015), who held that teachers are central to whether a curriculum is delivered consistently, effectively, and with efficacy to enable the support of student progress and growth. In a study skill, the NCEES (2017) conducted on curriculum fidelity and professional development, teachers self-reported fidelity rates when implementing an English language learner (ELL) program. The authors, who used a log to rate the level and amount of time spent on using the curriculum as prescribed, found that 16% of participants recorded decreased levels of fidelity, 51% recorded average levels of fidelity, and 30% recorded consistent fidelity of implementation, as prescribed by the curriculum developers. Previous researchers have shown a need to identify the factors that contribute to learners speaking

skills concerns and which barriers prevent full English language curriculum implementation (Lochner et al., 2015).

Understanding the barriers to speaking competence implementation, primary schools could provide education administrators with tools to address teacher concerns and could provide vital training for successful speaking competences to lower primary toddlers (Popp, M.S. (1996).

Indeed, to ensure that curricular innovations are implemented with fidelity, instructional practices should be aligned to the specific learning goals provided in the curriculum (Burriss, & Tabulda, 2017). Curricular implementation encompasses different components, including the delivery of the curriculum through resources and instructional practices. To implement curricula with fidelity, instructional practices must align with the curriculum as well as support the individual needs of the students (Causarano, 2015). In addition, teacher preparedness for curriculum implementation plays a vital role (McNeill et al., 2016).

The findings from several studies supported the need for teachers to know the curriculum well to strengthen instructional practices since parents did not support the children enough. Content instruction depends on the quality of the explanations the teachers offer to learners to speak. MacDonald et al. (2016) reinforces the need for quality instruction and commitment through their recommendation that parents should help teachers deliver the prescribed need of their children. Sometimes the problem with implementation results from a problem with the curriculum itself (Caropreso, Haggerty, & Ladenheim, 2016).

Bell (2015) analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of an English grammar curriculum; specifically, the guidance and directives provided to support teachers. Though Bell found the curriculum to be accurate overall, he found that the materials lacked pedagogical guidance to help teachers understand the lessons accurately enough to teach them. Bell pointed out another necessary component when considering the adoption of a new curriculum, but he reinforced how proper training played into implementing the curriculum with confidence (Caropreso et al., 2016; McNeill et al., 2016). Bell found that a lack of training or guidance for curriculum hindered accurate delivery to students. Once again, this type of barrier has been found to influence student growth and learning (Causarano, 2015).

Speaking culture in schools should emphasize the complex outcomes of a learning process (i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes to be applied by learners) rather than mainly focusing on

what learners are expected to learn about in terms of traditionally-defined subject content. In principle such a curriculum is learner-centred and adaptive to the changing needs of pupils, teachers and society. It implies that learning activities and environments are chosen so that learners can acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to situations they encounter in everyday life. Competency-based curricula are usually designed around a set of key competences/competencies that can be cross-curricular and/or English subject-bound.

### **5.1.3 What is the impact of home to school writing culture on the acquisition of English language competences in primary Kitgum district?**

On this, the study found out that the majority of respondents had a negative attitude towards writing competency-in primary schools hence writing culture was poor, which implies that children did not have an opportunity to practice writing while at home. Although some primary schools offered lots of opportunities for collaboration between pupils in the classroom and teachers to share writing materials for example, by using school newsletter, note taking and competitions in essay writing, home writing support could be of great impact to the pupils. With features for annotating each other's work and adding suggestions, pupils could continue to work collaboratively outside of the classroom too. Still some pupils did not participate hence poor writing skills.

Despite the skill gap that existed among parents and teachers in writing skill integration, this study shows that generally, teachers had a high perception. Similarly, Wambiri and Ndani (2016) concluded that teachers in Kenyan primary schools had high attitudes towards the improvement of writing skills in primary level indicating that with the requisite support, the use of ICT in schools would also achieve that. This is also supported by the finding that teachers had the high belief that ICT use would not only benefit them in the organization of instruction but also their learners.

The usefulness of technology to learners and teachers was important because it helped the teacher to invoke the innovativeness and creativity of the learner in all competences (Waweru, 2018), however, poor writing skills could be attributed to inadequate training on the pedagogical skills as found in the studies (Sharples & Moldeus, 2014). This means that due to inadequate preparation, such teachers would need the help for successful writing culture improvement in primary schools. According to Heinrich et al. (2020), the teachers'

belief about time and the effort needed for technology integration generally affect their use and perceived usefulness to their learners.

The effect of age and gender was also analysed. Teachers in their 40 s found ICT more useful than their counterparts in the 30 s. This finding was different from previous research that found the perception to be higher among younger teachers (Wambiri & Ndani, 2016). This difference could have been occasioned by sample composition in our study since the number of teachers in the 30 s was two times more than those in the 40 s. However, Bebell et al. (2004) warn that it is not obvious that younger teachers would have a higher perception of technology. A test of how teachers of different ages perceive the usefulness of specific technologies in the performance of their duties would lead to a more detailed analysis. Additionally, our analysis on the effect of gender on the perceived usefulness of technology among teachers did not show any statistical difference. This was consistent with Buliva (2018) who found no significant difference in the perception of technology use among teachers by gender. It, therefore, suggests that exemplary performance in the integration of technology should be expected from all teachers. The results also indicate that policymakers should formulate ways to equip male and female teachers with technology integration skills since they all have high perceptions and significant skill gaps. However, Venkatesh et al. (2003) noted that based on socialization, men would perceive certain technology as more useful if it allowed them to accomplish a task faster.

As earlier studies indicated, innovation (such as ICT in education) is indeed accompanied by a building up of uncertainty, arising from the complexity, ambiguity, and perplexity which often characterize curriculum development projects. Such uncertainty even if it is not so intense as to cause anguish as Schon has described, may be expected to arouse teachers and stimulate them to react to the innovation. However, teachers may react in quite different ways. Thus, an increase in uncertainty may be an antidote to the 'general boredom and repetitiveness' of school life (Jenkins, 2010); it permits teachers to identify themselves occupationally as innovators and opens up possibilities for 'exotic career moves'. Jenkins also thinks that 'institutionalized un-certainty' forces teachers to reconsider the way in which they are anchored to the perspectives and reference groups which have been of help to them in their teaching.

On the other hand, the relevant literature also shows that often enough uncertainty leads to resistance to change. Thus, Owen [20] asserts that each time a teacher is uncertain about what faces him; he (the teacher) is 'properly cautious' and that such caution either looks like resistance or transforms itself into purposeful resistance. However, in spite of such resistance, according to Holley (2000), when teachers have become familiar with change they do become committed to regular and systematic change.

It seems, therefore, that an understanding of the dynamics of teachers' reactions to curriculum innovation requires the study of the effects of a number of relevant psychological forces. Of these, 'dogmatism' (Rokeach, 2010) comes readily to mind as an important psychological mechanism because according to Rokeach, the dogmatic mind is extremely resistant to change'. Rokeach's analysis of dogmatism rests on the postulated existence in man of two powerful and conflicting sets of motives: the need to know and understand and the need to ward off threatening aspects of reality'. The question then is how do these motives intervene in the moulding of teachers' attitudes to curriculum innovation.

Actually, technology in the classroom is not exclusively beneficial to the students and teachers; it can also be beneficial to parents, particularly in the sense of parent-teacher interaction.

For a variety of reasons, regular physical interaction between parents and teachers is becoming increasingly difficult. However, classroom apps provide one way of tackling this problem. Parent-teacher communication writing helps in facilitating teacher responses to the queries from the parents regarding the development of their child. This allow parents to message their child's teacher, arrange appointments over calendar, as teachers, involving the parent in a child's education is an important step to learner success, and these can help make this a reality in the modern age. In addition to this, there are also classroom letters that allow parents to track their child's progress and how each is helping their child to improve their skills such as reading and writing.

Understanding the beliefs and concerns of teachers can provide insights into whether curriculum implementation will meet with success or failure. McNeill et al. (2016) and Rakes and Dunn (2015) have all substantiated this notion by addressing the impact of teachers' beliefs about given objectives in science curricula. McNeill et al. (2016) found that teachers' beliefs significantly influence their decisions for instruction. If beliefs play such a vital role,

then taking time to learn about teachers' concerns, values, and perceptions should improve the implementation process by proactively addressing these areas (Al-Shabatat, 2014; Rakes &Dunn, 2015).

One of McNeill et al.'s (2016) primary recommendations included preparing teachers through CPD and collaborative opportunities; specifically, professional development should make sure that teachers fully understand the objectives and receive time to try the new curriculum with a class to support teacher learning. The need for teacher understanding and efficacy when implementing a new curriculum is apparent, especially considering the impact of these factors on student learning.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The study concludes that the English language competency in primary schools in Kitgum District, Uganda has not yet been properly appreciated and understood by some teachers and parents especially in home to school communication. Here pupils are supposed to be at the centre of learning therefore learning is supposed to be learner-centered and the teacher's role is just to facilitate learning. Because of this, pupils should be good in reading, writing and speaking English language since many teachers use English to teach. Parents too play a key role in their children's acquisition of English language competencies. Home schooling positively impacts on children' language proficiency in schools. The study also concluded that home to school communication is a two-way process, and building strong partnerships between parents and schools can significantly contribute to the acquisition of English language competences in primary schools in Kitgum district.

Also primary schools should access and embrace the use of ICT to carry out research that can support both teachers and pupils in the acquisition and development of the four language skills and competences.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

Provide professional development opportunities to teachers to enhance their skills in engaging with parents, especially when addressing language acquisition concerns.

Provide parents with materials and resources that can help them support their child's English language development such as reading materials, online learning platforms and language learning apps.

Organize events that showcase pupils' English language achievements, such as language festivals, drama performances, or story telling sessions, where parents can actively participate.

Implement regular assessments to track pupils' progress and share the results with parents as this can help identify areas that need attention.

#### **5.4 Areas for further studies**

The current study assessed home to school communication cultures. The researcher therefore recommends that further studies be carried out on the influence of ICT in implementing the English language competency in primary schools by taking large samples, such as Central Uganda or Eastern Uganda.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX ONE: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PUPILS

Dear Pupil,

You have been chosen as one of the respondents of this research on Home to school communication as a predictor of Acquisition of English Language Competencies in Primary Schools in Kitgum District. Please kindly help in answering the following questions as honestly as possible. The information obtained will be strictly for academic purpose and your responses will be treated with confidentiality.

#### **Demographic Information:**

1. Name of the School: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Grade/Class: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Teacher's Name (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_
4. Student's Name (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_
5. Parent's Name (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Home Reading Culture:**

6. Do you have access to English language books at home?
  - Yes
  - No
7. How often do you read English books or materials at home?
  - Daily
  - Several times a week
  - Once a week
  - Rarely
  - Never

#### **Home Speaking Culture:**

8. In your home, do you engage in conversations in English with family members or others?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

9. How comfortable are you speaking in English at home?

- Very comfortable
- Comfortable
- Neutral
- Uncomfortable
- Very uncomfortable

#### **Home Writing Culture:**

10. Do you practice writing in English at home, such as maintaining a diary or writing stories?

- Yes, regularly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

11. How confident are you in your English writing skills?

- Very confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not confident
- Not confident at all

#### **School Reading Culture:**

12. How often do you read English books or materials at school?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- Once a week

- Rarely
- Never

13. Does your school have a designated time for reading in English?

- Yes
- No

**School Speaking Culture:**

14. Do you participate in English speaking activities or discussions at school?

- Yes, regularly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

15. How comfortable are you speaking in English at school?

- Very comfortable
- Comfortable
- Neutral
- Uncomfortable
- Very uncomfortable

**School Writing Culture:**

16. Do you have opportunities to practice writing in English at school (e.g., essays, creative writing)?

- Yes, regularly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

17. How confident are you in your English writing skills at school?

- Very confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not confident
- Not confident at all

**English Language Competencies:**

18. How confident do you feel in your overall English language skills (reading, speaking, and writing)?
- Very confident
  - Confident
  - Neutral
  - Not confident
  - Not confident at all
19. How would you rate your overall English language performance at school?
- Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor
  - Very Poor

**Perceptions and Attitudes:**

20. Do you believe that the home-to-school reading, speaking, and writing culture positively affects your English language competencies?
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
21. What role do you think the home and school should play in improving English language skills?

**Recommendations:**

22. Based on your experiences, what suggestions or recommendations do you have for enhancing the home-to-school culture in reading, speaking, and writing in English to improve English language competencies among primary school students in Kitgum?

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Thank you for participating in this survey. Your responses will be kept confidential and will help in understanding the impact of home-to-school reading, speaking, and writing culture on English language acquisition in primary schools in Kitgum.

## APPENDIX TWO: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Dear Sir/Madam,

You have been chosen as one of the respondents of this research on Home to school communication as a predictor of Acquisition of English Language Competencies in Primary Schools in Kitgum District. Please kindly help in answering the following questions as honestly as possible. The information obtained will be strictly for academic purpose and your responses will be treated with confidentiality.

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. School Name: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Grade/Class You Teach: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Years of Teaching Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Home-to-School Reading Culture:**

5. How often do you encourage students to read English books or materials at home?
  - Daily
  - Several times a week
  - Once a week
  - Rarely
  - Never
6. In your opinion, how supportive are the parents/guardians in fostering a home-to-school reading culture in English for their children?
  - Very supportive
  - Supportive
  - Neutral
  - Not supportive
  - Not supportive at all
7. Have you observed any noticeable differences in the English language competencies of students who have a strong home-to-school reading culture compared to those who do not?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not sure

**Home-to-School Speaking Culture:**

8. Do you encourage students to engage in English language conversations at home with family members?
- Yes
  - No
9. How comfortable do you think students are in speaking English at home?
- Very comfortable
  - Comfortable
  - Neutral
  - Uncomfortable
  - Very uncomfortable

**Home-to-School Writing Culture:**

10. Do you encourage students to practice writing in English at home, such as keeping a journal or writing stories?
- Yes
  - No
11. How confident do you think students are in their English writing skills when it comes to home-based activities?
- Very confident
  - Confident
  - Neutral
  - Not confident
  - Not confident at all

**Incorporating Home Culture into Classroom:**

12. Do you incorporate students' home-to-school reading, speaking, and writing experiences into your classroom activities?
- Yes
  - No
13. What strategies or initiatives do you use to bridge the gap between home and school language experiences?

**Teacher Recommendations:**

14. Based on your experience, what recommendations do you have for improving the integration of home-to-school culture in reading, speaking, and writing in English to enhance English language competencies among primary school students in Kitgum?

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15. Are there any additional comments or insights you would like to share regarding the impact of home-to-school culture on English language acquisition in your school?

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Thank you for participating in this survey. Your valuable insights will contribute to a better understanding of the role of teachers in leveraging home-to-school culture to enhance English language competencies among primary school students in Kitgum District.

## APPENDIX THREE: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

Dear Parent,

You have been chosen as one of the respondents of this research on Home to school communication as a predictor of Acquisition of English Language Competencies in Primary Schools in Kitgum District. Please kindly help in answering the following questions as honestly as possible. The information obtained will be strictly for academic purpose and your responses will be treated with confidentiality.

### **Parent Information:**

1. Parent's Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Child's Name (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_
3. Child's Grade/Class: \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many children do you have in primary school?

### **Home-to-School Reading Culture:**

5. Do you encourage your child(ren) to read English language books or materials at home?
  - Yes
  - No
6. How often do your child(ren) read English books or materials at home?
  - Daily
  - Several times a week
  - Once a week
  - Rarely
  - Never

### **Home-to-School Speaking Culture:**

7. In your home, do you engage in conversations in English with your child(ren)?
- Frequently
  - Occasionally
  - Rarely
  - Never
8. How comfortable are your child(ren) in speaking English at home?
- Very comfortable
  - Comfortable
  - Neutral
  - Uncomfortable
  - Very uncomfortable

**Home-to-School Writing Culture:**

9. Do you encourage your child(ren) to practice writing in English at home, such as maintaining a diary or writing stories?
- Yes
  - No
10. How confident are your child(ren) in their English writing skills when it comes to home-based activities?
- Very confident
  - Confident
  - Neutral
  - Not confident
  - Not confident at all

**Support for Home-to-School Language Culture:**

11. How do you support your child(ren) in developing their English language skills at home (e.g., reading together, conversing in English, encouraging writing)?
12. Have you faced any challenges in fostering a home-to-school culture that promotes English language skills development for your child(ren)? If yes, please describe.

**Perceptions and Attitudes:**

13. In your opinion, how important is it for parents to actively participate in promoting a home-to-school culture that enhances English language competencies?

- Very important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not important
- Not important at all

**Recommendations:**

14. Based on your experiences, what suggestions or recommendations do you have for other parents on how to effectively support their child(ren) in improving English language skills at home?

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15. Are there any additional comments or insights you would like to share regarding the impact of home-to-school culture on English language acquisition for primary school children in Kitgum?

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Thank you for participating in this survey. Your input is essential in understanding the role of parents in fostering a culture of reading, speaking, and writing in English at home and its impact on English language competencies among primary school children in Kitgum District.